

**If Words Could Kill**  
Matthew 5:21-26

- I. A Disciple’s Characteristics: 8 Blessings (5:1-12)
- II. A Disciple’s Influence: 2 Metaphors (5:13-16)
- III. **A Disciple’s Righteousness** (5:17-48)

A. The Kingdom Standard: Must exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees (5:20)

	SCRIBAL RELIGION	KINGDOM RIGHTEOUSNESS
Concept:	R = Outward conformity to God’s Law	R = Inward conformity to God’s character
Role of Law	Means of gaining God’s (and man’s) approval	1. Reveals God’s character 2. Exposes Man’s heart
Approach	1. Interpret the Law 2. Work harder	1. Explain Law’s intent 2. Invite repentance and faith 3. Transform hearts
Standard:	Comparison to Traditions	Perfect fulfillment of Law
Results	1. Focus on details 2. Promote comparison 3. Feeling of uncertainty	1. Focus on character 2. Promote compassion 3. Feeling of resolution
God’s Response	Resistance	Grace

B. Six Contrasting Illustrations (5:21-48)

**I. Keys to Understanding the Illustrations**

- A. As the promised King, Jesus speaks with an absolute \_\_\_\_\_ – greater than that of the scribes and Pharisees; even greater than that of \_\_\_\_\_.
- B. Jesus’ examples are not true *antitheses*, but are rather contrasting, \_\_\_\_\_ illustrations.
  - 1. Primarily, Jesus corrects the faulty \_\_\_\_\_ offered by contemporary religious leaders
    - a. Introductory formula: “You have heard that it was said” indicates how men *speak* about the Scriptures. When Jesus cited the Scriptures themselves, he used a different introductory formula: “\_\_\_\_\_.”
    - b. In the illustrations, Jesus quotes from the Law, for that is part of “what was said.” But the Pharisees placed emphasis in the wrong place, and thus \_\_\_\_\_ the intended meaning.
    - c. In the immediate context, Jesus asserted that he had not come to “set aside” the law – which would be the case if Jesus was somehow replacing Moses’ law with a new one. What he is setting aside is the \_\_\_\_\_ of men.
  - 2. Without undermining the authority of Law of Moses, in his explanation of its true intent Jesus \_\_\_\_\_ Moses’ teaching, moving beyond the letter of the Law to elucidate the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Law. In this way, Jesus “\_\_\_\_\_” the meaning of the Law and the Prophets (5:17).
- C. With each illustration, Jesus follows a formulaic pattern:
  - 1. “You have heard that it was said” – a statement of the accepted tradition
  - 2. “But I say to you” – Jesus’ authoritative and contrasting explanation of meaning/intent.
  - 3. “Therefore” – a commentary on implications and application.

- D. In Semitic style, Jesus often made his point by means of vignettes which were not further explained, leaving the listener to intuit the meaning. He also made use of \_\_\_\_\_ and other radical-sounding statements to convey his ideas.

## II. Illustration #1: The Sixth Commandment – “You shall not murder”

- A. Tradition: “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ (21).
1. The sixth commandment prohibited premeditated, deliberative, \_\_\_\_\_ taking of human life. The penalty was capital punishment, the severity of which is due to the \_\_\_\_\_ of God in the victim (Gen. 9:6).
  2. Pharisaic emphasis was on the liability to judgment: in their emphasis on the penalty rather than the offense, they shifted focus from the \_\_\_\_\_ law to the \_\_\_\_\_ law (Num 35:30-31).
  3. The point of the Pharisees was, if you have not \_\_\_\_\_ someone, you are, by definition, keeping the law and are therefore \_\_\_\_\_ (See Luke 18:18ff; Mat 19:16ff).
- B. Correction: \_\_\_\_\_ anger and \_\_\_\_\_ speech warrant judicial exclusion from the kingdom of heaven (21-22).
1. Two related offenses: internal (attitude) and external (action)
    - a. Inappropriate anger based on personal animosity that seeks \_\_\_\_\_ rather than \_\_\_\_\_
    - b. Abusive speech that expresses \_\_\_\_\_ for another person’s intellect and/or character.
  2. Judicial sentence: liable to \_\_\_\_\_.
  3. Note: Jesus does not say that these crimes of the heart are \_\_\_\_\_ murder. He says they are much more serious than we think and are in the same \_\_\_\_\_ with murder.
- C. Application: If your wrong behavior has broken a relationship, take immediate steps to \_\_\_\_\_

Summary: The letter of the law prohibits unlawful taking of life and prescribes the death penalty for the offender. The spirit of the law prohibits illegitimate anger that prompts expressions of contempt and/or breaches a relationship. Such anger merits divine judgment and requires immediate remediation.

## III. Kingdom principles

- A. The reason that Jesus’ statements are so shocking is that we are morally \_\_\_\_\_. We need to continually repent of our commitment to self-\_\_\_\_\_ and self-\_\_\_\_\_ (1 John 1:8-9). One of the blessings of the age to come will be \_\_\_\_\_ from this dysfunction.
- B. Being right involves more than not being \_\_\_\_\_. Being righteous involves more than not committing \_\_\_\_\_. It involves \_\_\_\_\_ the beatitudes.
- C. The temptation to personal animosity and abusive speech flairs up whenever I revert from the Kingdom of God to the Kingdom of \_\_\_\_\_. Unrighteous anger is a \_\_\_\_\_ that I am seeking something other than his rule and righteousness to fulfill my hunger and thirst for life satisfaction.
- D. This passage underscores the damage done by \_\_\_\_\_. As an assault on the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ of another person (the image of God), Jesus says it merits severe punishment. Any believer whose relationships are infected by verbal abuse must take radical steps to address that problem.
- E. Kingdom righteousness is not about avoiding \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_. It is about \_\_\_\_\_ persons (restoring God’s image) and \_\_\_\_\_ relationships.