

## SESSION 1: YOU HAVE HEARD...

Watch the video or read the script together as a group; then discuss the following questions. Keep in mind the questions are meant to prompt conversation, so don't feel the need to use or discuss every question.

## BIBLE REFERENCES

Matthew 5:9, 17, 21-26; 1 John 3:15, 4:20  
CNAC 3.4.8.7 and 5.3.6.2

## QUESTIONS

1. What do the words “kingdom conduct” mean to you and how do they affect your actions?
2. How does Jesus’ teaching about the commandments change your perspective on them?
3. Why do you think Jesus took the original commandments and, in a sense, made them harder to obey?
4. Why do you think the Sermon on the Mount was shocking to the first people who heard it? How should Jesus’ teachings in the Sermon on the Mount affect ***your*** behavior?
5. Why is our attitude towards those around us so important? Reference Matthew 25:31-40 and Galatians 5:14.
6. How is unexpressed and unreconciled anger towards our neighbor evidence of a broken relationship? Is anger ever an appropriate response in a situation?
7. Consider this quote: *There is therefore only one way of following Jesus and of worshipping God, and that is to be reconciled with our brethren.* How is reconciliation with our neighbor an act of worship?
8. PERSONAL TAKE-HOME: Commit to reading the entire Sermon on the Mount (Matthew: chapters 5, 6, and 7) over the course of this month. Decide on a reading plan with your group.

This image shows a single page from a notebook or ledger. It features approximately 28 evenly spaced horizontal blue lines across its entire surface. The margins are uniform on all sides, providing ample space for writing. There is no handwriting or other markings present on the page.

# SCRIPT & ADDITIONAL CONTEXT

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## SESSION 1: YOU HAVE HEARD...

Let's take a few moments to get an overview of the Sermon on the Mount. It has been described as Jesus' inaugural address, the constitution of the kingdom of God, the authoritative message of the Messiah. Even if you do complete all the session available in the Sermon on the Mount topic series you will barely scratch the surface of its teachings.

While that seems daunting, there is another way to look at the Sermon on the Mount. We can summarize it in two words: **kingdom conduct**.

In His sermon, Jesus calls upon us to fundamentally change our conduct. As followers of Jesus Christ, we are to change in our relationship with God. We are to change in our heart. We are to change in our relationship with our neighbor.

Let's focus now on chapter 5, beginning with verse 17: *"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill."* The "Law" refers to the Mosaic Law, "Prophets" refers to those who proclaimed the word of God in the Old Testament, and "fulfill," in this context, means to "fill out" or "complete." Jesus – the Christ, the Messiah, the True God – is about to explain what the law really means for those inhabiting His kingdom. From verses 21 through 48, Jesus takes six different aspects of the law to a new level – to a greater righteousness, if you will. Each time He begins with words like *"You have heard that it was said..."* and then follows with *"... but I say to you..."*

Let's focus on one aspect of the law that Jesus addresses. In verses 21-22 Jesus says, *"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of judgment.' But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire."*

Jesus is expanding the understanding of the fifth commandment, *"You shall not murder."* It is no longer just the act of taking another's life that breaks the commandment. When anger is held within us, or when it is expressed in words such as idiot or fool, it is evidence of a broken relationship between people, which cannot exist in the kingdom. We can also look to 1 John 3:15, *"Whoever hates his brother is a murderer..."*

Furthermore, our anger against our brother not only disturbs our relationship with him, it also disturbs our relationship

with God. Consider 1 John 4:20: *"If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?"*

Jesus explains what needs to be done in such a circumstance: *"Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift"* (Matthew 5:23-24).

Jesus is teaching that whether we have a grudge against our brother, or whether our brother has a grudge against us, it affects our relationship with God. In the kingdom, there cannot be broken relationships between people. Children of God don't abide broken relationships, they work toward reconciliation. They take to heart what Jesus taught at the beginning of His sermon: *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God* (Matthew 5:9).

Jesus concludes His explanation of the fifth commandment with this counsel: *Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny* (Matthew 5:25-26).

Here Jesus is telling us to make use of the available time to reconcile with our adversary who has been wronged. In essence, Jesus is outlawing estrangement between our brother and us. To be right with God, it is no longer sufficient that we abstain from evil actions against our brother. We must also inwardly, in our heart, be reconciled with him.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a 20th century Christian minister and theologian, put it this way: *"There is therefore only one way of following Jesus and of worshipping God, and that is to be reconciled with our brethren... In Jesus the service of God and the service of the least of the brethren were one."*