



LIFE & MINISTRY OF JESUS

Unit 5 • Jesus' Teachings - Principles of Living

UNIT DESCRIPTION

Jesus said, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them” (Matthew 5:17). By the time Jesus spoke these words, God’s Law had been made a tangled web of religious rules. Seeking righteousness through the law, the Jews codified it, adding over 600 statutes of their own. Believing that adhering to these would enable them to keep the law, they believed God would be obligated to grant them entrance into His kingdom. They completely overlooked the purpose and intent. The law sets the standards of a righteous God, and brings us to knowledge of sin. This, in turn, serves to bring us to an awareness of our inability to keep the law and leads us to dependence on God’s grace. When Jesus talked about a new way of understanding the law, it was actually a return to God’s original intention for the law, before man’s abusive excesses and misinterpretations.

The Old Testament clearly points to Jesus, as He encompasses the fulfillment of the Law and Prophets. He fulfilled Messianic prophecy, and was, in fact, the very goal of Old Testament revelation. But His platform was not as the Jewish leaders expected it to be and His methodology directly clashed with the world’s values. His emphasis was on meekness and mercy as opposed to pride and performance.

As you prepare this unit, consider that God calls us to walk in a manner worthy of Christ. As we present ourselves to Him each day, we can hope to progress in our Christian walk as He transforms us by His Holy Spirit. It is by His grace that we were saved and by His grace that we live each day for Him. By relying on ourselves, we demonstrate the same legalistic, prideful mistake the religious leaders made in Jesus’ day.



SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Life & Ministry of Jesus • U5#1 1st-3rd Grade • Oct.29, 2023

Concept

Because only Jesus is perfect, only He can make us right with God.

Goal

Students will learn that the purpose of the Sermon on the Mount teachings was to make it clear that God's standard is perfection and it is impossible to be perfect. God knows that no one can be perfect!

Passage

Matthew 5-7

Key Verse: "Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." Matthew 5:48

Planning Ahead

Lesson Supplies	Craft Supplies
Learning Activity #1: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• "Members Only!" cards, 1/student• Smarties candy, 1 roll/student Lesson: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• "Jesus' Standard of Perfection," 1/CT class	Activity Station: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• "Members Only!" Club sign• 6 clothespins• 2, 2-liter plastic bottles *• "Brain Teaser," 1/student

*TEACHERS PLEASE NOTE

For clarity, the italicized areas in the Planning Ahead section indicate supplies that are in—and should be returned to—your classroom SHARED SUPPLY bag.

Background Information/Teacher Helps

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Israel's religious leaders had twisted, misquoted and misapplied the Old Testament Law throughout Jewish history. By the time Jesus arrived on the scene, the laws, intended to reflect God's nature and character, had been reduced to a strict set of do's and don'ts, with little or no regard to an individual's heart. Jesus didn't speak against the law; rather, He summed up its moral and ethical standards. This, Jesus' longest recorded sermon, teaches that legalistic observance and ritual are worthless. Instead, God desires heartfelt, humble service and obedience (see Hosea 6:6; Amos 5:21, 22), Jesus' death on the cross being the ultimate example (see Phil. 2:5-8). A brief summary of His discourse demonstrates the platform from which He established His ministry. Jesus began the sermon with the beatitudes. These "be" attitudes are in sharp contrast to the "do" attitudes the Jewish leaders preached. "The expression of Christian character is not good doing, but Godlikeness. If the Spirit of God has transformed you within, you will exhibit Divine characteristics in your life, not good human characteristics. God's life in us expresses itself as God's life, not as a human life trying to be godly. The secret of a Christian is that the supernatural is made natural in him by the grace of God, and the experience of this works out in the practical details of life, not in times of communion with God."³

Although Jesus was accused of subverting the Law, He actually came to fulfill it. The sermon concludes with exhortations to his followers. By the end of the discourse, it is obvious that external works are not the way to God. No one, with the exception of Jesus, can possibly live up to God's standards, not even the most religious. Who, then, can be perfect (Matt. 5:48) as it is commanded? Who can pass through the small gate and narrow road that leads to life (Matt. 7:14)? The sermon reveals that we cannot possibly live up to the Law. But Jesus has done it, once and for all. While it is impossible for us to live the perfect life, He did. Because of His grace toward us, we can demonstrate grace toward others. As we recognize our sin, character flaws and helplessness to do anything apart from Christ we will rely more and more on Him, and less and less on ourselves. As a result, we will be progressively transformed and increasingly reflect His character in our lives.

³ My Utmost for His Highest, Oswald Chambers, © 1935, Dodd, Mead & Company, Inc., September 20th.

Activity Stations:

- **Object Lesson: “Members Only!” Club**

- **Goal:** To experience the frustration of trying to accomplish impossible tasks.
- **Instructions:** Set up a corner of the classroom as an exclusive “clubhouse” and hang the “Members Only!” Club sign. This exclusive “Members Only!” Club is only for those who can perfectly accomplish all the tasks in all three of the activity stations. Make a big deal about the fact that there are great benefits to being in this club. The most obvious benefit is that they were good enough to get in. Not everybody can do it. It is designed so that NO ONE will be able to get in.

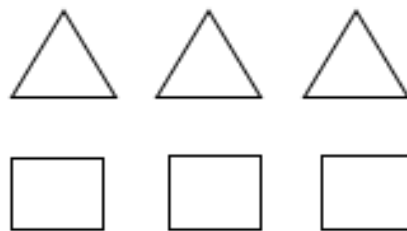
- **Game – Clothespins in a Bottle**

- **Instructions:** Put the two plastic bottles on the floor and give two students 3 clothespins each. Standing up with knees straight, they must drop the clothespins in the bottle. They must get all three clothespins in the bottle.

- **Drama – Peter Piper**

- **Instructions:** Student must perfectly repeat the tongue twister two times within ten seconds in front of a group of children. “Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers. If Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers, how many pickled peppers did Peter Piper pick?”

- **Brain Teaser**



- **Instructions:** Draw three straight lines from each triangle connecting each to all three squares. The lines must be straight and cannot cross each other. Note: This can't be done.

**Introduction
Lg. Group**

Jesus began to teach His disciples truths about themselves and God that were very different from what the religious leaders taught. The religious leaders, called Pharisees, made up a bunch of rules that they could keep and thought that by keeping these rules perfectly, they were good enough to be with God. Then they told everyone else that they must also perfectly keep these rules if they wanted to get to God. But Jesus said that you have to be even better than the Pharisees who keep all their rules, you have to be perfect like God is. Our key verse says, “Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:48).

Object Lesson

Instructions: One teacher will do the discussion. One will have the membership cards. One will have the candy. The students need to ask for the membership card and then show their signed card to get the treat.

Learning Activity#1 Continued

How many of you got into the “Members Only!” Club because you did everything perfectly? What, no one?! Didn’t anyone want to be in the club? Oh, no one was able to do every activity perfectly. How did you feel about the rule that you had to do everything perfectly? Did it make you mad, frustrated, want to give up or try harder? Some of you might not even have cared or wanted to be in the club. Were any of you tempted to change the rules so you could get into club?

I have a secret to tell you. When we made the rules for the activities, we knew it would be impossible for anyone to do them perfectly. We never expected you to be able to do these things perfectly. But we want all of you to be a “Members Only!” Club member so we made a plan to give everyone an opportunity. If you weren’t able to do the activities perfectly, but want to be in the “Members Only!” Club go to <<teacher’s name>> and ask her for a membership card and write your name on the card. <<teacher’s name>> has a treat for members of “Members Only!” Club. If you show <<teacher’s name>> your membership card he/she will give you the treat.

Transition

Everyone come sit back down for the lesson.

Lesson Lg. Group

Instructions: As you go through the verses, write the verses on the board (if available) as shown in the “Jesus’ Standard of Perfection” sheet.

The “Members Only!” Club is a silly club and doesn’t mean anything, but what do you think about our key verse for today, “Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:48). This verse says that you have to be perfect like God to get to heaven. You can never, ever get mad at someone for any reason or never even once think a bad thought.

Do you think this is fair? Is it possible for anyone to be perfect? Of course not! No one is perfect! The Bible even tells us in Romans 3 that everyone has sinned and falls short of God’s perfect standard. The problem in Jesus’ day was that the Pharisees changed God’s laws to rules they could keep. So they thought they didn’t sin. The same thing is true today. We often pretend that following the rules is good enough, letting us believe we don’t need to depend on Christ.

Turn to chapter 5 in the book of Matthew. Does anyone know what we call the teaching in chapters 5-7 (the Sermon on the Mount)? The purpose of these teachings was to make it clear that God is perfect and it is impossible for us to be perfect. God gave us His law so we would know that there is no way we can work our way to God. Look at verse 20 in Matthew 5. (Read the verse.) Even though the Pharisees did a very good job of keeping all their rules, actually better than anyone else, they weren’t perfect.

Lesson Continued

Let's look at three of the things that Jesus talks about in Matthew 5. On your sheet, the left column is what the religious leaders taught and lived and the right column is for you to add what Jesus says is the actual standard.

- Read verses 21 & 22 of Matthew 5. So, we all know it's wrong to murder and I think all of us have kept that law. But what about calling a friend "stupid"? So what should I write on the right column under Matthew 5:22, "I Say..."? Has anyone here kept that law? I know I haven't. That makes us guilty!
- Okay now let's look at Matthew 5:38-42. What does "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" mean? (We can make others pay us back equally for times they have done something wrong and we have to pay back equally what we've done wrong.) But what does Jesus say? (Vs. 39, rather than strike back, show forgiveness. Vs. 40, willing to go above and beyond what is fair to right a wrong we have done. Vs. 41, if we are forced to do something we don't want to do, we do it, and even more, willingly. Vs. 42, be generous) So how are you guys doing here? What do you think about this? (Allow time for discussion. Recognize that because we are so fallen, this is impossible for us. We usually want people to pay big time for their sin and want things to work out the way we want. But how often are we willing to take full responsibility for our sin?)

Did any of you give up on the "Members Only!" Club activities you thought you couldn't do and decide they weren't important, but kept trying on those you were more confident about? Are there things that you don't have a problem with that you think are bad when others do it? What about the things you do struggle with? Do you expect others to be patient and forgiving towards you? So write Jesus' standard under Matthew 5:39-42.

- Now let's look at verses 43 & 44. Love your neighbor and hate your enemy. While we are able to treat our neighbors and friends with love, it's natural to hate our enemies. But what does Jesus say? Not only should we love our enemies, but we should pray for them. What do you think about that? (Again the revenge and fleshly responses should surface. Take them back to what Jesus said.)

Transition

It's easier for some of us to look good. Even if it looks like we are perfect on the outside, if we do all the right things, always are kind and obey and help out without being asked, we aren't perfect on the inside. We just can't be perfect.

Remember 1 Samuel 16:7? "Man looks at the outward appearance but God looks at the heart." It is our heart that is important to God. It is easy for some people to keep all the rules and look good on the outside, but all of us are born with rotten, sinful hearts.

Learning Activity# 2 Sm. Groups

Learning Activity# 2 Continued

Let's consider the key verse, "Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). It's evident by this verse that we have a problem. We have to be perfect to have a relationship with God and to go to heaven, but it's impossible for us to be perfect. So if God knew we couldn't be perfect, why does He tell us we have to be? God knew it would be impossible for us to be perfect, so He had a plan from the beginning of time to bring us back to Him. He sent His perfect Son, Jesus, to die on the cross to pay for our sins. Jesus lived as a man and never sinned, even in His thoughts. So He was able to take the punishment we should have gotten for our sin. When we ask Jesus' death to pay for our sins, Jesus comes into our heart and makes our hearts clean. When God looks at us He doesn't see our sin any longer. He sees His perfect Son, Jesus. Remember our key verse, "Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." (Matthew 5:48.) When Jesus said this, He knew it was impossible. He knew that He is the only way to God.

Let's get into small groups to talk about how this works in our lives.

Discussion

Instructions: Form small groups and have the students discuss the following situation. The issue is that someone does the right thing, but their heart is sinful. Have them think of situations when they have done the same thing.

Situation

At the dinner table, Joe's sister accidentally spills milk on his favorite T-shirt. He punches her in the arm and calls her a name. His father tells him to apologize. He says he is sorry, but thinks to himself, "I'll get her back later."

- What do you think about Joe? He did what his father told him. Do you think he was really sorry? Why?
- Have you ever said and done the right things but on the inside had an attitude like Joe?
- How can we obey with the right attitude?
- What does it mean to repent? (agree with God that you are wrong & tell Him you want to change)
- Has anyone ever repented and asked God to change your attitude? What happened? (usually some suffering involved in seeing our sin)

Mission Prayer: Talk about and pray for Oasis Giving campaign.
Let's pray!

Game – Add an Action

Goal: This game shows the impossibility of perfectly keeping one rule- to do all the actions as they continue to be added. It is impossible to keep even one of God's laws perfectly.

Learning Activity# 3 Lg. Group

Learning Activity#3 Continued

Instructions: The group forms a circle and one student initiates an action, e.g., tapping head or knee. All students mimic the action. The student to the left of the first person adds another action, and all the players then do both actions simultaneously. The game continues until it is impossible to add more actions. It is best to keep the game moving quickly.