

## **Briefing Document-Matthew Lesson 73-Understanding the True Definition of Murder**

**Sunday AM-July 5, 2026**

### Executive Summary

This document analyzes a teaching on the Sermon on the Mount, specifically focusing on Matthew 5:21–22. The central theme is that Jesus Christ redefines the Sixth Commandment by shifting the focus from physical actions to the condition of the human heart. While traditional religious teachings of the time only condemned the physical act of killing, Jesus identifies anger and hatred as the roots of murder. The document explores the historical reliance on religious tradition over scripture, the danger of self-righteousness, and the necessity of internal repentance. Key takeaways include:

- **Internal vs. External:** God judges the internal heart attitude (anger and hatred) just as strictly as the external act of murder.
- **The Trap of Tradition:** Relying on human interpretations of the law can lead to a false sense of security and self-justification.
- **Universal Guilt:** Under Jesus' definition, all people have struggled with the sin of murder in their hearts and require divine forgiveness.

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### The Conflict Between Tradition and Scripture

A primary theme of the analysis is the difference between "rabbinic tradition" and the actual intent of God's Word. During the time of Jesus, the Jewish people were heavily dependent on what the rabbis taught rather than the scriptures themselves.

- **The Language Barrier:** After the Babylonian captivity, many Jewish people lost their ability to read and speak Hebrew. They primarily spoke Aramaic. Because the Old Testament was written in Hebrew, the common people could not study it for themselves.
- **The Power of Scribes:** Since the public could not verify the text, the rabbis and scribes held immense power. They provided interpretations that often simplified God's laws to make them easier to follow superficially.
- **A Historical Parallel:** This period is compared to the era of the Catholic Mass when services were conducted in Latin, a language most of the congregation did not understand. In both cases, spiritual ignorance led to a reliance on human tradition rather than personal understanding of the Bible.

### The Rabbinic Interpretation of Murder

The teaching notes that the scribes and Pharisees had a very narrow view of the commandment "You shall not murder." Their tradition focused on two main points:

1. **The Physical Act:** They taught that as long as a person did not physically kill someone, they had kept the law.
2. **The Civil Penalty:** They warned that murder put a person "in danger of the judgment," which referred to a local human court.

This interpretation was superficial because it removed God from the conversation. By making the law about avoiding a local court, people could justify themselves and feel righteous simply because they had stayed out of legal trouble.

### Jesus' Radical Standard

In Matthew 5:21–22, Jesus uses the phrase "But I say to you" to reclaim the true meaning of the law. He moves the standard from a courtroom to the conscience.

*"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.' But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire."* (Matthew 5:21–22, NKJV)

### The Source of Murder

Jesus argues that anger is the "root" of murder. He teaches that:

- **Anger is Murder:** In God's eyes, harboring bitterness, nursing grudges, or feeling hatred toward another person is the same sin as killing them.
- **Equal Punishment:** Jesus suggests that internal anger and external murder deserve the same spiritual judgment.
- **The Heart Matters:** God desires "truth in the inward parts" (Psalm 51:6). A person might appear nice on the outside while remaining a "stinker" or a murderer on the inside.

### The Delusion of Self-Justification

The document highlights how humans go to great lengths to convince themselves they are good people. This is termed "self-justification."

- **The Case of "Two Gun" Crowley:** A notorious 20-year-old criminal in 1931 who brutally murdered people, including police officers. Despite his crimes, he wrote a note claiming he had a "weary heart" that "would do nobody any harm."
- **Universal Application:** Just as Crowley deluded himself, many people today feel self-righteous because they do not commit "major" crimes. However, Jesus' teaching strips away this pride, showing that anyone who has been angry or mocking toward others is guilty before God.

## Moving Toward Repentance and Forgiveness

The final section of the analysis emphasizes that identifying as a "murderer" in heart should lead to a change in life.

- **Letting Go of Grudges:** Individuals are encouraged to "build a bridge and get over it." This involves giving up hatred toward friends, spouses, or enemies.
- **The Power of the Gospel:** The teacher shares a personal story of hating his eldest brother for years due to abuse. It was only through faith in Christ that he was able to forgive and find love for his brother.
- **Active Repentance:** Believers are called to cast aside emotions of hatred and anger, recognizing that these emotions rob them of the joy of God and give power to negative spiritual influences.

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## Foreign Language Terms and Definitions

The following table provides clarity on specific terms used in the scriptural context of this briefing.

<b>Term</b>	<b>Phonetic Pronunciation</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>Raca</b> <sup>[^1]</sup>	<i>rah-KAH</i>	An Aramaic term of contempt meaning "empty-headed" or "worthless person."
<b>Gehenna</b> <sup>[^2]</sup>	<i>geh-HEN-ah</i>	Translated as "hell fire" in the text; refers to a place of final punishment.

[^1]: This term was used as an insult to attack a person's character or intelligence. [^2]: Originally a reference to the Valley of Hinnom, it became a symbol for eternal judgment.

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