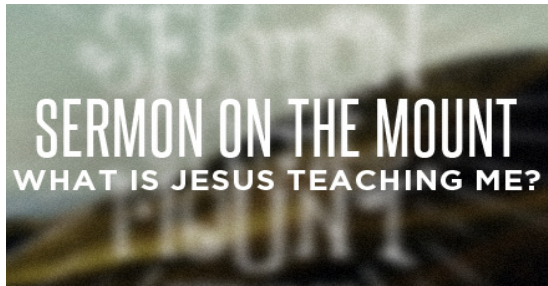


Lessons for Life



Week 4

These weekly studies are loosely based on the previous Sunday's sermon. If you missed it, you will find a recording on our website (www.knaphillbaptist.org.uk). They are designed for both Home Group discussion and/or personal reflection. Don't necessarily try to cover all the questions and discussion topics in your group at one sitting. You may like to think about them later in your own time.



Read Matthew 5:38-48

This is the fourth in our series of studies based on the Sermon on the Mount, (Matthew 5-7) entitled *Lessons for Life*. These chapters contain various sayings of Jesus that together form a coherent body of teaching, that are, considered to be, the blue-print for the Christian lifestyle. If we are to be true and authentic followers of Jesus we need to model our lives on what Jesus says here and allow it to shape, inform and define our identity. The verses this week contain more of the essence of the Christian ethic than any other passage in the New Testament. Here we find the defining characteristic ethic of the Christian life and the conduct which should distinguish the Christian from other people.

Questions and pointers for discussion/reflection

1. Verse 38 is part of everyday speech. See Deuteronomy 19:15-21; Exodus 21:24,25; Leviticus 24:20. This principle (*Lex Talionis*) limited the scope of any vendetta i.e. the continuous cycle of revenge between individuals and families that can consume closed tribal communities. Does the Bible justify this kind of 'tit for tat' attitude?
2. Compare this with Leviticus 19:18; Proverbs 24:26, 25:21. Does God follow the principle of an eye for an eye in the Old Testament?
3. Jesus gives us two new principles in vs. 39a and 42. What are they? What might they mean for us?
4. Jesus supports the rule of law but tempers it with mercy. He shows us his concern for justice and for law and order but drives the point home that we are not to avenge ourselves on anyone who has wronged us and always act out of mercy and love. What do you think your spirit is like? Have you ever acted out of revenge? How do you react when someone insults you or makes life difficult for you? Could you really respond how Jesus tells us to here? Is it possible to act like this? How?
5. Jesus is essentially saying here that we should not just stick to our rights. We often hear it said, 'I've got my rights'. What should be the Christian's approach to his or her rights? What should be the Christian's approach to other people's rights?
6. In going the extra mile (v.41) we go beyond the minimum and what is required by duty and respond generously to the needs of others with a glad and willing spirit. How do you think you could apply this in your life? Where do you think God might be wanting you to go beyond the call of duty?
7. How should we apply the principle of v.42?
8. 'Love your neighbour (v.43) is drawn from the Old Testament (Leviticus 19:18). Read Luke 10:25-37. And who is our neighbour?
9. Who are the enemies referred to in verse 43? Personal or national? Is Jesus calling us all to pacifism? Are there any attitudes you need to change in the light of these verses?
10. What is the two fold requirement which Jesus lays upon us as his disciples in verse 44? Why should we act like that – see verse 45. In what way can we be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect (v.48)? Compare Leviticus 19:2 with 1 Peter 1:15,16. How can we be holy? Is Christian perfection possible this side of the grave?