



Sanctity of Human Life

WHO IS IMPORTANT?

MATTHEW 5:17-22,43-45

Everyone is important to King Jesus.

FIRST THOUGHTS

There was a young, Deaf woman who was in an accident when she was very young. The accident left her with brain damage, and she lived the rest of her life with her parents. A man who knew her family took advantage of her. He had sexual relations with her, and she became pregnant. After prayer and counseling with the Deaf pastor, she and her family decided to give up the baby for adoption to parents who wanted a child to love. The law said an **abortion** was OK. But this young woman showed that she valued her baby's life.

Jesus values all human life and expects His followers to do the same.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

The **Pharisees** spent their lives studying the written Law. They were taught by famous teachers. Their teaching authority came from what their teachers taught them. They taught from authority.

What Jesus taught was so new and different that the people and the leaders recognized that Jesus taught with His own authority. He didn't teach what other people said or taught before (Luke 4:31-36; Mark 1:21-22).

The common people believed the Pharisees were the most religious group of people. Jesus challenged this belief. Jesus taught that obedience must exceed the examples of the Pharisees (Matthew 5:20).

EXPLORE THE TEXT (MATTHEW 5:17-22,43-45)

1. The Importance of the Law (Matthew 5:17-20)

VERSE 17.

¹⁷ *"Don't think that I have come to destroy the Law of Moses or the teaching of the prophets. I have not come to destroy them but to bring about what they said."*

Jesus wanted His listeners to understand that He obeyed the Law of God. This was called the Law of Moses. Jesus said it was not His plan to challenge the Law, change it, or do away with it. Instead, His purpose was to **fulfill** the Law.

Jesus had constant conflicts with the **Pharisees** and other religious leaders. Most of them believed that salvation came through keeping the Law. Jesus taught that the Ten Commandments were timeless truths that revealed God's character, expectations, and values. However, only faith in Jesus could give the righteousness that God demanded.

The religious leaders said Jesus broke the Law by associating with sinners and doing things on the Sabbath. Jesus healed people on the Sabbath. Jesus was friends with sinners. Jesus said some of those laws were made by men and not truly part of the Law of Moses.

VERSE 18.

¹⁸ I tell you the truth, nothing will disappear from the Law until heaven and earth are gone. Not even the smallest letter or the smallest part of a letter will be lost until everything has happened.

The Hebrew alphabet has some letters with small, extra marks to the side that are not attached to the letters and can be easily overlooked. Jesus knew that it was easier to keep some parts of the Law than others, but He taught that everything in the Law is important, even what some would think were little things.

VERSES 19-20.

¹⁹ Whoever refuses to obey any command and teaches other people not to obey that command will be the least important in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever obeys the commands and teaches other people to obey them will be great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰ I tell you that if you are no more obedient than the teachers of the law and the Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus knew the Pharisees were proud because they obeyed the Law and its extra rules like how many steps one could take or how much they could carry on the Sabbath Day.

Jesus could not have been clearer in His teaching than in verse 20. His choice of words left no doubt that the Pharisees were not teaching the truth and were not obeying the Law. They were not doing God's will.

KEY DOCTRINE: *Doing God's Will*

Read John 4:34. Which phrase(s) below describes Jesus?

- a. delight in the Father's will
- b. it is OK to go without food
- c. satisfaction in doing God's work
- d. there is no hurry in doing things for God
- e. doing a good job

Read Psalm 37:4-5. What can a person experience from serving God?

Read Galatians 2:20. What does Paul mean by saying, "I do not live anymore"? _____

Read Galatians 2:21. Does Paul say that Christ's death was useless?
YES NO Why or why not? _____

How did Jesus' teaching differ from the Pharisees' teaching?

2. Human Life Is Important (Matthew 5:21-22)

VERSE 21.

²¹*You have heard that it was said to our people long ago, "You must not murder anyone. Anyone who murders another will be judged."*

Jesus began teaching about the sixth and seventh commandments. Jesus taught that there is more to obeying

the laws than what we call the letter of the law. There is also the spirit of the law or obeying the law in our hearts before our actions can disobey the law. Jesus gave new understanding to the law. Many people today do not want to be tied down by the moral laws of God. They want to decide for themselves what is right and moral.

Jesus identified murder as an act that begins in the heart when another person is seen as worth nothing. The sin is in the attitude as well as in the act of murder. Murder, selling drugs, **sex trafficking**, and **abortion** are all examples of ignoring the value of other people.

Perhaps the largest example of ignoring the value of life we see in America is abortion. Since the 1973 decision by the United States Supreme Court on the issue of abortion, more than 57.5 million abortions have been performed in the U.S. Some reports state that over 1.2 million abortions per year are performed in Japan where oral contraceptives are still illegal.

VERSE 22.

²² But I tell you, if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be judged. If you say bad things to a brother or sister, you will be judged by the council. And if you call someone a fool, you will be in danger of the fire of hell.

Jesus finished talking about murder and then began teaching about anger. Was it because murder and anger are related?

Jesus taught that what begins small can grow to violence. This new type of teaching is another example of Jesus fulfilling the Law.

Read Proverbs 14:12. What is the result of people deciding for themselves what is right and moral? _____

How does this affect society when everyone wants to do this? _____

3. Love Beyond Expectations (Matthew 5:43-45)

VERSES 43-44.

⁴³ *You have heard that it was said, “Love your neighbor, and hate your enemies.”* ⁴⁴ *But I say to you, love your enemies. Pray for those who hurt you.*

The **Pharisees** had it completely wrong. They would not eat or fellowship with people they decided were sinners. The Pharisees labeled Jesus as a friend of Publicans and sinners. But in Luke 15:1-7, Jesus told a **parable** that taught that it is good to love sinners in order to teach them about God. Jesus’ example taught that Christians and the church should welcome those who are willing to seek God’s forgiveness in **repentance**. Today we often hear this expressed as “love the sinner, hate the sin.”

Jesus taught that His followers should not only love all people but also love people who persecuted them.

VERSE 45.

⁴⁵ *If you do this, you will be true children of your Father in heaven. He causes the sun to rise on good people and on evil people, and he sends rain to those who do right and to those who do wrong.*

In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gave examples about how believers should live. Jesus talked about how His followers should live so nonbelievers will want to follow Him.

BIBLE SKILL: *True Children of God*

To be a true child of God we must obey His will.

In your mind, imagine you have two acorns, a hammer, and a small shovel. Imagine that you take the two acorns and place them on the ground. Imagine you dig a small hole, place one acorn in it, and cover it with dirt. Imagine you take the other acorn and smash it with a hammer. With that picture in mind, answer these questions:

Which acorn will become an oak tree, and become what it is supposed to become? _____

Now, imagine that the acorns are your life. What will happen if you “plant” your life the way God wants it? _____

What will happen if you abuse your life and do not use it the way God wants you to? _____

Read Psalm 51:10 and Isaiah 40:31. Write down three things you will ask God to do to help you follow His will.

All that Jesus taught is summed up in the first part of verse 45: “If you do this, you will be true children of your Father in heaven.”

Jesus taught that we cannot choose or decide who we will love or bless. He explained that God’s love is for everyone, even those who do not know Him yet, just as the blessings of sunshine and rain are for everyone.

Write the words from John 3:16 here and substitute your name for the word *world*. _____

Now write the verse again with the name of a friend or family member and promise to pray for that person every day. _____

IN MY CONTEXT

From what Jesus said, is murder a big sin and anger a little sin?

YES NO

Do you think that your sins are smaller or bigger than someone else's sins? YES NO

What do you think God thinks about this? _____

Do you know someone who is struggling with what to do about an unplanned pregnancy? YES NO

How do you think Jesus would respond to them? _____

How should you respond to them? _____

Jesus called His followers to live their daily lives to a higher standard. Jesus knows we cannot do this in our own strength. This is why we have Bible promises that God will give us His strength and power to do what He wants us to do. Copy Philippians 4:13 here.

Pray using these words.

MEMORY VERSE

"But I say to you, love your enemies. Pray for those who hurt you."

—Matthew 5:44

Sanctity of Human Life

WHO IS IMPORTANT?

MATTHEW 5:17-22,43-45

PLAN AHEAD

Ask _____ to sign the hymn, “Oh, How He Loves You and Me” (Let’s Sign Hymnal # 320).

EXPLORE THE TEXT (MATTHEW 5:17-22,43-45)

1. The Importance of the Law (Matthew 5:17-20)

This is the Sanctity of Life lesson for this quarter. Be careful not to spend too much time on this section in order to focus more fully on the next section.

Ask _____ to study this Scripture Search (The Law) and summarize it for the class.

SCRIPTURE SEARCH: *The Law*

The Law means the first five books of the Old Testament. It is sometimes called the Law of Moses. The Pharisees added many rules, but Jesus spoke only about the Law of Moses. The Law was based on the covenant between God and His people (Exodus 19:5). Psalm 119:1-16 uses several words for the Law: teachings (verse 1), rules (verses 2, 14), orders (verses 4, 15), demands (verses 5, 8, 12, 16), commands (verses 6, 10), laws (verses 7, 13), words (verses 9, 11), and God’s ways (verse 15). The Ten Commandments summarize the whole Law (Exodus 20:2-17; Deuteronomy 5:6-21). Many of the laws begin with the words *if* or *when*. If the people obey, God will bless. When they disobey, God will punish. (See Exodus 21:2-4; 22:1-5,25-27).

How do we know what parts of the Old Testament law we must obey and what parts are no longer required? (New Testament teachings, especially the words of Jesus, are what Jesus meant by “fulfilling the Law.”)

2. Human Life Is Important (Matthew 5:21-22)

Review the material in the pupil section and use the study questions at the end to emphasize the sanctity of human life. Encourage discussion of what this means in your community, or among the Deaf people in your community.

3. Love Beyond Expectations (Matthew 5:43-45)

Review the pupil material.

Ask _____ to study Dig Deeper (A Child of God) and summarize it for the class.

DIG DEEPER: *A Child of God*

John 3:1-8 is a wonderful word picture of salvation: to be born again. We become a child of God. “Everyone who believes that Jesus is Christ is God’s child” (1 John 5:1). “Everyone who is a child of God conquers the world” through faith (1 John 5:4). “Those who are God’s children do not continue to sin” (1 John 5:18).

A child is different from a slave. “Now, you are not a slave, you are God’s child, and God will give you the blessing He promised, because you are His child” (Galatians 4:7). We are not naturally born children, but adopted by God through our faith in Jesus as Savior. “To all who did accept Him and believe in Him, He gave the right to become children of God” (John 1:12). “The Father has loved us so much that we are called children of God. And we really are His children” (1 John 3:1).

IN MY CONTEXT

Encourage discussion of the three elements of this lesson: the Law, human life, and love. Ask the class to discuss how these three ideas are related in this lesson.