**BCM Bible Study: April 8/9, 2020**

**Matthew 5:31-48: Righteousness in Practice**

Check In: Follow up on last week’s challenges:

1. Did anyone work to reconcile a relationship? Talk about that experience.
2. Was anyone able to talk with others about issues of lust? What was it like to talk with someone about it?

Last week we looked at 2 of the 6 examples that Jesus gives for righteous living. Today we will look at the remaining 4 examples.

Divorce: **Read Matthew 5:31-32**

* According to v.31, what had the people heard? How does Jesus deepen this commandment?

**Read Matthew 19:1-9**

* What is Jesus teaching about divorce and remarriage?
	+ Leaders, this is a tough question! Be ready to guide gently and listen as people who have been hurt by divorce will be impacted by their past experience.
* What is Jesus’ basis for this teaching in verses 4-6? What do we learn about the nature of marriage from this passage?
* According to verses 7-9, why did Moses give an allowance for divorce? (See Deut. 24:1-4 to learn more)
	+ Jesus recognizes that we live in a broken, non-ideal world. Though adultery is not what God desires, he recognizes that it will occur and it will break marriages. At the same time, God calls us to live in ways that align with his character.
	+ How can we prepare for and live in broken marriages in a way that honors and glorifies God? (Time permitting, consider Hosea 1:2)
* How does Jesus’ teaching differ from common modern views of marriage, divorce and remarriage?
* If your life has been impacted by divorce, in what way are Jesus’ words painful to hear? In what way are they comforting?
	+ What does it look like to love those who have not met God’s ideal for marriage?

Oaths: **Read Matthew 5:33-37**

* What is Jesus teaching here? (See Matt. 23:16-22 for more)
	+ Note that verses 34-36 may be confusing. In the same way that we swear by things higher than us to support our words (i.e. “I swear to God”), Jews would swear by heaven, earth, Jerusalem, or their head. Jesus is saying, God owns those things anyway, so it is no less profane than saying “I swear to God.”
* Why is it such a profane statement to say something like “I swear to God”?
* What does the need to makes oaths like this reveal about human brokenness?
* Why is Jesus opposed to oaths? Why should they be unnecessary for Jesus’ followers?
	+ What makes v.37 difficult to practice? In what ways can truthfulness be difficult?
	+ Why do you think it is so important for Christians to be true to their word?

Eye for an Eye: **Read Matthew 5:38-42**

* What is Jesus teaching here?
	+ It is not only lack of retaliation; it is lack of resistance, forsaking even our legal rights and legitimate expectations. Moreover, we not only practice non-resistance, we *actively* seek the interests of others.
* What are some modern examples of situations that could be included in this passage?
* What is your natural/typical response in situations like these? What does this reveal about your heart?
* What is accomplished by turning the other cheek or going the second mile?
* Why is it difficult to obey v.42? What does wisdom look like in giving away resources?
* **Read Phil. 2:3-6.**
	+ What types of wrong thinking prevent us from being faithful to carry out these instructions?
	+ How can the gospel realign our thinking in terms of relating to others?
* Is there someone toward whom you need to sacrifice self-interest and go above and beyond in serving their interest? What would that look like for you?

Love Your Enemies: **Read Matthew 5:43-48**

* **Read Leviticus 19:18**. Is the verse being properly quoted in Matthew?
	+ The second half of v.43 is not in Leviticus. However, it is clearly how people thought (and still think!). The thought is, “We are called to love our neighbors, but not our non-neighbors, much less our enemies.” Jesus is addressing a heart issue.
* Did Jesus choose his enemies? In light of this, how would you define an “enemy”?
* Do you have enemies? What makes them enemies?
* How can you follow Jesus’ example in dealing with enemies? (consider v.45)
* Love in these verses is clearly not a mere feeling. What does love look like when lived out in action?
* What are your thoughts about v.48? How can Jesus ask us to be perfect?
	+ Some say (and I agree) that v.48 is a summary verse for the whole chapter. Remember, Jesus is fulfilling the law. In other words, he is showing the heart of law. It goes beyond actions to the heart. Part of the purpose of the law was to show God’s character, so in showing us the heart of the law, Jesus shows us a more perfect picture of God. Therefore, as we seek to live out these commandments, we move closer to living out the character of God.
* Which one of the six examples in this chapter do you want most want to grow in? Why? (Anger, lust, rethinking marriage/relationships, truthfulness, seeking the interests of others, loving enemies)

Conclusion: Offer these challenges based on this week’s reading:

1. Spend time reflecting on the teaching about divorce. Perhaps you need to experience healing, re-assess your mindset about dating, or talk with a serious significant other.
2. Practice truthfulness. Journal about your experience and struggles you encounter.
3. Is there someone toward whom you need to sacrifice self-interest and go above and beyond in serving their interest? What would that look like for you?
4. Who are your enemies? Pray for them each day and do something to love them.