



Re-Forming Our Relationships (Matthew 5:21-26)

Re-Formed: Sermon on the Mount pt. 3

Pastor Kate Wallace Nunneley

THE BIG IDEA

As people of God, Jesus calls us to live lives that don't merely refrain from murder, that lives that pursue reconciliation and cultivate gentleness, peace, and love.

OPENING

- When was the last time you apologized to someone? What were the circumstances?
- Why do you think it's so difficult for people to admit when they're wrong?

DIGGING DEEPER

- In Matthew 5:21-47, Jesus quotes the Old Testament six times. Each time Jesus starts by saying something like, "you have heard that it was said" (vv. 21, 27, 31, 33, 38, 43) followed by "but now I say to you" (vv. 22, 28, 32, 34, 39, 44). Sometimes these six sections are called "antitheses," because it appears that Jesus is setting himself against the Old Testament. However, it's better to view these as "extensions" or "interpretations" of the Old Testament, another way Jesus is "fulfilling" the Law and the Prophets (see v. 17).¹ How does viewing these as extensions make sense of today's passage from vv. 21-26?
- According to Glen Stassen and David Gushee, instead of reading these six sections as following a twofold pattern (an Old Testament teaching followed by Jesus' command), we should read them as following a threefold pattern:
 - The traditional Old Testament teaching
 - The malforming cycle that keeps us trapped.
 - The re-forming practices that will set us free²

¹Amy-Jill Levine, *Sermon on the Mount: A Beginner's Guide to the Kingdom of Heaven* (Abingdon Press), p. 23.

²David Gushee and Glen Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context* 1st edition (Eerdmans Publishing, 1996). Gushee and Stassen call these categories "traditional teaching," "sinful cycles," and "transforming initiatives."



Jesus' command is not found in the Malforming Cycle (in this case v. 22). This is merely a diagnosis of a sinful pattern we get stuck in. Jesus' command is found in the Re-Forming Practices (in this case, vv. 23-25). How does this help you understand this section?

- According to Pastor Kate, the focus of this section is on times when we are in the wrong and have done something to wound a relationship. What is the command of v. 24? How does Romans 12:18 fill this in? What things are necessary for this to happen?
- What command does Jesus give in v. 25?
- Although the focus of this section is on when we are in the wrong, according to Matthew 18:15-17, what is our responsibility when someone else wrongs them?

PUTTING IT TO WORK

- It is rare for a wounded relationship to be caused by just one person. Most often, both parties share some responsibility for a wounded relationship. As you think about a relationship in your life that's wounded or broken, how have you contributed to the current state of that relationship? Spend time this week in listening prayer, inviting the Holy Spirit to show you where you have responsibility.
- This week keep track of the number of times you admit that you're wrong to people. At the end of the week, what do you notice?

PRAYER REQUESTS