

Jesus' House Rules – Lesson 3

“The Heart Behind the Law: Kingdom Relationships”

Summary

Jesus reveals the heart of the kingdom by moving beyond external rule-keeping to the deeper transformation of motives and relationships. He intensifies the Law—addressing anger, lust, divorce, oaths, retaliation, and enemy-love—to show that kingdom righteousness is not about avoiding sin but pursuing love, purity, honesty, forgiveness, and reconciliation. Kingdom people reflect the King by letting God reshape the heart, not just the behavior.

Scripture

Matthew 5:21–48

1. Introduction

Opening Thought

In Week 1, Jesus formed kingdom character. In Week 2, He showed how kingdom people influence the world. Now in Week 3, Jesus goes deeper—He exposes the heart behind our actions. He intensifies the Law, not by adding rules, but by revealing God’s original intent: righteousness that flows from a transformed heart.

Key Concept: Internal Motives vs External Behavior

External behavior and internal motives are inseparable in the kingdom of God. **External behavior** shows what we do, but **internal motives** reveal who we are. Jesus cares about both, but He begins with the heart—because transformed motives naturally produce transformed actions.

External Behavior: What We Do

External behavior is the visible action—the outward conduct people can observe. In Scripture, this includes things like not murdering, not committing adultery, keeping vows and limiting retaliation. These actions matter, but Jesus teaches they are *not enough* on their own.

Internal Motives: Why We Do It

Internal motives are the hidden desires, intentions, and attitudes of the heart. Jesus teaches that sin begins here—long before it becomes visible. Examples are anger that simmers beneath the surface, lust that lives in the imagination, bitterness that fuels retaliation and deceit that hides behind oaths.

- ➔ Romans 12:2 – “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye **transformed (internal)** by the renewing of your mind, that ye may **prove (external)** what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”

Relationship between Internal Motives and External Behavior

- Motives shape behavior: what fills the heart eventually shapes the hands, tongue, and life.
- Behavior without motives is empty: You can obey outwardly and still be far from God.
- True righteousness flows from the inside out: Jesus intensifies the Law to show that God wants transformed hearts, not just compliant behavior.

Knowledge → Values → Feelings → Behavior

2. Heart Transformation, Not Only Behavior Modification

Jesus Intensifies the Law

- Jesus is not replacing the Law—He is revealing its true depth.
- The Pharisees focused on external behavior.
- Jesus focuses on internal motives.
- Laws vs principles (speed limit vs. safe driving)

Six Areas Where Jesus Goes After the Heart

Area	Verses	Description
Anger	21-26	Not just murder—anger, contempt, and unresolved conflict damage relationships. Heart issue: resentment Kingdom response: reconciliation
Lust	27-30	Not just adultery—lustful intent fractures purity. Heart issue: ungodly desire Kingdom response: boundaries and purity
Divorce	31-32	Not just legal procedure—God cares about covenant faithfulness. Heart issue: hardness (or stubbornness) Kingdom response: commitment and honor
Oaths	33-37	Not just vows—truthfulness should be natural. Heart issue: manipulation (witchcraft) Kingdom response: simple honesty
Retaliation	38-42	Not just limiting revenge—choosing mercy over payback. Heart issue: self-protection Kingdom response: generosity and forgiveness
Love for enemies	43-48	Not just loving friends—loving enemies reflects the Father’s heart. Heart issue: partiality Kingdom response: radical, unconditional love (agape)

3. Practical Application

A. Practicing Reconciliation

Make the first move toward peace / Apologize without excuses / Seek understanding, not victory

Example: Sending a text or making a call to repair a strained relationship.

B. Setting Boundaries for Purity

Guard your eyes and thoughts / Limit digital exposure / Invite accountability

Example: Removing apps, setting screen limits, or choosing new habits.

C. Choosing Forgiveness Over Retaliation

Release the right to get even / Pray for those who hurt you / Respond with gentleness

Example: Choosing not to clap back, gossip, or escalate conflict.

D. Loving Difficult People

Bless instead of curse / Serve instead of avoid / Pray instead of resenting

Example: Doing one intentional act of kindness for someone who frustrates you.

4. Discussion Questions

- Which “You have heard... but I say to you” teaching challenges you most right now?
- Where do you see anger, lust, or dishonesty trying to take root in your heart?
- What relationship in your life needs reconciliation or forgiveness?
- What boundary could help you pursue purity this week?
- Who is one difficult person God may be calling you to love?

5. Closing Thoughts

Kingdom people don’t just avoid sin—they pursue love, purity, honesty, forgiveness, and reconciliation at the heart level. Jesus is not only after better behavior; He is after a transformed heart. And when the heart changes, relationships change. This is the deeper righteousness that reflects the Father and makes His kingdom visible.

Challenge for the Week

Identify which of Jesus’ teachings—anger, lust, divorce, oaths, retaliation, or enemy-love—challenges you most right now. Choose one heart-level practice to pursue this week.