

My Comments in red.

TRINITY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

IHOP BIBLE STUDY

Topic: Matthew 5: 17 to 5: 20 “Teacher’s Challenge” Chapter 5: 13 to 16 are noted on the Matthew chart as belonging with this study session. However, after reviewing it, it is clear to me that these verses are associated with last week’s lesson. The final chart will be corrected.

The gospel of Matthew’s message is powerful and relevant to our current human situation. Matthew’s purpose is to give us a training manual for teaching the Deeply Satisfied Life. This material is developed for the early church, but is applicable for us today. Matthew’s teaching role model is Jesus. The "Deeply Satisfied Life" is the experience ("Gut Trip Analysis") of the term Sanctification (which is an Old Christian Code Word understood as "Head Trip Analysis").

This is our fifth lesson in this series, and is associated with "Tools For Teaching The Methods For A Happy/Holy Life". My reflections on the gospel give us the overall title of "The Training Manual For Teaching The Transparent Sanctified Life." With this metaphor established, let us continue. .

- I. **I. Read the assigned reading at one time.**
- II. In traditional Protestantism, and in my experience as a pastor, the relationship between the New Commandment delivered by Jesus and the 10 Commandments delivered by Moses never has been easy. Largely, this is true because of Christian prejudice and arrogance. Even the term “NEW Testament” vs. “OLD Testament” betrays this understanding. The general feeling is that the Christian Bible supercedes the Hebrew Bible; the NEW Testament must be better. Today’s reading exposes this as a Christian myth. Jesus is quite clear when he says, “I have not come to abolish [The Law] but to fulfill them.”

One of the ways I’ve justified the difference between The Law and the New Commandment is to say Protestants believe The Law does not save us, but we practice the 10 Commandments because we are saved.

Now, let me see if I can take this bundle of old Christian Code Words and transliterate them into human experiences. “The 10 Commandments do not **spiritually awaken** us, but we practice the 10 Commandments because we are **spiritually awake**.”

Anyone who wants to take a stab at this, please go ahead.

- III. Next, are two disturbing quotations from Jesus. See what you can do to ground them in your human experience.
- A. 5:19 – What is the experience Jesus is pointing toward in his statement “Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven?” Remember, the “kingdom of heaven” is the experience of Perfect At-One-Ment. Now for a BIG HINT: How does breaking the least of the commandments prevent us from experiencing Perfect At-One-Ment?

The IHOP men struggled to define what might be the “least commandment.” It appears to us that the first two are crucial. Perhaps, one of the least may be “Do not covet.” Our experience of the 10th Commandment is that coveting drives a wedge into At-One-Ment. Desiring another person’s spouse, or his/her car—or whatever—defeats At-One-Ment.

- B. 5:20 – What is the experience Jesus is pointing toward in his statement “. . . unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven?” Remember, “righteousness” is “right living” with neighbor, self and Perfect At-One-Ment.

How had the Pharisees and the teachers of the law practiced righteousness?

“Righteousness” is experienced as being at-one with Perfect At-One-Ment. Often the Pharisees and Scribes get a bad rap in the New Testament, it is important to remember they were the ones who paid the bills and protected the status quo. They are like the present-day pillars of the church. The IHOP consensus was that the status quo often represents a certain superficiality.

What does it mean for Awakened People to surpass the Pharisees and teachers of the law?

The IHOP agreed that faithfulness to At-One-Ment depends less on ritual and more on the substance of the Law; i.e., Honor of Father and Mother is proven more in actions and less in keeping Father’s and Mother’s Day.

IV Now, please turn to Deuteronomy 5, or Exodus 20. Take the summary sentences of each commandment and write out your human experience of it This

is called transliteration. Please take time to share your work with us by transferring this document to the "Reply" box, and edit away.

Exodus 20: 1 – 17

20: 1 - 3 -- No other gods before me

By definition, it is impossible to have two Perfect At-One-Ments. In fact, human beings are not whole persons unless we are At-One-Ment with selves, neighbors and God who is the Perfect At-One-Ment.

20: 4 – 6 -- No idols in any form

An idol is a golden lie! Idols always are out to relieve us of our human situation, rather than transforming our relationship to reality. Idols make us victims to impossibility, because our human situations can seldom be changed: death is always death. However, our relationship to the reality of death can be a choice: we victims or victors!

The example here is of the State Lottery. The lottery is an idol. It holds out the hope of changing our human situation "If I can just win the lottery then I'll be happy." This is a faithless stance, because I can chose to be happy just as I am.

20: 7 -- Do not misuse the Lord's name

Doing things contrary to At-One-Ment, and naming it an activity of Perfect At-One-Ment is contradictory.

20: 8 – 11 -- Keep the Sabbath holy

It is the consensus of the IHOP that Sunday is not necessarily The Sabbath. According to Jesus, the Sabbath is a day to do the work of Perfect At-One-ment. Jesus reminded the Jews that when an animal falls down the well in the middle of Sabbath, it was permissible to remove the animal. However, according to Jewish Sabbath regulations, it was not permissible to help someone in need.

The experience of helping others in need is an activity of keeping the real Sabbath.

20: 12 -- Honor your father and mother

Our primary relationships are reflections of our experience with At-One-Ment. How we relate to old mom and dad are reflections of the way we relate to God.

20: 13 -- Do not murder

Murder is the antithesis of At-One-Ment.

20: 14 -- Do not commit adultery

Adultery is the antithesis of At-One-Ment.

20: 15 -- Do not steal

Stealing is the antithesis of At-One-Ment.

20: 16 -- Do not give false testimony

Giving false testimony is the antithesis of At-One-Ment.

20: 17-- Do not covet

Desiring those things that do not belong to us is the antithesis of At-One-Ment.

OK folks. This is the end of the second lesson in The Teacher's Handbook – Part I; Transparent Ethics. It is obvious that Jesus believed that the 10 Commandments were the foundation on which Christian Ethics are built.

Now, on to the third lesson: Matthew 5: 21 – 48 “Indicative Ethics” WWJD.”

“Indicative” is used in the same sense as in grammar. The opposite is the “imperative mode:” “You must do this.” The “indicative mode” is “This is the way to do it.” The indicative is in the present tense and it is active.

Theologically, Indicative Ethics is the way we experience Reality from the human, or relational perspective, or from the experiential perspective. So, enjoy the next few weeks as we delve into The Teacher's Handbook for the Early Church.

The next lesson is to be emailed soon. Pastor Bill

