

The Fulfilment of the Law (Matt. 5:17-20)

A Small Group Outline



1. Praise (Purpose: To worship God)

- What are you thankful for this week? (let the group's secretary write these down in an A4 hardcover or some notebook)
- Song Service
 - Sing a few songs of praise to God

2. Pray (Purpose: To carry each others' burdens and to seek the Lord)

- What challenges did you have this week? (write these down in an A4 hardcover or some notebook)
- Go into a season of prayer

3. Review (Purpose: To learn accountability)

- Tell us how it went with what you promised to do in last week's meeting? (e.g. Who did your share your faith with this past week? Who did you minister to? How did actioning your I WILL STATEMENT go?)
- Where people have failed to fulfil what they said they would, do not be harsh with them but gently encourage them to try again in the coming week. Give them more support by phoning or joining them in the week.

4. Give (Purpose: To be good stewards of our monies)

- This is the time to return tithes and offerings. If done electronically, kindly ensure that you get the bank account details of your local church from your treasurer. Don't forget to complete an envelope and to send the breakdown to him/her.

5. Discover (Purpose: To learn to listen to God, and be obedient to His Word)

• Notes for the facilitator

- Read *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessings (MB)*, pp. 45-55
- The 'Law' was the first five books of Moses (Genesis – Deuteronomy). The Prophets were the rest of the ancient Scripture that taught, interpreted and applied the law to ancient Israel. Jesus is here saying that all of God's will as found in the Hebrew Scriptures, should still be kept.
- Jesus came to fulfil the Law and the Prophets, i.e. give it fuller meaning through His life and teachings.
- The 'law' in Matt. 5:17, by extension, is a reference also to the Ten Commandments, which is one of the clearest revelations of God's will. So while Jesus' teachings were fully in harmony with Scripture, they were out of harmony with that of the scribes and Pharisees (vs. 20)
- "By His own obedience to the law, Christ testified to its immutable character and proved that **through His grace** it could be perfectly obeyed by every son and daughter of Adam." (MB 49)
- In vs. 17 Jesus responds to the thinking of the scribes and Pharisees that He was doing away with the law. He however was trying to show them the spirituality of the law, to help them understand that mere external compliance to the law in order to earn salvation and God's favour, was not what the Father was looking for. Instead, God was eager to write His laws in their hearts (Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 8:10). He wanted them to understand that the law could only be kept through a faith relationship with Him, empowered by His Spirit (Eze. 36:27). Such law keeping is a delight (Ps. 40:8; 1 Jhn. 5:3).
- A **jot** is a reference to the smallest Greek letter (the *iota*), while a **tittle** to the smallest projection on a Hebrew letter (like the bottom of a *j*). Here Jesus is saying that as long "as heaven and earth continue[s], the holy principles of His law will remain" (MB 50)

- To be called least in the kingdom is a way of saying that there will be no place in the kingdom for such a person.
- When we move away from God's expressed will, even in the slightest, it is a sign that there is still love for sin, and rebellion against God's government. Sins don't have to be big to prove rebelliousness. Look what happened when Eve disobeyed God in a 'small matter' as picking a fruit.
- "We cannot disregard one word, however trifling it may seem to us, and be safe. There is not a commandment of the law that is not for the good and happiness of man, both in this life and in the life to come. In obedience to God's law, man is surrounded as with a hedge and kept from the evil. He who breaks down this divinely erected barrier at one point has destroyed its power to protect him; for he has opened a way by which the enemy can enter to waste and ruin." (MB 52)
- Righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees: This righteousness was self-produced, encouraged pride, and would never be adequate to meet the law's requirements. Christians instead need Christ's perfect righteousness, for this is what the law requires. This righteousness is received as a gift when Christ is invited into the life. His righteousness works to transform people into His image. .
- *Read Matt. 5:17-20. Preferably let one person read it. Let everyone then put down their Bibles and get the group to reconstruct the passage in their own words. This teaches the group to be careful in quotation Scripture correctly and to use it as the basis of their discussions.*
- **Discussion Questions** (use only a few). *The notes in italics after some of the questions below are for the facilitator, and not to be read out to the group.*
 - What do you understand by the phrase 'Law and the Prophets'?
 - In which ways did Jesus come to fulfil them?
 - Why did God give us His laws?
 - How do you understand the meaning of, 'breaking the least of these commandments'?
 - What happens if a person lives a good life but only breaks a minor commandment of God?
 - Compare a healthy relationship to the law, to an unhealthy one?
 - Elaborate on the 2 things that result in one being called 'least in the kingdom of heaven'?
 - What do you understand by being called 'great in the kingdom of heaven'?
 - Why do you think Jesus spoke of the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees?
 - Why do you think Jesus had some of His most scathing rebukes for the scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees (church leaders), and not for the publicans and sinners (the bad guys)?
- **Application Questions** (select a few depending on your time. One has to be the I WILL STATEMENT)
 - How do you generally relate to law in your life: traffic laws, municipal regulations, church policies, instructions from teachers, etc.? Do you **generally** have a willingness to listen and obey, or tend to question and rebel?
 - Share a positive story of how obedience to a law has protected, guided or empowered you (from an accident, a wrong decision, etc.), OR a negative story of how rejecting a law has impacted your life (when you disobeyed the counsel of God, a teacher, parent, etc.)?
 - What type of law **enforcer** are you? Do you tend to be more lenient and compassionate, or more inflexible and strict?
 - I WILL STATEMENT: Formulate an I will statement in response to what you have discovered in the Word. Let the group's secretary also record these in an A4 notebook. Ensure that everyone gets a chance to give their I WILL STATEMENT. You have to be specific. E.g. "I will pray for God's guidance to lead me into deeper obedience, so that I don't merely obey those commands that are easy convenient or suitable to me."

6. Share (Purpose: To be witnesses of our faith)

- Do you have anyone you could share today's lesson with this week? *Be specific.*

7. Closing prayer