

# GOING ABOVE AND BEYOND

## MATTHEW 5:17-48

*“For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.” - Matthew 5:20*

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**As your group time begins use one or more of the following questions to introduce the topic of discussion:**

How do you usually respond to rules? Do you tend to be a rule-follower or a rule-breaker?

What are some rules or laws that you always make sure to follow?

Who were the Pharisees and Scribes? Can you think of a modern day equivalent?

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In verses 17-48, Jesus explained how wide and deep God’s rule is in His people’s lives. Sitting on the hillside that day, listening to Jesus’ teaching, the Israelites heard a new interpretation of the Law that focused primarily on a changed heart, not outward actions and following rules. He challenged the religious leaders of that time to release the man made traditions and take hold of God’s true intention for the law and it’s impact on the Christian life.

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The first lesson of the law is **THE LAW ISN’T ENOUGH**. Read together Matthew 5:17-20.

What did Jesus mean by saying He came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets?

Why wasn’t the way the scribes and Pharisees obeyed the law sufficient?

What was Jesus trying to communicate when He said we must exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees? How did this teaching raise people’s expectation of righteousness?

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The second lesson of the law is to **KNOW THE HEART OF THE LAW**. Read Matthew 5:21-37 together.

If someone told you the law was put into place to set you free, what would your reaction be?

How does Jesus' interpretation of murder (v. 21), adultery (v.27), and divorce (v.31) show what kind of righteousness He is looking for?

Is that interpretation encouraging or discouraging to you? Why? Is it possible for you to achieve that level of righteousness?

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The final lesson of the law is **THE PURPOSE OF THE LAW**. Read together **Matthew 5:38-48**.

What was the main point of the law to love your neighbor and hate your enemy? How did this change what His followers expected?

Have someone read Romans 12:17-21. How does God's command in these verses compare with His command in Matthew 5:43-44?

How did Jesus' life demonstrate this teaching? Consider Luke 23:34 as an example.

Have you sought revenge with anyone in your life? If you feel comfortable sharing, what was it that led you to that response? How would Jesus want you to respond differently after hearing the truth of His Word?

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**Pray:**

As you close your time together. Pray and thank God that His love for you is not dependent on your performance for Him. Thank God for the life and death of Jesus Christ who fulfilled the Law and the Prophets. Ask Him for the faith to believe what He says to be true about you in Christ. Pray that God would reveal the areas of our lives that remain in sin. Pray that God would reveal that sin, so that we can confess sin and be reconciled to God and to one another. Close in prayer, asking God for the Spirit's power to count your enemies as worthy of your own life for Jesus's sake.

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**Connect:**

