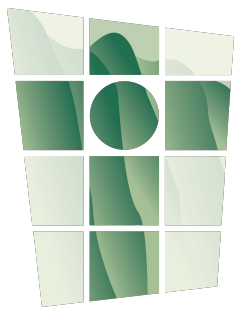


FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF HONOLULU



A SERMON SERIES

**TOGETHER**

BOOKLET

SERMON ON THE MOUNT  
Matthew 5:21-48



## A WORD FROM PASTOR TIMMY

The most influential teaching of the most influential person in all of history is Jesus' "Sermon on the Mount" (Matthew 5–7). As a church, we sat at Jesus' feet this winter (2024) and saturated ourselves in his introduction to his teaching – the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12). We called the sermon series BLESSED.

BLESSED told a story. It is the story of a transformed life. From beginning to end, it is the story of what happens to a life when God's mercy and grace are poured out upon it. It begins with bringing our emptiness and brokenness. It ends with us being nothing less than "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world"! Those with nothing to offer apart from their sin become powerful change agents for God in a broken and needy world.

Spring has come and brings a new sermon series. The Sermon on the Mount continues. We are calling our new series TOGETHER. Between April 7 and May 26, 2024, we'll be making our way through the rest of Matthew chapter 5.

TOGETHER sets the table. It's all about life together whether in a church, a family, a marriage, a college dorm room or apartment, or life on the road. Jesus dives deep into our hearts and reveals what is there. Jesus holds up a mirror and says,

*"Look at yourself. The only person you can change is you. Come to terms with what is inside. True community is impossible, if you don't. Without a community of healed and restored individuals, there is no mission."*

As with any healing, some kind of treatment, some kind of surgery is necessary. Thankfully, Jesus is the "Great Physician."

Invite your neighbors! As with our BLESSED series, TOGETHER will bring fresh and life-giving words to every listener wherever they are in life.

## HOW TO USE THIS BOOKLET

In the following pages you will find:

- An introduction;
- Weekly reflections and discussion questions based on and designed to follow the sermon for each week.

You can use this booklet:

- As a small group;
- As a family;
- Individually as your own devotional material through the week;
- As any combination of the above.

The booklet is related to the weekly sermons, so you'll want to follow the Sunday messages in worship in person or online. All of the weekly sermon questions printed here will also be available online:

[www.fpchawaii.org/together](http://www.fpchawaii.org/together)

By the way, all biblical citations are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) of the Bible. This is the version I always use in teaching and preaching. The English Standard Version (ESV) or the New International Version (NIV) are perhaps the Bible versions most familiar to you. They run pretty close to the NRSV.

Pray your way through this booklet and through this series!

Together with you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pastor Timmy". The word "Pastor" is written in a simple, slightly cursive font, while "Timmy" is written in a more fluid, cursive script with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Pastor Timmy Fearer  
timfearer@fpchawaii.org

## INTRODUCTION

Let's review where we've been since January.

Overwhelmed by the crowds at the end of chapter 4, Jesus withdraws with his disciples and begins giving his ministry away to them. The first step in this process is the delivery of his core teaching we call "The Sermon on the Mount" (Matthew 5-7). In so many words, Jesus is saying, "If you want to be with me, have a share in what I am doing, and do the things I am doing, you've got to get these words inside of you, so that they become a part of you."

In the Beatitudes (BLESSED), we saw Jesus turning our expectations upside down and blessing us again and again with good news. The series of blessings emerges as the story of a transformed life. This is life with God, the life you long for. There are costs, of course. Then again, there are greater costs if you go your own way.

We are calling our series TOGETHER. Here's why . . .

- Matthew 5:3-12 → The Beatitudes are about reality, how the world actually works.
- Matthew 5:13-16 → Jesus declares we are "salt" and "light." That's about identity.
- Matthew 5:17-20 → Jesus offers a teaching on the Bible and his relation to it. That's about authority.
- Matthew 5:21-48 → Jesus covers a variety of topics at the core of our life together. That's all about community.

Community is true togetherness. Jesus takes some of the Ten Commandments (which are all about togetherness!) and other traditions of ancient Israel and draws us deeper into them. They will prove to be eye-opening, challenging, freeing, and remarkable in their timeless relevance for your life today.

TOGETHER will dismantle us, and then put us back together and keep us together.

Let's dive in now, and you'll see!

## WEEK #1 – APRIL 7

Together: Anger | Matthew 5:21-22

### INTRODUCTION

This week Jesus dives into the first of a series of life and death issues. These determine the enduring strength of a community or its fatal weakness which will lead to collapse. First things first. Jesus addresses our anger. Nurtured, unresolved anger is a cancer. You can't have true community with festering anger in the system. Jesus goes after it with some shocking claims and a wake-up call.

Please pray and have someone in your group read Matthew 5:21-22 out loud. Then have another person read it out loud again.

[Read Matthew 5:21-22](#)

<sup>21</sup>'You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, "You shall not murder"; and "whoever murders shall be liable to judgment." <sup>22</sup>But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, "You fool," you will be liable to the hell of fire.'

### HEAD (KNOWLEDGE)

1. Jesus references the Law of Moses as the basis for his teaching. Which of the Ten Commandments is he appealing to? (See Exodus 20:1-17. Then take a quick look at the section in Exodus 21:12-15.) What did "liable to judgment" actually look like there? In other words, what kinds of judgments were ancient Israelites liable to when responsible for the death of another?
2. What is Jesus communicating with his introductory phrase (which you will be hearing repeatedly) "But I say to you"?
3. What kind of anger was the sermon saying Jesus is challenging here? What kind(s) of anger is Jesus likely not referring to?
4. What are your observations on the escalating nature of different expressions of anger and the increased consequences of each (judicial hearing, supreme court, hell)?
5. Are we to take Jesus' words literally (pushing one another before judges)? Or, instead of literally, are we to take them seriously, more seriously than we ever have before when it comes to anger? Discuss this.

## **HEART (TRANSFORMATION)**

1. As you sit with this passage, and also after hearing the sermon's reflections on various dimensions of anger, what strikes you?
2. What is your experience with nurtured, carried anger? You've surely been both on the receiving end, as well as been one who has nursed and kept anger alive. Discuss what it does to a relationship; to a family; to a community.
3. Describe the desired outcome(s) Jesus likely has in mind for hearers/readers of this passage. In your opinion what steps would he like people to take?
4. What do you make of the notion that "anger is always the result of unmet expectations"?
5. Where are you on a scale of 1 to 10 when it comes to anger?
  - 1 = "I'm never angry"
  - 6 = "I'm in need of an honest reckoning with, action steps, and prayer for my anger"
  - 10 = "Can someone drive me to the hospital?"

## **HANDS (SPIRITUAL STEPS OF THE WEEK)**

1. Make a list of people you carry anger toward.
2. Pick one person a day.
3. Trace your anger back to a disappointment and then back to an expectation.  
ANGER → A DISAPPOINTMENT → AN EXPECTATION
4. Pray, "Jesus, where did this expectation of mine come from? From you (a healthy, reasonable place) or from somewhere or someone else?"
5. Pray, "Jesus, help me with my anger."

## WEEK #2 — APRIL 14

### Together: Reconciliation | Matthew 5:23-26

#### Check-in

How did it go with you and anger over the past seven days?  
Last week we concluded with taking a step regarding the anger within.  
We prayed. So how did it go? If you took no step, what kept you from that?

### INTRODUCTION

Jesus continues with the anger theme this week but from a different angle. Matthew 5:21-26 is woven together as a single piece and likely appears that way – as a single paragraph – in your Bible. But, actually, Jesus pivots at v. 23 and shifts away from your anger toward others and moves over to other people’s anger toward you! Anger, no matter where it is coming from, makes community impossible. It’s got to be faced, diffused, and removed. Otherwise, neither our kids nor outsiders will ever believe what we claim about the transforming power of Jesus. Conversely, conquering anger is evidence that Jesus Christ is alive and has the power to change us.

Pray and then have someone read Matthew 5:21-26 out loud. Then have another person read it out loud again. This week’s focus begins at v. 23.

#### Read Matthew 5:21-26

<sup>21</sup>You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, “You shall not murder”; and “whoever murders shall be liable to judgement.” <sup>22</sup>But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, “You fool,” you will be liable to the hell of fire.

<sup>23</sup>So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, <sup>24</sup>leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift. <sup>25</sup>Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the way to court with him, or your accuser may hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. <sup>26</sup>Truly I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.’



## **HEAD (KNOWLEDGE)**

1. Jesus forces us to see ourselves from the point of view of the anger of others (v.23-26). Why do you think he goes there rather than focus further on what might have been our own legitimate anger from vv. 21-22?
2. Jesus places us in the middle of a solemn worship service in the middle of the Jerusalem Temple, offering our sacrificial gift - sort of like approaching the Pope during Mass at St Peter's in Rome! The one thing in our minds that should never be interrupted is a worship service. But what becomes even more important than a worship service which then justifies pushing the pause button?
3. Describe and discuss every single step in the process Jesus pictures in v23-24.
4. What kinds of grievances do you think Jesus would include in his broad phrase "something against you" (v. 23), which would then require your action?
5. Jesus shifts to yet another scenario in vv. 25-26. You can take this as specific advice for just such a situation, sure. You can also take it as a metaphor Jesus employs to make this point: In the name of common sense, don't let your pride or lackadaisical attitude toward the anger of another get you into an impossible situation you can't get yourself out of. Humble yourself, take initiative, and nip it in the bud. Discuss your thoughts and feelings about Jesus' approach.

## **HEART (TRANSFORMATION)**

1. Are you aware of "a brother or a sister" who currently "has something against you"? What specifically do you believe Jesus wants you to do about that?
2. Are you in any way, shape, or form in a situation right now that may bear resemblance to and wind up concluding like what we see in vv. 25-26? What would Jesus have you do about it?
3. How might your own anger toward those who are angry with you get in the way of you being the leader and working to dissolve the conflicts you face? What will you do about that?

## **HANDS (SPIRITUAL STEPS OF THE WEEK)**

1. Ask God to help you make a list of those who have "something against you."
2. Decide whom to go to first.
3. Ask God for help. Ask another person to pray for you as you go.
4. Go to the person this week and say something like: "I'm sorry," "Have I offended you?" "I feel something is between us" (or whatever is appropriate).
5. Repeat with another person on the list.

## WEEK #3 — APRIL 21

### Together: Forgiveness | Matthew 5:21-26

#### Check-in

We've been into anger for two weeks now. Had enough? Jesus won't let it go. It is number one on his list as he shapes a community – a ministry team – which will soon be turning the world upside down. Anger, however, is something that will strangle this baby even before it leaves the crib. It's a killer in relationships, families, organizations, communities, and even countries, not to mention entire civilizations.

Back to us. Anger is a cancer. It will kill the church and it will kill you.

Jesus loves and cares enough to take it head on.

So how have the decisions and steps taken over the past two weeks been going for you? Take plenty of time to discuss this. This week's discussion is a little different and can afford needed extra time here.

#### INTRODUCTION

This week's discussion is a little different, because Sunday's message was a little different. It was short on biblical explanation and long on biblical application. It was more of a testimony than a teaching. But it had everything to do with the teaching over the past two weeks. So, let's pray and read the passage from the last two weeks once again, out loud. And then have someone else read it a second time.

#### Read Matthew 5:21-26

<sup>21</sup>You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, "You shall not murder"; and "whoever murders shall be liable to judgment." <sup>22</sup>But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, "You fool," you will be liable to the hell of fire.

<sup>23</sup>So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, <sup>24</sup>leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift. <sup>25</sup>Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the way to court with him, or your accuser may hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. <sup>26</sup>Truly I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.'

## **HEAD (KNOWLEDGE)**

1. Are you seeing anything new in the passage that you hadn't seen before over the past two weeks?
2. If you had to sum up the passage in a single, simple sentence, what would it be?

## **HEART (TRANSFORMATION)**

1. What has jumped out at you the most over the past three weeks?
2. What did you most connect with as the pastor was sharing during his message last Sunday?
3. Any new messages from God for you?

## **HANDS (SPIRITUAL STEPS OF THE WEEK)**

Discuss the spiritual steps of the week AND the additional questions.

1. Identify whom you need to forgive (whom you are carrying anger against).
2. Ask God to:
  - set you free from your anger;
  - help you release that person from your anger;
  - help you forgive that person.
3. Forgive that person:
  - in your heart;
  - verbally in conversation with them.
4. Seek assistance, if you want or need it.

## **ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS**

1. How has all that you have wrestled with these past three weeks about anger, reconciliation, and forgiveness moved you to take action?
2. Where is there broadly shared anger amongst the First Prez community? Do you share that anger? What is Jesus telling you to do about your shared anger? Are there things the First Prez leadership ought to do to address that anger?

## WEEK #4 — APRIL 28

### Together: When I Think of You | Matthew 5:27-30

#### Check-in

Take some time and give a personal update on anger, reconciliation, and forgiveness in your life over the past three weeks.

#### INTRODUCTION

We're done with anger, well, at least for now in this series. Then again, it's always there. Who says unresolved anger isn't behind our abuse of one another in our imaginations (this week) and in the weakening of our marriages (next week), not to mention a long list of other life issues Jesus continues to tackle in his Sermon on the Mount?

This week once again Jesus takes one of the bad-behavior Ten Commandments and dives deep into our hearts and minds with it. As with anger, he's holding up a mirror. And, as with anger, he is tackling a sensitive topic surrounded by all kinds of pain and shame. We tread lightly here but at the same time don't want to compromise the message we all need to face. Let's get into it. So, let's pray and read the passage.

#### Read Matthew 5:27-30

<sup>27</sup>'You have heard that it was said, "You shall not commit adultery."<sup>28</sup>But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart.<sup>29</sup>If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.<sup>30</sup>And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to go into hell.'

#### HEAD (KNOWLEDGE)

1. Jesus recites #7 of the Ten Commandments, "You shall not commit adultery." Define adultery on a purely surface level, and then feel free to discuss the various "soft" forms it can take whether they be physically sexual or other.
2. A marriage covenant between a man and a woman is the protective boundary God has drawn within which sexual love is to be honored and enjoyed. Outside of that boundary, sex is like fire, full of life-giving benefits within the fireplace. But if it escapes the fireplace, it can bring destruction. Discuss the various effects of an adulterous affair.\*

3. Jesus is getting at the spirit of the Law. Just as murder begins with anger in our hearts, where does adultery begin? Discuss the struggles men often face here.
4. While being directed at men, to what degree and in what other forms more specific to some women can this apply to women, as well? (What marriage-weakening kinds of imaginings can many women give themselves to?)
5. Jesus uses a lot of hyperbole in his remedies. Again, should we take him literally or seriously? What is his message behind his exaggerated advice?

### **HEART (TRANSFORMATION)**

It feels like we ought to divide the group between men and women and go to separate rooms for the balance of the discussion! You might want to do that. Answering these questions can be a delicate matter.

1. When have you seen a darkened thought-life hurt a relationship, a family, a community?
2. What strategies have you used to reign in and redirect your imaginings about others in order to stay pure and bless others rather than use them?
3. Where are you on a scale of 1 to 10 when it comes to impure imaginings?
  - 1 = "I never struggle with that."
  - 6 = "I'm in need of an honest reckoning with, action steps, and prayer for my thought life."
  - 10 = "I could use some help."

### **HANDS (SPIRITUAL STEPS OF THE WEEK)**

Discuss the spiritual steps of the week AND the additional questions.

*See the April 28 worship bulletin for Chris Pan's Spiritual Steps of the Week, or go to [www.fpchawaii.org/small-groups](http://www.fpchawaii.org/small-groups).*

### **ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS**

1. What insight or advice from the sermon did you find helpful and are putting into practice?
2. Pray about this for FPC, and pray for each other, given all you have shared.

## WEEK #5 — MAY 5

### Together: Jesus and Divorce | Matthew 5:31-32

#### Check-in

Take some time and give a personal update on what's been going on in your head and heart since last week's words from Jesus about our thought life.

#### INTRODUCTION

Last week Jesus implicitly said adultery begins with imagining it. And so do the roots of divorce begin in our heads and hearts. The reality of adultery automatically brings the question of divorce to the fore. Jesus tackles it.

As the pastor said in the sermon, Matthew 5:31-32 does not represent everything Jesus thought about divorce, nor does it contain everything that can be said about divorce, let alone everything that the New Testament says on divorce and related matters. And, like last week, this is a sensitive topic affecting many in our congregation and the larger community. Let's be wise, measured, and sensitive as we discuss this.

You'll run out of time, so just focus on what is most important to the group. Let's pray and read the passage a couple of times out loud.

#### Read Matthew 5:31-32

<sup>31</sup>It was also said, "Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce." <sup>32</sup>But I say to you that anyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of unchastity, causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.'

#### HEAD (KNOWLEDGE)

Read Matthew 19:3-9 where Jesus is more expansive (see also Mark 10) as He is drawn into the middle of a contemporary debate.

*<sup>3</sup>Some Pharisees came to him, and to test him they asked, 'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause?' <sup>4</sup>He answered, 'Have you not read that the one who made them at the beginning "made them male and female", <sup>5</sup>and said, "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh"? <sup>6</sup>So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what*

*God has joined together, let no one separate.’<sup>7</sup>They said to him, ‘Why then did Moses command us to give a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her?’<sup>8</sup>He said to them, ‘It was because you were so hard-hearted that Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but at the beginning it was not so.’<sup>9</sup>And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for unchastity, and marries another commits adultery.’*

On the surface, it was all about how a person read the precedent established in Deuteronomy 24:1. What could “an objectionable thing” include as grounds for divorce, and what was required to end the marriage?

The “liberal” school of Jesus’ time following Rabbi Hillel said that just about anything could be grounds, e.g., “she burned the toast!” The “conservative” school following Rabbi Shammai said only “adultery” would be considered permissible grounds. Jesus reveals that he is closer to the Shammai school.

But more important than that, Jesus goes about laying a positive, biblical foundation based in the creation narratives for a bold affirmation of marriage between one man and one woman. This would remain an indissoluble union until death as God’s primary will.

Jesus also reveals what the sermon called a “secondary, circumstantial, with-deep-repentance-to-be-accepted-as-a-last-resort will of God.” Divorce can be permissible. (And, of course, in the midst of his teaching, Jesus unmask the disingenuous, self-centered nature of his opponents!) Jesus is trying to reign in a selfish, abusive, destructive-to-marriage-and-people movement.\*

1. What do you make of Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 19:3-9 (which echoes Matthew 5:31-32) and his encounter with these particular Pharisees?
2. In the sermon, the pastor suggested a broader definition of “adultery” to include various behaviors that violate and can mortally wound a marriage relationship. What were some of those examples of marriage-violating behaviors? What do you think about them as legitimate grounds for divorce in the eyes of Jesus?\*\*\* (And remember, the Bible never commands or insists on divorce. But, with qualification, it does permit it.)
3. Jesus is tenaciously fighting for marriage and taking a much stricter view of permissible dissolution of a couple. It was the minority view of the time. Even if we broaden the definition of what counts for “adulterous” behavior, how is that different than Hawaii’s “no-fault divorce” law and culture?
4. Broadening the definition of “adultery” allows for greater numbers of divorced people to remarry, if you stay within the limits of Jesus’ terms. What do you think about that?

5. There is the question about remarriage for one who has divorced another on non-permissible grounds per the limits of Jesus' words, even when expanded.

Is a new beginning (remarriage) possible for the truly repentant, no matter what they have done? What do you think? \*\*\*

### **HEART (TRANSFORMATION)**

1. What has been your experience with teaching on marriage and divorce in the churches you have been a part of other than FPC?
2. What has the teaching on this topic been like over the years at FPC?
3. What has been the attitude of your family of origin on these questions?
4. If you have been touched by divorce, how are these scriptures and Sunday's message sitting with you?

### **HANDS (SPIRITUAL STEPS OF THE WEEK)**

Discuss the spiritual steps of the week AND the additional questions.

1. Pray for those near to you who are in a difficult marriage.
2. If you are in a difficult marriage and have yet to reach out for support and counsel, then do so. (FPC leaders are here to listen.)
3. Share today's message with someone who needs to hear it.

### **ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS**

1. What kinds of ministry/ies ought FPC provide to the congregation and the broader community for building strong marriages, as well as for those finding their way through and beyond divorce?
2. How would such ministries be true to our stated mission - "Love God, Love People. Reach the World for Christ"?
3. Pray about this for FPC, and pray for each other given all you have shared.



\*Interesting . . . if you follow the case in Deuteronomy 24:1-3, it presumes that the partner faulted and divorced is allowed remarriage without question. We wonder what Jesus thought about that. And remarriage was, indeed, a common part of the Israel of Jesus' time.

\*\*Exodus 21:7-11 shows an interesting case and precedent (albeit within a polygamous culture) of a seldom discussed precedent toward the rights of a woman within a marriage and what she could expect. And then, if those requirements were not met, she had the right to walk out of the arrangement without penalty. We wonder what Jesus thought about all that.

\*\*\*Jesus is directing his teaching both in 5:31-32 and 19:3-9 at men . . . perhaps a specific group or kind of men. They had the power at the time. Are Jesus' words about marrying again a universal rule, or confined to the culprits he is targeting? What does the broader witness of the New Testament have to say to such violators as we boldly preach that sinners can find a new beginning no matter what they have done?

**NOTES:**

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## WEEK #6 — MAY 12

### Together: Keeping Your Word | Matthew 5:33-37

#### Check-in

Take some time and give a personal update on what's been going on in your head and heart since last week's words from Jesus about divorce and remarriage.

#### INTRODUCTION

Are we getting a bit of a break this week after two weeks of adultery, lust, and divorce? Maybe, maybe not. This week is all about telling the truth, follow through, doing what you said, or saying what you did do and not covering for what you didn't do. Ever hedge on the truth, let alone tell a bald-faced lie? How would everything on your tax return rate against a strict, absolute truth test? And what you are not saying may be more important than the truth you are saying, making the truth you utter misleading! This is more complicated than it might first appear.

Truth. Aeschylus, the Greek playwright of the 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> centuries before Christ, is the one who said, "The first casualty of war is the truth." And don't you wish our politicians would say what is true and govern by that, that they would say what they did and do what they say? Well, they are a mirror of our society, and even of us. Let's look into that mirror. Let's pray and read the passage a couple of times out loud.

#### Read Matthew 5:33-37

<sup>33</sup>'Again, you have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, 'You shall not swear falsely, but carry out the vows you have made to the Lord.' <sup>34</sup>But I say to you: Do not swear at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, <sup>35</sup>or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. <sup>36</sup>And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. <sup>37</sup>Let your word be 'Yes, Yes' or 'No, No'; anything more than this comes from the evil one.'

#### HEAD (KNOWLEDGE)

Jesus is deeply interested in his people being people of the truth – people of their word, who take their own word seriously, keep it, and stand by it.

1. As he begins addressing the issue in v. 33, Jesus is paraphrasing and combining some Old Testament teaching. Just carry out and follow through on what you say you will do, and you won't need to buttress your promises in

order to convince people. This teaching has so permeated our western culture that we see very few occasions where oaths are acceptable and part of some kind of procedure.

- a) Can you give the few examples where oaths do play a role? (Maybe there is more out there than I am aware of!)
  - b) What about oaths in other cultures you have been a part of? Can you give examples and explain their purpose?
2. Identify and discuss all the reasons Jesus argues against swearing oaths at all.
  3. What is Jesus' final summary command? Where would that apply?

### **HEART (TRANSFORMATION)**

1. Identify and discuss the various occasions we do not keep our word. And then discuss all the reasons for us not keeping our word.
2. Identify and discuss the various occasions when we would make a claim about what we did or what happened and feel compelled to say, "I swear!"
3. How often do you hear people say "I swear" these days?
4. Where are you on a scale of 1 to 10 when it comes to keeping your word?
  - 1 = "I have a real problem with my words matching my actions."
  - 5 = "Sometimes I hedge on what I promise and struggle with follow through more often than I'd like. I could probably use a little help here."
  - 10 = "I always follow through no matter what the cost."
5. What is the impact on a relationship when a person is inconsistent with follow-through? How about on a church when leaders are inconsistent with it?

### **HANDS (SPIRITUAL STEPS OF THE WEEK)**

Discuss the spiritual steps of the week AND the additional questions.

*See the May 12 worship bulletin for Christian Schroppel and the Youth Ministry's Spiritual Steps of the Week, or go to [www.fpchawaii.org/small-groups](http://www.fpchawaii.org/small-groups).*

### **ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS**

1. Where would you personally like to grow in this area?
2. What is one step you want to take in the next week toward letting your yes be yes and your no be no?
3. Pray for each other.

## WEEK #7 — MAY 19

### Together: Responding to Abuse | Matthew 5:38-42

#### Check-in

In the past seven days, is there an unkept promise you have made? Is there a mistruth you have spoken that you need to make right? How did you do with your action steps the past seven days? Please discuss.

#### INTRODUCTION

Now we wander into some of the most familiar phrases from the Sermon on the Mount and some of the most misunderstood and misapplied statements Jesus ever uttered. They take us back to the Beatitudes. The decisions and execution of Jesus' detailed responses below take the strength of a transformed person. They take the power of the meek and humble ones (Beatitude #3 / Matthew 5:5) to pull this off. They describe what Jesus did (1<sup>st</sup> example) and would do.

It is behavior that grabs attention and sows the seeds of transformation in the hearts and minds of the unconverted. Once again, Jesus is subversive and revolutionary in his vision for a truly new community. This is the community that conquers evil by surprising it and absorbing it. Let's pray and read the passage a couple of times out loud:

#### Read Matthew 5:38-42

<sup>38</sup>You have heard that it was said, "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth."  
<sup>39</sup>But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; <sup>40</sup>and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; <sup>41</sup>and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile. <sup>42</sup>Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you.'

#### HEAD (KNOWLEDGE)

1. What is packed into the ancient saying in v. 38 that teaches how to respond to a wrong? Also, it sounds gruesome, but what is it trying to contain?
2. In one sentence, how would you sum up Jesus' new lifestyle principle that he is trying to communicate in vv. 38-41? (Ignore v. 42 for now. There he shifts to the topic of generosity.)

3. When Jesus says “do not resist an evil doer,” is he saying let evil run rampant? See the examples he gives. What historical custom does each relate to?
  - Striking one’s cheek
  - Taking one’s coat
  - Being forced to go one mile

Recall the sermon and describe what Jesus is not saying by these examples and what he, instead, is saying.

4. Describe all the possible effects of the responses Jesus commands. (Recall what Bonhoeffer said. You mean you didn’t take notes?) What is Jesus’ goal(s)?
5. Hitting a different note, what do you think is the unqualified demand/command in v. 42 all about? What is the point?

### **HEART (TRANSFORMATION)**

1. What is your experience with being on either end of an over-reaction in response to a genuine wrong committed (e.g., “a broken bone in response to an insult”)?
2. What is your experience with being on either end of someone responding not-in-kind to a genuine wrong committed (e.g., “a gift in response to an insult”)?
3. What is the possible effect of generous cooperation and kindness in response to the abusive act that gets the exchange started?
4. Is there an opportunity for you currently to offer generous cooperation and kindness in the face of some kind of abusive behavior that you are facing? Family, work, school, church? Talk about it with the group.\*
5. Is v. 42 grabbing anyone of us and speaking to us right now?

### **HANDS (SPIRITUAL STEPS OF THE WEEK)**

Ask God to:

1. Remind you of this message this week when you are offended or being taken advantage of.
2. Give you a word or action of generosity and grace in response.
3. Then act on it. Do it.

\*Let's repeat here what we said in the sermon. Jesus is not counseling wives to let their husbands beat them. The goal is not to reward abusive behavior, but rather to break it by confounding it. There may be situations of self-sacrifice at great personal cost that Jesus may call a person to, but it is a very personal matter and always in the name of conquering evil, not empowering it.

**NOTES:**

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## WEEK #8 — MAY 26

**Together: Obedient Love | Matthew 5:43-48**

### Check-in

How did your act(s) of generous cooperation and kindness in the face of some kind of abusive behavior go this past week? (Turn the other cheek, remember?)

Talk about this together as a group.

### INTRODUCTION

This week we reach the end of Matthew chapter 5. You are one third of the way through the Sermon on the Mount! Pat yourself on the back.

Now let's get back to serious business. This week you not only have to offer generous cooperation and kindness to some of the nasty people around you. You also have to LOVE them! Jesus is once again turning the tables on conventional thinking. He's holding the mirror up once again and letting us see ourselves for who we are. It's not all that pretty. But it has the potential to become beautiful, not to mention transformational for a church that wants to love its neighbors.

Let's pray and read the passage a couple of times out loud.

### Read Matthew 5:43-48

<sup>43</sup>'You have heard that it was said, "You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy." <sup>44</sup>But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, <sup>45</sup>so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. <sup>46</sup>For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax-collectors do the same? <sup>47</sup>And if you greet only your brothers and sisters,\* what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? <sup>48</sup>Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.'

### HEAD (KNOWLEDGE)

"Love your neighbor and hate your enemy." Love of neighbor is found in Leviticus 19:18. Hatred of enemy is found nowhere in the Old Testament. Oh, there are sentiments of hatred and judgments that could communicate that (Psalm 137), but Jesus is not quoting Scripture.

As a matter of fact, there are sections that lean toward love of enemy – Exodus 23:4-5; Proverbs 25:21. Jesus is apparently referring to commonly held and shared views of the time, and perhaps even a preferred reading of portions of the Old Testament. Regardless, it is an almost universal and timeless principle that an enemy deserves one's hatred.

1. Remind yourselves again of the meaning and import of Jesus' phrase, "But I say to you ..." What all does Jesus command in relation to our enemies?
2. What is the primary motivation offered for enemy-love (v. 45a)?
3. What basis do we find for imitating the Father in enemy-love when we observe his actions (v. 45b)?
4. What further incentive(s) is offered for enemy-love (vv. 46-47)?
5. What is Jesus saying (commanding, actually) in rather extreme terms in v. 48?

### **HEART (TRANSFORMATION)**

1. Do you have an "enemy" that you feel some degree of hatred for? Have you ever in the past felt hatred for someone?
2. How did/are those intense feelings toward another person serving you? And how are those feelings affecting you, not to mention the situation?
3. What effect does beginning to pray for an enemy have upon you? Can you speak from personal experience?
4. What is keeping you from praying for the person you are having real difficulty with, or for the person who has hurt you, or for the person who is against you – your worst enemy?
5. How would prayer for an enemy move you/us toward growth as a church?

### **HANDS (SPIRITUAL STEPS OF THE WEEK)**

Discuss the spiritual steps of the week AND the additional questions.

See the May 26 worship bulletin for Pastor Tim Shaw's Spiritual Steps of the Week, or go to [www.fpchawaii.org/small-groups](http://www.fpchawaii.org/small-groups).











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