



ANGER

Study Five

Matthew 5:21-26

Introduction

Following from the last study where Jesus elevated the standard of righteousness to exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 5:20), Jesus elaborates on what His standard entails. Starting with Matthew 5:21 until the end of this chapter, Jesus uses the pattern of “it was said... but I say to you” to emphasize His authority and to clarify the true interpretation of obedience to God’s Word. In Matthew 5:21-26, Jesus begins with the topic of murder, which is universally considered one of the most grievous crimes and expounds on how being angry with another believer is liable to the same judgment.

This guide will use word studies and references to the Old Testament to understand the challenging standard that Jesus is calling His disciples to. Let us keep an open mind on Jesus’ insights on anger and prayerfully consider His call for reconciliation.

Group Study

1. Read aloud Matthew 5:21-26 and listen to Jesus’ words to His disciples as if hearing them for the first time. What are some initial thoughts and questions that come to mind as you read this passage?
2. In Matthew 5:21-22, Jesus quotes from the Ten Commandments in the Old Testament and it would seem on the surface that the vast majority of people have kept the sixth commandment by not committing murder. However, Jesus then highlights 3 situations which escalate from the (local) court to the Sanhedrin to fiery hell (God’s court). We will examine the 3 situations below:
 - a. In the first situation, Jesus is saying that being angry with another believer is equivalent to murder since both are liable to the courts. How is Jesus elevating the standard of righteousness beyond the Law? What is the true interpretation of the commandments?

- b. In the second situation, calling another believer Raca (Aramaic word meaning “empty”) is escalated to the Sanhedrin which is similar to the Supreme Court. What are the reasons that insulting a person’s intelligence would be escalated to a higher court?
 - c. In the third situation, calling another believer “You fool” is escalated to God’s court. The word “fool” is *moros* (adjective) in Greek – recall from a couple of studies ago on salt & light that Jesus uses the word “tasteless” which is a related word *moraino* (verb) in Greek. Read Matthew 5:13 again. What happens to the tasteless salt? What is the insult targeting in this situation? What type of judgment is being passed by calling a believer tasteless/foolish? What are the reasons that this case is escalated to God’s court?
 3. Read Ephesians 4:26. What does being angry and not sinning look like? Read 1John 3:15. How does this verse relate to anger and murder?
 4. In Matthew 5:23-26, Jesus pivots towards the topic of reconciliation. How is the scenario in Matthew 5:23-24 different from Matthew 5:25-26?
 5. From Matthew 5:23-24, what is surprisingly more important than offering a sacrifice on the altar to God? When should the reconciliation happen? What does this say about our relationship with God and with His people?
 6. From Matthew 5:25-26, what are the reasons that there is a sense of urgency to settle matters with an accuser? What are the potential consequences of being on the wrong side of the judge’s verdict? What should be done when being accused?
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Personal Reflection

1. Murder is a serious crime and Jesus expands the concept of murder beyond physical acts. Jesus says in Matthew 15:19 that “For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.” How does our heart condition affect our relationship with others? Do you have feelings of anger towards other believers in your life?

2. The Message Bible translates Matthew 5:23-26 as:

“This is how I want you to conduct yourself in these matters. If you enter your place of worship and, about to make an offering, you suddenly remember a grudge a friend has against you, abandon your offering, leave immediately, go to this friend and make things right. Then and only then, come back and work things out with God.

“Or say you’re out on the street and an old enemy accosts you. Don’t lose a minute. Make the first move; make things right with him. After all, if you leave the first move to him, knowing his track record, you’re likely to end up in court, maybe even jail. If that happens, you won’t get out without a stiff fine.

Is there a person or scenario that comes to mind in which you need to consider reconciliation? What would that look like?

Prayer

