

Matthew 5:17–47

The Higher Law

As Jesus Christ continued the Sermon on the Mount, He taught how He came to fulfill the law of Moses, and He introduced the higher law of the gospel. This lesson can help you live Christ’s higher law so that you can become more like Heavenly Father.

Jesus teaches the higher law of the gospel

- When has being on higher ground helped you improve your view?

- What were you able to see then that you couldn’t see before?

Just as a view from higher ground can give us greater perspective, the Savior taught His disciples a higher law to give them greater perspective. This greater perspective can help us become more like Him and Heavenly Father. In [Matthew 5:17–20](#) the Savior taught that He came to fulfill the law of Moses—not to do away with any of the eternal truths in the law. Jesus Christ restored the fulness of the gospel that had been lost due to wickedness and apostasy. He corrected false teachings and fulfilled prophecies made by Old Testament prophets. [Matthew 5:21–47](#) contains the Savior’s teachings about laws and traditions the Jews had developed under the law of Moses. In these verses, Jesus Christ explained the true meaning of the law of Moses and taught a higher way of righteousness. Read [Matthew 5:38–42](#) , looking for one example of a commandment from the law of Moses and the higher law Jesus taught His disciples in its place.

- What was one thing the Savior identified as part of the law of Moses or other traditions the people had established?

- What higher law did the Savior give in its place?

- How would living this higher law help a person more than the old law did to become more like Heavenly Father?

Consider your personal circumstances as you complete the following activities.

Activity A: How can I control my anger?

Reflect on the last time you got angry.

- Why do you think it would be important to control anger?

Read [Matthew 5:21–24](#) , looking for the higher law the Savior taught about anger.

- Is there anything you would consider marking in these verses? If so, why?
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The phrase “without a cause” in [verse 22](#) is removed in the Joseph Smith Translation (in [Matthew 5:22](#) , footnote *b*). Elder Lynn G. Robbins of the Quorum of the Seventy explained:

How interesting that the phrase “without a cause” is not found in the inspired Joseph Smith Translation (see [Matthew 5:24](#)), nor in the [3 Nephi 12:22](#) version. When the Lord eliminates the phrase “without a cause,” He leaves us without an excuse. “But this is my doctrine, that such things should be done away” [[3 Nephi 11:30](#)]. We can “do away” with anger, for He has so taught and commanded us. (Lynn G. Robbins, “[Agency and Anger](#),” Ensign, May 1998, 80)

President Thomas S. Monson (1927–2018) clarified our role in controlling our anger.

To be angry is to yield to the influence of Satan. No one can make us angry. It is our choice. If we desire to have a proper spirit with us at all times, we must choose to refrain from becoming angry. I testify that such is possible. (Thomas S. Monson, “[School Thy Feelings, O My Brother](#),” Ensign or Liahona, Nov. 2009, 68)

Answer the following questions:

- In what ways is the Savior an example of living this higher law?
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- What can you do to draw upon the Savior’s power to help you live this higher law?
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Activity B: Why should I get rid of lustful thoughts?

- What happens if weeds are not removed from a garden?
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- How might inappropriate thoughts in our minds be like weeds in a garden?
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Read [Matthew 5:27–28](#) , looking for sins the Savior warned against.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles discussed the seriousness of the sin of lust:

*Why is lust such a deadly sin? Well, in addition to the completely Spirit-destroying impact it has upon our souls, I think it is a sin because it defiles the highest and holiest relationship God gives us in mortality—the love that a man and a woman have for each other and the desire that couple has to bring children into a family intended to be forever. ... Love makes us instinctively reach out to God and other people. Lust, on the other hand, is anything but godly and celebrates self-indulgence. Love comes with open hands and open heart; lust comes with only an open appetite. (Jeffrey R. Holland, “[Place No More for the Enemy of My Soul](#),” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2010, 44–45)*

Just as we can remove weeds from a garden, we can remove impure thoughts from our minds. Read [Matthew 5:29–30](#) , including the Joseph Smith Translation of Matthew 5:33–34 (found in [Matthew 5:30](#) , footnote *b*). Consider marking what the Savior taught.

- What did you read that stood out to you? What questions do you have about these verses?

Watch the video “[Watch Your Step](#)”, located on ChurchofJesusChrist.org. As you watch, look for the impact of the man’s decision to remove or not remove lustful thoughts from his mind.

Answer the following questions:

- In what ways might removing sins from our lives be like plucking out an eye or cutting off a hand?

- What problems might we encounter if we fail to follow the Savior’s counsel to remove sins from our lives?

- What can you do to draw on the Savior’s power to help you get rid of lustful or other inappropriate thoughts?

Activity C: How should I treat people I do not get along with?

Think of a person you do not get along very well with.

- How do you think having unkind feelings for this person influences your relationship with your Heavenly Father?

Read [Matthew 5:43–47](#) , looking for the higher law Jesus taught that could help you.

- What words or phrases stood out to you? Why do you think those are important?

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf explained that Jesus Christ is the perfect example of this.

As always, Christ is our exemplar. In His teachings as in His life, He showed us the way. He forgave the wicked, the vulgar, and those who sought to hurt and to do Him harm.

Jesus said it is easy to love those who love us; even the wicked can do that. But Jesus Christ taught a higher law. His words echo through the centuries and are meant for us today. They are meant for all who desire to be His disciples. They are meant for you and me: “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you” [[Matthew 5:44](#) ; see also [verses 45–47](#)].

When our hearts are filled with the love of God, we become “kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving [each other], even as God for Christ’s sake [forgave us]” [[Ephesians 4:32](#)]. (Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “[The Merciful Obtain Mercy](#),” Ensign or Liahona, May 2012, 76)

Answer the following questions:

- How did the Savior feel about those who treated Him unkindly?

- What experiences do you have of trying to love your enemies or of praying for those who have been unkind to you?

- What do you think you can do to draw upon the Savior’s power to help you love your enemies?

Living the higher law

Ponder and write down what element of the higher law you feel like you need to focus on living.

Consider asking Heavenly Father for forgiveness and help as you strive to repent and live this law. Seek the guidance of the Spirit to know what actions to take. You may want to talk to your parents, bishop, or another Church leader so they can help you live this law.