I. Introduction
   A. The superiority of Grace over Law
      1. Law demands outward obedience without the power to enable
      2. Grace transforms the heart, enabling attitude and motivation change
   B. Jesus came to fulfill the law completely
      1. Yet, Jesus was crucified as a sinner
      2. The Judge of the Universe therefore declares the Law has been fulfilled, and every sinner has the opportunity to become a saint
   C. The greatest frontier - The journey into Christlikeness
      1. Grace has no bounds
         ★ Law has no power to make holy
         ★ The natural man cannot comprehend or obey Jesus’ commands
         ★ Only the Spirit filled and Spirit led can do what Jesus commands
      2. The disciples are our evidence

II. The superiority of Jesus’ ethics
   A. Do Not Murder vs. Freedom from Bitterness
      1. Murder is an external behavior
      2. Bitterness is the root of all murder
   B. The Cancer of Bitterness
      1. Deal with it before it metastasizes
      2. Acknowledge your responsibility quickly
      3. Seek peace continually
Question One:
In Matthew 5:21-22, Jesus uses an illustration of an important commandment, “you shall not murder” to point out that the Pharisees taught that murder consisted of taking someone’s life. But the Lord said the commandment extended not only to the act itself but also to the internal attitude behind the act.

- Describe how important your internal attitude is toward each of your actions.
- Share an example.

Question Two:
Becoming angry and calling another person a derogatory name such as “Raca!” (which means empty head or you fool) demonstrates sinfulness of the heart.

- Share a time when you have been angry with someone.
- How did you forgive or reconcile with them?

Question Three:
Reconciliation between one another must be accomplished whether you are the “innocent” or you are the “offending”. We all need to take the first step. Without such reconciliation, gifts presented at the alter mean nothing.

- Pray this week that God will grant you the courage to reconcile with anyone you have done wrong.
Life Group Questions for March 4, 2012
“Good News!” Series
Message = The Quiet Killer

Ice Breaker: Did you ever get in trouble in school? If you did, tell a story about it. If you never did, then tell what you were like.

Read Matthew 5: 17-26
1. Tell what you observe about this passage.
2. Did Jesus accomplish His goal of fulfilling the law? Please explain.
3. What relationship does a New Covenant believer have with the law of Moses? (Answer: He has absolutely NO relationship with the law. Grace has set us free from the law.)
4. Throw out to the group your definition of “righteousness.”
5. What does Jesus mean when He says this, For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:20)?
7. Have you ever dealt with bitterness in your life? Please share with the group.
8. Pray for anyone dealing with bitterness. Then pray for other needs.

Table Talk

Elementary
Matthew 5:21-26

Day 1 - Read Matthew 5:21-26. Look up the meaning of Raca (verse 22), reconciled (verse 24), and adversary (verse 25).

Day 2 - Why do you think that it is important that we be reconciled with one another before approaching the altar? Ask God to show you if there is anyone that you are currently angry and need to be reconciled with. (Parents: perhaps give a personal example of reconciliation that has taken place in your life).

Day 3 - Has God shown you anyone that you need to be reconciled with? If we keep the Ten Commandments and never use the Lord’s name in vain, we don’t kill or steal, etc... are we being righteous (without blame or sin)? The answer is “no” as God also measures the heart (intent) of our thoughts and actions. That is why Jesus addresses murder in verse 21. You do not actually have to commit a murder to be subject to judgment. Seek peace with others and especially with the siblings within your home!
Table Talk

Preschool & Nursery:
Table Talk: Read Matthew 5:21-26 to your child or tell them about God requesting us to forgive each other in your own words.

Talk about the verse that you read. Ask them again who is supposed to forgive. Emphasize that we are supposed to forgive others and that God forgives us. Talk about how we can show people that we forgive them.

Learning points: I am forgiving of myself and others.
- I learn from my mistakes.
- I have the power to keep changing for the better.

Bible Verse: Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Eph 4:32

Prayer: Dear God, I praise you for being so loving and kind. I praise you for being with me all the time. I praise you for forgiving me. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Activity: Give the children coloring/drawing materials. Have them draw a picture of something that they can do to show a friend or family member that they forgive them, for example a picture of them giving a friend a hug, a picture of them smiling, etc.

Personal Devotion Pages

The following pages are designed to help you enjoy a regular time alone with God. We have divided up the curriculum to help us grow wherever we are at in our relationship with God and in our knowledge of His Kingdom.

LEVELS: Since we are a Colorado church, we use skiing imagery to communicate the different levels of intensity and time involved in relating to God.

BEGINNER: If you are new in your relationship with God, we encourage you to try the exercises under this symbol:

INTERMEDIATE: If you have walked with God for some time and would like a little more challenge and more time involvement, try the exercises under this symbol:

ADVANCED: These exercises are for people who have walked with God for some time and display maturity in their relationship with Him.

These exercises provide a practical way to encounter God and His truth on a regular basis. There are no rules here. Please don’t hurry through the process. Slow meditation and memorization seems to soak in better than cramming.

Enjoy!
Day One

1. Take some time to praise the Lord for who He is and enjoy thanking Him for what He has done in your life lately.

2. Read Matthew 5: 17-26

3. Now Read Romans 8: 1-4. How did Jesus say average people would be able to satisfy the Law?

- Take 5 minutes and pray for your family for whatever comes to your mind. **Memorize Ephesians 4: 31-32.**

- Take 10 minutes to pray for your family, and 10 minutes to pray for people in your life who need the Lord. **Memorize Ephesians 4: 31-32.**

- Take 10 minutes to pray for your family, and 10 minutes to pray for people in your life who need the Lord. Take whatever time you have left to pray for your church leadership. **Memorize Ephesians 4: 31-32.**

Day Five

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**Come to terms quickly with your enemy before it is too late and you are dragged into court, handed over to an officer, and thrown in jail.**

~Matthew 5:25, NLT

This strange line from Jesus comes after He tells his listeners to deal with anger and resentment quickly. When you realize that a friend or brother has something against you, you are to quickly pursue reconciliation!

Then comes the line above. Jesus helps us to realize that our enemy (or the person who is angry with us) has a perspective we must hear. There may only be a shred of truth in a cacophony of lies and distortions, but we must pursue understanding quickly.

My responsibility is to own my sin and irresponsibility with that person. If I fail to listen and fail to repent, then I am handed over to the torturers. Torment and misery become mine until I own up to my responsibility in the matter. Jesus says it this way, **I assure you that you won’t be free again until you have paid the last penny**” (Matthew 5:26, NLT). The last penny implies that I cannot come out of prison until I’ve owned up to all of my sin with that person.

For most of us, we do not understand the aggressive nature of bitterness and unforgiveness. I’ll deal with it after a while, is our usual response. We don’t understand that we have just released a monster within.

Take time today to listen to those who are angry with you. Own anything that could possibly be your fault, and ask for forgiveness. Do whatever you can to make peace with all people.

**Father, show me any grounds for imprisonment inside of me.**
Day Five

1. Take some time to praise the Lord from your heart. Enjoy Him thoroughly before moving into a time of thanks. Thank God for all the good things He’s done for you lately.


3. As you praise the Lord today, take time to thank Him for giving you the power to forgive others, and thank Him for forgiving you.

4. Finish your Bible memorization today.

Day One

If you simply read through Jesus’ words in Matthew 5: 14-20 without allowing the Holy Spirit to give you insight, you will assume that Jesus came to be more of a legalist than the strictest pharisee.

Jesus was the only man in history to completely keep the law. He kept it perfectly. He came to fulfill the law; He came to do what no other man could possibly do. The justice of God was satisfied in Jesus.

Then, as if God made a cosmic and catastrophic mistake, Jesus died as a common sinner on a cross. The man who deserved the full blessing of the law received instead the curse of the law. Paul quotes the Old Testament correctly when He says of Jesus, But Christ has rescued us from the curse pronounced by the law. When he was hung on the cross, he took upon himself the curse for our wrongdoing. For it is written in the Scriptures, “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree” (Galatians 3:13, NLT).

Jesus had to fulfill the requirement of the law perfectly in order to be the spotless lamb, slain for the sin of mankind. He took on Himself the curse you and I deserve for not keeping the law.

What now is our relationship to the law? We have NO relationship to the law now. We are free from the law. But grace will never enable and empower us to do less than the law requires. Grace enables us to keep the spirit of the law.

That is why Jesus launches into a deeper understanding of the heart of God in Matthew chapter 5. Grace enables us to go beyond not murdering - it enables us to avoid bitterness. Grace enables us to go beyond divorce - it enables us to be free from lust.

Jesus, thank you so much for enabling me to walk in grace today!
**Day Two**

1. Take some time to quiet yourself before God and thank Him for all He’s done in your life lately. Then praise Him for who He is.

2. Meditate on Matthew 5: 17-26 again today. Because Jesus fulfilled the law and He now lives in every believer, every believer is counted JUSTIFIED (Just if I’d never sinned) before God the Father. Meditate on that fact.

3. Read Romans 7 today. What is the believer’s relationship to the law now that Jesus has saved them?

4. Ask the Holy Spirit to bring the scriptures alive in your life in such a way that you desire to immerse yourself in them daily.

5. Continue memorizing and meditating on the scriptures for this week.

**Day Four**

After Jesus explained that His righteousness far exceeded that of the religious big shots, He then takes the rest of Matthew 5 to show the superior ethic of Grace over Law. The Law requires adherence to certain behaviors. Grace enables believers to go beyond behavior change into heart transformation.

Jesus then takes on the big one - Bitterness. Bitterness is the root of all sorts of problems. It is the root cause of murder, of war, and of most divorces. Bitterness dries the bones. It brings drought to the human spirit, and cuts off communication with God.

Bitterness demands justice and refuses to give mercy or grace. *Vengeance is Mine, says the Lord.* But bitterness takes what belongs to God, and insists that it knows better than He. Bitterness elevates me to my own deity. I refuse to let Him be God. I must get vengeance for myself!

Jesus says this, *the ethic of the scribes and pharisees is about outer behavior.* Do not murder. But Jesus’ ethic is this: *do not let bitterness have any place whatsoever in your life.* Jesus knows that bitterness is the hyper aggressive cancer of the soul. If I let it remain in me overnight, it will begin to metastasize and take over my whole life.

The cult classic move, *The Princess Bride,* featured a hilarious character named Inigo Montoya. This brilliant swordsman dedicated his life to one thing, getting vengeance on the man who killed his father. He daily rehearsed the line he would say to the man when he finally cornered him... *Hello, my name is Inigo Montoya, you killed my father, prepare to die.*

After he got vengeance at the end of the movie, he realized that he had no idea how to live the rest of his life. His whole life had been dedicated to vengeance.

*Father, I surrender all my desire to take vengeance for myself!*
Day Two

The Good News goes beyond anything we can comprehend. It’s hard to wrap our minds around the fact that grace goes far beyond law. The law has no intrinsic power enabling us to keep its precepts. In fact, the law condemns us, and shows us our great weaknesses.

Grace, on the other hand, released through the sacrifice of the spotless Lamb of God, enables us to do whatever God commands. When my children were young, we bought them a trampoline as a surprise gift at the end of the school year. They played on that thing more than they ever played on a swing set. I remember my son was so thrilled when he mastered the seat drop. A maneuver requiring the jumper to go from the standing position to a sitting position, legs straight out, and then return to a standing position.

Dan cried out, I’ve mastered the trampoline, Dad!

By the time he graduated from high school, he could do consecutive front flips, immediately shifting to consecutive back flips. He could flip several times with spins mixed into each flip. He was the picture of acrobatic skill.

For most of us, we never get past the seat drop when it comes to overcoming sin. We think when we don’t curse when angry or when we avoid an old sin that we have mastered grace.

But Matthew 5 tells us that we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. We can love unconditionally, we can keep our word, we can avoid bitterness and lust, and we can actually act like Jesus Himself.

Leap into the great frontier of grace! It has no bounds!

Day Four

1. Take time to praise God for who He is and then thank Him with a grateful heart for all He has done for you lately.

2. Meditate on Matthew 5: 21-26. When we are bitter with someone, we elevate our desire for justice above the love of God. Lay down your desire for justice, and lavish forgiveness on anyone who has hurt you.

3. Ask the Holy Spirit if you need to go and talk to someone whom you have sinned against. If you have stolen anything from them, ask the Holy Spirit how you can give restitution.

4. Continue meditating on and memorizing the scripture for this week.
Day Three

1. Take time to praise God for who He is and then thank Him with a grateful heart for all He has done for you lately.


3. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you anyone, including yourself and God, with whom you hold unforgivness. Take time to forgive, and cut lose all debt that person owes you.

4. Ask the Lord to use you to glorify Him today in all you do.

5. Continue meditating on and memorizing the scripture for this week.

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Matthew 5:20, NLT

But I warn you—unless you obey God better than the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees do, you can't enter the Kingdom of Heaven at all!

As the crowds listened to Jesus, they must have felt a great sense of discouragement. The am ha aretz, or, the rabble, didn’t respect the pharisees very much, but they did realize that no one in their midst kept the law better than the pharisees and the teachers of the law. If the righteousness of these religious big shots was not good enough for the Kingdom of Heaven, then the King was asking for something way beyond anyone!

Or was He? What is impossible for man is possible for God.

The New Covenant was made when Jesus died on the cross. Paul says something happened that day. For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ (2 Corinthians 5:21, NLT).

In simple English, that verse says this, Jesus traded His perfect right standing with His Father for my sin when He died on the cross! Go back and meditate on that. It’s life changing!

Jesus, in His first sermon, was telling us that we can’t do it! We cannot attain to the righteousness God demands! So God did it!

Paul says it this way, For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh (Romans 8:3, NAS, underline mine).

Thank You, Father, that thanks to Jesus, I am as righteous as He is!