**THE HIGH IMPORTANCE OF RIGHT RELATIONSHIPS**

**Matthew 5:21-26**

**EXTERNAL “RIGHTEOUSNESS” IS USELESS WITHOUT INWARD TRANSFORMATION**

* *“You have heard that it was said to our ancestors, Do not murder, and whoever murders will be subject to judgment. 22 But I tell you, everyone who is angry with his brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Whoever insults his brother or sister will be subject to the court. Whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be subject to hellfire.”* (Matthew 5:21-22)
* **As Christians, we are to go beyond mere outward appearance of good works, and demonstrate a changed heart and mind that reflects that we have been born anew in Christ.**
* *“Brood of vipers! How can you speak good things when you are evil? For the mouth speaks from the overflow of the heart.”* (Matthew 12:34)
* *“But the Lord said to Samuel, ‘…for humans see what is visible, but the Lord sees the heart.’”* (1 Samuel 16:7b)
* *“Everyone who hates his brother or sister is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life residing in him.”* (1 Jn 3:15)
* **Inward transformation through Christ is exemplified in the way that we love outward, especially towards those who have wronged us.**
* *“But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 so that you may be children of your Father in heaven. For he causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. 46 For if you love those who love you, what reward will you have? Don’t even the tax collectors do the same? 47 And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what are you doing out of the ordinary? Don’t even the Gentiles do the same?”* (Matthew 5:44-47)

**RECONCILIATION IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF EVERYONE WHO BEARS THE TITLE “CHRISTIAN”**

* *“So if you are offering your gift on the altar, and there you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, 24 leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled with your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift.”* (Matthew 5:23-24)
* **Reconciliation and unity among believers is at the heart of our Lord’s instruction for us.**
* *“Don’t let the sun go down on your anger, 27 and don’t give the devil an opportunity.”* (Ephesians 4:26b-27)
* **We cannot obtain reconciliation without doing our part to actively pursue reconciliation with others.**

**IGNORING UNRESOLVED ISSUES WITH OTHERS ONLY LEADS TO NEGATIVE ESCALATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES**

* *“Reach a settlement quickly with your adversary while you’re on the way with him to the court, or your adversary will hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the officer, and you will be thrown into prison. 26 Truly I tell you, you will never get out of there until you have paid the last penny.”* (Matthew 5:25-26)
* **When we ignore unresolved issues with others it can, and most likely will, lead to more severe issues in the future.**
* *“As you are going with your adversary to the ruler, make an effort to settle with him on the way. Then he won’t drag you before the judge, the judge hand you over to the bailiff, and the bailiff throw you into prison. 59 I tell you, you will never get out of there until you have paid the last penny.”* (Luke 12:58-59)
* **When our earthly relationships exemplify kingdom values we avoid unnecessary judgement from God.**

**Connect Group Discussion**

**Understanding:**

* What was Jesus referring to when He said, “You have heard…”?
* How do we know Jesus wasn’t contradicting the Mosaic Law?
* What is the overarching theme of Matthew 5:21-26?

**Digging Deeper:**

* What do our words/actions reveal about our heart? (Matt. 12:34)
* Why is reconciliation so important to us as believers?
* How would/should you practice the principle of verses 23-24?
* How can you apply the overall message of Matthew 5:21-26 in your own life? Be specific.
* How can this study help you guide others who harbor anger?
* What is your big takeaway from this study?

**Loving Outward:**

* Who do you need to share the gospel with this week?
* Who do you need to follow-up with regarding the gospel?
* Who are you bringing to church next Sunday?

If you are not in a Connect Group and would like to get connected to grow in your relationship with God and others, contact the church office at 225-272-3740, and we can help find a group that fits your schedule.