

Theme: Commands of Jesus 4 - Matthew 5:17-20

To Get Us Started: Have you ever been told that you were not good enough and need to improve? Maybe it was at school, college, work or even by a family member? Or, have you ever had to tell someone off? Share your experiences!

Word:

Please read [Exodus 20:1-17](#).

Q. Do these Ten Commandments encourage you to live God's way or do they make you feel uneasy about not being able to live up to them all?

Q. How do you score? If it is anything less than 10 out of 10 then there's a problem!

Now read [Matthew 5:17-20](#).

Jesus is the fulfilment of all the law. Have a look at [Galatians 5:14](#); [Romans 13:8-10](#) & [Hebrews 8:7-12](#) whilst also noting [John 1:17](#).

Q. Have you ever wondered what it means 'Jesus fulfilled the law'? Discuss.

What it means in theological terms is that through faith in Jesus we can be made right with God. The righteousness of Jesus can be given to us if we shun evil, believe in, trust and obey Him.

Living as disciples of Jesus requires us to be obedient to the leading of the Holy Spirit rather than slavishly trying to obey the Old Testament laws. See [Galatians 5:16-26](#).

When we talk about the law in the Bible it is about the religious rules and regulations that we find in Exodus and Leviticus. The law of the UK is not optional! As Christians we are required to obey those in authority over us as per [Romans 13:1-5](#) unless it directly contravenes the Bible.

Continuing on with Matthew 5:17-20! These verses might be familiar to us now, but when Jesus first uttered them on that Galilean hill the crowds must have been astonished especially when Jesus made the statement in verse 20. All the 'ordinary' people looked up to the scribes and the Pharisees. They were regarded as holy and special - unlike the unschooled common people.

Jesus - in His wonderful way - turned things upside down and challenged them all by saying that the 'ordinary' people had to be more righteous than the 'professional holy' leaders!

Q. What do you think Jesus was getting at? Discuss.

Looking at the context of this portion of Scripture on chapters 5, 6 & 7 of Matthew it seems to be that Jesus was saying, 'Yes, the Law is very important right down to the smallest detail (as per [Matt.5:18](#)), but the spirit of it is even more so. Jesus said later in [Matt.22:37-40](#) that love was to be central. At the centre of this teaching block in Matthew 5, 6 & 7 we have what we call the 'Lord's Prayer'. At the centre of the prayer is the statement,

"Forgive us our debts (i.e. sins), as we have forgiven our debtors". ([Matt.6:12](#))

This is the central theme of the Gospel and the essence of the Old Testament Law, which the scribes & Pharisees had overlooked or completely forgotten. For our righteousness to surpass the religious leaders we must be people who are forgiving, forbearing and gracious - not critical, judgmental, nit-picking and self-righteous.

Worship: Spend a few moments thinking about the love and mercy of Jesus Christ towards us - an imperfect and needy people. Hopefully the character of Jesus fills us with gratitude and hope. Spend some time thanking Him for His mercy and for His perfect expression of love on the cross. Perhaps there is a worship song that expresses this which you'd like to sing or listen to on a CD?

Witness:

Bearing in mind the grace, mercy and forgiveness we have received from God through Christ prayerfully consider your thoughts and actions towards others over the last week, especially those who are slightly more challenging to get on with at times! Considering what we have learnt in the above 'Word' section how do you think God is challenging you about those relationships with others? Are you reflecting the grace, mercy and forbearance of Christ in your relationships towards family, friends, work-colleagues and strangers or have you slipped into critical patterns of behaviour which consider others as 'lesser beings' than yourself!

When we pray the 'Lord's Prayer' we are asking God to deal with us in the same way as we deal with others!

Oops!