



7

Jesus Teaches

Key Theme

- God gives us a new heart.

Key Passages

- Matthew 5:17–30, 5:43–48; James 2:8–11

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Describe the role of the laws Jesus used in the Sermon on the Mount.
- Recognize that God requires obedience from the heart.



Lesson Overview



Come On In

Students will review the memory verse by completing the Memory Verse Review Sheet.

- Write on the board, “Did Jesus change the standard of obedience to God?”
- Print one Memory Verse Review Sheet from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student.



Studying God’s Word

When Jesus preached, He wanted to correct what the scribes and Pharisees had been teaching. Outward appearance is not what the Lord seeks. Jesus seeks a heart that longs to love Him and obey Him. Jesus desires that His followers have humble spirits and contrite hearts. Jesus showed that it is impossible to obey the Law perfectly. And because of this truth, man is lost without the Savior.

- Study the Prepare to Share section.
- Go Before the Throne.



Activity: Heart of the Matter

The students will compare the statements of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount to commands from the Old Testament to understand the relationship between the two.

- Student Guides
- Pencils



Prepare to Share

SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read Matthew 5–7 along with this background.

The Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5–7 is no doubt one of the most famous passages in the New Testament. Both those inside the church and those outside have heard of it. Most people in the Western world have heard of “The Beatitudes” or “The Golden Rule,” which are both parts of this sermon, the longest recorded sermon of Jesus. But what is the essence of this sermon? Is this sermon of Christ a set of rules that must be followed to earn favor with God? Is this a description of how Christians ought to live? Is this the “manifesto” of God’s future kingdom?

There are many views on the meaning and purpose of the Sermon on the Mount, and dozens of books have been written on the matter. We will not try to fully address the topic in this short background. However, we do believe that one purpose and application of the Sermon on the Mount is clear: the hopeless condition of man in sin and his need for God’s grace through Jesus.

Before Jesus was born, the religious leaders of Israel had already decided what it meant to live righteously. Starting with the Mosaic Law of the Old Testament, they had developed a system of rules contrary to Scripture—a self-righteousness based on doing good works and following certain very specific laws. When Jesus entered the world, He gave the people an authoritative interpretation of the Law. Jesus stated that He had come not to destroy the Law, but to fulfill it (Matthew 5:17).

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus distinguished between how the teachers had redefined the Law as a means to achieve righteousness based on works—the “You have heard that it was said” statements—from the full meaning of the Law—the “But I say to you” statements. You see, God’s laws had always demanded both inward and outward holiness, but many of the Jews perceived God’s Law as a call to the outward appearance of holiness only. For example, in the case of adultery, the Jews recognized the need to avoid it. But they did not address the issue of the heart that would lead to the desire to commit that particular sin (Matthew 5:27–30).

They were also misguided about murder (Matthew 5:21–26). The Jews agreed that murder was a serious offense worthy of judgment and punishment. But again, the intentions of the heart were not addressed. Murder is provoked by unholy thoughts of anger, unforgiveness, hatred, and contempt toward someone. Jesus made it

clear that the feeling of hatred toward another person is sinful against God, as is the murder that follows.

Jesus continued in this vein throughout much of the sermon—pointing out that adherence to the letter of the Law is not enough. To merely acknowledge that any sinful act is wrong without addressing the issue of the heart cannot bring true righteousness. And in this, Jesus taught clearly that the Law was humanly impossible to keep. What a shock for the “keepers of the Law,” who considered their “righteousness” to be perfectly acceptable to the God they claimed to worship and serve (Romans 10:3).

And how much more shocking to everyone who listened when Jesus stated in Matthew 5:20, “For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.” This was shocking because the scribes and Pharisees were considered to be the most righteous of people. They went to the Temple regularly, paid tithes, fasted, and prayed constantly. How could Jesus say that someone must exceed them in righteousness? Clearly, Christ wasn’t impressed with their religious performance because their obedience was merely an outward performance—and their hearts were not aligned with God’s will.

As stated earlier, Jesus moved from the letter of the Law to the indwelling condition of the heart that leads to the temptation to sin. This teaching from Jesus is not a list of do’s and don’ts but a study of what is our real motivation. And again, as stated, Jesus made it clear that obeying the Law as He put forth could not be done, except by Jesus Himself.

What was Jesus’s purpose in expounding on these laws? Well, in order for Christ to do His saving work, the people He intended to save had to realize how desperately they needed Him. The Jewish religious leaders’ interpretation of the Law as a specific list of outward acts to be followed or avoided had made the Law easier to fulfill. Because they kept this list, they considered themselves righteous before God. For the sake of His saving work, Jesus had to preach the Law in its full rigor so that it would “bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith” (Galatians 3:24). Christ expounded on the Law so that the people would know that no hope existed for them since no one could possibly keep it.

God’s standard of righteousness is such that no one can attain it. Jesus was revealing the absolute necessity of the new birth. Man must not only do right, he must be right in thought, word, and deed—an impossibility

for us whose hearts are “deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked” (Jeremiah 17:9). It is only when we come to Christ in repentance and faith that we are given a new heart, that we are made new creations in Him (2 Corinthians 5:17). The gospel of Christ reminds us of the promise in Ezekiel 36:25–26, which speaks of God sprinkling sinners with clean water, cleansing them, putting His Spirit within them, and giving them new hearts of flesh in place of their hearts of stone. The Apostle Paul confirms this when he teaches that it is the Spirit dwelling in us that brings forth His fruit which could not be produced by the Law (Galatians 5:16–25).

Pastor Tullian Tchividjian, grandson of Billy Graham, summarizes it well:

We naturally treat the Sermon on the Mount like we typically treat the rest of the Bible—like it’s a divine self-help manual, a blueprint for having your best life now. But actually the Sermon on the Mount is intended to show that the Christian life is a glorious impossibility.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus wants to set us free by showing us our need for a righteousness we can never attain on our own—an impossible righteousness that’s always out of our reach. The purpose of the Sermon on the Mount is to demolish all notions that we can reach the righteousness required by God—it’s about exterminating all attempts at self-sufficient moral endeavor.

So, in the deepest sense, the Sermon on the Mount is not a goal, but a wall we crash into so that we finally cry out “I can’t do it!”¹

1. <http://www.pastortullian.com/2012/07/01/the-sermon-on-the-mountain-for-those-who-have-crashed-and-burned/>

HISTORICAL/APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND

It has been rightly said that the Sermon on the Mount is the most famous sermon ever preached. And it is the longest recorded sermon ever preached by Jesus, the Son of God, the second Person of the Trinity. It is the most quoted portion of the New Testament, both by the early church fathers and in secular literature. People often refer to the Sermon on the Mount for its moral code. But, as with most secular takes on the Bible, snippets and sections are taken out of context and misapplied.

So what’s the proper use of the Sermon on the Mount? First of all, as stated above, it shows us that we are all sinners and fall far short of God’s righteous standard. It shows us our need for a Savior, and that Savior is Jesus Christ—the only one who ever completely fulfilled the Law of God and who offers His righteousness to us.

Second, the Sermon on the Mount gives the characteristics of the members of God’s kingdom—those who have submitted themselves to God’s rule and have been born again through Christ. We can examine ourselves, our actions, our motivations, and our desires according to the high standards of God’s righteousness. We will fall short, but we can press on toward the goal, leaning on Christ for strength and asking God to work these qualities in us through His Holy Spirit.

A third consideration would be the cultural impact of this sermon of Jesus. Sayings and expressions from the Sermon on the Mount have become part of our everyday language; quotes such as “do unto others,” “judge not lest you be judged,” “love your enemies,” “turn the other cheek,” “go the extra mile,” and “a wolf in sheep’s clothing.” And many have heard of the Beatitudes, the Golden Rule, and the Lord’s Prayer. By familiarizing ourselves with these common sayings, we can incorporate the Sermon on the Mount into our evangelism. When we hear people use one of these biblical phrases passed down from this sermon, we can stop them and ask if they know where that saying comes from. This can begin a conversation about what Jesus really taught about good deeds and righteousness and could lead to a candid gospel discussion of God’s perfect standard and our need for a Savior.

For more information on this topic, see the Online Resource Page.



BEFORE THE THRONE

Perfect, holy God, Savior, and Teacher, thank you for providing a way for me to be righteous. Jesus’s words in the Sermon on the Mount remind us of our own inability to be perfect. Thank you, Lord, that Jesus redeemed me, and I am righteous in Him. I pray that this lesson will challenge my students to change their attitudes to be more humble, kind, loving, and Christ-like, and to see their need for a Savior.

Review

Last week we looked at a phrase and concept that Jesus used repeatedly to point people back to the authority of Scripture—“Have you not read?” With this question Jesus rebuked the scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees and their faulty understanding of Scripture. They had constructed their own religious systems, replacing the commands of God with the commands of men. In their efforts to be holy, they had missed the true nature of God’s commands and created a false system. By promoting a false religious system, they had become false teachers even though they were the descendants of Moses and Abraham.

? Why is it important for us to follow the example of Jesus in this area? *We need to make sure that we are comparing the teachings that we hear and the traditions that we are following to Scripture so that we are not led astray by the ideas of men.*

If Jesus pointed others to Scripture as the standard of right thinking and right living, how could we do anything else? The Bible is the standard we most hold above all others.

Today we are going to continue looking at how Jesus pointed to God’s standard of righteousness as He taught what we know as the Sermon on the Mount.

Blessed are the peacemakers, jots and tittles, judge not, let your light shine, an eye for an eye, no one can serve two masters, take the log out of your eye, you can’t gather grapes from thorn bushes, ask and it will be given to you, do unto others as you want them to do to you—all of these are common phrases in our culture. While many people may not recognize them as coming from the Bible, each is at least a part of the truth communicated by Jesus in His longest recorded teaching. In fact, divorced from their context, these phrases are even used in ways that are contrary to Scripture. All of these phrases come from the Sermon on the Mount. While we surely do not have time to examine the entirety of the three chapters, we are going to draw out some key ideas today and understand the real purpose of the account.



► Write on the board, “Did Jesus change the standard of obedience to God?”



Studying God’s Word

READ THE WORD

The Sermon on the Mount begins with “The Beatitudes” and then moves to offer some analogies to the life of a godly person. Jesus then takes a turn in verse 17. Let’s read Matthew 5:17–30 together. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

Matthew 5:17–30

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? **What had Jesus come to do regarding the Law and Prophets?** *He had come to fulfill those things written, not to destroy them.*
- ? **How does verse 18 relate to verse 17?** *Jesus reiterates the enduring nature of the Law and Prophets, noting it will not pass away until all is fulfilled.*
- ? **What does the phrase “one jot or one tittle” refer to?** *These were minor marks in writing, the jot (yohd) being the smallest Hebrew letter and the tittle a flare on a letter like the leg on an R. Our phrase “not one iota” comes from this phrase, iota being the Greek letter “i” equivalent of a jot and meaning “the smallest part.” Jesus was affirming that all of the Law was to be fulfilled and nothing lost or destroyed.*
- ? **How many commandments do you have to break to be least in the kingdom of heaven?** *One.*
- ? **How many commands do you have to keep to be great in the kingdom of heaven?** *All of them.*
- ? **How righteous must one be to enter the kingdom according to verse 20?** *More righteous than the scribes and Pharisees.*
- ? **Why did Jesus point His hearers to these men as a standard?** *They would have been seen as the most zealous and righteous people of the day, so the crowd would have seen this as a very high bar to obtain.*
- ? **What comparison might we make today to make the same point?** *We might say you have to be better than Mother Teresa or a saint or monk. In reality, these people are outwardly righteous but not necessarily inwardly.*
- ? **What phrase is common to verses 21 and 27 (as well as 31, 33, 38, and 43)?** *You have heard that it was said: some reference to what the people had been taught.*
- ? **What two things had the listeners heard about murder?** *They had heard 1) you shall not murder and 2) whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.*
- ? **What passages did Jesus point to when He talked about not murdering?** *“You shall not murder” is a quote from Exodus 20:13 and Deuteronomy 5:17.*
- ? **What phrase did Jesus use to challenge the understanding of the command in verse 17?** *“But I say to you” is used here as well as in verses 28, 32, 34, 39, and 44.*
- ? **How did Jesus redirect their thinking about murder?** *He stated that being angry without a cause incurs the same judgment as those who murder.*
- ? **What two names did Jesus use as an example of contemptible speech?** *He said that calling someone “raca” or “fool” is an offense worthy of judgment. Raca is likely an Aramaic term that means “empty headed” and fool is moros in Greek, the root of our word moron.*

Jesus then went on to give two more examples of reconciling with those you have offended in verses 23–26 before moving on to another example. Let’s move on to verse 27.

➤ This phrase stands in contrast to “have you not read” since His listeners may not have had direct access to read the Scripture but had heard teaching from the Scripture.

Hyperbole:
Using exaggerated language to make a point of emphasis.

- ? **What command did Jesus point His hearers to?** *The command to not commit adultery from Exodus 20:14 and Deuteronomy 5:18.*
- ? **How did Jesus reorient their thinking about adultery?** *He directed their thinking away from the act of adultery to just having a lustful thought about a woman.*
- ? **Does this command only apply to men since Jesus talked about looking at a woman with lust?** *He used men as an example, but the same thoughts would be sinful for a woman.*
- ? **How did Jesus drive the importance of the point home to His listeners?** *He told them to pluck out their eye or cut off their hand if it causes them to sin.*
- ? **What connection did Jesus make to punishment in hell?** *He told them it is better to lose a part of your body and enter heaven than to be cast into hell for continuing in sin.*
- ? **Did Jesus mean for His hearers to actually cut off body parts to avoid sinning?** *No. Jesus was using hyperbole to emphasize His point. Even if you could cut off your hand to prevent you from stealing, you could still have covetous thoughts in your heart, which are just as sinful as actually stealing. This is an example of reading the Bible literally, interpreting the words as Jesus meant them to be understood by His hearers.*

Discover the Truth

You have to be holier than the holiest people you know to enter heaven. But it's not just your outward actions; the thoughts you have are also being examined by God. Think about it for a minute—if you call someone a moron or take a second lustful glance at that beautiful man or woman, you have committed murder or adultery in your heart. An abusive insult carries the same level of moral responsibility as actually murdering someone! Just thinking sexual thoughts demands the same punishment from God as actually committing the act! Yelling at that driver who cut you off earns you the same condemnation as ramming them with your car and running them off a cliff. Wow!

- ? **If you had been sitting there listening to just this small portion of the sermon, how would you have responded? What would you have been thinking about getting to heaven?** *Discuss various answers focusing on the fact that salvation seems unattainable. It seems that Jesus was setting an impossible standard before His hearers.*

And that is the point—you can't earn heaven by your good actions because even if your actions are pure, your thoughts aren't. The sinful nature of humans brings condemnation to all because all have sinned. You have sinned against God in more ways than you can count and in more ways than you have been taught or have read. You are a sinful creature who is deserving of God's judgment.

- ? **What attribute of God is demonstrated in pointing out the exceeding sinfulness of sin in humans?** *Holy—God hates all sin in thought, word, or deed. Refer to Attributes of God Poster.*
- ? **Without holiness, no one will see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14). When you hear of this impossible standard of holiness and the knowledge of God’s judgment, what should this make you long for?** *The proclamation of the Law and how far short we fall of meeting the standard of perfect righteousness should bring us to our knees begging God for a remedy to our condition. But God had promised to send a Savior, one who would take away the sins of the people. We should look to that Savior, calling out to God for His mercy in light of our sin.*

The bad news is that we have all sinned against God. God is holy and must judge all sin. But the good news is that God is merciful and has sent His Son to be the Savior of those who repent of their sin and turn to Jesus in faith, trusting that He has paid the penalty for sin on the Cross. Knowing God’s holiness and our sinfulness, we should cry out for His mercy because He is faithful to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness in Jesus Christ (1 John 1:9).





Heart of the Matter

MATERIALS

- Student Guides
- Pencils

INSTRUCTIONS

As we have just examined a few of the statements from Jesus, it seems that He was changing the commands of God by replacing them with new commands. Some commentators have suggested that, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus raised the bar on obedience above the Law of Moses as He gave the six “but I say to you” commands. Your task is to examine this claim and to come up with an explanation of what Jesus was doing as He directed His listeners to His own comments and not what they had heard.

You will find the Heart of the Matter activity in your Student Guide. Work in groups to think about the passages presented there, and then we’ll discuss your conclusions in a few minutes. *Have the students work on the activity in small groups and assist them as they need help.*

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

Let’s look at the conclusions you came to regarding what Jesus was teaching in this section of His sermon.

- ? What had the Jews heard about murder (5:21)? *It would bring judgment.*
- ? What did Jesus say would bring the same judgment (5:22)? *Hatred and harsh words toward another.*
- ? What does Leviticus 19:17–18 teach? *God commands men not to hate others, but to love them as themselves.*
- ? Does Leviticus 19:17–18 align with what the Jews had heard or with what Jesus said? *It aligns with Jesus’s statement, not what the Jews had heard.*
- ? What had the Jews heard about the act of committing adultery (5:27)? *It would bring judgment.*
- ? What did Jesus say would bring the same judgment (5:28)? *To look at a woman with lustful thoughts in your heart is the same as actually committing adultery with her.*
- ? What does Exodus 20:17 teach about covetous thoughts regarding another man’s wife? *It is morally wrong to covet another man’s wife, desiring her to be your own wife (at least part of which would involve the sexual aspect of marriage).*
- ? What does Job 31:1–4, 31:9–12 help us understand about Job’s view of lusting after a woman? *Job clearly understood that to lust after a woman would bring God’s judgment, so he worked against such desires.*
- ? Do Exodus 20:17 and Job 31:1–12 align with what the Jews had heard or with what

Jesus said? *Both align with Jesus's statement, not what the Jews had heard.*

? **Based on these two points, do you agree or disagree with the statement that Jesus raised the bar on the standard of obedience above the Old Testament Law for those who heard (and now read) His sermon?** *It seems clear that God's intent in the commands of the Old Testament was not just concerned with outward actions like murder or adultery, but with the intents of the heart. What the Jews had heard from the teachers they were listening to had been skewed to focus on outward actions rather than matters of the heart.*

? **If you disagree that He was raising the bar, how would you describe what Jesus was doing by offering the correctives He did?** *Rather than raising the bar and creating a higher standard, Jesus was helping the Jews to see the original intent of the Law that had been distorted by things they had heard. He was refocusing their attention on the original intent that had been skewed by the traditions of various teachers they had heard from.*

? **What is the relationship between hatred and murder? Between lust and adultery?** *Both are answered as the thoughts and intents of the heart turn into actions. Jesus made this clear as He connected the moral consequences of judgment for both the thoughts in our hearts and the actions that flow from them. Lust is adultery in the heart. Anger is murder in the heart.*

Jesus was not altering the original meaning of the commands from the Law

He pointed to; rather, He was helping the people understand the true intent of those aspects of the Law. He wasn't negating the Law, but pointing to its true intent and fulfillment. No one could ever obey the Law. If they could have met the requirements of perfection, Jesus would not have needed to come as the Savior. God never desired only outward obedience but that our hearts would be directed to loving and obeying Him.

This was not a concept Jesus introduced but one that we see throughout the Old Testament. It was the case with the sacrifices offered by Cain and Able. It was Job's desire as He sought to obey God. It was Joshua's appeal to the Israelites as they prepared to cross into the Promised Land: "Put away the foreign gods which are among you, and incline your heart to the Lord God of Israel" (Joshua 24:23). Obedience to God is first a matter of the heart before it can ever be an action of our hands or feet. This is why we need to look to Christ to renew our hearts and let them be conformed to His perfect character more and more every day.



READ THE WORD

Let's look at one more section of the sermon to drive this point home. Turn to Matthew 5:43–48. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

Matthew 5:43–48

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? **What command of men did Jesus reject in this passage?** *He told them to reject hatred for enemies.*
- ? **What did Jesus tell the Jews to do instead of hating their enemies?** *He told them to love their enemies, bless them, do good to them, and pray for them.*
- ? **What would result from these actions?** *They would be sons of their Father in heaven.*
- ? **To whom did Jesus compare those who only love their friends?** *He compared them to tax collectors who do the same.*
- ? **What types of blessings does God give to all men, whether they're His children or not?** *He gives them rain and sunshine just as He does for everyone.*
- ? **What standard did Jesus call His hearers to in verse 48?** *He called them to be perfect.*
- ? **Who would they be imitating in their perfection?** *Their Father in heaven.*
- ? **Is this a standard these people can meet?** *No, it is impossible to be perfect as God is perfect.*
- ? **Was this a new standard given by Jesus?** *No, this is a restatement of commands given to Abraham (Genesis 17:1) and to the Israelites (Leviticus 11:44, 19:2; Deuteronomy 18:13). Perfection has always been the standard of holiness.*
- ? **What does James 2:8–11 tell us about the requirements of God's Law?** *Even if we keep some parts of the Law, breaking one point makes us just as guilty as if we had broken it all.*
- ? **How does this verse reinforce the call to perfection as an impossible standard to achieve on our own?** *It makes it clear that no one will be able to keep all of the Law perfectly since breaking one command brings judgment.*
- ? **For anyone listening to Jesus, what hope was there to enter the kingdom of God?** *There was no hope; their only hope (and ours) is to look to God for mercy found in the Savior who was standing before them.*

► Remind students that cross references in the margins of their Bibles can identify Old Testament concepts and passages in the New Testament.

James 2:8–11

Discover the Truth

Jesus seems to have been hounding the issue of full and total obedience of heart and mind, calling His hearers to be perfect just as God is perfect. But He knew that they could not achieve this standard—indeed, they had already failed to meet that standard. But He did this to point them to their insufficiency and sinfulness. He constantly pointed out the hypocrisy of those who claim to be righteous based on their own actions. He knew that He would obey for them and offer His life as a sacrifice for the sins that they had committed. His call to His hearers was to enter by the narrow gate to find eternal life, calling Him Lord, and doing those things He had called them to do. But all of this could only be done in God's power.

This power was promised by God to Jeremiah and Ezekiel in the institution of the New Covenant—God would take the heart of stone that is hardened and sinful, and He would replace it with a heart of flesh (see Jeremiah 31:31–33; Ezekiel 36:25–27; Hebrews 9:7–13). As we look to Christ to obey in our place, we are empowered to live a life of holiness in Christ. We have and will break God’s Law, but we are seen as holy and perfect because Jesus stands in our place. There is no hope for those who break the Law apart from the one who obeyed in their place. The one who calls us to the standard of perfection is merciful and gracious to us. He has obeyed for us.



Applying God’s Word

WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

We have all sinned in thought, in word, and in deed. Beyond that, we have failed to do the things that we know we should do. Jesus pointed His hearers to the standard of perfection and absolute obedience—not just outwardly, but also from the heart. But if our hearts are desperately wicked (Jeremiah 17:9) and as hard as stone (Ezekiel 36:26), how can we obey God perfectly? We can’t, and that is the point. We need to have a heart transplant that makes us alive to the things of God, willing and able to obey Him. In Christ, we are new creations with new desires having been reconciled to God. And when we still fail, we are forgiven in Christ. We can strive to obey knowing that Jesus has already obeyed for us.

As we turn to Jesus as Savior, our sins are washed away, and His righteousness is given to us. As Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:17, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” Let these truths invigorate us to look to Christ, trusting in His sacrifice and righteousness on our behalf and knowing that God sees His perfect obedience when He looks at us.

GOD’S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

? At the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount, it says that the people who heard Him “were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.” How did Jesus establish Himself as authoritative? *Rather than relying on and quoting from the teachers who had come before Him, Jesus quoted from Scripture and offered direct commands to His hearers. In other parts of the Sermon on the Mount that we did not read, Jesus identified Himself very closely with the Father, even telling the people that He was the Lord who would judge those seeking entry into heaven in the final judgment (Matthew 7:21–23).*

- ? **How do we offer the same type of authoritative challenges as Jesus did to those we see disobeying God, whether believers or unbelievers?** *In either case, we must point them to the Bible as the authority on holy living before God, not our own standards and convictions. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to convict them of that sin. Our role is to proclaim that truth with grace and love.*
- ? **How do you respond in your heart to the impossible standard of perfect obedience? Do you find this standard discouraging or encouraging in light of the gospel?** *Discuss various answers, encouraging the students to remember that in us there is no good, but only that which is done in Christ is good (Romans 7). Knowing that God loves us and has forgiven us in Christ even though there is nothing loveable in us should give us great joy and cause us to be thankful for all God has done for us. If there are those in your class who are unsure of their position before God, encourage them to examine themselves and look to Christ for forgiveness.*
- ? **How can we use this same principle of perfect obedience to the Law as God’s standard as we seek to share the gospel with unbelievers?** *The use of the Law to show people their sin so that they can understand their need for a Savior is the pattern of the New Testament. We must share the bad news of sin and judgment before we can share the good news of salvation in Christ. This mirrors the way Jesus used the Law to point out people’s sin.*
- ? **Some skeptics use this passage of Scripture to suggest that Jesus was actually changing the rules that God had set forth in the Old Testament. They conclude that Jesus was working against God, so the Bible presents a contradiction and therefore cannot be the Word of God. How could you respond to a skeptic who presents this challenge to the integrity of Scripture?** *We should never accept conclusions of skeptics regarding contradictions, but instead use the Bible to point them to the truth. Using the Old Testament cross-references discussed in the lesson, we can show the skeptic that what Jesus was saying was what had been revealed earlier. He was correcting erroneous teaching, not God’s standard of righteousness. We can use this as an opportunity to call them to examine themselves in the light of God’s standard of holiness and point them to the Savior, calling them to repent and put their trust in Him.*
- ? **How do you intend to live differently in light of what you have heard from the Word of God today?** *Discuss various answers, reminding the students that we have the power in Christ by the Holy Spirit to say no to sin, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, as we look forward to Christ’s return (Titus 2:11–14). And when we do sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous (1 John 2:1–2).*



MEMORY VERSE

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”



GROUP PRAYER TIME

- Thank God for sending His Son to obey for us.
- Praise God for His holiness, mercy, and grace.
- Ask God to give each person conviction of sin in their own lives, so that we can repent of it and turn to Christ for forgiveness.