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**OPEN THE CONVERSATION**

Take some time to build relationships with the students:

* Ask for each student’s high and low from the week.
* Today’s RBQ (Relationship Building Question): What’s a time you acted like you had it under control but were actually just figuring it out as you went?

**INTRODUCTION**

Most of us care more about what people think of us than we like to admit. It’s easy to look like we’ve got things together on the outside, even when things feel messy underneath. Most of us care a lot about what people think of us. Even when we don’t want to admit it, it’s easy to act like we’ve got it all together on the outside, even when things are messy underneath.

In this part of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is speaking to people who lived in a culture full of religious rules and teachers who seemed spiritual on the surface. They followed traditions, gave in public, prayed out loud, but their hearts weren’t in it. Jesus didn’t come to lower the bar. He raised it. He taught that obedience isn’t just about what people can see. It’s about what’s going on inside.

Jesus isn’t interested in performance. He’s after real change. He wants your heart, not just your habits. He wants people to be transformed and live with honesty, humility, and sincerity. This is not about earning anything. It’s about becoming the kind of people God has always wanted us to be, people shaped by His grace from the inside out.

***READ MATTHEW 5:17–20***

1. **Jesus didn’t come to get rid of the law but to fulfill it. What do you think that means and how is that different from just following rules?**
2. **Jesus says our righteousness should be greater than the religious leaders. What do you think He meant by that, and how could that even be possible?**

***READ MATTHEW 5:21–48***

1. **Jesus doesn’t just say do not murder. He says to deal with your anger. Why do you think He focuses so much on the heart instead of just the actions?**
2. **In this section, Jesus covers anger, lust, divorce, oaths, revenge, and loving enemies. Which one feels most challenging today, and why?**

***READ MATTHEW 6:1-4***

1. **Jesus warns us not to do good things just to be seen. Why do you think that’s such a common temptation?**
2. **What’s one small way you could live out your faith this week, even if nobody else notices?**

**WRAP UP**

Jesus cares about more than just our habits. He cares about who we are becoming. So take a moment this week to check your motives. Are you living for attention, or are you growing from a changed heart?

Ask for prayer requests and pray together, especially for real, lasting heart change and the courage to live from that place.

**EXTENDED CUT**

In Matthew 5:17–20 Jesus clarifies that He did not come to throw out the Law but to fulfill it. At that time, many people believed that righteousness came from following the rules outwardly. The Pharisees were known for their precision, but Jesus exposed the deeper issue: following rules without heart change was not enough. He shows that the Law always pointed to something deeper, a changed heart that only God can create. When He tells His listeners that their righteousness must surpass the Pharisees, He is not calling for more rule‑keeping. He is inviting them to a new way of life shaped by grace, not performance.

Verses 21–48 give real‑life examples of what that looks like. Jesus does not just say, “Do not murder.” He says to deal with anger and bitterness. He does not just say, “Do not commit adultery.” He says to honor people with your thoughts and desires. He calls for honesty, forgiveness, and love for enemies. These teachings are not about adding more rules. They describe the kind of life that flows from a transformed heart.

In Matthew 6:1–4 Jesus turns to motivation. Giving, praying, and doing good things are all good practices, but if the goal is to be noticed, the heart is in the wrong place. Jesus reminds His followers that the Father sees what is done in secret. That perspective changes everything. True discipleship is not about performance or public image. It is about living honestly before God, even when no one else sees.

This section of the Sermon on the Mount is not meant to crush people with impossible standards. It shows the gap between outward behavior and inner reality, and points to the only one who can close that gap. Real change happens through the Spirit. Jesus is calling His followers to live from the inside out; to let Him transform their hearts so their actions flow from love and trust, not from trying to earn approval.

**1. Jesus didn’t come to get rid of the law but to fulfill it. What do you think that means and how is that different from just following rules?**

Jesus wasn’t throwing out the Old Testament or the idea of obedience. He was showing that the law always pointed to something deeper, a need for God to change our hearts. Following Jesus isn’t about checking boxes. It’s about trusting the one who completed everything for us and now invites us to live in a new way.

**2. Jesus says our righteousness should be greater than the religious leaders. What do you think He meant by that and how could that even be possible?**

That probably sounded impossible to the people listening. The religious leaders looked like they had it all together. But Jesus was talking about a different kind of righteousness, one that isn’t just about looking good on the outside. Real righteousness comes from a heart that’s been changed by God. It’s not necessarily about doing more. It’s about letting God shape who you are from the inside.

**3. Jesus doesn’t just say do not murder. He says to deal with your anger. Why do you think He focuses so much on the heart instead of just the actions?**

Because the heart is where everything starts. You can look like a good person on the outside and still carry bitterness, hate, or pride inside. Jesus cares about what’s underneath. He wants us to live with love and honesty, not just avoid breaking rules.

**4. In this section, Jesus covers anger, lust, divorce, oaths, revenge, and loving enemies. Which one feels most challenging today, and why**?

Some might say loving enemies is really hard, or that anger builds up quickly. Others might talk about truth-telling or forgiving someone who hurt them. Whatever the topic, Jesus is showing us how much we need Him because real heart change is something we can’t do without His help.

**5. Jesus warns us not to do good things just to be seen. Why do you think that’s such a common temptation?**

Everyone wants to be noticed or appreciated. It feels good when people recognize your effort. Whether it’s in school, sports, or even at church, it’s easy to start caring more about what people see than what’s going on inside. But Jesus reminds you that if you’re doing something just for attention, it’s not really about God anymore. What matters most is doing the right thing because it’s right, even if no one says anything about it.

**6. What’s one small way you could live out your faith this week, even if nobody else notices?**

It could be something as simple as being kind when it would be easier to ignore someone, choosing to be honest in a small moment, or taking time to pray for someone without telling them. Living out your faith doesn’t always mean doing something big or public. A lot of the time, it’s about doing the right thing when no one’s watching, because you care more about what God sees than what people think.