

# BUILD YOUR HOUSE ON THAT!

Sermon-Based Study Guide  
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church

Matthew 5.21-30  
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## I. Connecting With One Another

Have you ever heard the phrase “letter of the law versus the spirit of the law”? What was it in reference to?

Before continuing in this study, spend some time in prayer:

- a. For this weekend’s gatherings – that God would guide the planning and preparation of those leading.
- b. For next week’s summer camps – both our 3<sup>rd</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> grade and high school students will be at Forest Home. Pray that God would use this time to draw each of our students into a deeper relationship with Him.
- c. For Good Shepherd, as we seek to Connect with God, Grow in Faith and Serve in Love.

## II. Introduction to this Study

Last week we learned that Jesus did not come to abolish the law, but rather, to fulfill it. In seeking to bring it to its completion, he now turns to specific ways in which those of his day had become content with following the letter of the law, instead of its spirit. This begins in Matthew 5.21-30 with Jesus addressing murder and adultery, and will continue for the next two weeks in Matthew 5.31-48, with our Lord addressing the meaning of marriage, taking oaths, retributive violence and love for enemies. These six teachings are commonly called the “antitheses,” though this title can sometimes foster a misunderstanding of Jesus’ perspective, as he is not offering an opposing teaching to the law, but rather how it was being interpreted in the first century. As such, Jesus was trying to get the law back to its original intent.

In Matthew 5.21-30, we read the first two of these six teachings, where Jesus engages with the sixth and seventh commandments, revealing the heart of the law was not just refraining from murder and adultery, but also anger and lust, the root of from which these actions grow. As such, our Lord reveals that the internal life of thoughts and attitudes – as well as the words we speak – are just as important.

## III. Study the Text

- a. Jesus quotes from the Ten Commandments in verses 21 and 27. Read the account of Moses receiving these original ten laws from God in Exodus 20.1-17. Why do you think God states, “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery”? How does that context inform what follows?  
  
If Jesus is a “New Moses,” what does he seek to bring us out of (and what is he leading us into)? To read the Apostle Paul’s thoughts on the matter, check out Romans 6.
- b. Jesus does not quote each of the Ten Commandments, but rather focuses on the sixth and seventh: “You shall not murder” and “You shall not commit adultery.” Why do you think he chooses these two?
- c. No one would disagree that murder is a crime worthy of judgment. Jesus, however, digs even

deeper, namely that being angry with another is worthy of sentencing (use of the term “brother” probably refers to another member of the Christian community). He offers three ascending judgments: first for being angry, with the second two for calling someone a name.

Scholars disagree on whether Jesus was teaching against all anger or a prolonged, holding a grudge kind of anger. How do you understand it? Why do you think what you do?

In the ancient Middle East, names were of great significance. As such, calling someone a name was very shameful. How is our culture different? Would you prefer to live in a culture like ours, where words are thrown around a lot more loosely, or like the first century, where words meant a lot more? Why?

- d. At first blush, verses 23-26 seem like specific teachings on giving at the Temple and practicing law, though they are meant to be examples of his teaching in verses 21-22 (the “Therefore” at the beginning of verse 23 gives it away). What connections do you see? Why would Jesus feel the need to give examples? How are these two examples relevant today?
- e. In verses 27-30, Jesus addresses the topic of adultery, again, revealing the drastic implications that result even from our thought life, even when an action is not taken. In the first century, women were commonly considered guilty if a man lusted after them (see John 8.1-11 for an example of this one sided blame game). Does Jesus continue this line of reasoning or forge a new one?

Sexual lust is obviously against the will of God for a number of reasons, including the way it demeans another of God’s creatures. And yet, in our culture it is all but accepted. What are other things people run after? How acceptable are they in our culture’s eyes?

Some throughout history have taken Jesus’ statement to gouge out eyes and cut off limbs literally. This, however, is hyperbole – especially considering it doesn’t actually stop the lusting, which is an internal sin. How, then, can we cut ourselves off from the things we may be tempted to lust after?

#### IV. Reflect and Respond

- a. God delivered the Israelites out of Egypt. Jesus delivers us from our sin into the Kingdom of Heaven. How has God delivered you? How does remembering what God has already done for us reframe how we’re called to live in response?
- b. Have you ever held a grudge? Did it do you any good?! Were you able to find reconciliation? If so, how? If not, is there a way you could do so now?
- c. Have you ever been called a name? Did you find that, as the Sticks and Stones rhyme goes, that words “could never hurt you?”
- d. Is there anyone who “has anything against you”? Have you sought reconciliation?
- e. Are there things that you need to remove from your life individually? In your family? In our church?