

## Virtual Bible Class with Rubel Shelly

### “Treasures in Heaven” - Matthew 5:38-48

*Here are some review and discussion questions that might help you pursue ideas highlighted in the video segments that discuss this section of the Sermon on the Mount...*

#### **Unit 1 – “Be Perfect!”**

1. Rubel suggests interpreting the command “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (5:48) as a context-specific teaching about the nature of Christian love rather than a call to moral perfection in a believer’s life. How would you express that idea in your own words? Do you agree with his interpretation?
2. Some people are terrorized by the Sermon on the Mount because it seems (to them!) to establish a standard of perfect obedience to impossibly high standards of law. The late Dallas Willard wrote: “Here as elsewhere in his lovely Discourse on the Hillside, we need to put the idea of *laws* entirely out of our minds. Jesus is working, as already indicated, at the much deeper level of the *source* of actions, good and bad. He is taking us deeper into the kind of beings we are, the kind of love God has for us, and the kind of love that, as we share it, brings us into harmony with his life. No one can be ‘right’ in the kingdom sense who is not transformed at this level.” (*The Divine Conspiracy*, p. 155). Is this helpful?
3. How does Jesus illustrate the “perfect” (mature, complete) love God has for his human creatures? (v.45). Does the parallel account of this teaching at Luke 6:36 help clarify the concept for you?
4. How are Jesus’ disciples expected to imitate God’s ideal love? (vs.44, 46-47).
5. Can you name two or three specific situations in your own life experience where the demand of “perfect” love has played out in your own life – either in *receiving* or *giving* it?

#### **Unit 2 – “Eye for eye, tooth for tooth”**

1. Most people understand “eye for eye, tooth for tooth” to be a brutal rule of conduct! In its Old Testament context, it is actually a law designed to *deescalate violence* and to prevent what are called “blood feuds.” Read Lev 24:17-22 to be clear about the law Jesus is citing.
2. The principle embedded in this law is called *lex talionis* (Latin, “law of retaliation” – a principle of retributive justice that requires that a punishment should be

proportional in degree and kind to the offense. Can you illustrate this principle from our own legal system?

3. Although *justice* is a legitimate concept and may be appealed to by Christians, divine love is less concerned to punish than to bring about reconciliation, forgiveness, and the healing of broken relationships. This is the basis of our salvation by God's *grace*! Parents understand this in terms of the way we deal with our children. See how Jesus used this idea at Matt 9:9-13; cf. Hos 6:6.
4. Expand on Rubel's explanation of the "slap on your right cheek" or the Roman legionnaire's right of impressment. Had you thought about this approach to substituting dialogue for fighting, second-mile service over retaliation, etc? How did Martin Luther King Jr. apply the teaching of this section of the Sermon on the Mount in leading a 1960s crusade for civil rights?
5. Which is the more *natural* approach to being slighted or hurt by someone: getting even or forgiving the offense? What is the *Christian* approach? How did Jesus model the teaching of this text even as he was dying on the cross? Cf. Luke 23:34.

### **Unit 3 – Reflecting Your Father's Heart**

1. What does Jesus' recurring use of "You have heard that it was said . . . but I say unto you" mean? He was neither the first nor last rabbi to use such a formula! Is he contrasting the Old Testament with the New Testament? Or is he contrasting two different ways of understanding the commandments found in the Law of Moses?
2. To further clarify Question #1, read Leviticus 19:18. Does this text encourage anger and retaliation against an enemy? Doesn't it make more sense that Jesus is *explaining and clarifying* what the Law of Moses meant rather than giving an alternative teaching?
3. God's perfect love allows both righteous and wicked people to benefit from his goodness – goodness expressed in sunshine, rain, and crops. Explain how this illustrates the commandment that believers are obligated to love all people – not just the "good folks" or people from one's own nation, race, or religion.
4. How does the Parable of the Good Samaritan reinforce the teaching of this section of the Sermon on the Mount? How clarify the concept of "neighbor"? How show that even an enemy is also a "neighbor"? Cf. Luke 10:25ff.
5. The social, economic, and racial divisions of our present culture and political climate have Americans in a state of frenzy in our attitudes toward one another. How does this passage *rebuke* that spirit? *Enlighten* it? *Replace* it with something better?