

Deeper Meaning of the Law: Murder (Matt. 5:21-26)

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. 55-59
- This teaching of loving one's enemy and not avenging was given in the Old Testament (see Lev. 19:17, 18) but obscured through hardness of heart and love of sin (MB 55)
- Murder is not merely an outward behaviour, but an inner state of the heart that leads to the physical action. In this passage, Christ condemns the *thought* that starts the act, the actual *act*, and *everything in between*.
- If someone cannot control their temper, they will surely lack self-control in other areas of their lives
- Raca: God does not give us the right to speak to another person in a scornful, disrespectful or insulting way, even though they are at fault
- In modern language *raca* could be translated, idiot, worthless person, simpleton, empty head (see *George Knight, Walking with Jesus on the Mount of Blessing, p. 132*)
- "God will hold us accountable for even a word spoken in contempt of one soul for whom Christ laid down His life" (MB 57)
- In the Old Testament *fool* is used for someone who is an apostate, who has abandoned himself to wickedness. So anyone who condemns another as an apostate or despiser of God shows that he himself is worthy of the same condemnation (see MB 57)
- A gossip or backbiter is a 'murderer of reputations' (*Knight, p. 132*)
- There are two words for anger in Greek: *Thumos* for anger that flares up quickly and then dies down quickly. *Orge* is anger that is long lived, an anger that a person cherishes, refuses to let die and that seeks revenge. It is *orge* that Jesus uses in vs. 22 (*Ibid, p. 129*)
- Eph. 4:26 shows that not all anger is wrong (cf. John 2:12-17) . Holy indignation is when, among other things, we are angry toward sin, angry because of injustices, or when God's Name is dishonoured. Examples of such anger are: when defenceless

children get raped, when millions are killed because of political agendas, when drug addicts prey on young innocent children, when people starve to death because of hunger while others waste food, when unconverted people say or do hurtful things that cause new converts to leave the church, etc.

- Myths about anger:
 - Anger is caused by **external circumstances** such as uncooperative people, slow traffic, machines that don't work correctly, etc.
 - Anger is beyond a person's control, one cannot help for it
 - Anger is healthy since it is a good way of 'blowing off steam' and 'venting'
- Anger surfaces in many ways: gossip, mocking, sarcasm, impatience, silence, withdrawal, etc. One needs to learn to identify the signs of anger in one's own life.
- Anger, insults, slander and murder all do the same thing. They kill the life of love and fellowship in the body of Christ.
- At the heart of anger is a burning passion and demand to have things "my way"
- There are times when a person may need some professional help with anger management
- A spirit of retaliation is harmful to Christians: When enemies of Christ attack, don't say anything to fight back, or to sharply criticize. Leave the work of judging and condemning to God (see MB 57-58)
- "If the love of Christ dwells in us, we shall not only cherish no hatred toward our fellows, but we shall seek in every way to manifest love toward them" (MB 58)
- "If we have in any manner defrauded or injured our brother, we should make restitution. If we have unwittingly borne false witness, if we have misstated his words, if we have injured his influence in any way, we should go to the ones with whom we have conversed about him, and take back all our injurious misstatements" (MB 59)
- Based on vs. 25-26, it may seem strange for 2 enemies to walk to the courtroom together today, but it was not so in a rural Palestinian village
- A lesson from these final verses is: Don't let anger fester. The longer we take to resolve bitterness and conflict, even if we are not at fault, the worse things get.
- *Read Matt. 5:21-26. 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.*
 - Why do you think Jesus touched on the emotions behind violent actions, and not just the actions themselves?
 - In what ways is an uncontrolled temper harmful?
 - What attitudes and emotions tend to lead to name calling?
 - Are there times when anger is acceptable? If so, under what circumstances (*Hint: see Eph. 4:26*)?
 - How do problems in our relationships with others affect our relationship with God?
 - What do you think is the modern equivalent of "offering your gifts at the altar" (vs. 23)?
 - What causes us to retaliate when people hurt us?
 - What are practical steps to love an enemy, especially one who has **wronged you**?
 - Why is it necessary to get things right with people before we come to worship God?
 - What do you think the problem would be if a person continues to worship God while having unresolved issues with another person?
 - Why is it important to settle matters quickly?

- **Application Questions** (*select a few depending on your time. One has to be the I WILL STATEMENT*)
 - When you're angry, do you tend to verbally attack and dump your emotions on others, or do you tend to go quiet and emotionally withdraw from others? What might be a more redemptive and healthy way to deal with your anger? (*ask one question at a time*)
 - Do you generally find that you get angry about the same things that make God angry?
 - In which area of your life are you most prone to struggle with anger? What are some things you can do to begin to transform that area of your life? (*ask one question at a time*)
 - Is there relational conflict that you need to resolve this week? (*this will take open discussion within a confidential environment*)
 - 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 endeavour to not only be kind to a colleague who has spread some nasty rumours about me, but also to buy him a tie for his upcoming birthday. I will earnestly fast and pray the day before I meet him for divine strength to do this seemingly impossible human task."

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

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