

Radical holiness

discussion guide

based on **Matthew 5.17-37** (Linked to sermon of 25/1/26)
www.stjamesbythepark.org/current-sermon-series

This was part of a series on the Sermon on the Mount.

There's enough material here for multiple sermons and studies! You have a choice of how you approach this.

1. Use these links to full-length sermons which deal with just one of the sections rather than trying to cover every section – this would be a good option if you want to do a deeper-dive into just one topic (eg anger). You could always do this individually.
2. Use a reflective deeper-dive approach to do some soul-work on the causes of repeated sin in your lives.
3. Use the more traditional Bible study overleaf (but even then you may just want to focus on some of the passage, not cover all of it).

1. Sermons and other links

5.17-20 What does Jesus think about the Bible - John Mark Comer

<https://bridgetown.church/teachings/gospel-of-matthew/what-does-jesus-think-about-the-bible>

5.17-22 Law and love – Tim Keller <https://gospelinlife.com/sermon/law-and-love/>

5.21-26 Jesus on anger - John Mark Comer

<https://bridgetown.church/teachings/gospel-of-matthew/jesus-on-anger>

5.27-32 Jesus on objectification and oppression - John Mark Comer

<https://bridgetown.church/teachings/gospel-of-matthew/jesus-on-objectification-and-oppression>

5.27-30 Love and lust – Tim Keller <https://gospelinlife.com/sermon/love-and-lust/>

5.33-37 Jesus on truth and integrity <https://bridgetown.church/teachings/gospel-of-matthew/jesus-on-truth-and-integrity>

5.33-37 Integrity – Tim Keller <https://gospelinlife.com/sermon/integrity/>

And on the bit that I missed out (5.31-32) on divorce, which needs to be read alongside the teaching in Matthew 19:

19.1-10 Marriage divorce and singleness – Tim Keller

<https://gospelinlife.com/sermon/marriage-divorce-singleness/>

19.1-10 Marriage and divorce - John Mark Comer

<https://bridgetown.church/teachings/gospel-of-matthew/the-marriage-myth>

Mt 19.1-10 What God has joined together - Hugh Palmer

https://www.allSouls.org/Media/PlayMedia.aspx?download=file&media_id=175493&file_id=187592

Podcast - Is Your Marriage Difficult or Destructive?

<https://careynieuwhof.com/episode771/>

Blog - 5 Powerful Measures To Help You Resist the Gravitational Pull Toward Divorce

<https://careynieuwhof.com/5-powerful-measures-that-help-couples-resist-the-gravitational-pull-toward-divorce/>

Mt 19.1-10 What God has joined together (Hugh Palmer)

https://www.allSouls.org/Media/PlayMedia.aspx?download=file&media_id=175493&file_id=187592

2. Reflective deep-dive

Jesus had said to his disciples, "You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world." (5.13-14). He's said they were going to be fishers of men (4.19). In other words, he was giving them a mission - to help bring in the kingdom of God. Often we think, "What kind of mission has he got for me? Is my mission going to be in the workplace, or helping at a foodbank, or witnessing to my non-Christian family? What mission has God got for me?"

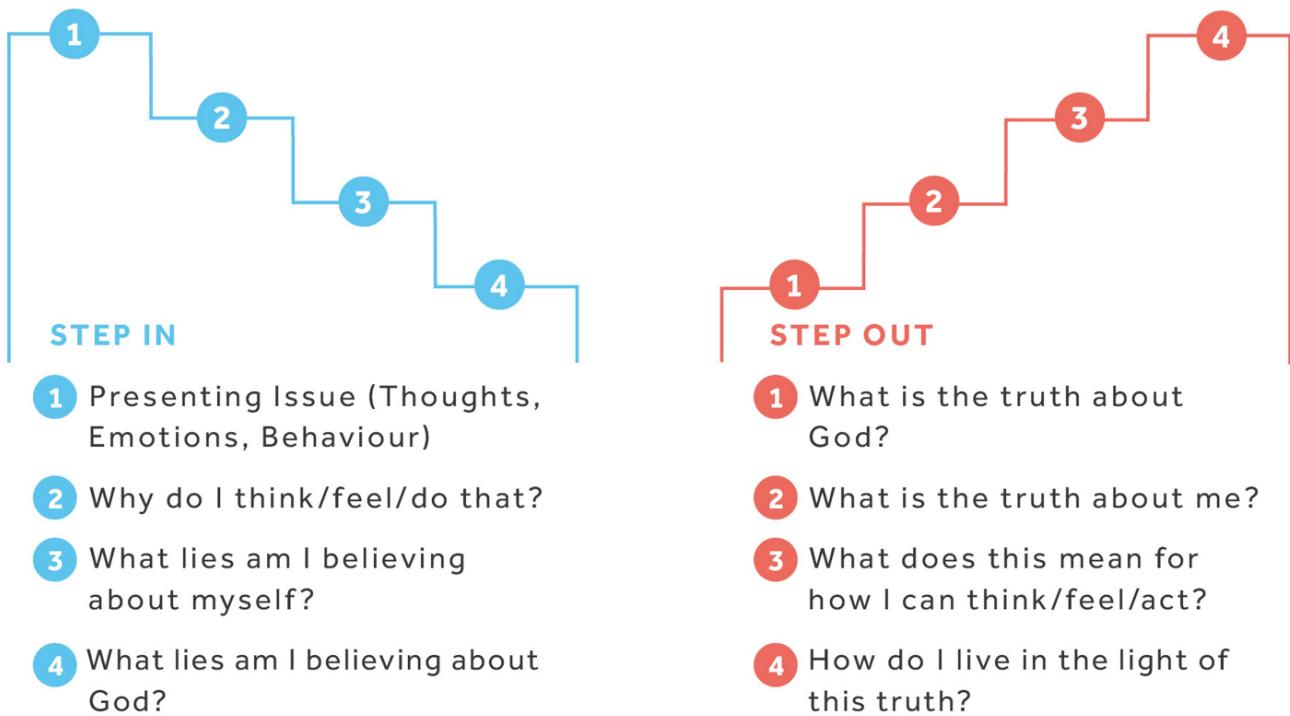
Sometimes it's helpful to flip that question round: "What kind of me does God want for his mission?" That's what Jesus is addressing in the Sermon on the Mount. He's talked about the radical character we're to have – being meek and peace-makers and poor in spirit and so on. Now he's talking about the radical holiness that we're to show.
[adapted from Chris Wright]

Spend 5 minutes praying silently: what kind of me does God want for his mission?

Share what you feel Jesus has been saying to you, so you can help each other weigh that up.

Jesus addresses different sins through this chapter.

We'll spend some time asking God to help us address sin in our lives at a deeper level than simply saying 'sorry'. We're going to use this 'steps' approach from *Metamorphosis* by Matt Hatch:



Work through this example together to understand the process:

For example, if being judgmental is your recurring sin, you might say:

Step in 1 – being judgmental: I look down on other people, especially if they are ...

Step in 2 – I look down on them because I'm insecure and I'm trying to build myself up.

Step in 3 – I’m believing lies that they’re less important than me. And that my worth is measured in relation to other people.

Step in 4 – I’m believing the lie that God isn’t as interested in them as he is in me.

Step out 1 – God created each of those people in his image; he died for them; he wants them in his kingdom; they are precious to him. “They are fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psalm 139)

Step out 2 – My worth isn’t measured in relation to other people; I have been chosen by God and adopted by him (Eph 1.3-8). I am secure in him (eg Phil 3.20).

Step out 3 – I don’t need to look down on other people in order to feel secure

Step out 4 – when I catch myself looking down on others, I need to repeat to myself that they are fearfully and wonderfully made, and that I am eternally secure because of what Jesus has done for me.

Most (all?!) of us have different ‘repeated sins’ – eg pride, lust, anger, greed, envy, lying.

Identify one repeated sin each (you don’t have to share it out loud).

Spend 10-15 minutes working silently through this process for your repeated sin. Do it prayerfully, asking God to reveal new things to you about your heart and motives etc.

If you want, share some of what you’ve discovered with others. If you’ve got stuck on some points, help each other out.

Author Jen Wilkin writes: “Sanctification [the process of becoming more holy] rarely looks like an immediate ceasing of a particular sin. It more often looks like an increase in the distance between repeated sins, and a decrease in the distance between committing them and confessing them. God is so patient with his children.”

Discuss: what stops you confessing sins more quickly?

Spend some time praying for each other.

3. More traditional Bible study

Intro

Describe a time when you have seen unresolved anger issues cause real problems.
(cheery beginning!)

Read Matthew 5.17-20 – the general principle

In what way(s) does Jesus fulfil Old Testament law?

Read Matthew 5.21-26 – example 1

What is the link between anger and murder? And between contempt ("you fool") and anger?

The 'fire of hell' was a reference to the rubbish dump outside the city which was constantly alight. In other words, it was a present reality not a future destination. In what way(s) does anger lead to living in 'hellish' situations now?

What is the point of Jesus' way of dealing with anger (v 23-26)?

What might that look like for you?

Read Matthew 5.27-30 – example 2

What is the link between adultery and lust?

What is the point of Jesus' way of dealing with lust (v29-30)?

Read Matthew 5.33-37 – example 4

The teachers of the law (and others) tried to restrict the occasions on which an oath was actually binding.

Think of some examples of times when we can be tempted to limit the relevance of God's law, to make it easier to keep!

In what ways is truth-telling being undermined in our culture at the moment?

What steps might you need to take to be people whose words can be trusted – a simple 'yes' or 'no'?

Dan summed up his sermon on this passage like this:

I tend to treat the law as flexible – mould it to my own advantage. Jesus says that his is the authoritative interpretation. I tend to think sin is so harmless it doesn't matter if it lingers. Jesus says sin is so dangerous I must deal with it straight away. I think sin is so mild I can dabble in it. Jesus says sin is so dangerous I should get rid of it as soon as it appears.

Do you agree / disagree? Why? Which bit do you resonate with most?

Read Hebrews 4.15-16

The hero of the Sermon on the Mount is Jesus – the one who perfectly kept the moral law, and became the perfect sacrifice for our sin. Spend some time worshipping him!

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What stops you confessing sins more quickly?

Reflection:

Head – what have you learned in this session that you need to ponder on more?

Heart – what has spoken to your heart in this session that you need to pray through more?

Hands – what actions do you need to take to put this into practice?

Is there anything from this reflection you want to share with your group (or one or two others in the group) so they can pray for you specifically, and encourage you in the days ahead?

Prayer suggestions:

Pray that we would have the courage to be radical disciples, living lives of radical holiness.

Pray that we would be salt and light in our communities.

Pray we would increase the distance between our repeated sins, and decrease the distance between committing them and confessing them.

Say this prayer together at the end, adapted from 1 Thessalonians 5.23-24:

May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify us through and through. May our whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls us is faithful, and he will do it.