



This week, we are continuing our series, “High Definition Living, an inside look at the Sermon on the Mount.” This week, we are “Channel Surfing” through a lot of material as we continue on the theme of balancing between the Law and the grace we experience through a relationship with Jesus Christ. The challenge is to work on our internal motivations *before* they affect our outward actions. We encourage you to take this Travel Guide home and finishing on your own what your group doesn’t get to . . .

- **Tell the story of a situation you faced in your life that was exceptionally painful.**
 - **How did it change your perspective toward the other people involved?**
 - **Did the hurt of the situation affect the way you treated other people at the time?**
 - **Is there some level of lingering effects that guide the way you see people now?**

- **READ: *Matthew 5:21-26***
 - Very few people in this world have actually committed murder. However, this passage teaches us that the heart of the matter is anger that isn’t dealt with.
 - **In what ways do you tend to struggle with anger? What tends to “set you off?”**
 - **When anger becomes a topic of conversation, are you immediately reminded of a particular relationship or situation? If so, could that situation be a source of bitterness you need to deal with? (See *Ephesians 4:26-27*)**
 - **What would you say is the primary heart issue that leads you into anger? How can your Growth Group specifically pray for you in this area?**
- **READ: *Matthew 5:27-32***
 - Various forms of adultery are becoming common in our culture and many Christ-followers feel the sting of divorce. However, Jesus tells us that adultery is a symptom of a greater problem: allowing impure thoughts to control us.
 - **What temptations do you face that risk the intimacy of your relationship with your spouse (or future spouse)?**
 - **What practical steps are you taking to ruthlessly protect your purity?**
 - **What can you do this week to purify your heart and push out lustfulness that has already crept in?**
 - **What tangible things have you done in the past week to increase your passion for your spouse, creating a wall of protection for your marriage?**
- **READ: *Matthew 5:33-37***
 - We live in a world of lying to get ahead and breaking contracts when we get overwhelmed (bankruptcy). Jesus teaches us that our lives should be so filled with integrity that there should be no need to “pinky promise” or add a guarantee to our claims.
 - **What kind of promises do you tend to make that you have problems following through on?**
 - **Why do you think you tend to get yourself into those situations?**
 - **What steps can you take to make your day-to-day promises more believable?**
- **READ: *Matthew 5:38-42***
 - If we’re honest, every one of us at some time or another has probably wanted to see someone get “what they deserve” for something they did. But this passage leads us to extend grace to everyone we encounter.
 - **How do you tend to respond when you feel like people are taking advantage of you?**
 - **What prejudices and/or preconceived notions do you harbor that keep you from being more gracious and compassionate to those around you?**
 - **What is one thing you can do to step over the line and break down that barrier this week?**
- **READ: *Matthew 5:43-48***
 - Most people have no problem hanging out with people they like, but they tend to ignore or move away from people they don’t like. Jesus challenges us to be proactive in stepping out to make a positive difference in the lives of those we are least comfortable being around.
 - **Can you name the neighbors 2-3 doors down from you and what they do? When was the last time you had a significant personal conversation with someone of a different race and/or socioeconomic level?**
 - **Do any of the prejudices we talked about before keep you from crossing this barrier? What about the routine of your life keeps you from intentionally meeting new people or developing relationships along the way?**
 - **What activities can you do in the next week to get out of your everyday bubble?**



Hey Growth Group Leaders!

This week's theme is "Channel Surfing," covering a variety of topics presented by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. As a result, we have a lot of ground to cover. **PLEASE DO NOT** attempt to go through everything in this week's Travel Guide. **BE PREPARED** ahead of time to know which of the six topics will impact your group the most and jump to them. From there, encourage your group members to take the Travel Guide home and use it as a catalyst for their personal growth through the rest of the week. The format is expanded to make personal study possible.

Since there is so much ground to cover, I'm not going to give you more information to digest than you need. So let's get started!

PLEASE, send me an email with some of the practical ideas your folks come up with in your discussions!

Andrew

This week, we are continuing our series, "High Definition Living, an inside look at the Sermon on the Mount." This week, we are "Channel Surfing" through a lot of material as we continue on the theme of balancing between the Law and the grace we experience through a relationship with Jesus Christ. The challenge is to work on our internal motivations *before* they affect our outward actions. We encourage you to take this Travel Guide home and finishing on your own what your group doesn't get to . . .

PLEASE, be careful to point out the theme with each question we cover. Our goal is not to simply change outward behaviors. Our goal is to encourage our folks to get to the heart of the matter and be transformed from the inside out with a passion for Christ.

The goal for the first set of questions is to get your folks thinking about how our attitudes in life are affected by how we handle various situations in our hearts. When we don't deal with the heart issues properly, it will have the power to change our entire perspective for a long time.

- **Tell the story of a situation you faced in your life that was exceptionally painful.**
 - **How did it change your perspective toward the other people involved?**
 - **Did the hurt of the situation affect the way you treated other people at the time?**
 - **Is there some level of lingering effects that guide the way you see people now?**

Helpful Preview information about Matthew 5:21-48:

Main point of the passage: Sin is not just the outward action, it is the attitude of the heart that leads to the action.
What this means for us: Maturity as Christ-followers does not come from merely doing the right things, but from purifying our hearts to be motivated to do the right things.

Therefore, as we discuss the six areas mentioned in the passage, the goal needs to be to help folks get to the "heart of the matter," and not just "do the right thing." I've addressed each of the six in this way:

- 1 - Passage
- 2 - Truth Statement
- 3 - Evidence of the struggle
- 4 - Understand the heart issue
- 5 - Challenge to overcome

ANGER:

If you have competitive folks in your groups, this is a good topic to discuss. You may want to prepare yourself with some sports illustrations or the like. You may also want to set up the discussion on this topic to move you into the next topic by asking related questions about dealing with anger in marriage.

- READ: *Matthew 5:21-26*
 - Very few people in this world have actually committed murder. However, this passage teaches us that the heart of the matter is anger that isn't dealt with.
 - **In what ways do you tend to struggle with anger? What tends to "set you off?"**
- **When anger becomes a topic of conversation, are you immediately reminded of a particular relationship or situation? If so, could that situation be a source of bitterness you need to deal with?** (See *Ephesians 4:26-27*)

This question could set you up for the "Revenge" topic later on. If you sense a situation in somebody's life that is keeping them from moving forward in their spiritual walk, be sure to visit the Ephesians passage and to also talk about how our ability to forgive is related to our relationship to God and his ability to forgive us.

- **What would you say is the primary heart issue that leads you into anger? How can your Growth Group specifically pray for you in this area?**

Different folks may have different motivations that lead them into anger. Ultimately, our pride and our refusal to yield what we view as "our rights" or preferences get us in trouble when it comes to anger. Encourage your folks to dig deep and find the deepest root of their anger so the group can lift each other up in prayer and accountability.

LUST, DIVORCE, SEXUAL IMPURITY

This may be a sticky topic for some of your groups. We have several folks at Journey that have experienced divorce, have lived in adultery, struggle with pornography, or other related situation. **I strongly encourage every group to discuss this topic.** Get to the root of the issue:

No matter what the outward action is, the root issue is lust. The ultimate consequence is the effects it has on your marriage (or future marriage). Your marriage is intended to be a picture of our relationship with God. If we tarnish our marriages, our relationship with God suffers.

- READ: *Matthew 5:27-32*
 - Various forms of adultery are becoming common in our culture and many Christ-followers feel the sting of divorce. However, Jesus tells us that adultery is a symptom of a greater problem: allowing impure thoughts to control us.
 - **What temptations do you face that risk the intimacy of your relationship with your spouse (or future spouse)?**

If folks are a little shy getting started, ask specific questions:

Who here has looked at pornography in the past month?

Who here has struggled with controlling your thoughts after seeing a coworker?

Who here has deep personal conversations with someone of the opposite gender other than your spouse?

- **What practical steps are you taking to ruthlessly protect your purity?**

A few months ago, we offered a CD with internet accountability software and other various tools. We still have those available at the church office. Other practical steps may include: limiting online chat time and topics of conversation, rearranging the furniture in your office to avoid staring in the wrong direction, putting all the TVs and Computers in you house in public rooms like the living room, etc.

- **What can you do this week to purify your heart and push out lustfulness that has already crept in?**

The above steps are all outward steps to keep the temptations from entering in. On top of these, you need to challenge your folks to come up with some ways to purify their minds to protect themselves when temptations do creep in. Arming yourself by memorizing related Scriptures that address your specific point of need is one such protection. Setting up an accountability group to simply pray through the temptation is another. Brainstorm together. *I would love to get feedback of the suggestions you came up with (no names attached, please.)*

****SINGLE GROUPS: SKIP THIS NEXT QUESTION****

- **What tangible things have you done in the past week to increase your passion for your spouse, creating a wall of protection for your marriage?**

(Date, flowers, time, notes, staring at her, gifts, concentrated talk time, pray/dream together, etc.)

VOWS, TRUTHFULNESS, CONTRACTS

For our folks at Journey, possibly the best place to take the discussion of this topic is related to following through on doing what we say we will do. In our busy society, we tend to stack activities on top of each other. Inevitably, we're going to wind up letting somebody down. This discussion can be used as a tool to encourage our folks to think and plan ahead, to do research before making major decisions, and to follow-through with our commitments no matter how we really feel about them.

- READ: *Matthew 5:33-37*
 - We live in a world of lying to get ahead and breaking contracts when we get overwhelmed (bankruptcy). Jesus teaches us that our lives should be so filled with integrity that there should be no need to “pinky promise” or add a guarantee to our claims.
 - **What kind of promises do you tend to make that you have problems following through on?**
 - **Why do you think you tend to get yourself into those situations?**
 - **What steps can you take to make your day-to-day promises more believable?**

****These last two topics are closely related.**** They both have an element related to people we normally don't want to associate with. **Journey Church is committed to reaching those far from God.** The people we are talking about in these two topics are often the people we need to reach. Unless we deal with these issues, our hypocrisy will keep these people from receiving the grace that God has to offer them.

REVENGE/RETALIATION

The more competitive the people in your group are, the more they will be dealing with this issue. However, we all want to see justice in the lives of people who wrong us. As you discuss this topic, you may want to include *Romans 12:14-21*, a passage we looked at a couple of times during the fall.

- READ: *Matthew 5:38-42*
 - If we're honest, every one of us at some time or another has probably wanted to see someone get “what they deserve” for something they did. But this passage leads us to extend grace to everyone we encounter.
 - **How do you tend to respond when you feel like people are taking advantage of you?**
 - **What prejudices and/or preconceived notions do you harbor that keep you from being more gracious and compassionate to those around you?**

This question is intended to challenge your folks to look inward at how they view people before the relationship even develops. If we have some preconceived notion about how they are going to act (positively or negatively), it will inevitably result in disappointment and anger down the road.

- **What is one thing you can do to step over the line and break down that barrier this week?**

LOVING ENEMIES, IMPACTING THOSE DIFFERENT FROM YOU

This topic hits at the core of the Journey Church “invest and invite” strategy.

- READ: *Matthew 5:43-48*
 - Most people have no problem hanging out with people they like, but they tend to ignore or move away from people they don't like. Jesus challenges us to be proactive in stepping out to make a positive difference in the lives of those we are least comfortable being around.
 - **Can you name the neighbors 2-3 doors down from you and what they do? When was the last time you had a significant personal conversation with someone of a different race and/or socioeconomic level?**

If your folks are able to name their neighbors and their careers, take the conversation to the next level by asking:
When was the last time you ate dinner with them or went to a movie/sporting event with them?
Do they go to church? If not, have you invited them to Journey?
What is their spiritual condition?

- **Do any of the prejudices we talked about before keep you from crossing this barrier? What about the routine of your life keeps you from intentionally meeting new people or developing relationships along the way?**

Take some time to develop this conversation. Our goal is to help folks understand that “invest and invite” doesn't take a lot of time, it simply takes looking for opportunities during our everyday life. Sometimes we need to make adjustments, but it's usually more about taking advantage of opportunities.

- **What activities can you do in the next week to get out of your everyday bubble?**

I am personally going to limit the times I use “self checkout” at the stores I am in. Self checkout may be faster, but it robs me of a potentially meaningful conversation with a cashier. *I would love to get an email from you listing the other ideas your group comes up with.*