



This week, we are continuing our series, “High Definition Living, an inside look at the Sermon on the Mount.” Two weeks ago, Eric taught us about the “beatitudes” that open the sermon. Then last week, we learned about and discussed our role as “salt” and “light” in the world. This week, we answer some questions about Jesus’ relationship to the teachings in his Jewish heritage . . . so let’s begin!

- **Tell the story of a time in your childhood that you did something you knew your parents did not want you to do.**
  - **Did you try to keep them from finding out that you did it?**
  - **Was it something they specifically told you not to do, or did you "just know?"**
  - **Did they ever find out/what was the end result?**
- **Can you think of a time in your childhood that you did not do something you knew your parents did not want you to do, despite somebody enticing you to do it?**
  - **What kept you from doing it: a fear of discipline, a desire not to disappoint them, you just knew it was the wrong thing to do, etc?**
  - **In hindsight, were there any rewards or consequences for your decision?**
- **READ: Romans 7:7. What does this verse teach us about the purpose of the law?**
- **READ: Matthew 5:17-20.**
  - **What does verse 17 teach us about the relationship between Jesus and the Jewish historical teachings?**
  - **Discuss the relationship between verses 18-19 and the "moral relativism" taught by our culture.**
  - **What does verse 20 teach us about our ability to make it to heaven on our own?**
- **READ: Romans 8:3-4. How does this passage relate to Jesus' statement "I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them" (Matt 5:17)?**
- **What actions are you taking in life to increase your understanding of the Law of God?**
- **On the graph below, how do you think the people around you would describe your attitude toward your sin? Why?**

I’m a pretty good person <----- I’m trying to do better -----> I’m sinful, and I need help

- **What adjustments can you make in your lifestyle that will better reflect your understanding of your helplessness and the solution that Jesus provides?**



Hey Growth Group Leaders!

I was glad to hear some feedback from some of you last week. I want to remind all of you that I would like to get a little feedback of some from you each week.

As I write this Travel Guide, we have officially experienced winter here in Auburn. I spent most of my day working on my computer, but enjoyed a good snowfall earlier in the day. Although we didn't get as much as was forecasted, I hope you all enjoyed the wintery whiteness. Neither Emily or I had seen snow in years. I couldn't help but think about being "cleansed white as snow" from my filthy sinfulness. I think the analogy is a great one to go with our discussion this week . . .

We've had several guests come through Journey Church in the past few months. Some are "church people" and might not be comfortable at Journey. However, several guests are very real prospects for becoming a part of Journey Church. I've mentioned before that statistics tell us that if meaningful relationships within a small-group setting are not established within 6 months, 80% of folks will stop coming. If you see a guest come two or three times, be sure to ask them if they are interested in joining a Growth Group. Remember names and let me know so I can follow up.

The long-term health and growth of the Growth Groups ministry needs to be a team effort. We each need to take ownership for its future. The health of the Growth Groups ministry will open the door for a growing genuine community at Journey. Let's all do our part!

Thanks as always!  
Andrew

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The first two groups of questions are Brain-Storm questions, as usual. These are intended to help focus your conversation and get you into a discussion on the topic at hand. PLEASE do not allow your conversation to get bogged-down in these questions. If you need to skip through them to avoid chasing a rabbit, please do! Also, on weeks like this, there's more information on the Travel Guide than you may be able to cover. Use it as a challenge to encourage your folks to follow up with more thought on the topic in their personal time at home.

As you go through these Brain-Stormers, keep in mind that we are aiming for the relationship between Jesus and the Law. Help your folks understand that the Law still has a purpose: it helps us to understand the difference between right and wrong. Ultimately, it tells us we are sinners. How would we know we are sinners if God didn't give us a standard that says, "if you can't live up to this 100%, then you're a sinner"? With this understanding, the Law also tells us that we're *hopelessly* sinners and can't save ourselves . . . enter Jesus . . .

- **Tell the story of a time in your childhood that you *did* something you knew your parents did not want you to do.**
  - **Did you try to keep them from finding out that you did it?**
  - **Was it something they specifically told you not to do, or did you "just know?"**
  - **Did they ever find out/what was the end result?**

- **Can you think of a time in your childhood that you *did not* do something you knew your parents did not want you to do, despite somebody enticing you to do it?**
  - **What kept you from doing it: a fear of discipline, a desire not to disappoint them, you just knew it was the wrong thing to do, etc?**
  - **In hindsight, were there any rewards or consequences for your decision?**
- **READ: *Romans 7:7*. What does this verse teach us about the purpose of the law?**

Even in the New Testament, there were two camps in Christian circles: one that insisted that the historic Jewish teachings about the Law are still binding and should be followed to the letter, and the other that grabbed hold of the concept of grace and tended to through the historical teachings out to follow Jesus alone.

I have generally found that when two sharp extremes on a theological issue rise up in the church, and when the issue seems to stick around a while without a clear "winner," then the truth is usually somewhere in between. I believe the Bible gives clear teaching that both extremes on the use of the Jewish Law fall short of God's desire.

**This verse teaches us that the Jewish Law has a very clear purpose for us, even today, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: it gives us a standard** to understand how holy God is and how far short of that holiness we fall on our own. **The Law defines "sin" in very practical terms.** In this verse, Paul uses the example of coveting. How would we know what coveting is if it wasn't defined, and how would we know it was wrong unless God said, "this is wrong"?

***Depending on who is in your group, there are several opportunities to talk about the holiness of God in this discussion.*** *If you think your folks would benefit from talking a little bit about the nature of holiness, go ahead. . . . Discuss how God's holiness sets him so far apart from us that we can not even begin to fathom how deep the perfections in His nature collide with even the best good things we would attempt to do on our own.*

- **READ: *Matthew 5:17-20*.**
  - **What does verse 17 teach us about the relationship between Jesus and the Jewish historical teachings?**

God has revealed himself to human beings throughout history. The Jewish teachings up to Jesus' time are largely a collection of "what God has said." Up until the time of Jesus everything God had said was intended to let people know how desperately they needed help. One of the first promises God gave us is that a savior would come. Everything in the Law and the Prophets was intended to point us to the that savior, Jesus. One of the biggest ways it does this is constantly helping us realize that a savior is needed.

- **Discuss the relationship between verses 18-19 and the "moral relativism" taught by our culture.**

The Law taught in the Jewish historical teachings as given by God. God delivered a clear definition of "right and wrong." Jesus teaches us that nothing in the message of grace diminishes the absolute holiness of God. The holiness of God here means the absolute perfection, without a hint of *any* impurity. While the particular *application* of a principle taught in Scripture might shift in different situations, the *principle* itself will never change.

- **What does verse 20 teach us about our ability to make it to heaven on our own?**

In this one statement, Jesus pretty much sums up the entire purpose of everything written in the Jewish historical teachings: they show us that we can't reach God on our own. We need help.

- **READ: *Romans 8:3-4*. How does this passage relate to Jesus' statement "I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them" (Matt 5:17)?**

Jesus had no intention of throwing away the historic Jewish teachings. After all, they actually all were teachings about him! If only we have understanding to recognize it! Additionally, in order to fulfill the teachings that a savior would come, Jesus had to live up to the principles of everything else taught in Scripture. If Jesus fell short in even the smallest detail, he would be in the same plight as the rest of us: needing someone to span the gap between our sinfulness and a holy God.

- **What actions are you taking in life to increase your understanding of the Law of God?**

If your folks have a hard time answering this question, encourage them to get on a Bible reading program. We have compiled several resources to give your folks simple ways to read, anywhere from a 2-week quick shots program to a full 365-day read through the Bible. Additionally, we are in the process of compiling some additional materials to help folks understand the spiritual disciplines and begin to practice them.

- **On the graph below, how do you think the people around you would describe your attitude toward your sin? Why?**

I'm a pretty good person <----- I'm trying to do better -----> I'm sinful, and I need help

Although it wouldn't appear where we want to be, the farther to the right we honestly see ourselves, the healthier our relationship with God probably is. The key to being on the right as being healthy is recognizing Jesus is that help, and we reach out to allow Him to make the necessary adjustments.

- **What adjustments can you make in your lifestyle that will better reflect your understanding of your helplessness and the solution that Jesus provides?**

This is our challenge/response question for the week. You will probably have to feed a few ideas to get the juices flowing here. Below are some generic suggestions. Encourage your folks to build on these and make them specific to their situation:

1. Stop trying to hide some fault/failure, especially if you are hiding it because you are afraid it might change the person's view of you.
2. Practice looking for illustrations in the world around you that can grow your perspective – i.e. the dull dreariness of a winter storm, and the pure beauty of the white snow left behind.
3. When you make a mistake, own up to it quickly and ask the forgiveness of people involved.
4. Intentionally do some menial task that would normally be far below your responsibility level, thus demonstrating that you recognize your level of 'earthly greatness' isn't anything compared to God's.
5. Tell somebody your story: tell them how you came to recognize your sinfulness and simply share the difference that forgiveness found through Jesus has made.