**Matthew 5: 31-48**

Suggested Questions based on Sunday 24 October’s talk

* *Visit the Church Website’s homepage to view Sunday’s service.*
* *You may find it useful to use the sermon notes to help discuss various questions.*

*These can be found on the Inspiring Resources Page.*

**To start**

* How good are you at having your beliefs in any area of your life challenged?
* If able, share an example of something that has challenged you to examine your position on an issue(s) and how this has impacted you.

**Antithesis III – Divorce**

Read Matthew 5: 31-32

Divorce was already a widespread phenomenon in the known world by the time of Moses over 3200 years ago! In response, God instituted some regulations surrounding divorce:

1. To protect the sanctity of marriage from indecency
2. To protect the woman from a husband who might simply send her away for little reason such as spoiling a meal
3. To provide evidence (a certificate) that a woman was legally divorced, so she would not be thought of as a harlot

The key to understanding this passage is verse 32.

* Compare and contrast the following two translations of verse 32:

The newer NIV translation says:

*But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for* ***sexual immorality****…*

The earlier NIV translation says:

*But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for* ***marital unfaithfulness****…*

The Greek work *porneia (marital unfaithfulness/sexual immorality)* is rendered differently in the earlier translation. Used in a broader way, it recognises more circumstances that can lead to the breakdown of marriage.

* Other than sexual immorality, what other circumstances could lead to a marriage breakdown?
* In light of these other circumstances, which of the two definitions do you think is more useful to us today? Why?

**Antithesis IV – Oaths**

Read Matthew 5: 33-37

Oaths still surround our 21st century lives, such as the oaths made in a court of law, as well as the oaths within both Marriage and Baptism services.

* When you promise to do something, do you always see it through to completion?
* When you struggle to keep an oath, what is your response?
* How can we ensure we are people ‘of our word’?

**Antithesis V – Eye for Eye**

Read Matthew 5: 38-42

Set at a time when the penalty often far exceeded the actual crime committed, this, the law of retaliation was established to ensure appropriate and equivalent justice was administered. Furthermore, it was intended that all punishments were to be imposed and carried out by civil authorities and courts to protect all parties against any private revenge crusades.

* How important is it for justice to be administered in our societies? Why?
* What would be the consequences if there was no justice in our societies?
* Why is it important for all punishments to be carried out by civil authorities?
* What should our response be when we encounter injustice?

**Antithesis VI – Love for enemies**

Read Matthew 5: 43-48

God calls us to love everyone unconditionally just as He loves everyone! This doesn’t mean we will like or agree with everyone’s life choices, but we are called to love, after all as the old saying goes ‘God loves the sinner but hates the sin’! In this Antithesis, we find Jesus turning the cultural practice that said one should ‘hate their enemies’ upside down.

* What things in the world do you hate? Why?
* How does one hate ‘evil’ without hating the perpetrators of evil?
* What is the antidote to evil?
* How can we show our love towards perpetrators of evil?

**Reflection**

* Which of these antitheses true meaning has been most enlightening to you today? Why?

**Verse to pray Together**

*And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love,*

*may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people,*

*to grasp how wide and long and high and deep*

*is the love of Christ,*

*and to know this love that surpasses knowledge –*

*that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.*

*Ephesians 3: 17b-19*