

did
JESUS
really say?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: WEEK THREE

Please read Matthew 5:21-26

21 "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' 22 But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, 'Raca,' is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell. 23 "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, 24 leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift. 25 "Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still together on the way, or your adversary may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. 26 Truly I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.

What immediately jumps out at you from this passage?

There seem to be three separate sections of this teaching from Jesus. Can you identify the separate sections

1. The first section contains Jesus' classic formula of "you have heard it said ... but I tell you."
This formula was one of the ways that Jesus was clarifying God's will and also teaching His followers about the community He was creating. Why do you think Jesus condemns anger in such strong terms?

2. One ancient commentator said of this passage "Murder is the fruit, but anger is the root." If he is correct, we can see from this passage that Jesus not only cares about outward behavior, but he cares about what is happening inside our hearts. Do you agree that God cares about both our outward actions and our inward attitudes? What do you think about the phrase "Murder is the fruit but anger is the root"?

3. Read verses 23 and 24 again: "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, 24 leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift." What do you think is at the heart of this teaching?

- This teaching may refer to what we should do when we realize or remember that we have hurt or offended someone. Would it be difficult for you to stop everything, including making an offering to God, and reconcile with someone you have injured?
- Do you think Jesus is teaching that before we come before God, we need to make things right with others? If so, why would that be so important? Have you violated this principal in the past? What was the result?

4. Read verses 25 & 26 again, please: Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still together on the way, or your adversary may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. 26 Truly I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny. What from this teaching do you think is valuable for us today?

- This teaching may refer to what we should do when someone else has hurt or offended us. What is the clear instruction? Would it be difficult for you to settle matters quickly when someone has offended you? Share a time when you did or did not follow this teaching; what was the result?

5. One takeaway from Matthew 5:21-26 could be: reconsider anger and reconcile quickly but as you do so reconsider God's love and with gratitude remember His grace. Why might this be a good takeaway from this passage?

- Can you think of an alternate takeaway?