

## Small Group Study Guide

Rescuing the Heart from Murderous Thoughts

Series: God's Stump Speech

Matthew 5:21-26

From Sunday February 14, 2021

Take a moment to pray for the Lord to still your mind, as well as direct your thoughts, conversation and response to the study.

### Appetizer:

Take a moment to read out loud Matthew 5:21-26

What makes you angry? Why?

What is your default angry response? (Example: Hit something, silent treatment, yell, death stare)

### Main Course:

In Matthew 5:21-26, Jesus completes the Mosaic law on murder by dealing with its foundational causes. The language he uses is both surprising and rattling:

Moses' Law: Anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.

Jesus' Law: Anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment.

**Question:** Why do you think Jesus attaches such strong language to anger? More specifically, why does he treat anger and murder the exact same way?

**Discussion:** In the passage, Jesus is basically saying that God's people are not to be angry with each other. Today, many people equate Christians to being angry all the time. Why do you think that feeling is out there? Is it true? Why are Christians so angry? WHEN did it seem like anger became an acceptable response to others—particularly other believers—who disagree with you?

Jeff suggested in the sermon that when Jesus mentioned Gehenna or hell as a place of judgment that angry believers would be sent to, he was referring to a valley that was known as a place of judgment due to what took place there. Years before, kings had actually sacrificed children on the

altars of other gods. It was suggested that anger would face the same punishment as those who worshipped other gods in despicable ways.

Obviously, there are places in Scripture that talk about anger. In fact, it can even be argued that Jesus displays anger.

**Question:** Considering Jesus' words and example, what kind of anger is acceptable in the kingdom of God, and what kind belongs to some other religion?

**To think about:** Jesus knew that if we master anger, murder would never occur. In our world we hear about war, death threats, shootings, and neighbourhood murders. **How does anger affect the way we value another person's life?**

### Dessert:

The aim of God's people is always towards reconciliation. Reconciliation is hard, especially if one side does not want to participate. Yet, we are not called to peace keep, but to peace make. There are times when reconciliation is not safe for people. There are times when, in our human resources, we have exhausted all avenues. And there are times when the best way to show love to someone is to let them experience the consequences of their actions.

But the aim of God's people is always towards reconciliation.

**Challenge:** As a challenge to the group, how can our community stand against the prevailing belief that Christians are known by their anger?

**What is something practical that we can do that helps bring restoration to factions in society or amongst different segments of Christianity that are angry with each other?**

In the passage, Jesus uses a funny example of walking alongside someone in order to make amends while they are taking YOU to court. Is there anyone in your life that expresses contempt towards you that you can "walk alongside on the way to court" with? In other words, is there someone in your life that you can still befriend, or cherish, or face towards even as they express resentment towards you? What will that look like to you in your situation.

**Take a moment to reflect on the anger that we see in the world. Have each person pray for peace and healing in our society, that all people would recapture what it means to genuinely value other humans that disagree with us. Ask forgiveness of those times where anger stole your Christian example or affected how you treat other people. Pray that God gives you wisdom in any relationships that you have that require reconciliation.**