



# the politics of Jesus

study guide | part one | a study in the Sermon on the Mount



Dear Cherry Hills family,

This study is an attempt for us to move deeper into our vision as a church, which is: To see people of every generation giving themselves fully to Jesus and His mission. Our strategy for accomplishing this vision is by pursuing life together with Jesus, one another and our community and world. So, while this study can certainly be used individually as a way to grow in your relationship with Jesus personally, my prayer is that you might go one step further and use this tool as a way to grow with others, specifically in a life group. We truly believe that we cannot grow as disciples of Jesus without doing it together.

So, a word about how to use this study. Each week includes five days of studying the passage of the Sermon on the Mount that we will be preaching on Sunday morning. Our suggestion is that you do the study before that Sunday and then use both the study and the message as your discussion guide in your life group. More than anything, I hope your discussions are less about filling out answers and repeating them and more about paying attention to what the Holy Spirit is highlighting for you as you study the passage that week. The two most important questions I will ask every week are: (1) What most stood out to you and why? (2) What do you sense the LORD is prompting you to do as a result of what stood out? In my opinion, learning to pay attention to those two questions is what it means to “walk in the Spirit” (Galatians 5:16)

Foundationally we believe that the Bible is our source of authority in life, and in order to grow deeper with the LORD studying the Bible is a necessary discipline.

So...I want to pray for you as you begin this journey with us with a famous prayer from the book of Numbers: “May the LORD bless you and keep you; may the LORD make His face shine on you and be gracious to you; may the LORD turn His face toward you and give you peace” (Numbers 6:24-26).

In Christ,  
Pastor Steve



Introduction to the Sermon on the Mount





week one  
Matthew 5:1-12

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Begin each day of your study by asking the LORD to speak to you through His Word.

Note: Because of the importance of the Beatitudes this week's study will be a little longer than the other weeks.

## Day 1

1. What do you know about the Sermon on the Mount? Why is it considered so important? What does it have to do with the Kingdom of God?

**The Kingdom of God** - This refers to the rule and reign of God over all of creation. It should be considered a verb more than a noun, though it is both. Jesus initiated the kingdom in His first coming and all future will culminate in His return when He finally restores all of creation as it was originally meant to be. Therefore, we are currently living in between the “now and not yet” of the Kingdom.

2. Read the entire Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:1-7:29 and make note below of: (1) Which section of the sermon seems unclear to you? (2) Which section seems most clear?

Unclear



Clear

3. How does the title for this series “The Politics of Jesus” strike you? What are your hopes and expectations for this series?

## Day 2

**Sat Down**—John Stott notes, “Although one would stand to read Scripture publicly, Jewish teachers would sit to expound it, often with disciples sitting at their feet.”

**Beatitude**—The Sermon on the Mount opens with nine pronouncements of blessing known as the Beatitudes. They can be understood as requirements for entering God’s kingdom or as descriptions of the postures that God approves and that will be developed by His true followers. The first four focus on our posture towards God, while the second four on our posture toward others. These would have been completely upside-down to what the people believed to be important in this day.

**Blessed**—The Greek word for “blessed” is *marakios* and can mean “fortunate” or “happy.”

1. Read Matthew 5:1-12.

Why do you think Jesus starts the Sermon on the Mount with the Beatitudes (5:3-12)?

2. Read Matthew 5:1-3.

Based on the definition of “poor” below, what could Jesus mean when He says, “poor in spirit”? Why is being “poor in spirit” an indispensable condition for receiving the Kingdom of Heaven? Why do you think Jesus started with this?

3. When did you recognize you were “poor in spirit?” How can you make sure you remain in that posture?

4. Read Matthew 5:4.

Now compare Joel 2:12-14, James 4:7-10 and 2 Corinthians 7:10. What do we learn about the role of mourning in these passages? In light of those passages and in light of the first Beatitude, what kind of mourning do you think Jesus is referring to when He says, “Blessed are those who mourn?”

5. Is this kind of “mourning” evident in your life? Why or why not?

## Day 3

### 1. Read Matthew 5:5.

Before looking at the definition below, how would you define the word “meek?” Now read the definition and compare what you wrote. From the world’s point of view, why is it surprising that the meek will inherit the earth?

**Meek**—Webster’s Dictionary defines meek as “enduring injury with patience and without resentment.” A meek person is someone who is not occupied with self at all, someone who does not insist on a set of rights. Others have defined it as “strength under control.”

### 2. Read Isaiah 53.

Based on this prophetic passage and on the definition of the word meek (see above), how did Christ perfectly demonstrate meekness? If a meek person is someone who does not insist on a set of rights, how meek are you? What rights do you feel entitled to or take for granted in your home, church, workplace, or community?

3. Read Matthew 5:6.

We hunger and thirst after many things besides righteousness. What are you hungering and thirsting for right now that cannot satisfy? In what ways are these things poor substitutes for Christ?

4. What can you do to cultivate a healthy, hearty spiritual appetite?

## Day 4

1. Read Matthew 5:7.

How would you define mercy? Read Matthew 7:1-2. How do these verses relate to the 5th Beatitude?

2. Why do you think our treatment of others will affect God's treatment of us? To whom do you have difficulty showing mercy? How could you adjust your perspective so that showing mercy to that person becomes easier?

3. Read Matthew 5:8.

If being pure in heart is not being perfect or free from sin (see 1 John 1:8), what is it? Why would the promise of seeing God (v. 8) be reserved for those who are pure in heart?

4. In what specific areas of your life do you battle with impurity of heart? How do those areas of sin cloud your ability to "see God"? How could the first two Beatitudes help you address this?

# Day 5

1. Read Matthew 5:9.

Look up the word “peacemaker” in a dictionary and write the definition below. Now read Galatians 4:4-7. Based on these verses, why do you think the peacemakers will be called the “sons of God?”

2. What are practical ways you can practice being a peacemaker? Think of some ways you can use your speech and actions to be a peacemaker in the areas of your life listed below:

Home—

Church—

Workplace—

Country—

### 3. Read Matthew 5:10-12.

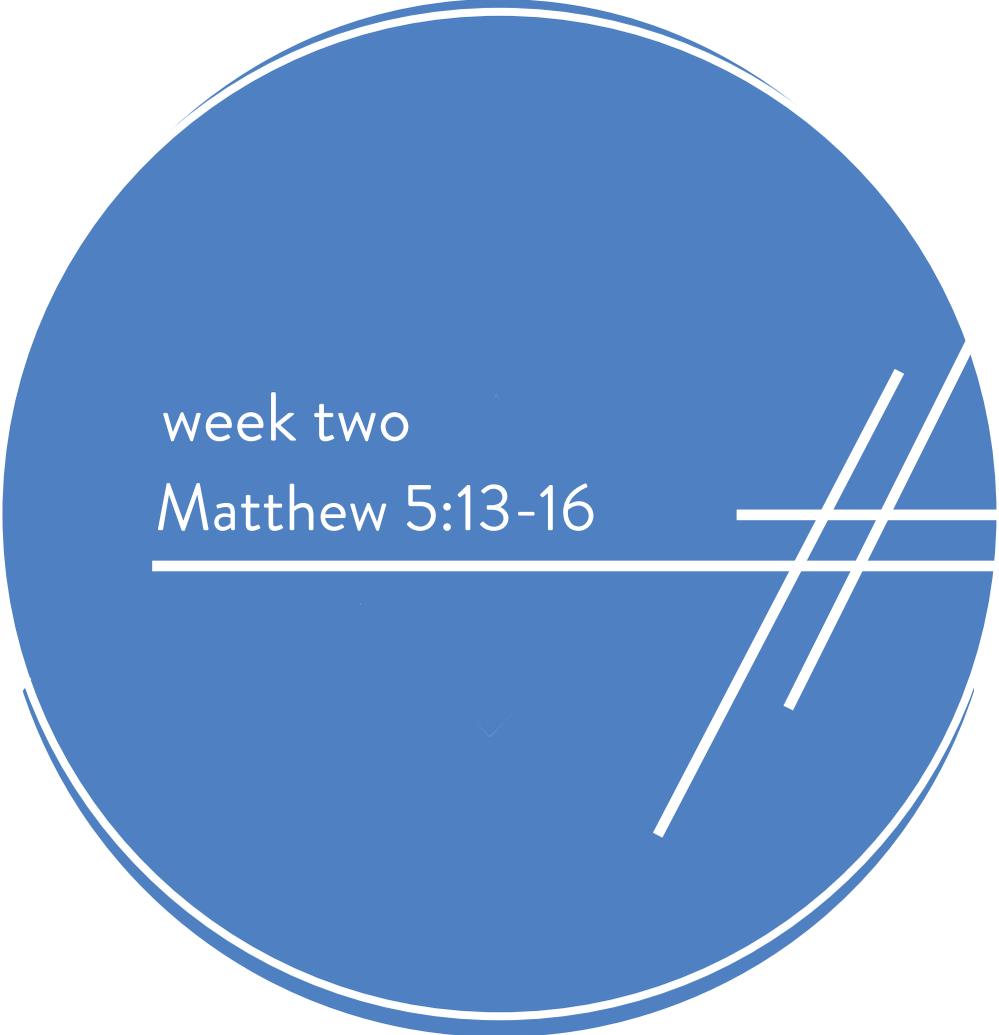
For what reason does the eighth Beatitude say persecution will occur? Have you ever been persecuted “for righteousness’ sake”? Think about how the experience changed you. Did you feel “blessed”? Why or why not?

4. Which of the postures listed in Matthew 5:3-12 are evident in your life? Which ones are not? How can you begin to develop them?

# Week One Conclusion

1. What most stood out to you as you studied Matthew 5:1-12 this week? Why do you think this was the case?

2. What is the Holy Spirit prompting you to do as a result of this? Be prepared to share with your group!



week two  
Matthew 5:13-16

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Begin each day of your study by asking the LORD to speak to you through His Word.

## Day 1

1. Read Matthew 5:3-16.

Why do verses 13-16 follow the Beatitudes in your opinion? Is this strategic on Jesus' part? Why or why not?

2. Why does Jesus use word pictures like the ones He uses in this passage? What other word pictures does He use in the Gospels that have helped you understand something more deeply? Which one is your favorite?

3. Before studying these verses further, write down in your own words what you think Jesus is describing with these two metaphors.

## Day 2

### 1. Read Matthew 5:13.

After describing the qualities of those who are part of God's kingdom, Jesus discusses the influence these people can have in the world. He first portrays believers as salt. Ancient Israelites used salt to both flavor and preserve food. How does this metaphor describe believers' relationship with the world?

### 2. Read Matthew 5:13.

Why do you think Jesus warns that salt can lose its saltiness? What are some things that can cause you to lose the "saltiness" of your Christian witness?

3. Remembering that salt was used to keep meat from rotting: What are some evidences that the world is rotting or decaying that we can see? Do you find yourself complaining or bemoaning those things or finding practical ways to act as salt? Why?

## Day 3

### 1. Read Matthew 5:14-16.

How does the idea of light complement the idea of salt for the church? Why would a Christian be tempted to hide their light?

**Lamp**—The small wicker oil lamps of this period would not give very much light in the average home, which had few windows; therefore, they would be most effective by being set on a lampstand. Something large placed over them would presumably extinguish the light altogether.

### 2. Jesus refers to believers as the “light of the world.” Read Philippians 2:14-16 and Ephesians 5:8-14. What do these passages say practically about how believers can be light? How are you doing in those things?

### 3. Read Psalm 36:5-9.

What does this remind us about the source of light (see v. 9 in particular)? How can this encourage us as we seek to be light in this world?

# Day 4

1. Read Matthew 5:14-16.

“Light” is used throughout the Old and New Testament to convey important things. Read the verses below and explain how light is used to communicate something:

Genesis 1:1-5:

Isaiah 60:1-5:

John 1:1-5, 9-13:

John 8:12:

John 9:5:

Acts 9:1-4:

1 John 2:8:

Revelation 21:23-27:

2. Many of those passages contrast darkness with light. What does that contrast imply about how believers should look when compared to the world? What area of your life can you reveal God's light into the darkness?

3. Read Isaiah 42:1-7 and 49:6.

What was Israel supposed to be for the nations? In what ways did they fail? In what ways did they succeed? How does their calling connect to our passage and what this means for the church?

## Day 5

1. Read Matthew 5:16.

What is the ultimate goal of being "salt and light" in this world? What does 1 Peter 2:12 say about this?

2. If we say we are Christians, our works will say something about God. What do your “good deeds” reveal about who God is to others?

3. What examples can you think of where the work of Christians has brought people closer to God (v. 16)?

4. What is one way you can begin having a stronger influence as salt and light this week that can bring glory to your Father in Heaven?

# Week Two Conclusion

1. What most stood out to you as you studied Matthew 5:13-16 this week? Why do you think this was the case?

2. What is the Holy Spirit prompting you to do as a result of this? Be prepared to share with your group!



week three

Matthew 5:17-26

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Begin each day of your study by asking the LORD to speak to you through His Word.

## Day 1

### 1. Read Matthew 5:17-20.

Before reading the definition below, in your own words, what is the Law? Why might some people have thought that Jesus came to abolish the Law and the Prophets?

**Law**—The Law given in Scripture can be broken into two categories: moral law (i.e. Ten Commandments), and the ceremonial law (i.e. food regulations, purification rituals). As Jen Wilken points out: “Old Testament ceremonial law was given as part of the Mosaic covenant at Mount Sinai. It served two basic purposes. First, it dictated the rules and regulations for ritual cleanliness that allowed a person to commune with a holy God. Second, it dictated regulations regarding everyday life—food, work on Sabbath, whom one could marry—which served to distinguish the Jews from their Gentile neighbors as the chosen people of God. The Pharisees were experts in observing outwardly both the ceremonial and the moral law.”

**Abolish**—John Stott is helpful here to explain what Jesus is describing: “Jewish teachers said that one “abolished” the law by disobeying it (cf. Deuteronomy 27:27), because one thereby rejected its authority. Such highhanded rebellion against the law—as opposed to particular sins—warranted social and spiritual expulsion from the Jewish community. The charge of openly persuading others that the law was no longer in force would be even worse. Jesus opposed not the law but an illegitimate interpretation of it that stressed regulations more than character.”

2. If “not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished” why do we no longer observe the ceremonial law today?

3. Read Acts 10:9-16, 11:1-18.

What do Peter and the other apostles conclude from Peter's vision? How do Jesus' words in Mark 7:14-16 shed light on the ceremonial law for today?

## Day 2

1. According to the following passages what is the purpose of the Law:

Exodus 20:12-17:

Romans 13:8-10:

Romans 3:19-20:

How have you seen this work itself out in your life?

2. Read Psalm 19:7-11 and list all the things the Law can do for us.

What does this communicate to you?

3. In what way does Christ fulfill the Law? What does Galatians 5:14, 6:2, and Romans 13:8-10 say about fulfilling the law?

## Day 3

1. How would someone's righteousness exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees? What does Jesus say about their righteousness in Matthew 23:1-7?

**Scribes and Pharisees**—The scribes and Pharisees practiced strict obedience to the Law, and they were considered the most righteous groups of Jesus' day.

2. Read Romans 9:30-10:4.

What different types of righteousness does Paul describe?

3. What can you do to ensure that you are pursuing God's righteousness and not your own?

## Day 4

1. Read Matthew 5:21-26.

After explaining that He is not going to destroy the law, Jesus reviews several Old Testament laws and shows how Jesus' requirements for His disciples actually go beyond the written Law ("You have heard it said...but I tell you..."). Those in God's Kingdom must have a righteousness that exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees (5:20). He begins by applying this to the command "You shall not murder" (Exodus 20:13). What does Jesus equate with murder? How are anger/insult and murder related?

2. Read Ephesians 4:26-27.

Do you think it is a sin to feel anger? Why or why not? What is the difference between sinful anger and “unsinful” anger? Give an example of each from Scripture and your own life:

Sinful Anger:

Unsinful Anger:

3. Jesus specifically links anger to sinful speech. How has your own anger resulted in sinful speech? Why do you think insults such as these constitute murder in God’s sight?

**Raca**—The insult of calling someone “Raca” is about the same as the one that follows it, “You fool!” The punishments are also roughly equal.

4. Why do you think we tend to hold onto our anger rather than letting it go? Ask God today to help you let go of your anger before you harmfully express it.

## Day 5

1. Read Matthew 5:23-26.

What do verses 23-26 teach us about broken relationships and our relationship with God? How does Matthew 6:14-15 add to this? When we offend someone, why is it important to go to that person and deal with the offense immediately?

**Be Reconciled**—As Stott notes, “Judaism stressed reconciliation between individuals; God would not accept an outward offering if one had oppressed or mistreated one’s neighbor and did not make it right. In the Old Testament God accepted only sacrifices offered with a pure heart toward Him and one’s neighbor (Gen 4:4-7; Prov 15:8; Isaiah 1:10-15; Jeremiah 6:20; Amos 5:21-24).”

2. Can you think of someone toward whom you harbor anger or contempt? How has your anger affected the other person? How has it affected you? What sinful actions, if any, have resulted from your anger?

3. Read 1 John 3:11-18. What are the consequences of hating another Christian? Does loving them mean there should not be boundaries? Why or why not? What does it mean to love “with actions and in truth?”

# Week Three Conclusion

1. What most stood out to you as you studied Matthew 5:17-26 this week? Why do you think this was the case?

2. What is the Holy Spirit prompting you to do as a result of this? Be prepared to share with your group!



week four  
Matthew 5:27-37

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Begin each day of your study by asking the LORD to speak to you through His Word.

Note: This week we will continue to study how Jesus elevates the Law to make it less about outward actions and more about the heart and inward attitudes. Each of these three “You have heard it said...but I tell you” sections have to do with relationships. There are some very difficult teachings in this section, but it is always important to ask the question why Jesus is teaching these things. Is He teaching them to bring the hammer down, or is He teaching them to protect us and encourage us to live the abundant life He offers? Remember, Jesus is going after the heart in these verses, not just external rule following, and the truth is, we do not take these sins as seriously today as we should. Yet, behind it all there is grace when there is true repentance and power when we seek to live in the Holy Spirit.

## Day 1

1. Read. Matthew 5:27-30.

Why does Jesus take adultery so seriously? Does Jesus set forth a course of action that should be followed literally? Why or why not? What point do you think He wants to make?

2. Read Job 31:1-12.

How seriously did Job take the issue of adultery? Why do you think adultery is not taken seriously today?

3. According to Proverbs 6:20-35, List all the ways adultery can harm or endanger a person:

## Day 2

1. In v. 29-30, Jesus talks about the severity of sin. He emphasizes that we should go to great lengths to avoid sin. What are the consequences of not doing so?

**Sin**—The New Testament writers use the Greek language to distinguish between sins and ongoing sins without remorse in a person's life. Ongoing sin reveals a person's true heart and faith.

2. How do the following verses align with Jesus' statement here?

Mark 8:34:

Romans 8:12-14:

Galatians 5:24-25:

Colossians 3:1-5:

3. How does Moses connect adultery to our relationship with God in Deuteronomy 31:14-18? What does this tell you?

4. What are some examples of ways you can crucify the flesh daily? In other words, in what areas of your life do you need to figuratively “tear out an eye or cut off a hand?”

## Day 3

1. Read Deuteronomy 24:1-4 and Matthew 5:31-32.

According to Matthew 5:31, what had the people heard? Had they been taught wrongly? How does Jesus respond? Does He contradict what they had heard?

## 2. Read Matthew 19:3-9.

Here Jesus speaks further on the topic of marriage and remarriage. The Pharisees wanted to test Jesus with a question about divorce. How does Jesus' reply in 19:4-6 contrast with their question? How do His words shed further light on His meaning in Matthew 5:31-32?

3. How do Jesus' teaching on divorce in these passages stand in contrast to the way people view marriage and divorce today? If divorce has impacted your life directly, in what ways are Jesus' words painful to hear? How are His words comforting?

4. In Matthew 19:4-5 Jesus points back to Genesis 2:23-24. What do Jesus' words teach us about God's original design for marriage? What difference does God's design make in living as a married couple today?

**Certificate of Divorce**—As Kent Hughes notes, “In the beginning divorce was inconceivable—and impossible. Jesus quoted lines from Genesis 2:23, 24 to emphasize two things. First, the intimacy of the marriage relationship. He says “the two will become one flesh.” There is no other intimacy like it. It is deeper than one's relationship with one's own children. After intimacy, the emphasis is on permanence. There was no thought of divorce—ever! God's idea was, and is, monogamous, intimate, enduring marriage.” While God's standard hasn't changed, the Fall changed things. Sadly, by the time of Jesus some Jewish rabbis were so loose with divorce that a husband could pretty much give any reason to divorce his wife, which would leave her alone with no recourse. So, in many respects, Jesus is protecting the rights of women with His words here and reminding people of the intimacy and permanence of marriage God set forth in the beginning.

## Day 4

1. Read Matthew 5:31-32 and Ephesians 5:22-23.

What does Paul compare marriage to? How would you explain that in your own words?

2. With these teachings in mind, how do you think the faithfulness of Christian marriages can point people to or away from Christ?

3. Read Matthew 5:33-37.

Jesus quotes a combination of Old Testament laws about swearing oaths (see Lev 19:22; Num 30:2). When the Pharisees made oaths, they would make distinctions between swearing on different items. These distinctions allowed people to get out of oaths they swear. Read Matthew 23:16-22. What does Jesus say about this practice?

**Oaths**—As Stott points out: “People swore by all sorts of things other than God to testify that their word was true. They reasoned that if they broke their oath based on any of these lesser things, at least they were not bringing God’s name into disrepute. It eventually became necessary for rabbis to decide which oaths were completely binding. Jesus says that everything by which one could swear is ultimately God’s and demands that people simply be as good as their word. Jesus argues the point in part from Scripture; Isaiah 66:1 declared that heaven is God’s throne and earth is His footstool.”?

# Day 5

1. Read Matthew 5:33-37.

Now read the following passages and note what you learn about oath-taking in the Old Testament:

Exodus 20:7:

Leviticus 19:11-12:

Numbers 30:1-2:

Deuteronomy 23:21-23:

2. Some people have taken Jesus' words to mean that a Christian should never take an oath of any kind (Pledge of Allegiance, oath of office, etc.). How would you respond to this interpretation?

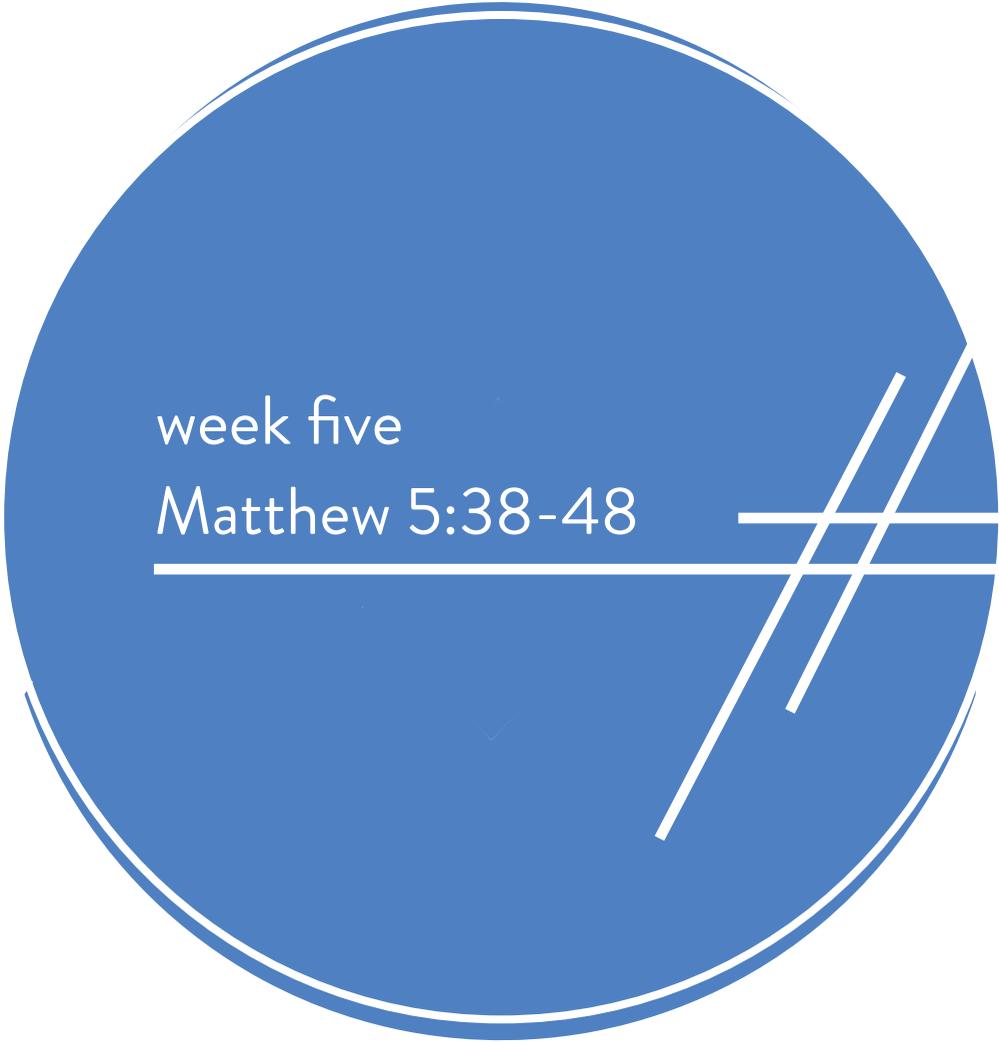
3. How has our culture relaxed this teaching? Have you ever verbally committed to do something you later failed to do? Why do you think it is particularly important for Christ followers to be as good as their word?

4. Is your speech honest and trustworthy? If not, what is Jesus calling you to consider this week?

# Week Four Conclusion

1. What most stood out to you as you studied Matthew 5:27-37 this week? Why do you think this was the case?

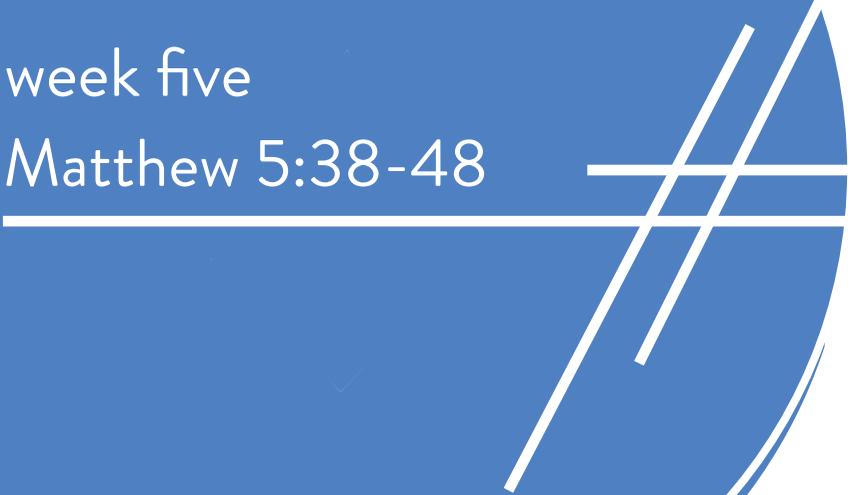
2. What is the Holy Spirit prompting you to do as a result of this? Be prepared to share with your group!



week five

Matthew 5:38-48

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Begin each day of your study by asking the LORD to speak to you through His Word.

## Day 1

1. Read Matthew 5:38-42.

In Matthew 5:38 Jesus quotes the “law of retaliation” found throughout the Old Testament (see Exodus 21:23-25; Leviticus 24:19-21; Deuteronomy 19:21). According to Jesus, how should believers act when wronged?

**Eye for an eye**—“Eye for an eye” and “tooth for a tooth” are part of the widespread ancient Near Eastern law of retaliation. In Israel and other cultures, this principle was enforced by a court and refers to legalized vengeance; personal vengeance was never accepted in the law of Moses, except as a concession for a relative’s murder (Numbers 35:18-21). The Old Testament did not permit personal vengeance. King David is a wonderful example of living out this principle (see 1 Samuel 35:33; 26:10-11). It seems, however, that the Pharisees had extended this law to the realm of personal relationships.

2. Carefully read Deuteronomy 19:16-21. Based on the context, to whom was the instruction “an eye for an eye” given? How would this limit the extent of revenge? What do you think was the positive intent of this law as given in the Old Testament?

3. How do you react when someone wrongs you? Do you seek to get even, or do you respond wisely—and even generously—toward the person who has wronged you?

4. Read Romans 12:17-21. How might a desire for vengeance cause you to be overcome by evil?

## Day 2

1. Read Matthew 5:38-42.

Why do we struggle so much to follow the instruction Jesus gives us about turning the other cheek and going the extra mile? What is accomplished by turning the other cheek or going the second mile? What is risked?

**Right Cheek**—The blow on the right cheek was the most grievous insult possible in the ancient world (apart from inflicting serious physical harm), and in many cultures was listed alongside the “eye for an eye” laws. Both Jewish and Roman law permitted prosecution for this offense.

2. Does all this mean that Christians are to be doormats for the world to walk on? Explain.

3. In what situations might Christ's commands apply today? How is it even possible for us to respond in the way Jesus suggests?

4. What heart attitude is Jesus addressing in 5:40-42? What does Jesus know about us when it comes to money and possessions?

**Coat**—According to Stott, “The poorest of the Empire had only an inner and outer garment, and the theft of a cloak would lead to legal recourse. Jesus gives this advice in spite of that, under Jewish law, a legal case to regain one’s cloak would have been foolproof: a creditor could not take a poor person’s outer cloak, which might serve as one’s only blanket at night as well as a coat (see Ex 22:26-27).”

## Day 3

1. Read Leviticus 19:18 and Matthew 5:43-48.

What words does Jesus remove and add from Leviticus 19:18? By doing so Jesus proposes a radical alternative. What is it? How do you react to this?

2. Who would Jesus' audience have considered an enemy? What would this teaching have meant for them? Who do you consider your "enemies?" Do you show love to, and pray for, such people? Why or why not?

3. Read Romans 5:6-11.

How does "our Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:45) show love for His enemies? How can this inspire us to do the same with others?

## Day 4

1. Read Matthew 5:46.

How do you feel when you read those words? What do you think it means?

2. How does Matthew 19:16-26 help us better understand this? In other words, where does “perfection” come from? How does this tie all the way back to Matthew 5:3?

3. How does Jesus’ call to perfection relate to how we are to treat those around us?

**Be Perfect**—I appreciate what Miles Custus writes about this, “In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus puts forth an impossible standard of righteousness. Not only do we need to guard our actions, we need to guard our thoughts and emotions. Not only should we love our neighbor, we should love our enemy. Jesus calls us to be perfect as God the Father is perfect. Such unattainable aspirations may cause some believers to despair. But this is why Jesus declares the poor in spirit and those who mourn to be “blessed” (see Matt 5:3-4). We cannot achieve God’s righteous standard on our own. Only through Christ and His actions can we be part of His Kingdom.”

## Day 5

1. This week we have finished Jesus' elevation of the Law from mere rules to heart attitudes. These are some of the hardest teachings we have from Jesus about how His followers are to live in His Kingdom. What are you struggling with most from Matthew 5:17-48? What has been most encouraging?

2. Next to each section of the Sermon on the Mount, write 1-2 sentences on how you would summarize Jesus' message so far and what it means for you in your daily life:

Matthew 5:1-12:

Matthew 5:13-16:

Matthew 5:17-26:

Matthew 5:27-37:

Matthew 5:38-48:

3. In your own words, explain how it is even possible to live this way.

# Week Five Conclusion

1. What most stood out to you as you studied Matthew 5:38-48 this week? Why do you think this was the case?

2. What is the Holy Spirit prompting you to do as a result of this? Be prepared to share with your group!

# Extra Notes

# Extra Notes





cherry hills church  
*life together*