

# LIGHTHOUSE GROUP CURRICULUM

Matthew 5:17-20

## LEADER'S STUDY

### Jesus Finished What the Law Began

#### Matthew 5:17-20

#### What is happening?

Chapters 5 – 7 are known as the Sermon on the Mount. It's called that because this is where we see Jesus sitting on a mountainside with his disciples, teaching what life in the Kingdom of God will look like. Some of the things he told the people were jarring, as they seemed to conflict with what they'd been taught about the Law of Moses. Jesus didn't contradict what the Law said; in fact, he said it should be kept diligently. But his teachings went beyond the letter of the Law and straight to the heart of it. He points out that there are those who teach the Law but don't keep it themselves. Only Jesus taught the whole Law, both letter and heart, *and* kept every "jot and tittle" of it.

#### Where is the gospel?

When we read Jesus's teachings in the Sermon on the Mount, it might sound like we have to do all the things he talks about in those chapters if we're to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Never be angry with a person (5:21-22)? Never have a lustful thought (5:27-28)? Love my enemy and pray for people who abuse me (5:43-46)? That's impossible! But the gospel isn't about being good enough. It's about surrendering our lives to Jesus, the only human being who never sinned in thought, word, or deed. He knows the intent of God's heart when the Law was given, because he is the one who gave it. He's not merely the Law Giver, though; he's the very embodiment of its teachings. He alone is able to perfectly keep the Law—by living a sinless life, and by fulfilling every requirement for atonement of sin. The Law that brought death (Romans 7:7-13) is fulfilled in Christ's death (Hebrews 7:27; 9:22); that's the perfect sacrifice the Law prescribed for sin (Lev. 22:19). Having paid the penalty for us, he now invites us into his kingdom to live, eternally purified by his perfect grace.

Rather than giving rules we must follow in order to enter Christ's kingdom, the Sermon on the Mount lists characteristics of the kingdom into which he alone can give us entrance. We bring nothing to the table, for we come on his terms, by his work, because of his worthiness. He gave mankind the Law, and he fulfilled it all himself.

As you prepare for this week, ask yourself questions like these: Did Jesus advocate doing away with the Jewish law? If so, should any of it be kept? If not, why are Christians not obligated to follow it? The scribes and Pharisees (v. 20) were meticulously virtuous in every detail of their lives. So how can Jesus expect anyone's righteousness to exceed theirs? How is God calling me to think and to live differently? How does this change my perspective today? How is God calling me to respond based on this scripture?

Spend some time reading and meditating on these truths as you prepare for your meeting. Be willing to share this with your group and invite them to join you in sharing how God is asking them to respond to His word. Be willing to share areas that He is calling you to "follow Him" and make clear "I" statements about how you are going to align with Him.

**Some helpful scriptures:** Matthew 24:35; Romans 3:20-31; 10:1-4; 13:8; Galatians 3:10-13, 21-28; Philippians 3:8-10. What other places in scripture speak this same truth?

# LIGHTHOUSE GROUP CURRICULUM

Matthew 5:17-20

## INTENTIONAL BIBLE READING

READ Matthew 5:17-20  
and meditate on it.

Read in the ESV or similar word-for-word translation. Read it again in the NLT to get a thought-for-thought perspective.

Consider the historical context:

- Who was Jesus' audience?
- How might they have understood what they were hearing?
- What do we know about the writer of this account? (See Mt. 9:9-13)
- What do you think Matthew wanted to convey when he recorded these words?
- For whom did Matthew write it?

Try to summarize the passage in your own words.

Consider what this truth means to you as a Gentile Christian in 21<sup>st</sup> Century America.

Every verse of scripture points to the gospel. Look for how this passage points to the finished, once-for-all work of Jesus.

## POTENTIAL STUDY QUESTIONS

These are just questions you might ask to help your group discussion. Don't feel like you need to answer all of these as a group

**What is significant, surprising or confusing from these verses?**

**What seems to be the main point of this letter?**

**How does this portion of scripture point to Jesus and the gospel?**

**What parts of this passage are challenging to your current way of thinking?**

**What did you discover or learn about God and His character from this passage?**

**What parts of this passage can you relate to?**

**Look at one or two key words and define them really clearly, then look at them in context with that definition. Does this change your understanding?**

**Why did God bring me to this scripture today?**

## APPLICATION QUESTIONS

**How is God calling you to obey, based on this passage?**

or

**What is your "I will" statement?**

(Encourage everyone to steer clear of "we" or "us" or "Christians" statements)

**With whom are you going to share what you have learned?**

(This is a critical part of growth that is often overlooked. If we can share it with someone else it means we really understand it, it cements it in our own minds, it makes us accountable to the truth and it blesses the one who hears it. Rom 10:17)

**Based on this passage, what can we pray about and how should we pray?**