

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

FAMILY DEVOS



It Starts with the Heart

Scripture: Matthew 5:21-26

Memory Verse: Ezekiel 36:26

“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.”

For My Family:

In our last study, we looked at how Jesus came to fulfill the law and saw that He is the only Man who never sinned. That means that every other human being in all of history is a sinner. Now when some people hear that, they might think, “Sure I’m not perfect, but calling me a sinner sounds harsh. After all, I’ve never done anything really bad, like rob a bank... or kill someone.” However, in today’s passage, Jesus explains that sin isn’t just the bad things we do. Sin starts with our hearts.

Jesus begins the passage by reminding us that the sixth commandment tells us not to murder. But what He says next is shocking: if you have hatred and anger for someone in your heart, or if you call them a fool, that’s a sin too! That might sound like a strange comparison. After all, how can you compare calling someone a fool or being mad at them to actually killing someone? But what Jesus is saying here is not that these actions are the same, but that they are signs of the same problem: hatred for another person in your heart. Whether our hatred leads us to bitterness, name-calling, or even hurting another person, the problem is that we are showing hate for another human being, someone God created, someone He loves. While what people do about their hatred might be different, they all come from the same source: a sinful heart.

To illustrate the importance of having a heart free of hatred for others, Jesus gives the example of a man going to worship at an altar. Jesus says that if the man realizes that there is something causing division between him and a fellow believer, instead of going to the altar, he should make things right. The same way, if we have anger or hate in our hearts toward someone, especially another Christian, we need to make things right with them.

When we think about sin, usually we think about actions. We know that we shouldn’t steal, shouldn’t lie, and shouldn’t hurt other people. But as we saw in today’s passage, sin starts with the heart. We hurt others because of anger or hate in our hearts. We steal because of greed in our hearts. We lie because of selfishness or fear in our hearts. So if we want to obey God, we need to deal not just with our sinful actions, but our sinful hearts. But how do we do that? How can we fix a sinful heart? On our own, we can’t, but the good news is, Jesus can. When we ask Jesus to come into our lives, the Bible tells us that Jesus gives us a new, clean heart. If you’ve never done that before, talk to your family today about asking Jesus to save you and give you a clean heart.

Questions for Young Children:

Is it a sin to hate another person in your heart?

If you are going to worship God but you remember you are mad at someone, what does Jesus say you should do first?

Who gives us a clean heart?

Questions for Teens and Pre-teens:

Why do you think Jesus compares hatred to murdering someone? What do they have in common?

What does it mean that sin starts with our hearts, not our actions?

Can we fix sin in our hearts on our own? How can we fix the problem?