

Matthew 5:17-20

Sept. 14th, 2025

Do You Treat The Bible Like Jesus Does?

Pastoral Moment

Welcome to Center Church my name's Josh I'm one of the pastors here. Our mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ & if you're a parent we want to help you disciple your kids. We're ALL in on StuMin, bc we want to be a place that helps your entire family grow. So parents here's our strategy: **First**, we want to help your students make godly friends. We said last week that godly friends can make all the difference & that's especially true when you're in MS or HS. **Second**, we want to help your students find godly mentors who will invest in them, listen to them & reinforce what you're saying at home! **Third**, we want to encourage & resource you bc I doubt any of us would say "I've got parenting figured out."

We want to be a blessing to your family but that will only happen if you get your student involved, so let me encourage you to get your student here on Wed nights from 630-8pm for **Midweek**. J.P. Sealy is our Students Coordinator, he's going to be underneath the Students flag on the patio after the service. He'd love to meet you & help you get connected. So I want to stop & pray for our Students, but I also want to pray for the family of Charlie Kirk. As many of you know Charlie Kirk was a political activist who publicly identified as a follower of Jesus, who was shot & killed this week. Charlie is now with the Lord & we want to pray for his wife & children who are suffering bc of this tragedy. *Pray for next generation & for comfort for the Kirk family.*

Intro

If you have a Bible meet me in Mth 5:17. After a one week break we're back in the **SOTM**. The SOTM is the most famous sermon Jesus ever preached & the closest thing to a **manifesto** he ever delivered. It's his description of what he wants his followers to be & do. Wk 1 was about the **character** of a disciple, wk 2 was about the **influence** of a disciple & this week is about how disciples treat the Bible. So how do people treat the Bible today? I thought of a few views on this chart.

Some have a **negative** view - they think the Bible's an outdated book, that's anti-science, oppressive to women & used to control people. Others have a **neutral** view - they think it's an interesting book that's basically like every other religious text. Others have a **respect but neglect** view, they think the Bible is important but they don't read it much. Others have a **dutiful** view - they read the Bible but do so as a duty. Finally some have a **delightful** view - they love the Bible. It's food for their soul, a light to their path & makes them wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

I don't know how you view the Bible, but wherever you are that chart my goal is to help you **move one step to the right**. Here's why, bc how you treat the Bible will shape your spiritual trajectory. Show me your relationship to the Bible & I can probably show you your spiritual future. So today we're going to look at how Jesus treated the Bible & our goal is to treat the Bible like he did. Look at v. 17

17 "**Do not think** that I have come to **abolish** the Law or the Prophets; (law & prophets was a short hand way of referring to the OT) **I have not come to abolish** them but to fulfill them.

Wrong: Jesus began by saying “there’s a wrong way to treat the Bible.” If you think I’ve come to abolish the Bible **you’re wrong**. He said that in response to two groups. Group 1 was the *Pharisees*. They had created a bunch of rules they added to the Bible, Jesus didn’t abide by those rules, so they accused him of rejecting the Bible. He said “No, I reject your made up rules but I love the Bible.” Then there was *another group*, they were hoping Jesus would get rid of the Bible, they wanted a spiritual leader who made them feel good but didn’t require them to change. Jesus said I’m not doing that either.

Authority: You see Jesus didn’t come to abolish the Bible, on the **contrary**, he submitted to God’s Word as his highest authority. He obeyed it. He memorized it, he used it to fight temptation, he devoted 3 years of his life to teaching it & he quoted from it in his darkest moments. When people asked him questions he’d often quote the OT as his answer.¹ **Jesus treated the Bible as the final authority** in his life & **his disciples** should do the same thing. **IOW - the Word of God is the standard & authority in the Kingdom of God.**

Q: Which leads to a **Q:** What is **THE** authority in your life? We all have various authorities in our lives - kids & teens might say my parents, some of us have teachers, coaches or bosses & we all live under the authority of the government, but I’m asking what *in practice* is **THE** authority in your life. Who tells you how to think & live & you actually listen? I’d say the most common answer to that question is “self”. We live in a world that says “You are THE authority in your life”. The mantra of our day is “live your truth”

& “assert your authority” & bc that’s *the water we swim in*, we often live out of that belief w/o realizing it.

We make decisions w/o seeking God’s input through his Word, His church & prayer. We take the promotion & move cities, we start the dating relationship, we decide to double major or sign the kids up for activities - all w/o stopping to listen to God.

Eden: That’s bc you do you is the song that *serenades* us every day but can I remind us this is the same song a serpent spoke to a woman in a garden. Eve, put aside the *noise* of what God said, you know what you desire. Why would you have a desire you’re not supposed to fulfill? You know what’s best for you. This is the way to your most vibrant authentic life. Live your truth & assert your authority. So she did & her husband did & the result was the loss of true life. *Live your truth* isn’t a new slogan, it’s been around since the garden & it doesn’t lead to life it leads to death. But Jesus is inviting us to experience true life by delighting in the Word of God. Look back at v. 17

17 “Do not think that I have come to abolish the **Law** or the **Prophets**; I have not come to abolish them but **to fulfill them**.”

Fulfill: When you think “law” think **commands** & when you think “prophets” think **promises**. So Jesus fulfilled all the commands & promises of the OT. How so? Ok there are *preachy sections* & there teachy sections in a sermon, this is a *teachy* section so stay with me.

So how did Jesus fulfill the law?

He fulfilled it by **obeying it**. Jesus obeyed every command in the Bible. Have you ever wondered why he was on earth for so long?

¹ Mt 22:36

Why not come & do everything in a week. Bc Jesus came to fulfill the law which **meant he needed to live a perfect life** in every life stage - perfect kid, adolescent, young adult & adult. Jesus fulfilled the law by obeying it perfectly.

He fulfilled the law by **modeling it**. In his life & ministry he showed us what it looks like to love your neighbor, pray for your enemies & show mercy to the poor. He fulfilled it by **teaching it**. Jesus is the greatest Bible teacher of all time, he explained, illustrated & applied it. When people heard him they said their hearts burned within them. He fulfilled the law by **paying it's penalty**. The law is God's standard of justice, as such it demands punishment for sin. **Gal 3:13** says that on the cross Jesus took the curse of the law upon himself in our place.

Finally, Jesus fulfilled the laws **ceremonies & symbols**. The law pointed forward to Jesus through ceremonies, sacrifices & rituals. Jesus fulfilled these **shadows by becoming the reality** - the true passover lamb, the once for all sacrifice, the great High Priest & the temple itself. That's why Christians no longer offer animal sacrifices, we don't have to gather at the temple in Jeruslaem & **we can eat bacon** to the glory of God. Bc Jesus fulfilled the ceremonies & symbols of the law.²

Prophets: So how did Jesus fulfill the **prophets**? He did so by fulfilling over 300 prophecies in his life death & resurrection. **Christianity** is the only world religion that is shot through with fulfilled prophecy. Bc Jesus didn't come to abolish the law & prophets he came to fulfill them. V. 18

² Heb 10:1-14

18 For truly, I say to you, **until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass** from the Law until all is accomplished.

Eternal: Jesus gets personal, he said truly I say to **you** - insert your name - as long as heaven & earth endure so the Word of God will endure. Jesus is saying the Bible is **eternal & timeless**. Its never outdated or needs a version update & its as relevant today as it was 2k years ago.

Old: Sometimes people will say the Bible is "**antiquated**" as a criticism. But think about what that means. This book has persisted across time, culture & civilization. Its the same book the Israelites read in exile & that Peter, James & John read & preached. It was true then, it's true now & it will be true long after we're gone. In **every age** God's Word is attacked, questioned & criticized. Yet here it remains. It reminds me of the French Philosopher **Voltaire** who in the 1700's confidently wrote "**One hundred years from my day there will not be a Bible on earth except one that is looked upon as an artifact.**" Yet after he died, in a twist of irony, the house where he lived become a printing press for the distribution of Bibles.

Apply: The Bible isn't a book about *what happened* it's a book about *what happens*. It's not an old book it's a *timeless* book & because of that it is always **timely**. It reveals the character of God & diagnoses the human condition with remarkable accuracy. There is intrinsic power in the Word of God that is simply **unparalleled & spiritual renewal** will often occur in your life when you redevote yourself to the scriptures. **So why spend hours** watching cable news or scrolling social media? Why not go to the eternally relevant word of God? Bc every time we read the Bible we're reading a book that has stood the test of time. V. 18

18 For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an **iota**, not a **dot**, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.

Iota: An iota was the smallest letter in Hebrew, like a lower case “i” & a dot was the smallest mark. Jesus is making the point that the Bible is inspired down to the **very words**. So when we read the Bible we’re reading **God’s Words To Us**.

Revelatory: If we didn’t have the Bible all we’d have is human speculation about who God is but **bc of the Bible we don’t have to rely on human speculation** instead we can be confident in **divine revelation**. God has revealed himself. And he hasn’t done so through strange mystical visions that only a few special leaders have access to. No, he’s done so using **words** that we can read, comprehend & understand. This is called the doctrine of the **clarity of scripture** - the clarity of scripture means that the Bible is comprehensible to Christians who possess the ability to read or understand oral communication. It doesn’t mean scripture is always easy to understand, but that God has revealed himself in a way that can be understood when we try.

Apply: Here’s what that means, **if you try hard & utilize the help of the church you can learn to understand & apply the Bible**. I promise bc that’s how **God has revealed himself**. If you want help to understand the Bible better you should sign up our 8 week discipleship experience called **Rooted**. It’s starting on Oct. 2 & the first 4 weeks are all about How To Read The Bible. **Cults** are all about special revelation that comes through some special leader but Christianity is anchored in the **truth of the Bible** that you can read for yourself.

We Believe: Which leads to an important question: **What do you believe about the Bible & why?** Do you believe what Jesus believed, or do you still have questions? Let me tell you what **I believe** & this church believes. We believe the scriptures are inspired by the Holy Spirit, are without error & the final authority in our lives. That the scriptures are true, good & beautiful & the more we understand & apply them the more we become like Jesus & experience the life we were created for.

Evidence: I don’t believe that bc I’m **uneducated** or was **raised** that way. I believe that bc I’ve looked at the evidence & found it compelling. Let me encourage you to do the **research** bc time & again the Bible has been proven historically, geographically & archaeologically accurate.

Let me give **you one example**. People sometimes wonder if the Bible has been **changed over time**, so what we have today isn’t what was originally revealed. **Well the oldest copy** of the book of Isaiah used to be from the 1100’s. Then in **1946** a complete scroll of Isaiah was found from the **1st c.**, 1000 years earlier. When scholars compared the two scrolls they found something remarkable: **the text was virtually identical**. There were a few spelling differences (like American vs British spelling) but nothing that affected meaning or doctrine. Demonstrating that the transmission of the Bible has been extraordinarily faithful & we can trust what we have in our hands today. Not an iota or dot will pass away. V. 19

19 Therefore whoever **relaxes** one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called **least** in the kingdom of heaven

Temptations: There are 2 temptations we must avoid when it comes to interpreting scripture. We must not relax God's Word or tighten it. We RELAX God's Word when we take away from it, by doing interpretive gymnastics to make the Bible say the opposite of what it says & what the church has affirmed for 2,000 years. This happens most around topics that challenge us culturally: things like sexuality, gender & finances. The temptation is to relax what the Bible says to match our cultural sensibilities. This is what the Sadducees did.

The other temptation is to tighten God's Word. We TIGHTEN God's Word when we add man made rules to it, this is what the Pharisees did. One example would be alcohol. The Bible says do not get drunk with wine & warns against the dangers of alcohol. But it doesn't prohibit the use of it. It's very wise for some Christians to abstain from alcohol entirely, but it's wrong to condemn the moderate use of alcohol bc the Bible doesn't do so.

Goal: As we relate to the Bible our goal isn't to relax or tighten, but to rightly interpret & faithfully apply God's Word. We're not looking for loop holes we're asking God for grace to live out His Word recognizing it isn't easy but we're in this together. V. 19b

but whoever **does** them and **teaches** them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Do: Notice Jesus said whoever **does** these commandments will be called great. He didn't say whoever listens to or memorizes them, but whoever **does** them. Jesus ends the SOTM in the same way, he said whoever hears these words of mine & does them will be like a man who built his house on the rock. You see knowledge of the Bible is good but obedience to the Bible is better. That's why I do so much

application in my preaching, bc I want us to be doers of the word & not just hearers. If you aren't a disciple of Jesus I understand why you wouldn't obey the Bible, you have to decide what you believe about Jesus first. But if you are a disciple submission to the Bible is part of the deal. So is there an area of your life you simply aren't obeying the Bible? Maybe it's about forgiveness? Or money? Or sexual purity? Jesus wants more for you than that.

Teach: Notice also the emphasis Jesus placed on **teaching** the Bible. He said those who do the word & teach the word will be called great. You might think "that's just for pastors" but remember Jesus said this to ALL of his disciples not just pastors. Bc here's the truth: you're always teaching someone how to relate to the Bible.

How we relate to the Bible teaches our friends, classmates, kids & co-workers how to relate to the Bible. Parents when you love, cherish, trust & apply the Word of God it teaches your kids to do the same. When you ignore its commands you silently teach your kids the Bible isn't that important. Every disciple of Jesus is teaching the Word of God to the world around us through out actions. Is my life a good teacher or a bad one?

Seam: Here's the thing, as you try to live out the Word of God you're going to realize how hard it is & you're going to be confronted with the fact that you fail a lot. Which is why Jesus ends by talking about the kind of righteousness we need to enter the Kingdom of God. v20

20 For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Never: This is surprising to **Americans** bc Jesus is saying not everyone gets into heaven. Wait I thought everyone went to heaven as long as you were genuine & a decent person. Not according to Jesus. According to Jesus here's how you enter heaven - your righteousness must exceed that of the scribes & pharisees.

Wow: That's shocking, bc the Scribes & Pharisees were the most serious religious people of that day. **You've never** met someone so serious about religion as these guys. Your typical Pharisee memorized the first 5 books of the Bible, fasted weekly, prayed multiple x/day & tithed from everything including his spices. They were very zealous for religion. And yet Jesus is saying THAT'S NOT ENOUGH. Why? Bc the Pharisees were trying to achieve righteousness through their own efforts & Jesus is saying that will NEVER WORK. You see, we need a righteousness outside of ourselves. **A righteousness that is not achieved by effort but received by faith in Christ.**

Rescue: This gets us to the heart of the gospel & what makes Christianity so distinct. I've heard it described as the difference between an **escape religion & a rescue religion**. Most religions say if you keep the rules well enough you can escape judgement. There's a list of rules & if you keep them well you'll be accepted by God, or welcomed into Nirvana or w/e. **Islam** has the 5 Pillars, **Mormonism** the Book of Mormon, **Buddhism** the 8 fold path. Those are different applications of the same principle: if you perform well enough you can escape judgement.

Rescue: But Christianity isn't an escape religion it's a **rescue religion**. The Bible says God is far too holy & I'm way too sinful to rescue myself.

I can't escape, I'm not good enough, I'm spiritually dead, what I need is to be **rescued**. And Jesus is the savior who comes to **rescue** us. Guys that's what the entire Bible is about. Mt 5 is stunning bc Jesus is saying "The entire Bible is about me, coming to give you the righteousness you need." So I want to close by thinking about how Jesus is the fulfillment of the law & prophets & I'm indebted to my former pastor J.D. Greear for this insight.

OT: Think with me about how Jesus is in every book of the law & prophets. In **Genesis** he is the Word of God creating the heavens & the earth & he is the promised seed who would one day crush the serpent's head. In **Exodus** he is the passover lamb who will take away the sins of the world & the tabernacle, where God's glory dwells. In **Leviticus** he's the great high priest who offers sacrifice to atone for our sins. In **Numbers** Jesus is the guide who leads us through the wilderness. In **Deuteronomy** Jesus is the greater prophet that Moses promised. In **Joshua** Jesus is the victorious conqueror who leads us into the promised land.

In **Judges** Jesus is the ultimate rescuer from our sinful rebellion. In **Ruth** Jesus is the kinsman redeemer, who pays the price to bring us into his family. In **1 & 2 Samuel** Jesus is the shepherd king who fights giants on our behalf. In **1 & 2 Kings** Jesus is the righteous ruler we long for. In **1 & 2 Chronicles** Jesus is the true temple. In **Ezra** Jesus is the faithful scribe. In **Nehemiah** Jesus is the rebuilder of that which is broken. In **Esther** Jesus is the one who risks his life to save us from destruction.

In **Job** Jesus is the sovereign ruler over Satan who one day will deliver us from suffering. In **Psalms** Jesus is the one who holds our

tears & hears our cries. In **Proverbs** Jesus is wisdom personified. In **Ecclesiastes** Jesus is the meaning in the meaninglessness of life. In **Song of Solomon** Jesus is the lover of our souls.

In **Isaiah** Jesus is immanuel, God with us, the child who was born, the son who was given, whose name shall be called wonderful counselor, mighty God, everlasting father & prince of peace. He is the suffering servant who would be pierced for our transgressions & crushed for our iniquities & by his stripes we are healed.

In **Jeremiah** Jesus is the new covenant keeper, in **Lamentations** Jesus is the one who meets you with new mercy every morning. In **Ezekiel** Jesus is the spirit who gives life to dry bones, in **Daniel** Jesus is the ancient of days & the 4th man in the fire, in **Hosea** Jesus is the faithful husband who never gives up on his family, in **Joel** Jesus is the only one who can restore the years the locust have eaten.

In **Amos** Jesus is our burden bearer, in **Obadiah** our perfect judge, in **Jonah** he is our savior from the storm, in **Micah** Jesus is the ruler promised to be born in Bethlehem, in **Nahum** Jesus is the avenger of all who trust in him.

In **Habakkuk** Jesus is our joy even when our fields are empty. In **Zephaniah** Jesus is our great redeemer. In **Haggai** Jesus is the cleansing fountain, in **Zechariah** Jesus is the humble king riding on a donkey & in **Malachi** Jesus is the son of righteousness risen with healing in his wings. From Genesis to Malachi it's all about Jesus.

Close: And what did Jesus do? He lived the life we couldn't live, he died the death we deserved to die, & then he conquered the enemy

we cannot conquer death itself. And why did Jesus do all of this? Bc he loves you. He died so you could live & he became our sin so that we can become his righteousness. With that in mind I have two questions

1. Are you a disciple of Jesus? Have you received the righteousness of Jesus Christ through repentance & faith? If not I want to invite you to do that today. To respond to the hero of the Bible by entrusting your life to him.
2. If you are a disciple of Jesus are you treating the Bible like He does? Is it food for your soul & a light to your path? Do you trust it, delight in it & apply it in your life?

Communion