

I. Introduction:

What is the worst sin you can think of? What sin is the least bad?

II. Read the Story: Matthew 5:21-26

21 "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.'

22 But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire. 23 So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against

you, 24 leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

25 Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison.

26 Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.

III. Engage the Story:

1. Jesus says, "You have heard it said... But I say to you..." What is Jesus trying to do here? Is he trying to refute or contradict what was taught before?

2. On its face, it seems like Jesus is saying that if you ever get angry with someone or insult them, that you'll be going to hell. Is that really what Jesus is saying?

3. Why did Jesus say to leave the gift at the altar? What does leaving the gift have to do with being reconciled to a brother? Why does one have to come before the other?

4. The connecting word "so" in verse 23 links the teaching on anger with the teaching on reconciliation. How are anger and reconciliation related to each other?

IV. Live the Story:

In the beatitudes and Jesus' teaching on salt and light, Jesus begins laying out his vision for his kingdom and how his followers would transform the world. Then Jesus explains in his teaching on the law and the prophets that his vision is not a new one, but simply a fulfillment of the Old Testament. But after laying out his vision, his followers still have no idea how to actually live it out. So Jesus begins to give a case study. Jesus explains, "This is what the Old Testament says, and this is how the intention behind the Old Testament is to be fulfilled in this new Kingdom." The intention of the murder laws was to create a society where people are in right and healthy relationships with each other.

5. Have you ever been angry at someone this week? Maybe even today? How seriously did you take it? Do you consider anger to be a serious sin?

6. Have you ever had a really broken relationship that was reconciled? Share with the group.