

**My comments in red.**

**TRINITY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
IHOP BIBLE STUDY**

**Topic: Matthew 5: 21 to 5: 48 “Indicative Ethics: WWJD**

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 sixth 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.

We are entering into one of the most amazing sections in the New Testament. From Matthew 5:1 to 11:19, the world as we know it gets turned upside down. This is fertile earth in which to till the ethical garden with the tools of our human experience.

**I. Read the assigned reading at one time.**

**II. In the study of Indicative Ethics, there are five words that need definition: “Indicative and TWLI,” “ethics and WWJD,” and “judgment.”**

**The Indicative is compared to its use in grammar as the Indicative Mode. This mode speaks in the present tense, and describes reality as it is experienced as The Way Life Is or TWLI. Biblically, Moses describes the voice of God as “I am.” This is an indicative expression. The opposite of the indicative mode is the “Imperative mode;” this is understood in the terms “ought” and “should.” However, the overtones of this mode lean into moralism. The indicative never is moralistic.**

**“Ethics” describes a system for relating to TWLI. The ethic I espouse is summed up in the letters WWJD, or “What would Jesus do.” This is based on the premise that Christians never have primary relationships, we have secondary relationships.**

**Primary Relationships can lead into the misuse of things and of other humans. This is illustrated when a man desires his secretary to fulfill his own selfish purposes. This misuses his secretary and deflates her in to an object to be used, and this diminishes the male person into a temporary emotion. In this way, he dehumanizes himself.**

**On the other hand, Secondary Relationships place the Cross of Christ between the other and ourselves. In our human relationships we ask the questions “What would Jesus do?” This assumes that the Sacrificial Spirit does not misuse others but seeks to bring about At-One-Ment. The same holds true in our relationship to our toys. That new set of golf clubs is mighty attractive, but WWJD? This does not assume that we do not get the new golf clubs, it means we**

do deeper self-analysis and reflection before we do anything. This is SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS in operation, the result of which is At-One-Ment.

“Judgment,” in our Christian understanding, is best experienced as unmerited love. However, any kind of love illuminates the final result of At-One-Ment. God never directly punishes us, except as we punish ourselves. In our human experience, the Judgment of God is love; it can be no other.

God gives us free will, and this is what gets us in trouble with Perfect At-One-Ment. We can do things contrary to what At-One-Ment means. Consequently, the JUDGMENT is understood in the formula: *“The reward for the deed is found in the deed itself.”* We do things (deeds) to hurt others and the reward we receive is the antithesis of At-One-Ment; people get mad at us. On the other hand, there is a price to be paid for doing helpful things. The reward is peaceful relationships, and we feel good about each other and ourselves. This is the experience of At-One-Ment.

There always is a price to be paid. The reward can end in further separation, or it can end in bringing us together in at-one-ment. “The reward for the deed is found in the deed itself.”

### III. Issues that can result in the judgment 5: 21 to 26

In this section there are three different human situations: murder, brother/ altar relationships; and adversary settlement.

Use our Indicative Ethical model to overlay these three circumstances to reflect on what happens in these three human situations:

#### 1) Murder 5: 21 – 22:

**The Judgment:** murder is the ultimate wedge driven in our human relationships that defeats At-One-Ment. The indicative reward for the deed is found in the deed itself: people are locked away in permanent separation from society.

Jesus is quoted as saying that murderers are “in danger of Hell fire.” From an experiential point of view, hell is defined as living in the absence of Perfect At-One-Ment.

WWJD: this still puzzles me. Can anyone help? How do we apply the rule of Secondary Relationships? How do we put Jesus between the murderer and the one murdered? I suppose that the Sacrificial Spirit would raise an alarm, or to deliberately put itself in harms way. Maybe this is not such a bad answer after all.

The IHOP talked briefly about the difference between “murder” and “killing.” Murder is prohibited in the 10 Commandments. We decided that “killing” as a state response to murder has an inherent danger of killing the wrong people. This is demonstrated in the work of the Illinois State Governor who set aside the death penalty of those on death row in his state. This was the result of several inmates being executed who were later proven innocent.

#### 2) relationship to your brother before offering altar gifts 5: 23 – 24:

**The Judgment:** asking forgiveness heals the breach in our human relationships. The reward for the deed is that separation and healing results in At-One-Ment.

The failure to ask forgiveness result in deepening the separation that already exists.

**WWJD:** The presence of Jesus standing between our wounded brothers/sisters and ourselves demonstrates the courage needed to set our own wounds aside and to ask for forgiveness.

### **3) adversary settlement 5: 25 – 26:**

**The Judgment:** making things right is the demonstration of “righteousness.” The failure to heal the separation prolongs the separation and is the antithesis of the At-One-Ment necessary to heal the wounds.

**WWJD:** The presence of Jesus standing between our wounded brothers/sisters and ourselves demonstrates the courage needed to set our own wounds aside and to ask to be made right.

## **IV. Issues that concern Spousal relationships 5: 27 to 32**

In this section are two topics:

### **Adultery 5: 27 to 30**

**The Judgment:** in our relationship with our spouses, adultery is the ultimate wedge that defeats At-One-Ment. Our relationship to our spouses deeply reflect our relationship to Perfect At-One-Ment. My axiom for this is “The rights of a couple together are of more value than the rights of any of us as individuals.”

The reward for the practice of adultery is that one spouse is profoundly hurt, and the other spouse can never fully be forgiven. Or, while it may be possible to be forgiven, but the deed can never be forgotten. Also, the reward for perpetrating the would is that the individual lives with them for the rest of their lives in the knowledge of what they’ve done.

**WWJD:** In this perspective, one spouse does not have the right to commit adultery. The spousal relationship, seen through the cross of Christ always subjugates the rights of individuals to the corporate rights of the couple.

### **Divorce 5: 31 to 32**

**The Judgment:** divorce is a legal wedge driven in the At-One-Ment of married life. The reward for the failure of marriage is a legal wound that remains a sore spot for life. Again, my maxim that “The rights of a couple together are of more value than the rights of any of us as individuals.”

**WWJD:** This applies the rule of second relationships. The experience is that each person in this family unit is asked to treat and respect the other in self-less ways. Divorce is the evidence of the failure to fully practice At-One-Ment.

**Jesus accusations that divorce makes a woman an “adulteress” is beyond me for the moment. Anyone want to help? My only stab-in-the-dark is this supports the contention that marriage is not meant to be broken. (OK, so I know vows are broken! Yet, the failure represents the failure of the individuals to work at their relationship.)**

## **V. Issues that concern Legal considerations**

### **Oaths 5:33 to 37**

**The Judgment:** Not being clear in our opinions leads to misunderstandings. The result of misunderstanding is a wedge in At-One-Ment. On the other hand, the reward for our forthrightness is that people understand where we stand, even if they do not appreciate our point of view.

**WWJD:** Jesus is clear here. Christians practice our ethical stance when we are forthright and clear in our commitments.

The IHOP engaged in a sidebar conversation about homosexuality. The result of our conversation applied the rule of At-One-Ment. If heterosexual relationships result in demonstrating At-One-Ment, then why couldn't loving and caring homosexual relationships do the same? No effort was made to get into the biblical or political/constitutional issues surrounding this current issue.

## **VI. Issues that concern Interpersonal relationships**

### **Love of enemies 5: 42 to 48**

**The Judgment:** This is one of the easier issues to understand. The reward for the deed is obvious; the practice of an "eye for an eye" is a wedge that results in anti-At-One-Ment.

**WWJD:** Jesus spells out the practice of secondary relationships. We are to turn the other cheek, etc., so that we do not participate in any activity that results in the support of anti-At-One-Ment. The reward for practicing secondary relationships is the potential for healing angry relationships, and under any circumstances, we fulfill what it means to be a human being, even if the other party does not.

## **VII. Reflect briefly—**

### **A. What did you discover about the "Indicative"**

**The Indicative plays the cards as they are dealt to us.**

### **B. What did you discover about "Ethics"**

**The application of secondary relationships results in healing and humanizing life's circumstances.**

**All right, people. Please talk to me!**