

Introduction

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[0 : 0 0] There was a man of noble birth who went into a far country to be crowned king and then to return.

There was a man of the work that they were to do while he was gone. And so Jesus came to them and said in verse 18 of Matthew 28, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age. Well, this was our Lord's last words to the church.

There's unfinished business. I'm leaving it in your hands. I'm coming back. And as you remember in that parable, I'm going to call you to give an account of what did you do with my assignment. And so it is our concern as pastors from time to time for us to realize as a church, really to keep this assignment before us, that the Lord's last words are really our first marching orders as a church and what we're to be about.

[1 : 3 7] And so we need to keep bringing ourselves as pastors and Christians back to this assignment and to say, is my life being shaped by Jesus' last words?

So I've resurrected something that I found very helpful in thinking about the Great Commission, something Pastor Aaron Hoke shared with us years ago, this whole idea of moving people to the right.

You have there in front of you, if you've got a handout, if you didn't, you can get one from Dick in the back, but you see this from the trellis and the vine.

Three categories, three columns. You have the lost, then you have the saved, and then you have the Lord Jesus himself.

The first two categories, you have the lost. This is the kingdom of darkness. And then you have the kingdom of light. And everyone we meet with in our lives falls into one of those two categories, don't they?

[2 : 5 1] They are either lost, still in the kingdom of darkness, or they are saved and in the kingdom of light. And our aim, our assignment in life is to be moving them to the right, moving them toward Jesus Christ.

We are after a transfer out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. And then once they're in the kingdom of light, we want to see them transform further in mind and will and heart into the likeness of Jesus.

And so that simplifies things for us, in a sense. It helps us to see that whoever we meet, whoever we're talking to, whoever we have these conversations with, our aim is to move them toward the Lord Jesus Christ.

So we want, first of all, all those in the lost column to move into the saved column, to come to know Jesus Christ and the salvation that is in him. So we do what we can to move them to the right on this continuum.

There's a whole continuum between the left and along the line of the kingdom of darkness. Some are closer to the kingdom.

[4 : 08] Remember that guy that Jesus met in the gospels and he says that you are not far from the kingdom. That he had come to understand a little more of what the gospel is.

And so some people are further from the kingdom and others are closer. But they're all lost and if they die, it doesn't matter how close you were. So we're wanting to see them cross that line from death into life, from darkness into light.

Conversion. It's a point. It's a vertical line. But before that, there's these various stages. And so our aim is to be moving people toward conversion to Christ.

Now we might not be the one who brings them over into Christ. More usually it's a team effort, isn't it?

1 Corinthians 3 tells us that one plants, another waters, and someone else reaps as God gives the increase. And I wonder, can any of you testify to something of that in your conversion experience?

[5 : 10] That it wasn't just one person. And it wasn't just the first time you heard the gospel. That you went from saved to lost, or from lost to saved. And were transferred into the kingdom of light.

But you found that there were several people. Different times in your unconverted life. Before you crossed over into life.

Anybody want to share just a word on that? How was it with you? Was it one person? Or was it many? Jean?

Jean? Even to listen to people pray.

And hearing the gospel in their prayers. Moving Jean to the right. Until one day she crossed from death into life. Good. Anybody else? Yes.

[6 : 14] There. There. There. You have a family and you need to be a family and their friends. Okay. A process.

Sometimes it's just first time, one person, death to life. But many times, perhaps more often if we had the time, we would hear that it wasn't that way with us.

So there was this progressive moving us to the right. Isn't it that way with us then as we seek to bring the gospel to others?

We may be the one who plants the initial gospel seed. The first time someone hears the gospel, it might be from our lips. You parents, I trust that your children are hearing the gospel for the first time from you.

And you have that opportunity to be seeking to move them to the right. With each succeeding Bible story, each presentation of the Lord Jesus, and others then come along behind and add to that movement to the right.

[7 : 24] Conversations about the gospel, telling people what Jesus has done for you. Each seed of truth is given in order to move them to the right. For we want to see them transferred into the kingdom of Christ.

Maybe we watered the seed that somebody else planted, reinforcing it, explaining it, so that maybe now they came to understand better why they need a Savior.

They hadn't seen it as clearly before. And that's the watering of the seed. Maybe you gave them a booklet or a track or a book to read. Maybe you invited them to church where they heard something of the gospel that they hadn't understood before.

And by that, you moved them under the power of God to the right. Maybe it was there that they came under conviction of sin in a way that they hadn't before.

Maybe you're used to remove an obstacle, just one obstacle in the way between them and Jesus Christ. Maybe it's an intellectual obstacle of a doubt about the existence of God.

[8 : 31] Well, we can be used to poke holes in this theory of evolution that just does away with God. And we can expose the inconsistencies of all other philosophies of life and all other worldviews.

They're not consistent. They're not true. And we can be used maybe just to remove one stone from the way and thereby help them to move forward. Maybe the obstacle is not even intellectual at all.

Maybe it's the thought that, you know, all Christians are hypocrites, that they're no different from us. But in meeting you and observing you and listening to you, they find somebody who's genuine.

And your holiness of life is consistent. And your love for God and for others, it's there for them to see. And they're attracted to it.

And they say, well, I can no longer say that they're all hypocrites. And that may just remove enough of an obstacle that they can move ahead and consider now the claims of Christ upon their lives.

[9 : 35] And so we see whatever it is in our dealings with people, we invite them to church. They see the love of Christ on display in relationships in a body of Christ.

They see steadfastness in your life in the midst of trials that you have hope and peace and joy. And they're wanting to know more why. And they're more ears open the next time they hear the gospel, either from you or someone else.

So we're moving them to the right until someone then reaps a harvest as God gives the increase. And they cross over into the kingdom of light in a moment.

Well, now they're in the saved column. But they're not yet like the Lord Jesus. They've got a long way to go in taking on the very image of their Lord and Savior.

And so this, too, is a continuum. And of all the saved people that you meet, your aim is to move them closer to Christ. Some are babes in Christ.

[10 : 34] Some are teenagers in Christ. Some are young men and young women, older men and older women. Mature in the Lord. Grace in the seed, in the bud, in the full head of grain.

And so our aim is to move them further toward Christ's likeness. To see them transformed in mind, heart, and will into his image. There's all the different one another's in the New Testament.

What are some of the one another's by which we move people to the right in this column of saved? Encourage one another.

Just shout them out. Serve one another. Love one another. Pray for one another. Greet one another.

Give to one another. Admonish one another. Spur one another on. To persevere in all those things. In other words, be patient with one another because it doesn't just happen overnight that, oh, I see now and they immediately change.

[11 : 46] No, we persevere patiently instructing one another. What do we do if we find a brother that's fallen? We gently restore, don't we?

And on and on. 20, 25 different things that we do. And that's how we are keeping spurring each other on to the right into greater likeness to Christ. Being a good example yourself, as Paul calls Timothy to do.

Could be meeting one on one to spur each other on to love and good deeds. In one way or another, every Christian we meet, we are to be aiming to move them to the right.

Now, doesn't that help simplify, then, our Lord's last commands to us? Our assignment. Why am I here? What am I to be doing today? I'm to be moving people toward Christ, whoever I meet, lost or saved.

See them transferred into the kingdom of light and then transformed into the likeness of the king. So for the next two months in this class, we'll be examining just one way that we can aim at the first part of that, of moving lost people further to the right toward Jesus Christ, to make them followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[13 : 10] In the last 20 to 30 years, there's been a whole special group of Bible studies that have been developed. Let me give you some of the titles of this set of Bible studies.

Discovering Christianity, Christianity Explored, Explaining Christianity, Christianity Simple, and on and on. What do these titles of these Bible studies imply?

An Introduction to Christianity. So you shouldn't expect to find all the finer points of Christianity in these studies, but rather just the most basic ideas of the Christian faith.

Discover. The first definition in my English dictionary is to find out for the first time. Exploring conjures up the idea of investigating the unknown.

If I told you I'm taking the next three years off to explore downtown Bremen, you'd laugh at me. There's not much to explore, and I've lived here all my life. Why do you need to explore?

[14 : 23] No, we explore the unknown. So the Lewis and Clark expedition is exploring places that white man has never gone, and so on.

So what these things are, these titles are suggesting is that these Bible studies were developed for those in the world to whom Christianity is unknown or unfamiliar.

And that being the case, they just hit the most basic beliefs, the fundamentals of the Christian gospel. Now, it's interesting that these basic introductions to Christianity were not devised for tribal groups deep in some jungle, isolated from the rest of the modern world, who've never had the Bible translated into their language, and therefore they are ignorant of spiritual things and Bible truths.

In fact, several of these earliest Christianity-explored courses came out of England, a nation that has had the Bible in their own language for well over 500 years, a nation that once shone brightly with gospel truth and had the shining of the gospel in the Puritan age, but now a nation that's agnostic with only a few percent attending church services on any given Sunday.

Now, that there is a need then for introductory Bible studies in such a land is telling in itself that even lands where the gospel once was can lose the light of the gospel through neglect, through disinterest, through rejection and hatred.

[16 : 05] Remember what Jesus says, light has come into the world and men love darkness rather than light. And so a nation can gravitate and will, apart from the grace of God, gravitate to the darkness instead of the light.

Now, the truths of Christianity are even more unfamiliar and more unknown in France where David and Nicky Vaughn are spreading the gospel. That nation was not as privileged as much of Europe, Western Europe, was in receiving the light of the Reformation.

Reformation. Rather, France persecuted those who preached Reformation truth and chased Protestants out of that land. So David Vaughn has put together a Bible study on the basics of the Christian gospel.

It was about a year ago that David wrote to us and I'm going to quote from his letter, this winter we began a Discovering Christianity Bible study with five non-Christian French friends here.

None of them had ever been to a Protestant church before 18 months ago when they started attending a few of our special services. There are two couples and one single man.

[17 : 15] The two couples are contacts of Nicky's through her English teaching and the single man is my physical therapist. The Discovering Christianity Bible study we are doing with them is a six-session study.

The six sessions cover the basics of the gospel message. All five of these non-Christian friends are so different that our evening together are hilarious at times.

We do the studies in our home and eat a light supper before. During the supper conversation on the first night it came out that one couple was a supporter of the French Republican Party that's the political right wing which had just had its primary election.

While another man present was an admirer of Fidel Castro. One lady's greatest passion in life is cats. One man is convinced that Trump was behind the Brexit vote in Britain.

Yet they're all intelligent, engaging, and lovable people. So what can we say about such a scene as are gathered there around the Vaughn's dinner table?

[18 : 23] What can we say about these people who are so very different from one another all around the table to study the basics of the Christian gospel?

Does that say anything to you? Does it highlight any truths in the scripture? Does anything jump into your mind when you see a scene like that? Anybody?

They all need the same thing. Good. So with all their differences and my how varied they are, they all have the same need. What else is, what else does it suggest to you?

Okay. So there is ignorance of the scriptures. They have that in common, these that are gathered around this table. Perhaps it's included in, Pastor Jason?

Okay. Jesus came to seek and save sinners, all kinds of sinners, didn't he? Where did all these people come from?

[19 : 33] Let's go way back. Okay. Adam and Eve, where did he come from? So what I'm getting at, we can go way back and say all these people around the table were created by God and for God, weren't they?

Colossians 1.16. And you can know that about any person you ever meet. This person was made by God and for God.

And she will never come to enjoy her purpose in life until she meets Jesus Christ. So, we all, with all of our differences, we have this in common.

We've all come from God and have been given life by him that is to be lived for him. That's how we were designed. And then, we all share sin in common.

All these different people and all the differences of their interests, and yet, they all have sinned. And they all need the same Savior.

[20 : 36] Now, I say, I think it's helpful for us to see that and to think of people that we meet in that way. These differences can scare us and cause us to back off.

I don't have anything in common with somebody her whole life as cats. What do I know? How can I connect with her? This person is so far off on the political spectrum that I don't have anything to share in common with him.

But you see, these things are put off to us. They would push us away and cause us to retreat from people. when, if we would remember, we all share the same creator and God-given purpose, why we're here.

And we're all sinners. And we're all in need of the Savior. Well, then I see, I have something to say to this person. I have the most important thing that will bless them in this life and for all eternity.

And hopefully, that will move us toward them and so this picture is a wonderful reminder of Romans 3 and verses 22 and 24 through 24 where Paul is gathering up all kinds of humanity as guilty before God and he can say, there is no difference.

[22 : 03] There is no difference. Yeah, tell me all of your different political interests, and your hobbies, and all. There is no difference in this.

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. And all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Jesus Christ.

So, let's get a good picture of what the gospel tells us about all mankind mankind and be drawn to us.

Now, we don't live in France. You and I don't live in England, but we're here in the United States. So, why do we need an introductory Christianity explored Bible study in our country?

Anybody? Anybody? Will? Okay.

[23 : 04] Have you seen that? Have you seen that? Very good. dared? Hmm.

Have you found that? People you talk to? And if they talk very long at all about God, you realize? That is miles away from the gospel of Jesus Christ.

They spent all their life in church, perhaps. But we have a whole other generation that is not spending their life in church. And so, they're ignorant of the gospel.

Surveys are done of the ignorance in our country. Even among those who claim to know God, only half of American adults can name one of the four gospels. Most don't know the name of the first book of the Bible.

Only a third know that Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount. And one out of ten thought that Joan of Ark was Noah's wife. So, these are just little facts of the Bible.

[24 : 26] But they're telling, aren't they? Those little facts won't get you into heaven. It's not the gospel. But if people are so basically ignorant of those kind of facts, things, what do we hope that we'll find when it comes to understanding how is a sinner made right with a holy God?

Oh, then we find even increased ignorance. So there may be more religion in our nation than in present-day Europe, and that is true, but much of the religion in our land is not saving religion.

religion. It's not the true gospel. And this can be even more dangerous than out-and-out ignorance, to have some knowledge.

Have you ever heard somebody say, well, I have just enough knowledge to be dangerous? That's the way it is with gospel light as well. People have little bits of the truth here and there, and because they have been in church and have heard what they think is Christianity.

They think they know, but they only have a caricature of it. Yes, there's two eyes and two ears and a nose and a mouth, but it's completely out of proportion, not in the places that they ought to be, and it's a ghastly sight.

[25 : 53] So they know some of God's commandments, and they think that by keeping them, if they keep enough of them, they'll get to heaven. They know some facts about Jesus, that he was born a virgin, died on a cross, rose again, but they think that just believing those facts makes them right with God.

Sure, I believe in Jesus. They don't have a clue what saving faith is, and how it differs from just notional nodding of the head to certain facts, like the devils do.

They know some of Jesus' teachings. They know the golden rule, and they think that's how we get to heaven, by keeping it. And they know the verse, judge not that you be not judged.

They don't have a clue what that means, that there's a proper judgment that we are to make. And so there is a great need in our nation for these introductory Bible studies, perhaps more so than we're aware, and let's keep our ears open as we move among people as to what are people's concepts of God, of Jesus Christ, of sin, of salvation, heaven, hell, the basics of the Christian life.

And so one of the reasons for this two-month Sunday school series is to give me the time to put together a course of study that could be used for such an investigative Bible study. Now you say there's all these different courses already available, why would we do something different?

[27 : 25] Well, they're not all from a reformed perspective to begin with. One of them, in one of the sessions, the aim is to get the folks to speak in tongues. So you can see that there's different ideas down the road, and some of these are strong in one area and weak in another, and so we're wanting to try to put together something that is helpful.

David Vaughn sent me a helpful review of six of these leading Bible studies that have been published on basics of Christianity, and it lists their strengths and their weaknesses, and so we hope to put together something that is simple and useful.

Because I believe there are many here who could make use of such a simple tool, verses to read from the Bible and questions to ask.

that some of you could lead another person just in a one-to-one Bible study, or maybe a few people together to explore Christian basics, and others who may not be able to lead such a study, yet have some friends who have an interest and could gather two or three together if someone else would come and teach and lead this study.

So how do we gather people with an interest in studying the Bible? Think about that.

[28 : 59] Let's think together. How do we gather people for an introductory, lost people for an introductory study on the Bible? Anyone?

good. We've got to rub shoulders with some lost people if we're ever going to be able to invite them to a Bible study for Christianity.

Excellent. What else? All right.

We need to build bridges with these lost people that are in our sphere of influence so that we might bring them over the bridge to a Bible study or to further knowledge of Christ.

Isn't that what we saw with David and Nikki? How'd they gather? Five people together. Well, David got a frozen shoulder and needed physical therapy over and over and out of that relationship with that physical therapist grew this sense of concern for him and sharing tracks with him and helping answer some of his questions and now he's right.

[30 : 35] He'd like to know more about this thing called Christianity. Never been to a church before. And Nikki, she's got a job, a part-time job, mainly for the reason to meet people.

And so she's teaching English over there. And she has contact with people in that way. And two couples out of those teaching opportunities showed interest and were invited to their home for a meal.

And when the invitation went out, they were ready. It's the same thing that we're seeing in Michael and Ashley Amati in Ireland who hosted dinner in the Bible on the last Sunday of every month.

Invite folks that they meet and know through their kids' school or other activities. Invite them to come over for dinner and a short Bible study afterwards.

Bob and Kathy self in West Atlanta. What are they doing? They're seeking to meet and show interest and love for all sorts of people, neighbors, have them into their home, seeking to build relationships upon which they can then say, would you like to come and learn more on a regular basis?

[31 : 48] Do you see any patterns in these examples that we can learn from people? And imitate? It's to say, who has God put in my circle?

Make the most of these people in our ordinary spheres of life, your medical appointments, your children's activities. Where do you meet people that are lost? That's your mission field.

That's your pool to fish in. That's your house in which you're to let your light shine to all that are in your house. Take an interest in people that God has put in your path to heaven.

Invitations to hear gospel presentations. That was another thing that the Vaughns did. They held these special evangelistic meetings on a Friday night and invited people to come who knew nothing of Christianity and present some truth about the gospel.

Some people were more ready to come to such a meeting than to come to church on Sunday. We're planning to do six evangelistic Sundays instead of four this coming year.

[32 : 58] Places where you can invite folks who are ready and hungry to learn something more of the gospel to help move them to the right. A friend of mine from Arizona called me last Monday and he told me about the people that cram into his living room on Thursday night for Bible study.

He said, there's a crusty old marine. There's a young couple that was raised in strict fundamentalist circles. There's a lady who saw the movie Shack and thought it was the greatest thing.

And here they are, all met together to study the word of God. And there are people that he met when he was the mayor of his local town.

in the normal, ordinary, give and take of life, we meet these people and as we show interest and talk with them, eventually we find those who God is working and creating an interest.

So, that's where we need to have our antenna up, seeking to see who is it that is in my sphere of influence that I can seek to speak with, love upon, show concern for.

[34 : 14] J.I. Packer said, evangelism is a Christian being a Christian. He was making the point that evangelism is first something that we do before, or something we are before something we do.

It's just being a Christian, loving God with all your heart and loving your neighbor as yourself. And that's how we begin. And then as God gives us opportunity to speak of our Savior and the difference he's made in our lives.

Well, we need God's help, don't we? We need to ask God to help us to have our antenna up, to seeing needy people around us who are needing to understand the basics of the gospel.

And then pray that God would move in their hearts, creating an interest. So, in the following six weeks, it's my plan to lead you through an exploratory study of Christianity.

We'll just call it Christianity Explored, the same kind of study that you might lead someone through, whether one-on-one or in a group setting.

[35 : 15] It's evangelistic. It's designed for non-Christians. It's brief. It's just hitting the most basic points of the gospel. Intentionally short, that non-Christians could at least commit to six meetings.

You're not asking them to commit to a half- a-year study, but just six meetings to come to understand and study something of Christianity. And it's designed to get people into the Bible for themselves.

Not just to judge Christianity from what they've heard about it, but to take them to the source book itself, to have them read it, so that they see for themselves what God has said about his son.

And so, your assignment, you have signed up for this basic exploratory study. Your assignment is to read Luke 1 through 9, and just to ask yourself, who is Jesus, and why did he come to earth?

We may not get all the way through those nine chapters, but we're going to use the gospel of Luke, and I want you to get started in Luke, and start reading for yourself, and ask, who is Jesus?

[36 : 27] Why has he come to earth? And if you've got questions as you read, mark them down, and we'll have opportunity for questions. The six topics we plan to cover is, who is Jesus?

Why did Jesus come? That's the problem of sin. Why did Jesus die? The nature of the atonement and the cross. And did Jesus rise from the dead?

The importance of the resurrection. And then, lastly, two sessions on the response that is required of you in the gospel, repentance and then faith. Well, it'll be good for us all to just revisit the gospel again.

It's the good news that we live upon, and I trust it will become a useful tool as you prayerfully think of who are people in my life that need to know something more about this gospel.

Well, let's pray together. Lord, Lord, that we have eyes to see as your kind gift to us. In your light, we see light.

[37 : 29] We live in the midst of a dark world, and we're seeing increasingly folks that have no clue of how to be right with God. And worse than that, they are holding a lie in their right hand, thinking they know, thinking that they are right with God, when in fact it is the devil's lie.

Lord, move us with pity and compassion for this world around us, for individual people, the people we see and meet in the course of our week, and help us then to pray for them, help us to move toward them.

And Lord, create interest that they might long to know more about our Savior and come to know him and be made like him. Help us, we pray, in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

[40 : 19] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

[44 : 50] Amen. Thank you.

Thank you.

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And what was provided.
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[65 : 18] Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.

And we're going to begin with the Lord Jesus and the sixth commandment. And he's the one that gave us this command. He's the one lawgiver who's able to save and to destroy.

[82 : 21] Surely he then knows the meaning of this sixth commandment of his. And so as soon as the Lord Jesus began preaching, his message was, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

The kingdom of heaven is at hand. And then in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus set forth the laws of this kingdom of heaven that is at hand. And he goes right to the Ten Commandments to show that he has not abolished these commandments, but has made them to be the standard of righteousness for his own kingdom.

Matthew 5, 21 and 22, he comes to the sixth commandment. And no doubt his hearers felt safe. You shall not murder.

Murder? Well, I've never stabbed my brother in the back. I've never killed anyone. I can check this commandment off. That's how the scribes and Pharisees were teaching people to interpret the sixth commandment, in a pure external way.

Well, here Jesus tells them, By reducing this command to mere outward behavior, you've missed the greater part of what God requires in the sixth commandment.

[83 : 39] And he tells his hearers, You think that do not murder only condemns the out-and-out murderer to death. But I say to you, that anyone who is even angry with his brother deserves to be punished with death.

And whoever uses demeaning insults with his brother, like you blockhead, you jerk, you idiot, you fool, everyday cutdowns, deserves to be condemned and cast into the fire of hell.

You see, the sixth commandment requires far more than keeping your knife out of your neighbor's back. It requires as well the keeping of bitter thoughts and sinful anger out of your heart.

The very anger that puts demeaning words into your mouth and murder weapons into your hands. That anger is the root of murder, and it exposes you to the fire of hell unless you repent.

Can you imagine the shock as Jesus preached that Sermon on the Mount for the first time? He's saying that the sixth command forbids all sinful attitudes and actions that lead to murder, as well as the murder itself.

[84 : 57] It condemns it all, root and branch. He condemns the hatred that stirs up strife, the hatred that's expressed in gossip, that seeks to kill someone's reputation, hatred expressed in the very look of the eye, so that we say, if looks could kill, hatred expressed in malicious thoughts, it is possible to even wish someone dead.

Everything in the heart that gives rise to murder is condemned in the sixth commandment, according to the lawgiver himself. So you're lying in bed at night, and you're thinking over how someone has mistreated you, and you're rehearsing how they wronged you.

Be careful. Be very careful. Murder is crouching at your door. It desires to have you, but you must master it.

And if you don't turn to praying for their good, you'll soon be wishing for their harm, maybe even plotting your own revenge, how to hurt them back, nursing your bitterness, stoking your ill will and malice, and now you're on the road that leads to murder.

With the same stuff in your heart that's found in the heart of the coldest murderer, an unforgiving, bitter spirit is the spirit of murder.

[86 : 25] And according to Jesus, malicious anger is mental murder. It is murder acted on the stage of the heart. It's murder in the seed, and given all the right conditions, it could ripen and make killers out of us all.

Ten chapters later in Matthew's gospel, we hear Jesus say this in Matthew 15 and verse 19. For out of the heart comes, and then follows a long list.

Let me give you the first two. For out of the heart comes evil thoughts, comma, murder. And on it goes.

Out of the heart comes murder. Now that's not the flattery that we hear from the world, that tells us, you know, at heart we're all basically good. We mean well from the heart, you know.

Jesus says the opposite. The world says you need to listen to your heart, rather than your head. Jesus says the opposite. He says it's what's in your heart that leads to murder.

[87 : 42] Why is this world so full of murderers? Where does murder come from? Where does it get its start? Jesus says from the heart. Your heart and mine. It's in there.

In fact, Jesus is saying if it wasn't in there, there wouldn't be any murders out there. Out of the heart proceeds murder. It's our own heart's capacity for evil is frightening.

And how little we know of it. There are reservoirs of malice in my heart, which if tapped would lead to the act of murder. And if you think that you're beyond that, think again. Let him who thinks he stands, take heed lest he falls.

You know, there were tender hearted women that in the siege of the Babylonians over Jerusalem, actually killed and ate their own children. Don't think that you're above murder.

Murderers are not a different species that live on some different country, or in some totally unrecognizable place.

[88 : 45] No, they're us. They are us fallen sinners, the likes of a godly king, David, who found himself wanting someone so badly that he was willing to kill for her.

And he did kill for her. And only later, woke up to the horror of what he had done, and cried in deep contrition, save me from blood guilt, oh God, the God who saves me.

If murder was not beyond the author of the 23rd Psalm, then it's not beyond you or me either. Kids, do you like detective stories?

I loved to read them when I was a kid. Father Brown is G.K. Chesterton's fictional detective. And he's got an uncanny ability to track down murderers, to sniff them out even better than the police can do.

And at one place, he explains his method of detection in these words. You see, it was I who killed all those people.

[89 : 59] What does Father Brown mean? He understood homicide because he understood something of his own heart. And by looking within himself, he discovered the very motives of a murderer.

He found out what the murderer must be thinking and feeling and doing by considering his own thoughts and feelings and actions in such circumstances.

You see, Chesterton, the creator of Father Brown, understood the words of Jesus in Matthew 15, 18, that out of the heart proceeds murder. Murder. Because out of the heart comes evil thoughts, malice and envy, jealousy and anger, hatred and lust.

The many motives of murder. And so there's enough within our own hearts to put together various profiles of a murderer.

So according to Jesus, anger and hatred in the heart breaks the sixth commandment and condemns to hell just as truly as the act itself.

[91 : 15] The man who stabs another to death. Both are breakers of the sixth commandment and both are condemned to hell because of it. Now, am I stretching Jesus' words beyond their proper meaning?

