

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

Raising the Bar **Matthew 5:31-48**

Getting Started

What did you do or say as a child in order to strengthen an oath – to convince people you really meant what you said?

Digging In

1. **Read 5:31-32.** The Jews of Jesus' day would sometimes use minor matters as an excuse to get a divorce. How does Jesus raise the bar?
2. **Read 5:33-37.** What are some things people say in order to emphasize the truthfulness of what they're saying?
3. What do you think Jesus meant in v. 37? What are the practical implications of this with regard to daily living?
4. **Read 5:38-42.** Jews were using the *law of retaliation* to exact vengeance. How does Jesus raise the bar from justice to mercy?
5. Practically speaking, how do you think we should apply these verses today?
6. **Read 5:43-48.** Jesus says that when we love our enemies we are *sons of our Father in heaven*. What do you think is meant by this phrase? (cf. v. 9)
7. How does loving our enemies make us unique ... distinct?
8. What do you think Jesus means in v. 20? How are we to apply this verse to our lives?



What Now?

- How does this passage contribute to our understanding of what it means to be a citizen of the kingdom of God – a genuine follower of Christ?
- None of us can be perfect, and yet this is the standard Jesus establishes. How are we to deal with this *performance gap*?
- People cope with the performance in various ways. Some lower the requirements (legalists), try harder, or just give up. What does it mean to *climb in hope*?