



Message Discussion Guide Week of March 12, 2023

Message: 18 Minutes, Part 3: Hard Sayings

Key Scripture: [Matthew 5:17-20, 48](#)

Preacher: Tom Parkinson

Message Highlights:

The command of Jesus to “be perfect” is one of the hardest sayings in all of the Bible. It’s paralyzing to consider perfection when all of us are sinners prone to mistakes.

God created us to have boundaries. The Law of God, given in the Old Testament, is meant to protect us and promote our flourishing. Without boundaries, life becomes dangerous.

- The nation of Israel built their lives around God’s Law.
- The problem is that while the Law can tell us how to live, it cannot empower us to live that way. No one perfectly follows the law.

In the days of Jesus, the Pharisees arose as a sect that sought rigid devotion and obedience to God’s law. They sought perfection. Since Jesus taught against them, many assumed that Jesus came to abolish the Law. Jesus said nothing could be further from the truth. He came not to abolish the Law but to fulfill it.

- The grace of Jesus does not decrease the demands of the Law in, it increases them.
- Jesus wants to move beyond mere external obedience to the Law of God. He wants to change our hearts.

Two foundation truths of the gospel: 1.) God loves you just the way you are. 2.) God loves you too much to leave you that way.

Perfection is a direction, not a destination. Jesus is the only one who is perfect. For us to “be perfect” is an invitation for us to be transformed by becoming more like Jesus.

Discussion Questions:

1. Have you ever known a perfectionist? Have you ever tried to be one? Why is perfectionism appealing? What makes it impossible and unhealthy?
2. Pastor Tom shared that human life thrives inside of boundaries and that our culture often acts like boundaries restrict freedom. Why are boundaries important in our lives? In what ways do you see our culture blurring the boundaries between right and wrong?
3. [Read Matthew 5:17-20, 48](#)
 - In what way does Jesus “fulfill” the Law?
 - Why would Jesus’ audience have assumed he came to abolish the Law?
 - What is the righteousness of the Pharisees? What does Jesus mean when he calls us to surpass it?
 - What makes this verses hard teaching?
4. If salvation is a gift of God’s grace, and if there is nothing we have to do to earn it, then what is our motivation to obey God’s Law?
5. What is your primary takeaway from this message?

Abundant Life Tip: God sets boundaries in our lives for our own good. When we transgress those boundaries, God’s grace is sufficient to forgives us, but that doesn’t mean God is ok with us living outside the boundaries. God has a design for our lives and when listen to God’s Spirit we learn that living inside the boundaries of that design is when we experience abundant life.