

This is Jesus' teaching from what is often known as 'The Sermon on the Mount'. He is speaking to his disciples and also to a wider Jewish audience that have gathered to hear Him teach. What He says to them probably came as quite a shock... Feel free to be as messy as you like as you work through this sheet, if people's views and answers differ feel free to write more than one down. There is a sheet with more information and bible verses which might help you to think about certain questions as well as what you may already know. You don't need to write an answer for the final question but you may like to discuss it in your group and reflect on it personally.

What did Jesus mean by the phrases 'accomplish their purpose' and 'its purpose is achieved'?

Who were the pharisees?

What does righteousness mean?

How could someone expect their righteousness to be better than pharisees?

The Law

17 "Don't misunderstand why I have come. I did not come to abolish the law of Moses or the writings of the prophets. No, I came to accomplish their purpose. 18 I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not even the smallest detail of God's law will disappear until its purpose is achieved. 19 So if you ignore the least commandment and teach others to do the same, you will be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But anyone who obeys God's laws and teaches them will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.

20 "But I warn you—unless your righteousness is better than the righteousness of the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven!

Anger

21 "You have heard that our ancestors were told, 'You must not murder. If you commit murder, you are subject to judgment.' 22 But I say, if you are even angry with someone, you are subject to judgment! If you call someone an idiot, you are in danger of being brought before the court. And if you curse someone, you are in danger of the fires of hell.

23 "So if you are presenting a sacrifice at the altar in the Temple and you suddenly remember that someone has something against you, 24 leave your sacrifice there at the altar. Go and be reconciled to that person. Then come and offer your sacrifice to God.

25 "When you are on the way to court with your adversary, settle your differences quickly. Otherwise, your accuser may hand you over to the judge, who will hand you over to an officer, and you will be thrown into prison. 26 And if that happens, you surely won't be free again until you have paid the last penny.

Adultery

27 "You have heard the commandment that says, 'You must not commit adultery.' 28 But I say, anyone who even looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. 29 So if your eye—even your good eye—causes you to lust, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. 30 And if your hand—even your stronger hand—causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

What was wrong by the law and what did Jesus say was wrong?

Does Jesus prohibit looking at women all together? Is it a question of actions or attitudes?

Do you think that Jesus' suggestion of gouging out eyes and cutting of hands is fair? Should we be following it?

Would you say that you prefer what is quoted here as the law or what Jesus says? Why?

Why would Jesus say that marrying a divorced woman commits adultery? Do you agree?

Divorce

31 "You have heard the law that says, 'A man can divorce his wife by merely giving her a written notice of divorce.' 32 But I say that a man who divorces his wife, unless she has been unfaithful, causes her to commit adultery. And anyone who marries a divorced woman also commits adultery.

What sort of vows is Jesus talking about? Can you think of a contemporary example?

Vows

33 "You have also heard that our ancestors were told, 'You must not break your vows; you must carry out the vows you make to the LORD.' 34 But I say, do not make any vows! Do not say, 'By heaven!' because heaven is God's throne. 35 And do not say, 'By the earth!' because the earth is his footstool. And do not say, 'By Jerusalem!' for Jerusalem is the city of the great King. 36 Do not even say, 'By my head!' for you can't turn one hair white or black. 37 Just say a simple, 'Yes, I will,' or 'No, I won't.' Anything beyond this is from the evil one.

Why would it be 'from the evil one' to swear in something?

Revenge

38 "You have heard the law that says the punishment must match the injury: 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.' 39 But I say, do not resist an evil person! If someone slaps you on the right cheek, offer the other cheek also. 40 If you are sued in court and your shirt is taken from you, give your coat, too. 41 If a soldier demands that you carry his gear for a mile, carry it two miles. 42 Give to those who ask, and don't turn away from those who want to borrow.

Do you think an 'eye for an eye' is fair?

Do you think turning the cheek is fair? Why?

Teaching about Love for Enemies

43 "You have heard the law that says, 'Love your neighbour' and hate your enemy. 44 But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you! 45 In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven. For he gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and the unjust alike. 46 If you love only those who love you, what reward is there for that? Even corrupt tax collectors do that much. 47 If you are kind only to your friends, how are you different from anyone else? Even pagans do that. 48 But you are to be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.

How do you think the Jews that first heard this feel/respond?

Do you think what Jesus asks of His disciples is fair?

Do you think what Jesus asks of His disciples is achievable?

Is Jesus contradicting the law?

Can you think of a parable that Jesus tells that makes a similar point?

Why would Jesus tell us to be perfect? Can we be perfect?

Is Jesus more concerned in these passages with our actions or our attitudes?

Think about whether you would rather live by the law demonstrated in these passages or by Jesus' teachings? Why?