

Briefing Document: Matthew Lesson 72 "Are You a Murderer?"

Sunday AM-June 28, 2026

Executive Summary

This document synthesizes the teachings from a service held at New Life Family Worship Center regarding Jesus' instructions on murder in the Sermon on the Mount. The central theme explores how Jesus moves beyond the external letter of the Law to address the internal condition of the human heart. Key takeaways include:

- **The Root of Sin:** Murder is not merely a social issue but a manifestation of a "debased mind" and an evil heart authored by Satan.
- **The Value of Life:** Every human is made in the image of God; therefore, taking a life is an assault on God's creation.
- **A Higher Standard of Righteousness:** Jesus teaches that avoiding the physical act of murder is insufficient. True righteousness requires managing anger and seeking reconciliation with others.
- **National Reflection:** The teaching coincided with the celebration of the nation's 150th anniversary, calling for national revival and a return to biblical principles regarding justice and the sanctity of life.

National Context and Spiritual Revival

The sermon took place during a patriotic celebration of the nation's birth. The discourse emphasizes that while the country was founded on principles of liberty and "inalienable rights," it has since fallen away from its spiritual foundations.

- **A Call for Prayer:** Leaders prayed for revival, asking for "clear vision and sober minds" for national leaders and peace in schools.
- **Biblical Heritage:** The service cited *Psalm 33:12: Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people He has chosen as His own inheritance.*
- **Societal Concerns:** The document notes a decline in safety and an increase in hostility, suggesting that modern legal systems have strayed from biblical principles.

The Scriptural Foundation: Matthew 5:21–26

The core of the lesson focuses on Jesus' first illustration of how a believer's righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees.

- **The Traditional Law:** *"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment'" (Matthew 5:21).*
- **The New Standard:** Jesus expands the definition of murder to include internal states:

- **Anger:** Being angry with a brother without cause.
- **Insults:** Calling a brother "Raka" (a term of contempt) or "you fool."
- **The Consequence:** Jesus warns that these internal sins put one in danger of "hellfire" and the judgment of the council.
- **The Requirement for Reconciliation:** Jesus instructs that if someone remembers a conflict with a brother while at the altar, they must leave their gift, go reconcile first, and then return to offer the gift.

The Theological Nature of Murder

The teaching defines murder through a biblical lens rather than a secular one.

The Origin of Murder

- **Authored by Satan:** According to *John 8:44*, the devil is a murderer.
- **The Human Heart:** Murder is not caused by "social deficiency" or stressful environments. Instead, *Matthew 15:19* states: *For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.*
- **A Debased Mind:** Citing *Romans 1:28-29*, the document explains that when people reject God, they are filled with "unrighteousness" and "murder."

Categories and Statistics

- **Modern Prevalence:** In the United States, approximately 14,000 murders occur annually, averaging 38 per day.
- **Forms of Murder:** The teaching broadens the scope of murder to include:
 - **Suicide:** Described as "self-murder."
 - **Abortion:** The document claims at least 65 million babies have been "murdered" in the womb since legalization.
 - **Violent Crime:** Including gang warfare, domestic disputes, and "love triangles."

Divine Justice and Capital Punishment

The document outlines God's historical and legal response to the shedding of blood.

- **The Institution of Capital Punishment:** In *Genesis 9:6*, God established the death penalty: *"Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed; For in the image of God He made man."*
- **Divine Allowance:** The document notes a distinction between murder and "divine allowance." This occurs when God commands the removal of a nation in judgment or when a person acts in self-defense to protect the "image of God" in their own life.

- **Premeditation:** *Exodus 21:14* emphasizes that a man who kills with premeditation or treachery must be taken even from the altar to be put to death.

The First Human Crime: Cain and Abel

The biblical history of murder begins with the account of Cain and Abel in *Genesis 4*.

- **The Deception:** Cain lured his brother into a field with the intent to kill him.
- **The Judgment:** God told Cain, "*The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground*" (*Genesis 4:10*).
- **The Legacy:** From this first crime, murder became a recurring issue throughout biblical history, involving figures such as Pharaoh, David, Jezebel, and Herod.

Conclusion: Challenging Self-Righteousness

Jesus used the topic of murder to shatter the comfort of the Pharisees. They believed they were righteous because they had never physically killed anyone. Jesus' teaching targets three specific areas:

1. **View of Self:** It forces individuals to realize that internal anger is a sin as serious as the physical act of murder.
2. **View of God:** It highlights God as a judge who looks at the heart and the intentions, not just external actions.
3. **View of Others:** It demands that believers treat others with respect and prioritize reconciliation over ritual religious acts.

The lesson concludes that true righteousness is not the absence of a crime, but the presence of a transformed heart that seeks peace and values the image of God in every person.

Greek Terminology and Definitions

Greek Word/Term	Phonetic Pronunciation	Definition
Septuagint ¹	sep-TOO-uh-jint	The ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament.
Raka ²	RAH-kah	A term of extreme contempt meaning "empty-headed," "worthless," or "vain."

¹ Footnote: Referenced in the context of the translation of the account of Cain and Abel. ²

Footnote: Used by Jesus in Matthew 5:22 to describe a verbal assault that warrants judgment.