



Sermon on the Mount Series

Avoid the Edge!

Avoid falling into sin by seeking righteousness instead

Course Text: Matthew 5:13-48

In this series we are looking at the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew. As you study these courses try to answer the question, "When and how does this apply to us?" In this course, we will study Matthew chapter 5 following the Beatitudes.

Outline

| <u>Lesson</u> | <u>Topic</u> |
|---------------|--------------------|
| Lesson 1 | - Salt |
| Lesson 2 | - Light |
| Lesson 3 | - Avoid the Edge |
| Lesson 4 | - Do Not Murder |
| Lesson 5 | - No Adultery |
| Lesson 6 | - Keeping Promises |
| Lesson 7 | - Forgiveness |
| Lesson 8 | - Be Perfect |

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Suggested methodology for each course:

1. Allow time for greetings and fellowship (Save most of this for the end of class.)
2. Take prayer requests (Try to keep it from becoming a competition to see who has the most or the worst.)
3. Pray (The idea here is to leave our troubles with God so we can give His word our attention with a clear mind.)
4. Read the text aloud from the Bible one question at a time.
5. Answer and briefly discuss the "fill in the blank" questions. Let those who prefer to listen, listen. My answers on the next page are just one opinion; you may have a better answer. Repeat 4 & 5 for all questions except the "Think & Pray" questions.
6. On the final "Think & Pray" question everyone should take a few minutes to pray over it and jot down their own thoughts before the discussion. **This gives the Holy Spirit a time to speak, so don't rush it.** The class leader should watch for the pencils and pens to quit moving. Others can look at the "For Further Thought" questions while waiting for everyone to finish.
7. Discuss your "Think & Pray" answers. Never force anyone to share theirs. As with the other questions, my answer, when provided, are just one more opinion; you may have a better answer.
8. Close in prayer (It is best to call on others to pray, but try to get their permission ahead of time.)
9. Fellowship (Leave this as open ended as possible for the time and place you meet.)

Depending on the number of people, each lesson is expected to take about one hour. Steps 4 thru 7 are about half of that. If you take longer, let each lesson take more than one meeting, or consider breaking into two groups. If you take less time, extra questions are provided for discussion called "For Further Thought"

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Lesson 1 - Salt: (Text: Matthew 5:13-20)

In this course we are going to take a broad look at the rest of Matthew 5, verses 13 through 48. I want to talk about a general idea I believe Jesus was trying to get across. He uses six examples in the same form. "You have heard that the ancients were told ..." (then He quotes something from the Old Testament and/or something the Pharisees claimed was right) and then He says, "But I say to you" and then gives an example of this idea. The idea is this: stay away from the edge, it is dangerous there.

Some people take this chapter and use it to heap more rules and legalism on all who will listen to them. They claim that Jesus is giving us even more laws. He is not. He is just explaining the best way to go about keeping the laws that have already been given. Many of us look at rules as something to be bent. We like to see exactly how much we can get away with. We want to exercise our freedom of choice right up to the edge of doing wrong, without going over. But when we do that we inevitably go over the line, perhaps accidentally, perhaps unintentionally, but over the line nevertheless. Jesus is saying don't live that way. He is saying to get as far away from that edge, that border line between right and wrong, as possible.

To introduce this idea Jesus uses two figures of speech to describe a worthwhile Christian – salt and light.

Read Matthew 5:13-20

[1A] According to Matt 5:13 what happens to salt when it becomes tasteless? _____

[1B] What does Matthew 5:13 mean?

Think & Pray _____



You are the salt of the earth

Course Long Exercise:

Who do you think is good? Think about it for a minute. Pick one real person. Someone other than Jesus Christ that you actually know, not a historical or famous person. Who is your example of how a person should live the good life? Do you have them clearly in mind? Maybe it is a saintly grandmother or a pastor that led you to Christ. Maybe it is one of your parents or a special teacher you had in school that took an interest in you. Maybe it is fellow Christian you find inspiring and encouraging.

Write down something to help you remember your choice: _____
(Don't use their name.)

Remember them. We are going to be using them as a personal teaching example for you during this entire course. What makes you believe them to be a good example?

----- ANSWERS -----

Lesson 1 - Salt

[1A] According to Matt 5:13 what happens to salt when it becomes tasteless?

It is discarded and trampled.

[1B] The phrase "has become tasteless" is from one Greek word for which there is no English word. That is how translators do it when there is no word that matches, they describe it instead. The word translated "has become tasteless" is only translated that way when the context is food, or something you put on food, like salt. When the word is used in connection with people it means "make a fool of yourself" or something like that. "Clueless" might be the best translation.

Here it is using the word "salt" to describe people, so which of the two meanings of this Greek word is meant? "Become tasteless" or "clueless." Is He saying that when a Christian is foolish he is also useless? I'll let you make up your own mind about that, but it seems clear to me God doesn't want silly Christians. And yet, there does seem to be many that are. They'll take one verse out of context and build their whole religion on it, or live in such an unwise way that the unbelievers around them just roll their eyes and count their lucky stars they are not a Christian. Or when some Christians realize they have lost their "saltiness" they try to fix it themselves, instead of going to Jesus. They become pepper instead, thinking that if they are hot enough, annoying enough, nagging enough, they will win the lost to Christ.

What is salt? Before refrigerators it was used a lot to preserve food. It is used in lots of circumstances to prevent decay. You can use it on skin wounds to prevent or fight infection. Used in the correct amount it tastes good. It is essential to life. If you get no salt at all you will eventually die.

Have you ever thought about what it might be like after the rapture? All of a sudden Jesus appears and calls all of His own to fly away with Him. A world without Christians. Who would be left to fight evil? Some, perhaps. Christians don't have a monopoly on morality, but probably not enough. Things would become very bad. Christians, non-foolish Christians, that is, help stop the world, our culture, from decaying into evil.

For further thought:

(1c) Are you a salt or pepper Christian?
Do you have taste or are you just white sand suitable for nothing but walking on?

(1d) Do you have Jesus in your heart?
_____ How do you know? If we lived under persecution could the government prove in a court of law that you are a Christian? How about the person you selected for your good example? Would they be convicted of being a Christian?

THE BACK PEW - JEFF LARSON



http://thebackpew.com

You are the 'Salsa' in life's taco.
Mt. 5:13 southwest translation

Lesson 2 - Light: (Text:Matthew 5:14-16, Context: Matthew 5:13-20)

Please read Matthew 5:14-16

[2A] What can not be hidden?

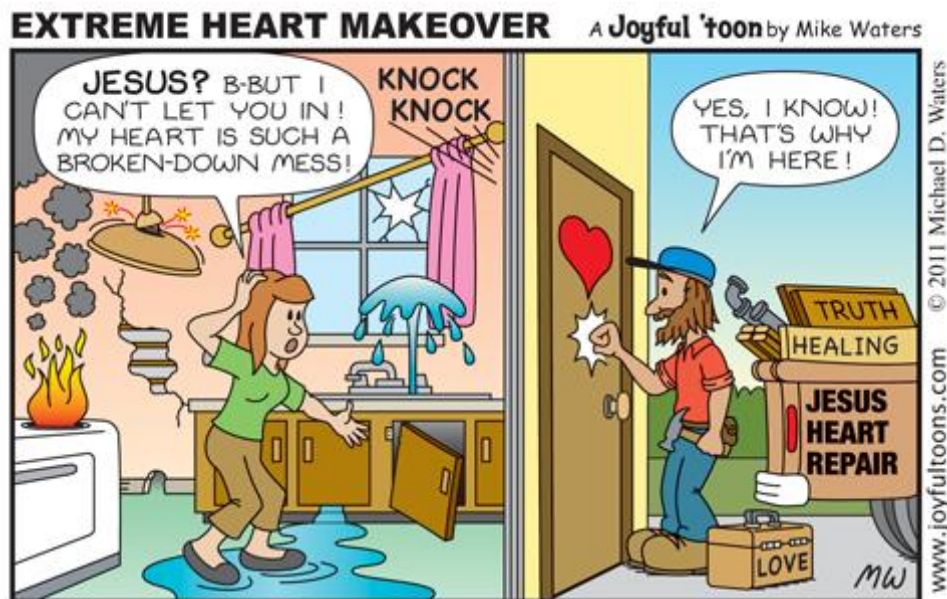
[2B] Where is a light placed?

[2C] Who is to be glorified by our actions?



[2D] We are “the light of the world.” What does that mean? What good works is Matthew 5:16 talking about? Is Jesus talking about charity or what? What does that mean to your life and Christian walk?

Think & Pray _____



Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me. — REVELATION 3:20 NIV

----- ANSWERS -----

Lesson 2 - Light:

[2A] What can not be hidden? A city on a hill [Mt 5:14]

[2B] Where is a light placed? On a stand where it can illuminate widely [Mt 5:15]

[2C] Who is to be glorified by our actions? Our Father in Heaven [Mt 5:16]

[2D] Light, as it is described here, illuminates something. It makes it possible to see. What do we allow the world to see and how do we do that? It explains it in verse 16. We show people God in heaven by our good works here on earth.

Some people do not understand this. They do good works, but it is all about the light shining on themselves. They want credit for it. They want favors for it. They want approval for it. They want admiration for it. They want to be given places of leadership for it. Tasteless salt, flashlights with no batteries, burned out light bulbs, candles without a match, lanterns with no fuel. Useless and hidden.

For further thought:

(2e) How does the real person Christian example you thought of in the last lesson compare with Jesus' words about salt and light?

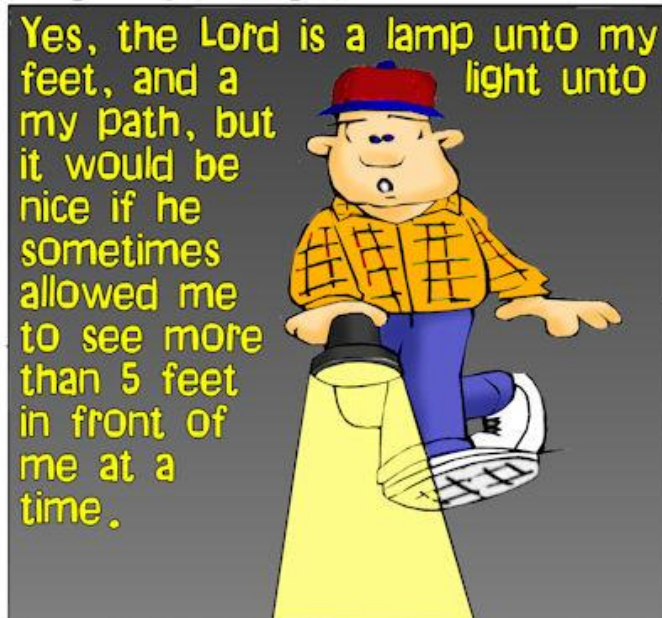
(2f) Are you a useful sort of Christian? Do you glorify God? Are you the best version of yourself or are you somebody that you would hold in contempt?

THE BACK PEW - Jeff LARSON



Take a Lesson from my Dog!
They are judged by this fact, the light came into the world, but they did not want the light. **John 3:19**

The Back Pew - Jeff Larson



but then you would see all the lions, tigers, and bears.. OH MY! **Ps 119:105**

Lesson 3 - Avoid the Edge (Text: Matthew 5:17-20, Context: Matthew 5)

AVOID THE EDGE! I remember when my son started playing soccer in high school. At first when I would go to the games I would be puzzled, trying to figure out who was winning. The scores in soccer are so low that it is hard to tell. Eventually I figured it out. The team that spent most of the time playing closest to their goal were winning. If they could keep the ball down their end of the field they had a better chance of scoring and would usually win. If the ball spent an equal amount of time at each end, that meant it was a close game. In Chapter 5 of Matthew, I think Jesus is saying if you want to win the game of life, quit playing on Satan's end of the field..

Read Matthew 5:17-20

[3A] What has Jesus come to fulfill or complete? _____

[3B] What is going to be taken out of the Law? _____

[3C] Who will be least in the kingdom of God.? _____

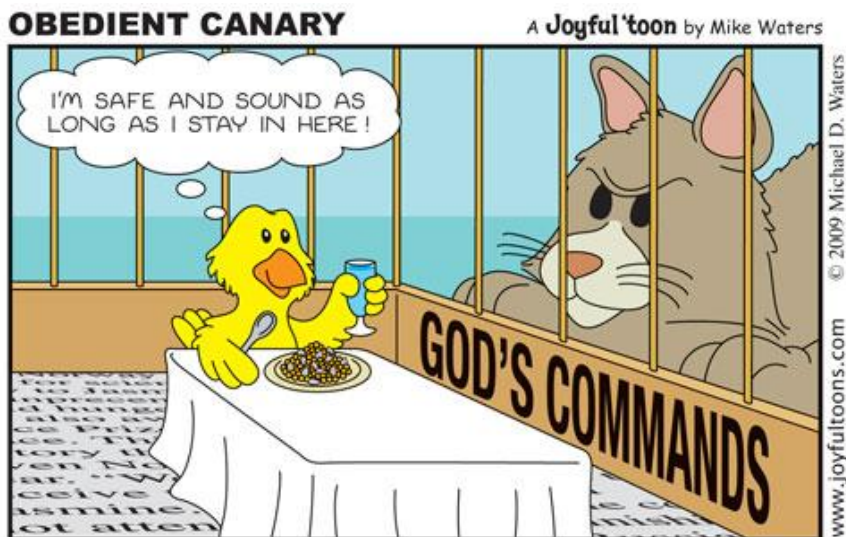
[3D] Who will be greatest in the kingdom of God? _____

[3E] In Matthew 5:17-20 Jesus affirms the whole Old Testament. Then he says something that His listeners would have found phenomenal. "Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and the Pharisees" you will not be saved. The people He was talking to, thought the scribes and Pharisees were the ones who were righteous, who were the best example of what was good in their culture. Now Jesus is telling them to be better than that.

Whoever you wrote about as an example in lesson 1, you have to better than them.

You have to be better than them. Are you?

Think & Pray _____



Follow my decrees and be careful to obey my laws, and you will live safely in the land. Then the land will yield its fruit, and you will eat your fill and live there in safety. — LEVITICUS 25:18-19 NIV

----- ANSWERS -----

Lesson 3 - Avoid the Edge

[3A] What has Jesus come to fulfill or complete?

the Law and the Prophets (Their name for the Old Testament) Mt 5:17

[3B] What is going to be taken out of the Law? Nothing (Mt 5:18)

[3C] Who will be least in the kingdom of God.?

He who teaches we do not need to obey God's laws (Mt 5:19)

[3D] Who will be greatest in the kingdom of God?

He who obeys God and teaches others to do so (Mt 5:19)

[3E] If you are like me, you are finding yourself falling short. Thank God it doesn't depend on you or me.

Jesus said, "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill."

He is the One. He is the One who fulfills the law. If you are cleansed by His blood, if you have a personal relationship with the Lord, if you have the Holy Spirit within you, you are saved. Why? Because He is the One. He fulfilled the Law and the Prophets. It is about Him. It is not about you and me.

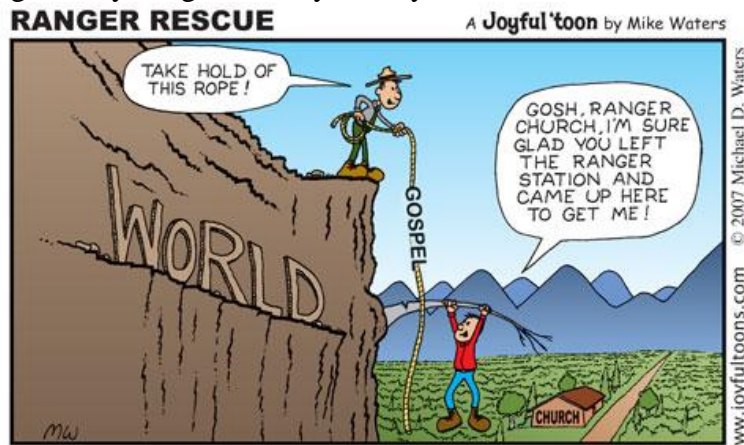
We are the saltshaker, He is the salt within. We are the lantern, He is the fuel. We are the flashlight, He is the battery. If you are not sure you have Jesus in your heart, please ask a Christian you trust to help you.

Jesus is not trying to lay more burdens on us. He is trying to explain to us how His father's universe works. If you want to obey God's commands, and you should, don't go anywhere near the edge of breaking them. Don't try to bend the rules. Live well within them.

For further thought:

(3f) How does the real person Christian example you thought of in lesson 1 compare with Jesus' words about avoiding the edge?

(3g) How does my answer to 3E above sound to you? He provides the Spirit within us that makes us "salty" and "illuminating." Do you agree? Why or why not?



How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!"

- ISAIAH 52:7 NIV

Lesson 4 - Do Not Murder - Read Matthew 5:20-26

[4A] What does Jesus say has the same consequences as murder? _____

[4B] What does Jesus say will happen to people who call others bad names?
_____ and

[4C] Read Ephesians 4:26. How can we avoid getting close to falling over the edge and committing murder?

Think & Pray _____



phillipmartin.info

----- ANSWERS -----

Lesson 4 - Do Not Murder -

[4A] What does Jesus say has the same consequences as murder? Being angry. Mt 5:22

[4B] What does Jesus say will happen to people who call others bad names?
They will get in trouble on earth and go to hell when they die Mt 5:22

[4C] Jesus said we are not to be angry and He even goes on to say not to insult people and call them names. Is He giving us a new set of commandments, even more difficult than the ones we already have? No. He is telling us that to obey the commands, we should not even begin to go in the direction of sin. He is NOT saying anger is a sin. Ephesians 4:26 says, "Be angry, and yet do not sin."

That means that anger is not a sin. Ephesians goes on to say in the next verse, "... and do not give the devil an opportunity." It is the same idea. Don't play around on Satan's end of the field.

Avoid murder with extreme gentleness

For further thought:

(4d) How does the real person Christian example you thought of in lesson 1 compare with Jesus' words about anger?

(4e) Are we born knowing about anger or do children have to learn it? How do you know?

(4f) Read 2 Kings 3:15. What does this tell us about being upset and being able to hear God's voice.

(4g) What does Psalm 37:8 tell us about how long anger should last?

(4h) Read Exodus 22:24. Since anger is an attribute of God and we are made in His image, what does that tell us about ourselves?

(4i) Read John 2:13-17. How would you describe Jesus' mood? Is anger a sin? Why or why not?

(4j) What is something that makes you angry that is justified, that is righteous anger? Why is it Godly anger?

(4k) What does Proverbs 16:32 tell us about controlling our anger.?

There is another course in this Sermon on the Mount series that has several lessons that focuses on what the Bible has to say about anger starting with Matthew 5:21-26. It includes the above "for further thought" questions in more detail as well as many more.



You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.
— 2 CORINTHIANS 3:3 NIV

Lesson 5 - Do Not Commit Adultery (Matthew 5:27-32)

Read Matthew 5:27-30

[5A] What causes a man to commit adultery in his heart? _____

[5B] When a man divorces his wife, what is he making her do? _____

[5C] Is divorce a good solution for marital problems? _____

[5D] How can we avoid getting close to falling over the edge and committing adultery?

Think & Pray _____

The Back Pew - Jeff Larson



Then out came a woman to meet him, dressed like a prostitute and with crafty intent. **Pr 7:10**

----- ANSWERS -----

Lesson 5 - Do Not Commit Adultery

[5A] What causes a man to commit adultery in his heart? Looking at a woman with lust for her Mt 5:28

[5B] When a man divorces his wife, what is he making her do? Commit adultery Mt 5:32

[5C] In ancient days, in the Old Testament, the rule was that if a man wanted to divorce his wife, he simply wrote it down on a piece of paper, gave it to her, and told her to be on her way. Some people want to take this passage and claim that Jesus is making a different law – divorce is a sin. That is not what He said at all. He is saying that when you get a divorce it makes a big emotional complicated mess. Divorce is terrible. However, God recognizes that it takes two to make a marriage, but only one to make a divorce.

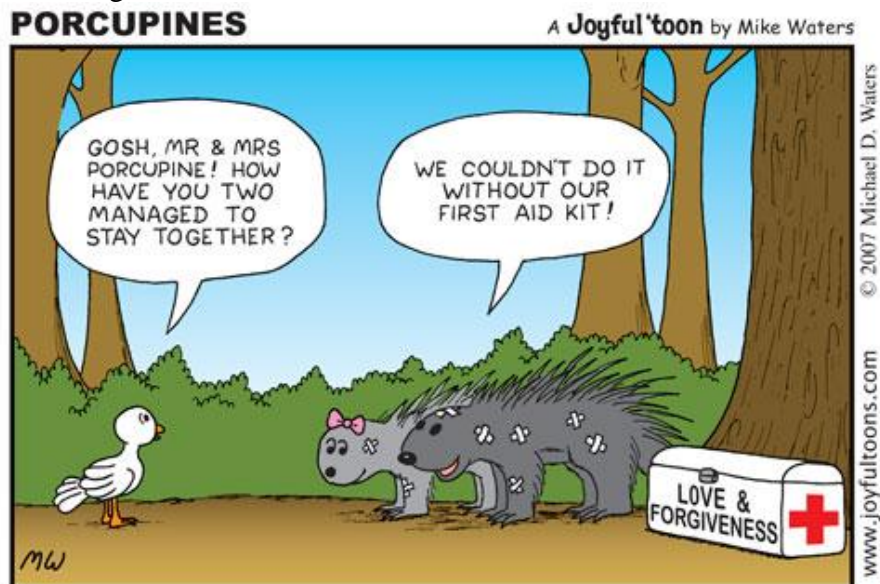
Anybody who has ever been near a divorce knows it is terrible. Even if there is no children and everyone is friendly and in agreement, it is the death of a dream. I can't tell you how many couples I have been around who don't take their marriage seriously. They think if things don't go their way they can just get a divorce. No problem. That is ridiculous. If you get a divorce and marry someone else your problems go with you.

Happiness in marriage does not come from having a good spouse.

Happiness in marriage comes from being a good spouse.

Don't give Satan a foothold in your marriage. Make it work. Do whatever it takes to make it work.

[5D] Half the people in the world are the opposite sex. You can't not look at them. You can't stop noticing them. But you can control what you think about. You can control what you stare at. Is it a sin to look at someone? No. When you feel yourself going in the direction of lust... When you notice you are making plans for intimacy with someone you are not married to... RUN! Go the other direction. Think about something else. Don't play on Satan's end of the field. Don't go near the edge. The edge is dangerous. (See also Genesis 39:1-22)



Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. - 1 PETER 4:8 NIV

Avoid adultery by not looking at all. Take your marriage seriously

For further thought:

(5e) How does the real person Christian example you thought of in lesson 1 compare with Jesus' words about adultery?

(5f) Compare Deuteronomy 24:1 with Malachi 2:16. Does God approve of divorce? How do you know?

(5g) Read Ephesians 5:21-33 and discuss it.

There is another course in this series on the Sermon on the Mount that focuses on Matthew 5:27-32. Actually there are two courses - one for men and one for women.

----- ANSWERS -----

Lesson 6 - Keep All of Your Promises

[6] What four things are we not to swear by? (Not necessarily in this order)

[6A] Heaven Mt 5:34

[6B] Earth Mt 5:35

[6C] Jerusalem Mt 5:35

[6D] Your own head Mt 5:36.

[6E] This list of things we are not supposed to swear by is not meant to be a complete list. They are examples to show the uselessness of swearing "by" something. I never have understood the people who want to make this chapter into a bunch of new laws. How do they explain this one? How can you get married and not make a vow, a promise? On the other hand I have little patience with those whose words mean nothing. Don't tangle yourself up with a bunch of commitments you have no way of keeping. Don't make so many promises you can't remember them. That is playing down Satan's end of the field. (More about this in Course 10.)

Avoid breaking your promises by making very few promises

For further thought:

(6f) How does the real person Christian example you thought of in lesson 1 compare with Jesus' words about keeping their word?

(6g) What does Deuteronomy 23:21 tell us about promises?

(6h) What does Numbers 30:2 tell us about promises?

(6i) What does Leviticus 19:2 tell us about promises?

(6j) What does James 4:15 tell us about our ability to keep our word?

There is a another course in this series on the Sermon on the Mount that focuses on Matthew 5:33-36.

There is an entire series of courses that looks at the

process of claiming God's promises called Prayers & Promises.

See <http://www.LoveBibleStudy.com>.



Lesson 7 -Love Your Enemies – Unconditional Forgiveness

Read Matthew 5:37-42 (See also Mt 6:14-15, Lk 6:27 and Lk 6:35)

[7A] What was supposed to be taken from a person who caused somebody to lose an eye? _____

[7B] If someone wants to take your shirt by force, what are you supposed to do? _____

[7C] For whom are we supposed to pray? _____

[7D] To whom does God give His sunshine and rain? _____

[7E] How can we avoid getting close to falling over the edge and becoming hateful?

Think & Pray _____

DUMPSTER



A Joyful 'toon by Mike Waters



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Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

— EPHESIANS 4:31-32 NIV

----- ANSWERS -----

Lesson 7 - Love Your Enemies – Unconditional Forgiveness

[7A] What was supposed to be taken from a person who caused somebody to lose an eye? Their eye Mt 5:37

[7B] If someone wants to take your shirt by force, what are you supposed to do? Give them your coat. Mt 5:40

[7C] For whom are we supposed to pray? Those who persecute us. Mt 5:44

[7D] To whom does God give His sunshine and rain? Everyone, good, evil, righteous and unrighteous Mt 5:45

[7E] Most of us have been involved in trying to take our own vengeance. We become our own judge, jury and executioner. How dare he say that to me! We have all heard of incidents of road rage. Somebody drives stupidly and a few minutes later somebody is dead. Let it go! Taking vengeance just leads to a cycle of violence. It is too near the edge. It leads to all kinds of sin. (More about this in Course 11)

Avoid violence and unending trouble with forgiveness

Instead, love your enemies. Pray for your enemies. This is hard to do, but our Father who created the universe, says that this is the way we should act in His universe in order to get the best results. Did you know that many, perhaps most, people who are murdered are murdered by a family member? Who are our enemies? The most annoying people in our lives are the ones we are around the most. We know all their faults, follies, and foibles and they irritate and aggravate us. You know what I'm talking about.

But you also live in God's universe. I'm not telling you anything you don't already know. It is better to live with people you love than people you hate. You know that is true. But here is what you might not have realized before. Even if you can not choose who you live with, you can still decide to love them. The happiest way to live is to love the people around you and that is totally in your control. You can decide to do that. Just get off Satan's, hate filled, vengeance hunting, pleasure seeking, promise complicated, anger defiled, end of the field. Don't go near the edge!

Have a happy life by giving love without limit

For further thought:

(7f) How does the real person Christian example you thought of in lesson 1 compare with Jesus' words about forgiveness and love?

(7g) Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 22:39; Mark 12:31, Romans 13:9, Galatians 5:14 all tell us to love our neighbor. Do any of them suggest we are free to disobey that command if our neighbor is also our enemy? What does that tell us?

(7h) What is 2 Samuel 19:6 talking about?

(7i) How do you explain Psalm 143:12 in light of Jesus' command to love our enemies?



But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. — LUKE 6:35 NIV

Lesson 8 - Be Perfect – Read Matthew 5:48

[8A] Who are we supposed to be like? _____

[8B] How can we move in the opposite direction of the edge between right and wrong, in the direction towards God’s perfection?

Think & Pray _____



We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.
— ROMANS 6:4 NIV

Questions for further discussion on the course as a whole:

It seems to work best to discuss questions W and X together.

[W] Which of the things mentioned in this course is hardest for you to do? Why?

Think & Pray _____

[X] Which of the things mentioned in this course is easiest for you to do? Why?

Think & Pray _____

[Y] What does Matthew 5:45 tell us about the nature of God?

Think & Pray _____

[Z] What do you hope you remember from taking this course?

Think & Pray _____

----- ANSWERS -----

Lesson 8 - Be Perfect

[8A] Who are we supposed to be like? Our heavenly Father Mt 5:48

[8B] We know perfection is impossible for us humans. In the old days the sailing ships used to steer by the stars. They would pick out a star above where they wanted to go and steer towards it. They would never get to the star but they would get to safe port. This is like that. Being perfect is a star to steer towards. It is the direction away from the edge. It is God's end of the field. Keep your eyes on the cross. Try to be like Jesus.

1st Thessalonians 5:22 "Abstain from all appearance of evil."

Live a life of victory by living God's way

For further thought:

(8c) How does the real person Christian example you thought of in lesson 1 compare with Jesus' words about being Godlike?

(8d) Read <http://www.gotquestions.org/Christ-like.html> about how to be more like Christ. Can you add anything to what they say?

[W & X] Each of us is different. I have no problem with not taking vengeance. I can shrug things off pretty easily. On the other hand at the moment something bad happens to me, I do have trouble bending my anger into something positive.

[Y] That He is in control of everything – power without limit. It also tells us that He uses His power to extend His love to everyone.

[Z] I hope I remember this from writing this course:

AVOID LIVING ON THE EDGE OF THE ABYSS OF SIN!

Avoid murder with extreme gentleness

Avoid adultery by not looking at all

Avoid breaking your promises by making very few promises

Avoid violence and unending trouble with forgiveness

Have a happy life by giving love without limit

Live a life of victory by living God's way