

Group discussion *Each number below includes questions that relate to the scripture. I offer a few answers, but your perspective may be better. The point is to discuss, not to get 100% agreement. Rule of thumb: the fewer questions you ask, the better. Save time for “the big question.”*

Read Matthew 5:33-48 aloud.

1. Jesus gives three illustrations of kingdom righteousness in our reading (see Bible notes). What is the first of these three (33-37)?

Why would someone feel the need to ever swear an oath at all (then or now)?

How could swearing oaths and making promises get out of hand?
Hint: Read Matthew 23 to see how things got out of control in Jesus’ world.

What ends up happening to one’s neighbor when this out-of-control kind of swearing/promising keeps going and going? In other words, how do they end up being treated?

Have you ever been on the receiving end of being sworn to and ultimately realizing you had been manipulated or lied to? How did it feel?

2. In light of this discussion, what then do you think Jesus is getting at when he says, “Do not swear at all?” (See Bible Notes)

In other words, what kind of person is Jesus describing?

Have you ever known anyone like this—filled with integrity, honesty, and plain speech? Who were they and what effect did they have on others?

What effect would disciples of Jesus today have on others if they spoke this way (aka were these kinds of people)?

3. What is the next contrast of teaching Jesus gives (38-42)?

In what way was the old teaching an inherently good teaching?
Hint: It prevents from retaliation from getting out of hand.

How can “eye for an eye” get out of hand?

Hint: Too often the retaliation is not equal, but of greater impact.

Have you ever seen retaliation get out of hand between two people (or groups of people)? What happened? What did you learn?

4. What is the new teaching that Jesus offers (39-42)?

Of the four listed which of those strikes you as most challenging for you personally? Why?

What might a person do (or think differently) in order to become the kind of person Jesus describes here?

What might you do practically to embrace this new teaching of Jesus?

5. What is the final contrast of Jesus (43-48)?

Who would you consider to be an enemy?

Why is it hard to love that person (or group of people)?

What would it look like for you to love that person?

What would the prayer sound like if you offered it on behalf of that person?

6. What rationale(s) does Jesus give for this final teaching?

What do we learn about God from Jesus’ reasoning?

What do we learn about what it means to follow Jesus?

† **The million-dollar question** *If you ask only one question, let this be it. Allow at least 20 minutes. Go around the circle and give each person an opportunity to answer. It’s okay if they pass, but at least they get a chance to respond.*

Of the three teachings here which most convicts you as a place you need to change? Pray for one another to make changes in this area.

Resources

Bible notes

As Jesus explains this new kind of internal righteousness (5:17-20) he “illustrates” what this kind of life looks like in the world. Each of his six examples starts with “you have heard that it was said.” This context must be kept in mind as you read these final three examples (5:33-48). Jesus is not giving a new law to his disciples, but he is describing a new way of life. These illustrations are just that—illustrations, not a new checklist for disciples. Jesus wants us to be transformed from the inside out—these kinds of actions he describes will be produced from a changed heart. For example, someone could give their cloak away and still hate the neighbor to whom they gave it. Keep this in mind as you discuss.

Kid-friendly activity. *An activity designed to help kids and adults grow in faith together. Do this first, then dismiss the kids so the adults can talk.*

“Walking, Speaking, and Loving” Activity

Prep: Make a “prayer path” (inside or outside) where you can guide the kids. Have areas where they can stop and pray. At each location have a Scripture or a topic (e.g., “enemies”) for them to pray over as they walk from spot to spot.

Deliver: Gather the kids together and discuss: describe a time when you were angry or upset. What happened? How did you respond?

Read Matthew 5:38-48.

Ask: What does Jesus tell us about how we should respond when we get angry or upset? Why do you think Jesus wants us to respond in these kinds of ways?

Delivery: One of the most challenging, but helpful ways to respond when we are angry or upset with another person is to pray for them (and even ourselves). Therefore, we are going to put this into practice now so that next time we get upset we will know how to respond.

Activity: Guide the kids through the prayer path together as a group, individually, or in pairs.

Delivery: Gather them all together and ask them what was most memorable about their time of walking and praying. Challenge them to keep praying about those things this week.



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LIFE Group Guide

Matthew 5:33-48 – The Heart of Speaking and Loving

By Wilson McCoy (wilson.mccoy@gmail.com)

The theme: **In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus pushes his disciples from Pharisaical righteousness dealing strictly with surface actions to deeper righteousness that transforms the heart and eventually their lives. These final three examples challenge how disciples to speak and love from the heart.**

This week Kevin continued his “Praying for Reign” series by discussing how disciples respond to those around them. Followers of Jesus are the kinds of people who go the extra mile in acts of generosity, vulnerability, and love. Such a life affects all those around us—be it a friend or an enemy—and helps disciples to truly become salt and light in their world.

Leadership tip: This week’s guide covers three individual, but interrelated texts. They are related in that they all involve our posture to our neighbors. However, they differ in their specific emphasis—the first concerns speech, the second retaliation, and the third focuses on enemy love. Each group will likely have one of these three grab the attention of the group most. Be attuned to which most strikes your group (or just ask) and make sure you spend plenty of time on that specific topic/text. Pray that God would guide you.

Relate *Use a few to introduce the theme, check everyone’s spiritual pulse, and “break the ice.” No right or wrong answers – maybe goofy but not wrong! Look for opportunities to affirm and encourage through these questions.*

- ❖ Have you ever seen one of the following: a rainbow, pot of gold, or a leprechaun? Tell the story (especially if it’s all three!).
- ❖ If you did meet a leprechaun what do you think it would say? What do you think you would say to him (or her)?
- ❖ Have you been on Spring Break this week? What have you done?
- ❖ Where would you go on vacation if you had an unlimited budget?