

**Day 22 – Matt 5:27-30**

***“You have heard it said to those of old...”*** Jesus starts off the same way as He did in His introduction concerning the law from verse 21. Here He quotes the seventh commandment, Exodus 20:14 & Deut. 5:18, *“You shall not commit adultery.”* He then repeats the previous phrase to lead into His new instruction ***“...but I say to you...”*** Jesus strikes at the core of the matter and says, *“...that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”* Just as in His first comparison of the old law--which He came to fulfill--Jesus is taking the moral standard to a whole new level; He deals directly with the root issue of where sin is conceived (read Jms. 1:14-15 then read Gen.6:5, Jer. 17:9-10, Rom. 1:20-25).

**Reflection:** We are reminded of the words of King Solomon; (read Prov. 4:20-27) we need to be diligent about keeping the condition of our hearts pure before the Lord. The word diligent has the following meaning: *quietly and steadily persevering especially in detail or exactness; characterized by care and perseverance in carrying out tasks.* As we carry out the task of living in this world day after day we must be mindful of our thoughts, for it is easiest to sin where none will know. But the Father knows, and we need--as Paul said in Rom. 12:2--to be renewing our minds daily so that we will know the perfect will of our Heavenly Father.

**Daily Journal**

Turn to 1 Cor. 2: 9-16 and spend time reading and meditating on this passage of scripture. Too many believers focus on the fact that we are just sinners saved by Gods’ grace, yet Jesus Himself said we are the salt and light of the earth. In view of what these verses say about us, mainly the last part of verse 16, how will you respond to them? Write down your thoughts:

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## Day 23 – Matt 5:33-37

Reiteration is a powerful tool, and Jesus uses it once again to its full effect to drive His point home. For He says, ***“Again you have heard it said to those of old...”*** He refers to yet another one of the ten commandments, this time the third commandment--read Lev. 19:12 first then compare it to Exodus 20:7 & Deut. 5:11. Jesus goes on to say ***“But I say to you...”*** in His explanation He is once again calling us to live a higher standard in regards to our integrity. The Pharisees actually concocted elaborate rules regarding vows. They established their own set of standards as to what was or was not a binding agreement, thus enabling themselves to be released from certain vows which they made. But Jesus levels the playing field and raises the moral standards regardless of who you are. He says in verse 37, ***“ But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’ For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.”*** The Pharisees were masters at distorting the truth for self-gain, and Jesus purposely throws this sharp comment directly into the face of those Pharisees that had gathered with the crowd to hear what He was saying to His disciples.

**Reflection:** We need to be men and women of our word, we need to rise above the standards of the world and walk in integrity. In a society of dishonesty, greed, and self promotion, we need to shine as lights for God and rise above the hypocrisy that we see all around us. If we continuously follow and apply the fundamental principles that Jesus taught us in the Beatitudes (go back and read over Matt. 5:3-12) by His grace we will be different.

### Daily Journal

Think about that last statement: by His grace we will be different. God's grace is not His cover up for our sins nor is it His forgiveness of sins (see Lk. 2:40 & Jn. 1:14-17). If grace was for the forgiveness of sin then why would Jesus ever need it, for He never sinned (2 Cor. 5:21 & Heb. 4:14-15). True biblical grace is what empowers us **not to sin**, look at some of these verses in context and write down your thoughts: Rom. 1:5, 5:2, 6:14, 12:3, 15:15. 1 Cor. 1:3-9, 3:10, 15:10. 2 Cor. 1:12, 4:15, 6:1, 8:1-9, 9:14, 12:9. Gal. 2:6-9, 2:21, 5:4. Eph. 1:6, 2-10, 3:8, 4:29. Col. 1:6. 2 Thess. 1:12. 1 Tim. 1:14. 2 Tim. 1:9, 2:1. Titus 2:11. Heb. 2:9, 4:16, 10:29, 12:15 & 28, 13:9. Jms. 4:6. 1 Pt. 1:13, 4:10, 5:5 & 10-12. 2 Pt. 1:2, 3:18 & Jude 4. Grace is empowerment.

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**Day 24 – Matt 5:38-42**

This time Jesus quotes from the O.T. Law, but not directly from one of the ten commandments. The bible refers to them as the ordinances, judgments, statues and/or the law of God (read Ex. 21:1, Lev. 25:18, Num. 27:11). The next statement said by Jesus: ***“You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’”*** is sometimes referred to as the law of retaliation. It was not intended to encourage personal revenge but to protect the offender from a judgment or punishment more severe than the offense warranted. It is important to note that Jesus once again raises the standard from the original intent of the law. Read His first response: *“But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also”*. This statement had a hidden insinuation directed at the Pharisees who knew the O.T. Law and prophets better than anyone, and had prophetic meaning to what was coming. Jesus' reply was taken from the words of the prophet Isaiah (read Is. 50:4-6) and were fulfilled in Matt. 27:67-68. In verse 40-42 Jesus once again sets the bar higher by telling His listeners that if someone wants to sue you, use you, or borrow from you, to then give them more than they are asking for. Each of these three verses references to the laws God set forth apart from the ten commandments that were intended for His chosen people Israel. The intent that Jesus has for responding with such a stark contrast is to emphasis good not evil, grace not vengeance, love not hatred, and to make the listener more self-aware of the condition of their own heart.

**Reflection:** Many times we as believers say things to people, especially those closest to us, that can be hurtful and demeaning. We can sometimes be quick to judge others for their action yet neglect our own faults and short comings; we need to be reminded of the condition of our hearts.

**Daily Journal**

Read the following passage, Luke 2:30-35, then write down your own thoughts in regards to what Jesus already knows about your heart:

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## Day 25 – Matt 5:43-48

Here we read Jesus' final words concerning the law and His call to a higher moral standard to all who believe in Him and follow His teachings. As before, He starts His address with the same phrase, ***“You have heard that it was said,”*** but this time only the first part of His statement can be found anywhere in God's word, *“You shall love your neighbour...”* (read Lev. 19:18). This was an accepted part of the Jewish ethics at that time.

**Question:** *So from where and how did the Pharisees derive the second part of the Lord's address, “and hate your enemy”?* It wasn't in the law the Lord God set forth for them to follow, or was it?

**Response:** Let's first address *“where”* the Pharisees may have devised such a mindset. To do that we need to simply look back at the last ***“You have heard that it was said,”*** which was *“An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth”*. The Pharisees applied God's principle of sowing and reaping established back in the book of Genesis (read Genesis 8:22) to this particular law. The *how* is what Jesus has been pointing to throughout this whole portion of teaching of the law: It boiled down to the condition of their hearts. The Pharisees memorized the entire law (and many memorized the books of the prophets as well) yet they didn't have a heart after God. Consider these verses; read Matt. 5:31-32 then read Matt. 19:1-9. The Pharisees didn't know the heart of God, they were legalistic and their hearts were hardened. They twisted the law in God's word to suit themselves and tailored their lifestyle to gain recognition from man, not God. They weren't able to rightly divide the word of truth

## Daily Journal

Remember Moses, he was a man seeking after the face of God, yet the children of Israel only sought Him for His miraculous provision. Their hearts were hardened and God called them a stiff necked people. Ps. 103:7 says, ***“He revealed his character to Moses and his deeds to the people of Israel”*** (NLT). Have you allowed legalism into your heart? Ask the Lord to speak to you.

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**Day 27– Matt. 6:5-7**

A wise man once said, *“If there is no appointed time for prayer, soon there will be no time at all for prayer”* (Quoted from *The Complete Book of Zingers*, page 243, by Croft M Pentz). Jesus repeats these words, *“...when you pray”*, in all three of these verses to emphasis His point: we need to be a people of prayer just like our Lord. In verse 5 He deals with where we need to pray, in a private place, so we can learn to hear the Father's voice in the secret place of our hearts. Jesus often withdrew to commune with His Father, and it was in those times that He learned the will of the One who sent Him. All that Jesus did and taught came from the Father (read Jn. 7:14-18 & 8:28-29).

**Reflection:** The word of God instructs us to pray always (read Eph. 6:18) and without ceasing (1Thess. 5:17). When we practice praying in our secret place we hone our skills to pray more frequently in the business of our day. With the demands of day to day life for most people we need to purposefully designate a time and discipline ourselves to practice the art of prayer. It is not about how long we pray; it's how sincere and devoted we are when we do. God takes greater pleasure in the quality of our prayer over the quantity of it (read Matt. 6:7 again).

**Daily Journal**

If you have never designated a specific time and place to pray there is no better time to start than now. Challenge yourself to make time every day to spend with the One who gave His own Son for our sins. We will always make time for the things that are most important to us, and He took time out of eternity for us. It is the least we could do to show our gratitude and love for Him. Journal your progress:

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**Day 28– Matt. 6:8-15**

After instructing us on when and where we ought to pray Jesus now gives us the frame work of how we should pray.

**9) In this manner, therefore, pray:** In other words, pray similar to this...

**Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.** First things first, acknowledge His holiness which is the very core of who God is, He is holy (read Is. 6:3, 1 Pt., Rev. 4:8).

**10) Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.** Practice quieting your heart in the secret place where your Father will speak to you (Ps. 46:10a & 91:1, Acts 7:31).

**11) Give us this day our daily bread.** God is first and foremost interested in our spiritual well-being (Matt. 4:1-4).

**12) And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors.** In God's words forgiving others is a prerequisite to enter into the kingdom of God (Matt. 6:14-15 & Mk. 11:25-26).

**13) And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one.** He has overcome every temptation we could ever face (Matt. 4:1-11) and has given us away to escape (read 1 Cor. 10:13 then Jms. 4:7).

**14) For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.** We are the kingdom's citizens, and He is the King we honour (read Matt. 5:3-10, Rev. 1:4-6 & 1Pt. 2:9).

**Reflection:** Croft M Pentz wrote these words, *“There is no time lost in waiting if you are waiting on the Lord”* (Quoted from The Complete Book of Zingers, page 243, by Croft M Pentz). Our Lord taught us the most fundamental way of communing with our heavenly Father through these few verses we have looked at. Our duty is to take up His instructions and apply them in our own lives daily.

**Daily Journal**

Has this basic principle of prayer that the Lord taught stirred up your heart? If so what are you doing about it? Write down your thoughts:

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