

## **Study Guide: Matthew Lesson 68 – Our Attitude Behind Our Actions**

### **AM Message – May 24, 2026**

This study guide explores the teachings of Jesus Christ regarding the internal motivations that drive human behavior. Based on the Sermon on the Mount, specifically Matthew 5:21–48, the material emphasizes that God is more concerned with the condition of a person's heart than their outward religious appearance. It highlights how Jesus Christ raised the standard of the Law by focusing on "attitudinal" righteousness—the thoughts and feelings that exist before an action is even taken.

#### Quiz: Reviewing the Message

1. According to the text, what is the primary difference between how human beings judge others and how God evaluates them?
  2. Why does the document state that Jesus Christ did not come to set aside the Old Testament Law?
  3. How is the relationship between a person's attitude and their actions described in the sermon?
  4. What are the six specific themes or illustrations Jesus Christ uses to explain the higher standard of His kingdom?
  5. According to the sermon, why is having hate in your heart considered the same as committing murder in the eyes of God?
  6. How does the text define the "righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees," and why was it insufficient for entering the kingdom of God?
  7. In the context of Memorial Day mentioned in the document, what scripture is used to describe the "greater love" shown by those who sacrifice their lives?
  8. What does the sermon say about the concept of "no-fault divorce" in relation to the teachings of Jesus Christ?
  9. Why is the instruction to "love your enemies" described as a revolutionary thought for the people of that time?
  10. Based on the scripture from Titus 2:11–14, what does the grace of God teach believers to do in the present age?
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## Answer Key

1. Human beings typically look at outward appearance and external behavior, often satisfying themselves with how they act visibly. However, according to 1 Samuel 16:7, the Lord looks at the heart, as the internal state is infinitely more revealing than the external.
  2. Jesus Christ came to fulfill the Law rather than destroy it. He stripped away the confusing traditions added by rabbis to expose the Law's original purity and lift it back to the high standard God intended.
  3. A person's attitude determines their actions because behavior is an outgrowth of internal righteousness or sin. The sermon suggests that the "thinker" or the mind is where sin begins, making thoughts just as important as deeds.
  4. Jesus Christ addresses six specific areas: murder, adultery, divorce, swearing oaths, retaliation (an eye for an eye), and loving one's enemies. In each case, He moves the focus from the physical act to the heart's intent.
  5. Jesus Christ teaches that God's standard is based on the heart's attitude rather than just physical behavior. Therefore, a person who harbors anger or hate is just as guilty and liable to judgment as one who physically commits murder.
  6. Their righteousness was entirely external, focusing on ceremonies and visible works to justify themselves. This was insufficient because they lowered God's standards to fit their own abilities while their hearts remained full of lust, hate, and pride.
  7. The sermon cites John 15:13, which states, "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends." This is used to honor veterans and those who died in service to their country.
  8. The sermon argues that "no-fault divorce" contradicts the teachings of Jesus Christ because there is always responsibility involved when a marriage fails. It emphasizes that divorce should not occur without a just cause, such as sexual immorality.
  9. At the time, the common religious teaching was to love your neighbor but hate your enemy. Jesus Christ changed this by commanding His followers to love their enemies, which was a completely different way of thinking than the traditional system.
  10. The grace of God teaches believers to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts. It encourages them to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age while looking forward to the return of Jesus Christ.
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## Essay Questions

1. **The Heart vs. The Appearance:** Explain the significance of 1 Samuel 16:7 in the context of the Sermon on the Mount. Why is external religious behavior potentially misleading according to the teachings of Jesus Christ?
2. **The Fulfillment of the Law:** Discuss the phrase "But I say to you," which Jesus Christ used repeatedly in Matthew 5. How did this phrase signal a shift from traditional Rabbinic teaching to a divine standard?
3. **The Power of Attitude:** Analyze the statement, "Your attitude determines what you do." How does this perspective change the way a person might monitor their own spiritual health compared to just following a list of rules?
4. **Sacrifice and Freedom:** The sermon connects the sacrifice of military veterans to the words of Jesus Christ. Discuss the parallels between physical freedom provided by soldiers and the spiritual concepts of love and sacrifice discussed in the text.
5. **Loving the Unlovable:** Why is "loving your enemies" considered the "widest possible attitude" mentioned in the progression of the lesson? Describe the challenges of applying this principle in modern social interactions.

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## Detailed Study Summary

### The Central Theme: Internal Righteousness

The sermon focuses on the "attitude behind our actions." It asserts that God is a "heart evaluator" who is not impressed by external ceremonies or religious rights if the heart is not right.

- **External vs. Internal:** Man evaluates based on what is visible, but God evaluates the heart (1 Samuel 16:7).
- **The Goal of the Sermon on the Mount:** Jesus Christ provides standards for living in His kingdom, redefining the Law to emphasize internal purity.

### Correcting the Traditions

Jesus Christ addressed a religious system (the Judaism of that time) that had lowered God's standards. The scribes and Pharisees had created a system of "external righteousness" that allowed them to feel justified without actually changing their hearts.

- **Stripping Traditions:** Jesus Christ removed the "Rabbinic principles" that had been added to the Law to reveal its original, bare purity.
- **Raising the Standard:** He taught that God's standard is higher than human standards. To enter the kingdom, one's righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 5:20).

## The Six Illustrations of the Higher Law

Jesus Christ used six specific examples to show how the Law applies to the heart:

- **Murder:** It is not just the act that is wrong; anger and hate in the heart are also subject to judgment.
- **Adultery:** Looking with lust is the same as the physical act because the "unclean desire" has taken root in the heart.
- **Divorce:** Marriage is a basic social definition, and divorce should not be treated lightly or done without just cause.
- **Oaths:** A person's word should be their bond; there should be no need for swearing false oaths.
- **Retaliation:** Instead of "an eye for an eye," the citizens of God's kingdom should be willing to "turn the other cheek."
- **Love:** The standard moves from loving neighbors to the revolutionary command to love one's enemies.

## The Progression of Christian Living

The teachings of Jesus Christ move through a three-fold progression:

1. **The Individual:** Dealing with personal sins like murder and lust.
2. **The Family/Social System:** Addressing marriage, honesty, and justice.
3. **The Widest Attitude:** Reaching the peak of righteousness through love, even for those who oppose us.

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## Glossary of Key Terms

- **Attitudinal:** Relating to or springing from a person's attitudes or internal mental state.
- **Beatitudes:** A series of blessings spoken by Jesus Christ at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount (referred to as "biatitudes" in the source).
- **Commend:** To praise or present someone as worthy of regard; the Pharisees "commended themselves" based on outward looks.
- **Decalogue:** Another name for the Ten Commandments given by God to Moses.
- **External:** The outward appearance or visible behavior of a person.
- **Internal:** The inner thoughts, motives, and condition of a person's heart.
- **Justification:** The act of being declared righteous or "in the right" before God.

- **Rabbinic:** Relating to the teachings or traditions of rabbis (Jewish religious teachers).
- **Righteousness:** The quality of being morally right or justifiable; the sermon distinguishes between true righteousness and "self-righteousness."
- **Scribes and Pharisees:** Religious leaders during the time of Jesus Christ known for their strict adherence to the external details of the Law.
- **Soberly:** In a serious, sensible, and self-controlled manner.

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### Greek Word Study and Pronunciation

The following term found in the study context has its roots in the Greek language:

#### **Decalogue** [DEK-uh-log]<sup>1</sup>

- **Definition:** This term refers to the Ten Commandments. It comes from the Greek words *deka* (ten) and *logos* (words or statements). In the sermon, it refers to the foundational laws Jesus Christ expanded upon, such as "Thou shalt not murder" and "Thou shalt not commit adultery."

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<sup>1</sup> The speaker uses this term to refer to the two commands from the "decalogue" that Jesus Christ expands upon during His teaching.