



# Pure in Heart

God gave the Israelites the Law through Moses. The Pharisees believed that they were able to obey them, and thus were proud about their own self-proclaimed righteousness. However, as we will come to see, Jesus took the law that was given and taught that the Law that God gave was more than just a mere “checklist” to be ticked off. It pierces and searches our hearts.

In this section of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus corrects the popular interpretations of the Law during his day and goes into the heart and spirit of God’s laws. It is less about our own actions (though it is important), but it is ultimately about our hearts and intentions behind our actions. It is about being “pure in heart” (cf. Matt 5:8). Jesus takes the commands on adultery, divorce, and oaths, and dive deeper into the heart of the issue. Let us take a closer look at Jesus’ teachings.

## Launch

- 1) Which do you think is more important – our actions or the intention behind our actions? Why?

## PURE IN HEART

**Read Matthew 5:27-37**

- 2) What are the passages that Jesus focuses on in his correction of the people’s misunderstandings? (v27, 31, 33)
  - a. What is Jesus focusing on with his teaching? How do you think the people will react to that?
  - b. How serious should we be taking what Jesus says in v29-30?
  - c. What does that show about Jesus’ thought about God’s holiness and our sins?
- 3) How does he correct the misunderstanding of the command in v27? (v28)
  - a. What is Jesus focusing on with his teaching? How do you think the people will react to that?
  - b. How serious should we be taking what Jesus says in v29-30?
  - c. What does that show about Jesus’ thought about God’s holiness and our sins?
- 4) How does he correct the misunderstanding of the command in v31? (v32)
  - a. How do you think the people are abusing the command listed in v31 for Jesus to teach what he did in v32?



- 5) How does he correct the misunderstanding of the command in v33? (v34-36)
  - a. What do you think Jesus is focusing on by teaching that?
  - b. Instead of swearing, what does Jesus ask us to do? (v37)
  
- 6) What do you think Jesus is focusing on when talking about these commands in our passage today?
  - a. Based on what we have read in this passage, do you think God cares more about our actions or our hearts?
  - b. How should this change the way we think about our Christian life and obedience to God?
  
- 7) How can we apply each of the three teachings of Jesus in our lives today?
  
- 8) Of the three teachings of Jesus in our passage today, which do you think you struggle with the most?

## Conclusion

Obedience to God's law can easily turn into a checklist that we tick off. Once we have done that, it becomes easy for us to feel morally superior and self-righteous about it. Jesus comes and smashes that notion when he took what has been the popular interpretation of God's law and raise the standard. Committing adultery happens when one looks lustfully at another. Divorce is not something that is done by just giving the wife a certificate of divorce. Swearing oaths are not necessary when you are faithful to your own words. At the heart of the issue is about our intentions and motivations behind our actions.

It is not that our actions do not matter. Rather, our hearts give rise to our actions. We may "train" ourselves to have the right actions, but deep down it is still possible that our hearts are not pure. Jesus goes right into the heart of the issue, knowing that if we have a pure heart, it will give rise to pure actions. Obedience to God then is not merely a checklist for us to tick off, but obedience is a matter of our hearts – to be pure in our intentions and motivations. It can be easy to shame or train others into outward obedience, but that only covers up our impure hearts. Rather, we pray to God and work on our own hearts, purifying our hearts through the work of the Holy Spirit in us. It is then the fruit of the Spirit in us that transforms us to be more Christ-like.