

*Bible chat week starting 12 2 23*

Matthew 5: 21 & 22:

*'You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, "You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgement." But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgement. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, "Raca," is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, "You fool!" will be in danger of the fire of hell.*

1. It's okay to describe other people. It's unhelpful to continually label another person in negative terms, and it's certainly not okay to call them bad names. Discuss where the boundary line is between helpful descriptions and rude names.
2. Why is Jesus' teaching on this matter so severe?

Matthew 5:27 - 30:

*'You have heard that it was said, "You shall not commit adultery." But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.*

1. Why do religious people especially look down on those caught in a sexual sin? Do Christians have a particular problem with sex?
2. Again, Jesus' teaching here is extreme. How can we cultivate a helpful and honest attitude towards sex?

Matthew 5:31 - 32

*'It has been said, "Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce." But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, makes her the victim of adultery, and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.*

1. Do you accept that sometimes the most helpful and life-affirming step might be for a marriage to end?
2. In that case, how can we understand Jesus' words on divorce here? Is it about protecting women as well as promoting lifelong marriage, at least as an ideal, as David suggested.

Matthew 5:33 - 37:

*'Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, "Do not break your oath, but fulfil to the Lord the oaths you have made." But I tell you, do not swear an oath at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne; or by the earth, for it is his*

*footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. All you need to say is simply "Yes," or "No"; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.*

1. Why does Jesus teach against making oaths?
2. Jesus is advocating honest, straightforward, simple speech. Do you think this is an achievable goal? Why, or why not?
3. Reflect on the three hoops model for speech:
  - Is it true?
  - Is it helpful?
  - Is it necessary?Is this a useful idea for moderating our speech?

*David suggested the teaching of Jesus here centres around respect: for God, for the other and for ourselves. He said we should listen to others with that respect, and with an open heart, for the other may bring Christ's message to us.*

1. What stops us from really listening to each other?
2. Can Christ be heard in the voices and stories of those without faith?