

You Must Be Perfect

Matthew 5:48

“Therefore, you must be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

1. Some people can be very exacting in personality and can sometimes challenge our patience, but we should also be grateful for people who are exacting. For example, I am grateful for exacting people whenever I fly. Can you identify areas of life in which you are grateful for exacting people?

Read Matthew 5:48

2. Take time to review Jesus’ audience and His purposes for addressing them.
 - a. Read Matthew 4:25 and 5:1.
 - What types of people would have been in these crowds?
 - What types of people made up His disciples?
 - Would the religious leaders have been there (cf. 19:2-3)?
 - b. Jesus aimed His teaching at those who were self-righteous and believed that they could keep the Law for personal righteousness. His intention was to show that they were mistaken.
 - How do verses 21-22; 27-28; 31-32; 33-34; 38-39; and 43-44 help confirm that this was Jesus’ audience and His intention?
 - How does verse 20 help us to confirm this?
 - How might these people have reacted to Jesus statement in verse 48?
 - In what ways are you tempted toward self-righteousness? How does verse 48 strike you?
 - c. Jesus also sought to show His disciples what it would mean for them to live out God’s perfect desires in His kingdom.
 - Review together some of the things you’ve learned from Jesus’ teaching from the Law. When you think of the six topics Jesus addressed from verse 21 to verse 47, what changed your thinking the most? What challenged your heart the most? What encouraged you most?
 - Discuss how it might be possible to pursue the kind of perfection Jesus taught in verse 48 while understanding that we can’t achieve it in this life.

3. Take time to discuss some of the points that Jesus wanted to communicate in this statement.
 - a. Jesus wanted to remind us that we were created by God for the purpose of imaging Him forth in this world.
 - What specific language in verse 48 communicates that this is what Jesus had in mind?
 - How does verse 48 connect with Genesis 1:26-27?
 - How might it connect with Ephesians 5:1?
 - How might this help us to understand why it does not please God when unbelievers do legitimately good things?
 - b. Jesus is teaching that the standard that God will use to judge you is perfection.
 - If we accept the plain meaning of what Jesus said, what conclusion will we draw as to what God expects of us? Do you see any reason not to accept the plain meaning?
 - How does this compare to Leviticus 19:2?
 - How might 1 John 1:5 also suggest that it would take perfection to be in God's presence? What about Psalm 143:2?
 - What will this mean for those who are hoping that they have been good enough to "get in" to heaven?
 - c. Jesus was teaching that it would be impossible for you to meet God's expectations by keeping the Law.
 - Go back and briefly review verses 22 and 44. Have you been able to keep these Laws to the extent that God expects of you? Are you willing to share ways in which you have fallen short?
 - How does verse 48 connect to Romans 3:19-20? What about Galatians 3:10?
 - What point does James make in James 2:10? What does this mean for you?
4. Take time to discuss how you should respond to Jesus' teaching.
 - a. Jesus wants you to change your mind about how you measure up to God's standards.
 - How do most people think they will do before God at judgment? Why do they think this?
 - How might verse 48 connect with Romans 3:23? What about Romans 3:10?

- Why is it essential that you accept your condition before God (cf. Rom. 6:23)?
- b. The gospel calls you to put your hope entirely on the work that Jesus did on your behalf.
- How does Hebrews 2:17 give you hope?
 - How does Romans 8:3 give you hope?
 - How would you explain this to a friend who has never heard the gospel?
- c. Jesus is teaching that, as a child of the Father, you should commit yourself to obedience.
- What should be your goal in this life according to verse 48? What should be your motivation (cf. John 1:12-13; 14:15)?
 - How can you strive toward this goal while knowing that you can't meet it?
 - What will keep you from discouragement when you fall short (cf. Romans 8:1; 1 John 2:1-2)?