

TEACHER / FACILITATOR DISCUSSION GUIDE

Sermon on the Mount – Session 2

Do I Really Have to Keep All the Rules?

Matthew 5:17–48

SESSION OVERVIEW (FOR THE TEACHER)

Big Idea

Jesus did not come to abolish God’s Law, but to **fulfill it** by revealing its true purpose: not external rule-keeping, but **heart-level righteousness** that flows from transformed lives. Following Jesus goes deeper than behavior — it reshapes motives, desires, and relationships.

Teaching Goal

By the end of this session, participants should:

- Understand what Jesus means when He says He came to **fulfill** the Law
- Recognize the difference between **external obedience** and **internal transformation**
- See how Jesus raises the standard from rule-following to heart faithfulness
- Begin identifying areas where God is inviting deeper obedience of the heart

Time Guide (Suggested – 60–75 minutes)

- Opening & Scripture reading: 10 minutes
 - Teaching & discussion (three movements): 40–50 minutes
 - Personal reflection & closing prayer: 10–15 minutes
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OPENING (10 MINUTES)

Opening Question (Icebreaker)

“Have you ever followed the rules but still knew something wasn’t right on the inside?”

(Examples might include relationships, school/work expectations, parenting, or religious habits.)

Teacher Notes

- Keep this non-threatening and relatable.
- The goal is to surface the tension between **outward compliance** and **inward reality**.
- Avoid correcting answers at this stage — allow honesty.



Opening Prayer

Ask God to open hearts, not just minds, and to help the group hear Jesus' words as an invitation rather than a burden.

SCRIPTURE CONTEXT (FOR THE TEACHER)

Before reading, explain briefly:

"Jesus has just begun the Sermon on the Mount, describing the character of life in God's kingdom. Now He addresses a question many people ask: *What happens to God's rules now that Jesus has come?*"

Emphasize:

- Jesus is speaking to religious people who **valued the Law**
- His words are not about lowering standards, but **deepening them**
- This teaching challenges both legalism and casual faith

Read **Matthew 5:17–20** aloud.

TEACHING MOVEMENT 1: JESUS AND THE LAW (Matthew 5:17–20)

Key Teaching Point

Jesus fulfills the Law by completing its purpose and revealing its true meaning.

Teacher Explanation

- Jesus makes clear that He did **not** come to discard Scripture
- To "fulfill" means:
 - To bring something to its intended goal
 - To complete what it was pointing toward
 - To reveal its deepest meaning
- The Law always pointed to:
 - God's holy character
 - Humanity's need for transformation
 - The coming Messiah
- Jesus warns that righteousness based only on external rule-keeping falls short

Discussion Questions



- Why do you think people assume grace means rules no longer matter?
- How is “fulfillment” different from simply “following” rules?
- What do you think Jesus means by righteousness that “surpasses” the religious leaders?

Teacher Notes

- Watch for extremes: legalism (“try harder”) or dismissal (“rules don’t matter”).
- Gently emphasize: **obedience flows from relationship**, not fear or performance.

TEACHING MOVEMENT 2: FROM OUTER RULES TO INNER HEART (Matthew 5:21–32)

Key Teaching Point

Jesus moves obedience from outward actions to inward motivations.

Teacher Explanation

- Jesus presents a series of examples (“You have heard it said... but I say to you”)
- He does not weaken God’s commands — He **intensifies** them
- Examples include:
 - Anger as the root of murder
 - Lust as the root of adultery
- Jesus reveals that sin begins in the **heart**, not just behavior
- God’s concern is not mere self-control, but **heart transformation**

Discussion Questions

- Why do you think Jesus focuses so much on the heart?
- How is it easier to manage behavior than motives?
- What dangers come from focusing only on outward obedience?

Teacher Notes

- This section can feel confronting. Normalize discomfort.
- Emphasize that Jesus is not calling for perfection, but **honesty and repentance**.
- Redirect shame toward grace and transformation.

TEACHING MOVEMENT 3: A NEW WAY OF RIGHTEOUSNESS (Matthew 5:33–48)



Key Teaching Point

Kingdom righteousness reflects God's character through love, truth, and mercy.

Teacher Explanation

- Jesus addresses everyday areas:
 - Truthfulness and integrity
 - Retaliation and revenge
 - Love for enemies
- These teachings show what a transformed heart looks like in real life
- Loving enemies reflects God's own mercy and grace
- "Be perfect" means **whole, mature, complete** — not flawless performance

Discussion Questions

- Which of Jesus' examples feels most challenging today? Why?
- What does loving enemies look like practically, not ideally?
- How does this teaching redefine what it means to be "good"?

Teacher Notes

- Avoid letting discussion stay abstract — ask for concrete examples.
- Reinforce: this is not about earning God's love, but **reflecting it**.

PERSONAL REFLECTION (10 MINUTES)

Invite quiet reflection. You may read this aloud:

"Jesus invites us into a faith that goes deeper than appearances — a faith that transforms the heart."

Reflection Prompts:

- Where do I tend to focus more on appearances than inner faithfulness?
- Are there areas where I obey outwardly but resist inward change?
- What might God be inviting me to surrender at the heart level?

(Allow silence. This is important.)

CLOSING (PRAYER & CHALLENGE)



Closing Prayer

Pray for:

- Humility to let Jesus examine our hearts
- Courage to embrace deeper obedience
- Trust in God's grace as the source of transformation

Optional Take-Home Challenge

Encourage participants to:

- Reread **Matthew 5:17–48** during the week
 - Ask God daily: "Where do You want to shape my heart today?"
 - Practice one intentional act of heart-level obedience (forgiveness, honesty, love)
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FINAL TEACHER REMINDER

This session is not meant to burden people with impossible standards, but to **invite them into deeper freedom**.

Jesus does not merely demand righteousness —
He **provides** it and then reshapes our hearts to live it.

"I have not come to abolish the Law, but to fulfill it."

