

NEW CITY DAILY DEVOTIONAL FOR WEEK OF 7/6/2020-7/10/2020

The following content is based on the message on 7/5/20 at New City Church in Phoenix, AZ. It is not meant to be a full synopsis, but rather a resource to help you analyze and apply the main ideas. To use this devotional effectively, please listen to the message found at <http://newcityphx.com/sermons/>.

MONDAY // THE HEART OF KINGDOM LIVING

You might be tempted to relax the requirements of God's standards. But, rather than dismissing the righteous requirements of the Law, we discover that the righteousness demanded by Jesus surpasses anything imagined by the religious leaders. In this week's devotional, we will read about how Jesus speaks against our tendency to justify ourselves by the letter of the Law. He is going to take us to the bottom of this hypocrisy—to the heart of our sin.

Read Matthew 5:21-26. Jesus reveals to us that the Old Testament Law, which prohibits murder, actually points to a more fundamental problem—anger in the human heart. Lest we think we are off the hook because we haven't shed blood, Jesus is saying "No, when you get angry with your brother, you are just as guilty as the murderer."

We don't want to just not commit murder, we want to be people who don't get angry.

- *Who is someone that you have negative feelings toward? Take a few minutes to pray for that person.*
- *How can you tell the difference between righteous anger in your heart and relational anger than Jesus speaks against here?*

TUESDAY // LUST AND ADULTERY

Read Matthew 5:27-30. Much like yesterday's topic, Jesus reveals the intention of the Old Testament Law. Rather than focusing on whether someone has committed adultery or not, Jesus goes further. He goes as far as to say that lustful intent was sinful like adultery. Many people can say that they haven't committed adultery, but most people allow lust to creep into their minds. The point here is simple: We are to take sin seriously. Sometimes we have to go to drastic measures to keep from sinning.

We don't want to just not commit adultery, we want to be people who don't lust.

- *How can you take sin more seriously in your life?*
- *Set a 5 minute timer. Ask God to reveal to you an area in your life that has caused you to sin. Then, ask God how you can properly "cut off" that cause of sin.*

WEDNESDAY // DIVORCE, AND OATHS

Read Matthew 5:31-37. This section may seem odd, because we do see oaths made in the OT and even Paul regularly swore oaths. So what's going on here? In Jesus' day, there was an elaborate system of oaths that actually allowed you to swear to something and not be held to that oath. This system became a bunch of rules which let you know when you can get away with lying and deception, and when you can't. But the truth is no oath is trivial, no oath is justifiable evasion; all oaths are solemn pledges to speak the truth. The real question that Jesus addresses here is truthfulness. For the follower of Jesus, it is best simply to say, "Yes" and mean yes or to say, "No" and mean no. Jesus doesn't want us to play games with the truth.

We don't want to find loopholes so we cannot be held to our word.

- *Reflect on a time when someone did not keep their word to you. Why do you think Jesus specifically calls out this type of sin?*
- *In what areas of life do you fail to be completely honest (e.g., work, relationship, self)?*

THURSDAY // RETALIATION WITH GOOD

Read Matthew 5:38-42. Those of us who follow Jesus should less concerned than those who do not follow Jesus about protecting our reputation, rights, property, status, or comfort. The way of the cross is to not cling to these things. When it's all said and done, our Lord and Savior was taken advantage of, yet He deserved none of it. In fact, He deserved to be treated much better. But instead, Jesus emptied himself of the glory and the reputation He enjoyed, and He humbled Himself. This is the example that Jesus set for us when He tells us how we should treat others.

We don't want to pay people back evil for evil, we want to pay back evil with good.

- *How do people most often retaliate in 2020?*
- *As Christians, how do we actually lose sight of Jesus when we retaliate at someone?*

FRIDAY // PERFECT LOVE AND PERFECTION

Read Matthew 5:43-48. The kingdom standard is that the Christian must love people the way God loves people. God's kingdom standard is not like the standard of the world. God goes as far as to show love to His enemies. We are to also do the same. Jesus wants us to find ways to bless people, even when they don't bless us back.

We don't want to simply love people like ourselves, we want to love all people.

In verse 48, Jesus goes as far as to say that we have to be perfect. This standard of righteousness can seem daunting, but there is one who has reached it. Jesus met that perfect standard so we didn't have to meet it.

- *Even though we cannot reach it, why do we need to take Jesus' standard of perfection seriously? On the other hand, why don't we have to feel shame when we fail to reach Jesus' standard?*
- *How does Jesus' perfection motivate you to live differently today?*