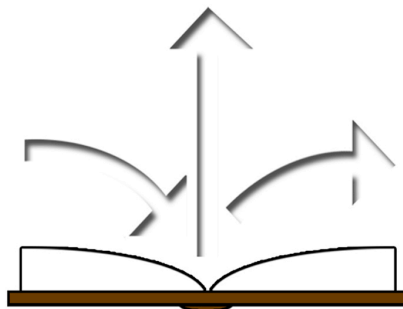


CALVARY BAPTIST  
CHURCH *of* SANTA BARBARA

**SERMON** *Matthew 5-7*  
**on the MOUNT**

**Study Guide**



# Sermon on the Mount

Calvary Baptist Church of Santa Barbara

September 20, 2015 – July 24, 2016

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These studies have been written to help us study the Scriptures on our own before we hear the sermon on Sunday. The questions are designed to get us thinking deeply about Scripture. You are encouraged to join a Fellowship Group through CBC or meet together with a friend or two to discuss your responses to the questions and your reflections upon the text. The Elders of CBC pray that this will be a rich time of deeply exploring the truths of Scripture and that by doing so you will be transformed more and more into the image and likeness of Jesus our Lord.

Special thanks to Dan McDavid for the artwork.

## SOURCES/ABBREVIATIONS

Augustine	Aurelius Augustinus, <i>Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount</i> , (CCEL).
Beale/Carson	G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, ed. <i>Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament</i> , (Baker, 2007).
Boice	James Montgomery Boice, <i>The Sermon on the Mount</i> (Baker, 2006).
Bonhoeffer	Dietrich Bonhoeffer, <i>The Cost of Discipleship</i> , (MacMillan, 1963).
Calvin	John Calvin, <i>Commentary on Matthew</i> , (CCEL).
Carson	D. A. Carson, <i>Jesus' Sermon on the Mount</i> , (Baker, 1999).
ESV	<i>The English Standard Version of the Holy Bible</i> , (Crossway, 2011).
ESVSB	<i>The English Standard Version Study Bible</i> , (Crossway, 2008).
Hendriksen	William Hendriksen, <i>New Testament Commentary: Matthew</i> , (Baker, 1973).
Lloyd-Jones	D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, <i>Studies in the Sermon on the Mount</i> , (Eerdmans, 1976).
Luther	Martin Luther, <i>Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount</i> , (Lutheran Publication Society, 1892).
Piper	John Piper, <i>What Jesus Demands from the World</i> , (Crossway, 2006).
Stott	John R. W. Stott, <i>The Message of the Sermon on the Mount</i> , (InterVarsity, 1978).

All Scripture references are taken from the English Standard Version of the Holy Bible unless otherwise noted.

## INTRODUCTION TO THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

If Jesus had a manifesto, it would be the Sermon on the Mount. John Stott writes, “It seems to present the quintessence of the teaching of Jesus. It makes goodness attractive. It shames our shabby performance. It engenders dreams of a better world.”<sup>1</sup> These are such radical teachings that they can only be classified as “counter-cultural.” Stott writes:

Jesus did not give us an academic treatise calculated merely to stimulate the mind. I believe he meant his Sermon on the Mount to be obeyed. Indeed, if the church realistically accepted his standards and values as here set forth, and lived by them, it would be the alternative society he always intended it to be, and would offer to the world an authentic Christian counter-culture.<sup>2</sup>

The Sermon on the Mount is truly the disciple’s manifesto. It is a beautiful picture of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ individually, and what it means for the church to be counter-cultural together. This is the whole story of the Bible; that God has called out for Himself a people to be “holy” or set-apart from the world, to obey Him, to love Him, to follow Him, to glorify Him...to be radically counter-cultural. This is our true identity as Christians and this is what is powerfully pictured in the Sermon on the Mount.

“I am both drawn and shamed by [the Sermon],” writes D.A. Carson. “Its brilliant light draws me like a moth to a spotlight; but the light is so bright that it sears and burns.”<sup>3</sup> Jesus demands nothing less than perfection. “Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”<sup>4</sup> Yet the first word in the public ministry of this perfection-demanding preacher is *repent*.<sup>5</sup> The Sermon on the Mount is to be understood in this context. It displays the complete and utter change that comes into a believer’s life through the power of the Gospel. The Gospel calls us to repentance and graciously offers a whole new way of life. It is life in the “kingdom” of our gracious and loving King Jesus. Life in His kingdom is radically different from life in the world. Sometimes Jesus contrasts His kingdom life with the life offered by the religious, moralistic, legalistic Pharisees. Other times He contrasts His kingdom life with the life offered by the irreligious, licentious, antinomian<sup>6</sup> pagans. In the kingdom of God we are graciously freed to live the life that God has designed for us.

Jesus begins the Sermon with a blueprint of Christian character and how to be “blessed” by God. The Beatitudes stand as a gateway to the rest of the sermon. We will spend the first eight weeks of this sermon series meditating on what it means to be poor in spirit, to mourn, to be meek, to hunger and thirst for righteousness, to be merciful, to be pure in heart, to be peacemakers, and to be persecuted. May our gracious King lead us into the fullness of life in His radically counter-cultural Kingdom!

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<sup>1</sup> Stott, 9.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 10.

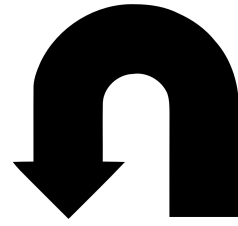
<sup>3</sup> Carson, 11.

<sup>4</sup> Matthew 5:48

<sup>5</sup> Matthew 4:17

<sup>6</sup> Antinomian literally means anti-law-ism.

**STUDY ONE: MATTHEW 5:1-3**  
**THE POOR IN SPIRIT**



**Read the entire Sermon on the Mount found in Matthew 5-7.** Write down any initial thoughts, impressions or questions you have from the passage.

1. **Now go back and re-read the Beatitudes<sup>7</sup> in Matthew 5:1-12.** Why do you think Jesus starts the Sermon on the Mount with the Beatitudes?
2. How would you define the word “blessed”? What kind of person would you consider “blessed”? How is this different from the kind of person Jesus considers “blessed”?
3. Jesus says that the poor in spirit will receive “the kingdom of heaven.” What do you think is “the kingdom of heaven”?

The kingdom of heaven is perhaps the great theme of the Sermon on the Mount. Note that the Beatitudes begin and end with the kingdom (verses 3 and 10). Look up the following passages to get a fuller understanding of this kingdom:

Matthew 5:20

Matthew 7:21-23

Mark 9:45, 47<sup>8</sup>

John 3:3, 5

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<sup>7</sup> “Beatitude” literally means “blessed.”

<sup>8</sup> Note the parallel in these two verses. In verse 45 Jesus refers to entering life and in verse 47 He refers to entering the kingdom. To enter the kingdom is to enter life!

4. What do you think it means to be “poor in spirit”?

To be “poor in spirit” is to acknowledge our spiritual poverty, our bankruptcy before God. It is the conscious confession of our unworthiness to stand before God. It is the deepest form of repentance. A person who is poor in spirit confesses his or her need for God, and admits that he or she is impotent without Him. D.A. Carson writes:

At the very outset of the Sermon on the Mount, we learn that we do not have the spiritual resources to put any of the Sermon’s precepts into practice. We cannot fulfill God’s standards ourselves. We must come to Him and acknowledge our spiritual bankruptcy, emptying ourselves of our self-righteousness, moral self-esteem, and personal vainglory. Emptied of these things we are ready for Him to fill us. Much of the rest of the Sermon on the Mount is designed to remove these self-delusions from us, and foster within us a genuine poverty of spirit.<sup>9</sup>

5. Why do you think being poor in spirit is an indispensable condition for receiving the kingdom of heaven?
6. Why is it so difficult for us to acknowledge our spiritual poverty?
7. Jesus begins by calling us to the deepest form of repentance, to acknowledge our impotence and inadequacy. How is this radically different to what our current culture calls us? What obstacles prevent us from growing in poverty of spirit in our world?
8. Take some time to reflect on your own spiritual condition. Are you poor in spirit? Prayerfully consider how you should respond to Jesus’s words. How can you apply His teaching to your life? What obstacles do you see in your own life that are preventing you from growing toward a poverty of spirit? Where do you need to be emptied in order to be filled?

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<sup>9</sup> Carson, 18.

**STUDY TWO: MATTHEW 5:4  
THOSE WHO MOURN**



**Read Matthew 5:1-12 and then go back and re-read verse 4.**  
How would you explain this verse to someone who was completely unfamiliar with Jesus and the Bible?

It seems very odd, even paradoxical or contradictory, to call those who mourn “blessed.” We could translate this second beatitude, “Happy are the unhappy.” But “blessing” in the Bible and in the Sermon on the Mount is so much more than a circumstantial feeling of happiness. To be “blessed” is to have a state of well-being in relationship to God through a personal relationship with Jesus and a personal response to His teaching.

1. What do you think Jesus means here by “those who mourn”? How is it that mourners are blessed?
2. One aspect of the Beatitudes that we will see is that they are not individually distinct qualities. They are all interwoven and dependent upon one another. How might such mourning relate to being poor in spirit? Why would those who are poor in spirit feel a need to mourn?

The mourning to which Jesus refers here is associated with repentance. Jesus is saying that true repentance (being poor in spirit) must be accompanied by genuine grief over sin. It is to mourn the loss of righteousness, innocence, and self-respect. It is to mourn over breaking the heart of the God who loves you and gave Himself for you.

3. What are some things for which you mourn? It could be your own sin or the sin you see around you in your family, friends, community, nation, or world. It could be an experience of loss or suffering in this fallen and sinful world. For what do you mourn? What does this tell you about your own heart?

4. The promised blessing that Jesus gives to mourners is that they will be comforted. How do you think those who mourn will be comforted?
  
5. Read Isaiah 61:1-3 and Revelation 7:17. How do these passages describe the comfort that those who mourn will receive?
  
6. Explain how the Gospel of Jesus Christ comforts those who mourn over their sin.

Consider this statement by John Stott:

This is the second stage of spiritual blessing. It is one thing to be spiritually poor and acknowledge it; it is another to grieve and to mourn over it. Or, in more theological language, confession is one thing, contrition is another.<sup>10</sup>

7. When have you mourned over your own sin? How did God make His comfort real to you?

Take some time to confess your sins to God. Ask Him to give you a contrite spirit, to enable you to genuinely mourn over your sin. Then receive the comfort that can only come through the forgiveness we have in the Gospel.

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<sup>10</sup> Stott, 41.



**STUDY THREE: MATTHEW 5:5**  
**THE MEEK**



**Read Matthew 5:1-12 and then go back and re-read verse 5.**  
How would you explain this verse to someone who was completely unfamiliar with Jesus and the Bible?

1. “Meek” is not a term we frequently use in modern America. What images does that term conjure up for you?
2. How would you define biblical *meekness*?
3. What do the following passages add to your definition?

Matthew 11:28-29

Psalm 37:8-11

James 1:19-21

In our modern society we can tend to think of the “meek” as being wimpy, weak, and passive. The Greek adjective, *praus*, means “gentle, humble, considerate, courteous.” *Praus* is a word of power—not weakness—because it requires a tremendous amount of self control.

4. Can you think of someone you know who embodies this “meekness”? How do they live out this quality and what about them do you find admirable?

5. What is the opposite of meekness? Where do you see yourself on the spectrum between the two?
  
6. This study asserts that each of the Beatitudes are not describing different types of people, but are together a composite description of true Christian character, of holiness. How does *meekness* cohere with and compliment the previous two qualities of poverty of spirit and mourning?
  
7. How would a true estimate of ourselves (vv. 3-4) lead us to have a humble and gentle attitude toward others?
  
8. What do you think it means to “inherit the earth”? Why do you think Jesus (and Psalm 37:11, for that matter!) asserts that the meek shall “inherit the earth”?
  
9. Discuss the following comment from the ESV Study Bible. Do you agree or disagree? Why?

The **meek** are the “gentle,” those who do not assert themselves over others in order to further their own agendas in their own strength, but who will nonetheless **inherit the earth** because they trust in God to direct the outcome of events.<sup>11</sup>

10. How would you grade yourself on the following test: I have come to the place where I don't have to be the strong one all the time. I can be tender and gentle with people. I've given the control of my life to God and I don't have to “win” all the time.

LOW    1    2    3    4    HIGH

**Pray:** Take some time to pray through the first three Beatitudes. Ask the Lord to humble you and increase your meekness to be more like Him.

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<sup>11</sup> ESVSB, 1828.

**STUDY FOUR: MATTHEW 5:6  
THOSE WHO HUNGER AND THIRST**



**Read Matthew 5:1-12 and then go back and re-read verse 6.**  
How would you explain this verse to someone who was completely unfamiliar with Jesus and the Bible?

1. What is “righteousness”?

Some scholars have broken down biblical righteousness into three aspects: legal, moral, and social.

- Legal righteousness is justification, a right relationship with God.
- Moral righteousness is that righteousness of character and conduct that pleases God.
- Social righteousness seeks humanity’s liberation from oppression, promotes civil rights, justice in the law courts, integrity in business dealings, and honor in home and family affairs.

2. What does it mean to hunger and thirst for each of these?

3. Read Genesis 15:1-6. What does it mean for Abraham to have righteousness?

4. Read Psalm 71:15-19. How does the psalmist demonstrate a hunger and thirst for righteousness?

5. How is it that those who hunger and thirst for righteousness shall be *satisfied*?

6. What do the following passages add to your understanding of spiritual hunger and thirst?

Psalm 107:9

Isaiah 55:1-2

John 7:37

7. How might the first three Beatitudes of Jesus lead us to hunger and thirst for righteousness?
8. Jesus criticizes the Pharisees throughout His ministry for pursuing righteousness through outward acts of religiosity. How is this different from a hunger and thirst for righteousness?

Martin Luther writes:

The command to you is not to crawl into a corner or into the desert, but to run out, if that is where you have been, and to offer your hands and your feet and your whole body, and to wager everything you have and can do.

What is required, he goes on, is...

...a hunger and thirst for righteousness that can never be curbed or stopped or sated, one that looks for nothing and cares for nothing except the accomplishment and maintenance of the right, despising everything that hinders this end.<sup>12</sup>

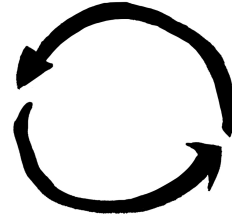
9. What can you do to cultivate a healthy, hearty spiritual appetite?

**Read Romans 9:30-10:4.** Take some time to praise God and thank Him for what He has done for you in His Son, Jesus Christ. And then, pray for an increased hunger and thirst for Him who is our Righteousness.

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<sup>12</sup> Luther, 27.

**STUDY FIVE: MATTHEW 5:7**  
**THE MERCIFUL**



**Read Matthew 5:1-12 and then go back and re-read verse 7.**  
How would you explain this verse to someone who was completely unfamiliar with Jesus and the Bible?

1. How does this Beatitude flow from and connect to the others?
2. Jesus says the merciful will receive mercy. Why do you think our treatment of others will affect God's treatment of us? Should we interpret this verse legalistically? In other words, is it saying that the only way to obtain God's mercy is by showing mercy to others?

Consider this statement from D.A. Carson:

The Christian forgives because he has been forgiven; he forgives because he needs forgiveness. In precisely the same way, and for the same kind of reasons, the disciple of Jesus Christ is merciful.<sup>13</sup>

3. Read Ephesians 4:31-32 and Colossians 3:12-13. What is the ground and basis for our forgiving others and showing them mercy?

God's mercy permeates the Bible. It appears immediately after Adam and Eve sin in the garden. Their sin had grave consequences for us all, but God demonstrated His mercy toward them, and toward us, immediately.

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<sup>13</sup> Carson, 25.

4. Read Genesis 3. How were God's first actions after their sin acts of mercy?

David is another person who sought and received God's mercy. Immediately after confessing his sin of adultery and conspiracy to murder, David received forgiveness. There were still grave consequences for his sin, but Nathan the prophet declared to him, "The Lord has taken away your sin."<sup>14</sup>

5. Read Psalm 51, which is David's prayer of confession after this incident. On what basis does David ask for mercy from God?
6. What does David promise to do as a result of receiving God's mercy?
7. Why are we so prone to desire and even seek vengeance rather than to pursue and demonstrate mercy?
8. Read Romans 12:1-2. What does Paul say our response should be to the mercies of God in the Gospel of Jesus?
9. Throughout the Scriptures, mercy is, firstly, an attribute of God. The call for us to imitate His mercy is two-fold – to be merciful in attitude and merciful in action. How are you challenged by this Beatitude? Where do you need to grow in mercy? How might you cultivate this growth?

Take some time to confess your sins and receive, again, the mercy of God. Ask Him to make you merciful as He is merciful.

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<sup>14</sup> 2 Samuel 12:13.

**STUDY SIX: MATTHEW 5:8**  
**THE PURE IN HEART**



**Read Matthew 5:1-12 and then go back and re-read verse 8.**  
How would you explain this verse to someone who was completely unfamiliar with Jesus and the Bible?

1. What do you think it means to be “pure in heart”? What are some synonyms and adjectives you might use to describe “pure in heart”?
2. D.A. Carson writes, “In biblical imagery, the heart is the center of the entire personality.” Why do you think Jesus is so concerned about the purity of our hearts?
3. What do the following passages add to our understanding of our hearts?  

Matthew 15:19

Jeremiah 17:9

Romans 1:21

Romans 2:5
4. Why do you think it is necessary to be “pure in heart” in order to see God?
5. How does our sin obscure our vision of God?

**Read Matthew 23:25-28.** These verses are part of Jesus’s “seven woes” that He levels at the Pharisees. Jesus was criticizing their attention to an *external appearance* of righteousness, while ignoring the *inward heart* of righteousness.

6. How do you struggle with a disconnect between what you believe and how you behave?
  
7. **Read Psalm 24.** For whom is the blessing from the Lord in this psalm? What else does this psalm teach us about what it means to be “pure in heart”?

God requires clean hands and a pure heart, yet we also resonate with the writer of Proverbs 20:9, who rhetorically asks, “Who can say, ‘I have made my heart pure; I am clean from my sin’?”

8. What does 1 John 1:9 tell us to do to be made pure?
  
9. What does the author of Hebrews say we should do in Hebrews 12:14? What does 1 John 3:2-3 add to this? How are you doing this?
  
10. What other attitudes and practices can move us toward purity?
  
11. What do you think of this statement from Dietrich Bonhoeffer?

Only they will see God, who in this life have looked solely unto Jesus Christ, the Son of God. For then their hearts are free from all defiling phantasies and are not distracted by conflicting desires and intentions. They are wholly absorbed by the contemplation of God. They shall see God, whose hearts have become a reflection of the image of Jesus Christ.<sup>15</sup>

**Pray!** Spend some time confessing your sin and receive again the cleansing that comes through the gospel, the great and glad news that Jesus was made sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Bonhoeffer, 126.

<sup>16</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:21.



## STUDY SEVEN: MATTHEW 5:9 THE PEACEMAKERS



**Read Matthew 5:1-12 and then go back and re-read verse 9.**  
How would you explain this verse to someone who was completely unfamiliar with Jesus and the Bible?

In the time and place where Jesus spoke these words, there was a movement by a Jewish sect called Zealots. The Zealots believed they could force out their Roman occupiers through military action and violence, and bring God's kingdom. Certainly the nation was poor and oppressed under Roman rule, so this approach was attractive. The Zealots believed that their actions would prove that they were loyal sons of God.

1. Who does Jesus say are the true children of God?
2. What words or images come to mind when you hear the word *peace*?

The Hebrew word for "peace" is *shalom*. It has a richness of meaning including ideas of wholeness and harmony, both within a person and between people.<sup>17</sup>

3. Why do you think Jesus emphasizes that peacemakers will be called "sons of God"?
4. How do you think peacemaking relates to the other seven Beatitudes? How does it logically proceed from the previous six?
5. **Read Ephesians 2:11-22.** How did Jesus embody peacemaking? How does the Gospel reconcile enemies?

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<sup>17</sup> While the New Testament was written in Greek, Jesus likely spoke these words in Aramaic, which is more closely related to Hebrew. Being an Israelite, Jesus certainly had in mind the Jewish conception of *shalom* when he spoke this word.

6. How does the Gospel make us peacemakers?
  
7. What is the difference between the *peacemaking* Jesus is talking about and *people pleasing*?
  
8. How do you think Jesus is asking you to respond to His challenge to be a peacemaker in your own life? In your church? In your community?
  
9. Do you agree or disagree with this statement by D.A. Carson?

The Christian's role as peacemaker extends not only to spreading the gospel, but to lessening tensions, seeking solutions, ensuring that communication is understood. Perhaps his most difficult assignments will take place on those occasions when he is personally involved. Then he will remember that "man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires" (James 1:20), and that "a soft answer turns away wrath" (Proverbs 15:1). He will not confuse issues, even important issues, with his own ego-image; and fearful lest he be guilty of generating more heat than light, he will learn to lower his voice and smile more broadly in proportion to the intensity of the argument.<sup>18</sup>

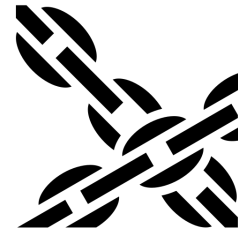
10. What are some things that you can stop doing to be a peacemaker? What are some things you can do to be a peacemaker?
  
11. Where do you wish you could be a peacemaker? What steps can you take for that to happen?

**Pray!** Ask God to make you into a peacemaker. Pray that He would use you to reconcile people to Him and to others. Ask Him to show you how you might pursue peace in your family, your church, your community, and your world.

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<sup>18</sup> Carson, 27-28.

**STUDY EIGHT: MATTHEW 5:10-12  
THOSE WHO ARE PERSECUTED**



**Read Matthew 5:1-12 and then go back and re-read verses 10-12.**  
What initial observations, thoughts, impressions, or questions do you have from the text?

1. How do you think this Beatitude relates to the other Beatitudes? Why do you think Jesus puts it last?
2. How does Jesus say his disciples are to respond to persecution? How did the Apostles respond to persecution in Acts 5:40-42?
3. List the types of persecution you see mentioned in these verses. Which of these have you experienced for your faith in Jesus? How did you respond?
4. How might persecution express itself in our current culture?
5. What does it mean to be persecuted for “righteousness’ sake”?

Deitrich Bonhoeffer writes, “It is important that Jesus gives his blessing not merely to suffering incurred directly for confession of his name, but to suffering in any just cause.”<sup>19</sup>

6. How do we see Christians suffering for just causes in our society today?
  
7. Jesus also lists “on my account” as cause for his disciples’ persecution. Why do you think relationships can dissolve into hostility when Jesus becomes the topic of conversation?
  
8. The blessing promised by Jesus to those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake is a future reward – the kingdom of heaven. In a culture that pursues and promises instant gratification, how can we develop perseverance in the midst of persecution that depends on the promise of future reward?
  
9. **Read Hebrews 12:1-3.** What was the “joy set before him”?
  
10. Those who will be persecuted are the ones who are living out their faith openly and unashamedly, not covertly or “under wraps”. How is it with you? How many of your acquaintances know your heart for Jesus?
  
11. What are some steps that you can take to be more open and courageous with your beliefs?

**Pray!** Pray for the persecuted church around the world. Pray for the church in the United States as it becomes increasingly unpopular to love and follow Jesus. Pray for yourself and other believers you know; that you would *rejoice* in the midst of persecution.

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<sup>19</sup> Bonhoeffer, 127.

**STUDY NINE: MATTHEW 5:13-16**  
**SALT AND LIGHT**



**Read Matthew 5:13-16.** What initial observations, thoughts, impressions, or questions do you have from the text?

In this passage Jesus addresses two distinct communities: the church and the world. Jesus uses two word pictures to describe the influence the church should have upon the world—salt and light.

1. In the ancient world salt was used as a preservative; it kept meat from rotting. What does Jesus’s statement “You are the salt of the earth” tell us about society and the church’s role in it?
2. What are some examples of how our society is in a state of decay?
3. What does it mean practically to be salt where we live and work?
4. What might cause disciples to lose their saltiness?

5. What does it mean for the church to be the light of the world? How does this image complement the church's role as salt?

Jesus clarifies that our light is actually our "good works." We are to let people see our good works so that they glorify our Father in heaven. John Stott writes, "It seems that 'good deeds' is a general expression to cover everything a Christian says and does because he or she is a Christian, every outward and visible manifestation of a person's Christian faith."<sup>20</sup>

6. How might we be tempted to hide our light?

**Read Isaiah 42:6 and 49:6.** Israel was called to be a light to the world. Here Jesus is declaring that the reconstituted people of God—the Church—are to be this light to the world. **Read John 8:12.** Here Jesus claims, Himself, to be the light of the world! The key to having the light of life in us is to follow Him.

7. Go back and read the Beatitudes that precede this teaching in Matthew 5:1-12. What do you think is the connection between the Beatitudes and Jesus's teaching in verses 13-16? How do the Beatitudes inform our calling to be salt and light in the world?

8. What is one way you can increase your influence as salt and light?

**Pray** for areas of decay and rottenness in our world and for God's grace to shine the light of truth.

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<sup>20</sup> Stott, 61.

**STUDY TEN: MATTHEW 5:17-20**  
**FULFILLING THE LAW**



**Read Matthew 5:17-20.** What initial observations, thoughts, impressions, or questions do you have from the text?

The “Law” refers to the first five books of the Old Testament. The “Prophets” includes the rest of the Old Testament, all of which was believed to have been written by prophets.

1. What do you think it means that Jesus came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets (the Old Testament)?
2. What do the following passages add to this idea?  
  
    Luke 24:27, 44  
  
    John 5:39
3. What are some specific ways that you can think of in which Jesus has fulfilled (literally “filled”) the Old Testament?
4. What do Jesus’s words in verse 18 tell us about the authority of the Old Testament?
5. The *iota* is the smallest letter of the Greek alphabet and the *dot* most likely refers to a tiny stroke or part of a letter used to differentiate between Hebrew letters. What is Jesus’s point in using these terms?
6. Do Jesus’s words strengthen your confidence in Scripture? Why or why not?

7. What does Jesus mean when He says in verse 18, “until all is accomplished”?
8. How can Jesus’s disciples have a righteousness that exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees? How do the following passages help us understand such righteousness?

Romans 6:17

2 Corinthians 5:21

Jeremiah 31:33 (also Hebrews 8:10)

Ezekiel 36:27

In this passage Jesus seems to be addressing two equal and opposite errors: legalism and antinomianism.<sup>21</sup> Legalism says, “I am accepted by God *if* I obey.” Antinomianism says, “I am accepted by God so *I don’t need* to obey.” Jesus says we must neither abolish the law (antinomianism) nor obey the law merely to earn our acceptance with God (legalism).

9. How does the Gospel of Jesus Christ free us to fully and freely obey the Law of God?

Consider the following statement by John Stott:

Thus God’s two promises to put his law within us and to put his Spirit within us coincide.<sup>22</sup> We must not imagine that when we have the Spirit we can dispense with the law, for what the Spirit does in our hearts is precisely to write God’s law there. This deep obedience is a righteousness of the heart and is possible only in those whom the Holy Spirit has regenerated and now indwells. This is why entry into God’s kingdom is impossible without a righteousness greater than that of the Pharisees. It is because such a righteousness is evidence of the new birth, and no one enters the kingdom without being born again.<sup>23</sup>

10. How can you make studying and applying the whole council of God, both Old and New Testaments, a higher priority?

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<sup>21</sup> Or “Anti-law-ism.”

<sup>22</sup> Jeremiah 31:33 and Ezekiel 36:27.

<sup>23</sup> Stott, 75.



## STUDY ELEVEN: MATTHEW 5:21-26

### ANGER



**Read Matthew 5:21-26.** What initial observations, thoughts, impressions, or questions do you have from the text?

The prohibition against murder was not new when God gave the sixth commandment, “You shall not murder.”<sup>24</sup> From the beginning it has been an abomination to God. The murder of Abel occurred a few chapters into the Bible in Genesis 4, and God was swift in His punishment of Cain. In Genesis 9, God gives clear reason why murder is wrong.

1. **Read Genesis 9:4-6.** Why is it wrong to commit murder?
2. In verses 21-22 Jesus places murder and unrighteous anger in the same category. How are they related?
3. In verse 22 Jesus warns against “insulting” a person. The Aramaic word used here is *Raca*, which means “empty” or “stupid.” It is roughly equivalent with the one that follows it, “you fool.” Why do you think an insult like this would constitute murder in God’s sight? What do James 3:8-12 and 1 John 3:15 add to this idea?
4. Consider the consequences of having such an attitude in the heart. Such a man or woman would be “liable to judgment,” “liable to the council,” and “liable to the hell of fire.” All three of these terms most likely refer to God’s judgment and the punishment of Hell. In light of this, how seriously does God take the attitudes of our hearts and the expressions of our mouths toward other people?
5. What has caused you to lose your temper with people?

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<sup>24</sup> Exodus 20:13

6. In verses 23-26 Jesus gives an example from worship and from the law court. According to these verses, how does Jesus want us to address broken relationships?
  
7. How do our broken relationships affect our relationship with God? What do the following verses add to your understanding?

Proverbs 15:8

Isaiah 1:10-17

8. Why is Jesus concerned that reconciliation be made quickly?
  
9. When have you either initiated forgiveness or had someone initiate it with you? What was the outcome?
  
10. How would the application of the following passages protect our hearts from the sin of murderous hatred and anger? (Can you think of any other passages that would help?)

Romans 13:10

1 Corinthians 13:4-7

1 John 5:7-12

John Stott writes:

How seldom do we heed Christ's call for immediacy of action! If murder is a horrible crime, malicious anger and insult are horrible too. And so is every deed, word, look or thought by which we hurt or offend a fellow human being. We need to be more sensitive about these evils. We must never allow an estrangement to remain, still less to grow. We must not delay to put it right. We must not even allow the sun to set on our anger. But *immediately*, as soon as we are conscious of a broken relationship, we must take the initiative to mend it, to apologize for the grievance we have caused, to pay the debt we have left unpaid, to make amends. And these extremely practical instructions Jesus drew out from the sixth commandment as its logical implications! If we want to avoid committing murder in God's sight, we must take every possible positive step to live in peace and love with all men.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Stott, 86.

**STUDY TWELVE: MATTHEW 5:27-30**  
**LUST**



**Read Matthew 5:27-30.** What initial observations, thoughts, impressions, or questions do you have from the text?

This passage is the second of six passages where Jesus begins by saying, “You have heard that it was said.... But I say to you...” Jesus has defined His relationship to the law of God and the relationship His disciples are to have with the law in verses 17-20. Jesus is now working through the true interpretation of the law of God and how His disciples are to apply it to their lives. After addressing the sixth commandment (verses 21-26), Jesus turns His attention to the seventh commandment: “You shall not commit adultery.”<sup>26</sup>

1. According to Jesus, what is the full meaning of the seventh commandment? (see verses 27-28)

2. Read the following passages. What do they teach us about God’s design for marriage?

Genesis 2:24

Matthew 19:4-6

Mark 10:6-9

The sixth commandment and Jesus’s teaching implies biblical marriage. God’s design for our sexuality is that it would be expressed and enjoyed within the context of a permanent marital union between a man and a woman.

3. Jesus points out that lust and adultery is a matter of the heart. What does this tell us about human sexuality?

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<sup>26</sup> Exodus 20:14.

Jesus was confronting the Pharisees who had given a conveniently narrow definition of sexual sin by limiting it to a mere prohibition of acts of sexual immorality. But, Jesus clearly shows that we can commit adultery in our hearts and minds.

4. How does Jesus's teaching contrast with our current cultural attitudes regarding sex, lust, and adultery?
  
5. **Read 1 Corinthians 6:18.** According to Paul, sexual sin is sin against one's self. How have you seen lust hurt yourself and others?
  
6. **Read Proverbs 6:20-35,** in which a wise father warns his son against committing adultery. How many of the verses identify the ways that a man can harm himself?

The provision against adultery is not some priggish rule by a divine kill-joy; it is God's protective measure to guard sexual purity within and outside of marriage, and maximize human flourishing.

7. Some have taken verses 29-30 literally and have mutilated their bodies. How do you think Jesus intends us to understand His warning? What does it mean to tear out an eye or cut off a hand that causes you to sin? In what situations might you need to do so?

Jesus says that the sin of lust and adultery begins with the eyes. It is the one who *looks* with lustful intent who commits adultery in the heart. Therefore, the remedy starts with the eyes; tear them out if they cause you to sin. The transforming principle that Jesus is advocating is to remove the cause of temptation.

8. Our culture peddles sexuality in order to sell everything from cars to hamburgers. Pornography is readily available through the internet, on home computers, tablets, and smartphones. How are we to remove ourselves from temptation or remove the temptations from ourselves? What are some practical steps we can take?

Reflect personally on what habits draw you into lustful thinking/desiring. Take some time to confess your sins to God. Read 1 John 1:9. There is power and healing found in confessing to another brother/sister in Christ, and asking for accountability. Prayerfully consider what God may be asking you to do.

**STUDY THIRTEEN: MATTHEW 5:31-32**  
**DIVORCE**



**Read Matthew 5:31-32.** What initial observations, thoughts, impressions, or questions do you have from the text?

**Read Matthew 19:3-9 and Mark 10:2-12.** What do these passages add to the Sermon on the Mount text in Matthew 5?

Divorce has touched almost all of our lives in one way or another. Perhaps you are a child of divorce, or you have been through a divorce yourself, or you have someone close to you who has experienced a divorce. If so, then you understand what it is to seek God's answers at the most personal, and emotionally complex, level.

At the time of Christ, a controversy about divorce was being conducted between the rival schools of Rabbi Hillel and Rabbi Shammai. Shammai taught that divorce was permitted only in extreme cases. Hillel taught that it was permitted for any and every reason.

1. How does this help us to understand the Pharisees' "test" question from Matthew 19 and Mark 10?
2. Jesus points back to God's original design for marriage in Genesis. **Read Genesis 2:18-25.** List the things you learn about biblical marriage from these verses.
3. What is Jesus encouraging us toward with respect to our view of marriage?
4. How have you seen the God-created and ordained institution of marriage come under attack in our 21<sup>st</sup> century American culture?

John Stott believes that Jesus replies to the Pharisees (Matthew 19) in three parts. Consider this 3-part dissent to their question:

1. The Pharisees were preoccupied with the grounds for divorce, Jesus with the institution of marriage.
  2. The Pharisees called Moses's provision for divorce a command; Jesus called it a concession to the hardness of human hearts.
  3. The Pharisees regarded divorce lightly; Jesus took it so seriously that, with only one exception, He called all remarriage after divorce adultery.<sup>27</sup>
5. What is your initial response to each of these three statements?

Needless to say, #3 above is provocative and countercultural. Divorce and remarriage are exceedingly common in our society. But, Jesus is pretty clear. Even the "exceptive clause" is not *prescription* for divorce! The Bible does not command us to seek divorce when infidelity has occurred.

6. Do you know anyone (don't name names) whose marriage has weathered great difficulty, trial, conflict, and even infidelity, and survived? If so, what God-given qualities helped that marriage through such difficult times?
7. Jesus is concerned with our hearts and with the exalted place that God intends for marriage. What do you think are the most important ingredients of a healthy marriage?
8. Marriage can be very difficult. Challenges arise when two sinful people say, "I do." For those who are married: how can you pray for your marriage and encourage your spouse? For those who are single: how can you pray for and encourage your married friends? If you hope to be married one day, how can you prepare yourself?

The Elders of CBC have a position paper on divorce and remarriage. You can pick up a hard copy in the foyer or access it under Document Downloads at [www.cbcsb.org](http://www.cbcsb.org).

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<sup>27</sup> Stott, 94-95.

**STUDY FOURTEEN: MATTHEW 5:33-37**  
**OATHS**



**Read Matthew 5:33-37.** What initial observations, thoughts, impressions, or questions do you have from the text?

1. People, regardless of their belief, often invoke the name of God in their speech (“I swear to God,” “Honest to God,” etc.). What do you think is at the bottom of this?
2. The Pharisees had elaborate formulas for oaths, with some being binding and some not (see Matthew 23:16-22). Why do you think Jesus is opposed to oaths?

In first century Palestine people swore by all sorts of things other than God to testify that their word was true. They reasoned that if they broke their oath based on any of these lesser things, at least they were not bringing God’s name into disrepute. It became necessary for rabbis to decide which oaths were binding and which were not.

3. With this in mind, why does Jesus tell the people to not take any oaths at all?
4. Is Jesus saying that we should not make commitments or promises at all? What is His overarching point? Why should oaths be unnecessary for disciples of Jesus?

This is the fourth teaching of Jesus in a row that begins with the same phrase, “You have heard that it was said....But I say to you....” Jesus is specifically addressing aspects of God’s law and giving the true interpretation (see Matthew 5:17-20 as an introduction to these six teachings). Here He is addressing the third commandment found in Exodus 20:7. It says, “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.”

5. How might swearing by, or taking an oath by, the name of God or by anything God has created become a violation of the third commandment?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. **Read Proverbs 20:25.** Why would a hasty vow be a “snare” or a trap?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. What does **Ecclesiastes 5:1-7** add to this discussion of speech and making vows/oaths?

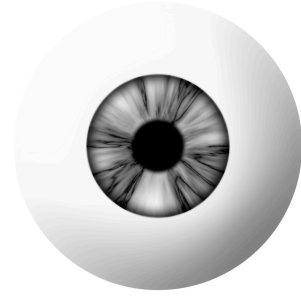
A person who swore an oath by the name of the Lord was calling on the Lord to witness the vow and see to it that the vow was kept. “If I don’t keep this vow,” the person was saying, “may God take vengeance on me.” They were serious words to be taken seriously.

8. With this in mind, what do you think is the connection between Jesus’s teaching on vows/oaths and His previous two teachings on marriage, lust, and divorce (see Matthew 5:27-32)?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. In what ways do you think you violate what Jesus says about oaths? What changes can you make?

Jesus teaches that the real implication of the law is that we must keep our promises and be people of our word. The bottom line is that we are to be people of truthfulness, faithfulness, and integrity. Take some time to repent of your failure to be this kind of person. Take some time to praise God for His grace and mercy and for Jesus who perfectly embodied these qualities for you.



## STUDY FIFTEEN: MATTHEW 5:38-42 RETALIATION



Read Matthew 5:38-42. What initial observations, thoughts, impressions, or questions do you have from the text?

1. What do you find most difficult about Jesus's instructions in these verses?
2. Do these teachings of Jesus mean that Christians are to be doormats for the world to walk on? Explain.

This is now the fifth so-called antithesis where Jesus employs His familiar statement, "You have heard that it was said....But I say to you...." He is challenging the religious leaders' interpretation of the Law of God and giving us its true interpretation. These are perhaps some of the most demanding of Jesus's teachings. We are challenged because our inclination is toward recompense for wrongs inflicted upon us. Our culture glorifies personal "rights" above all and has consequently created an entitled and litigious society.

In verse 38 Jesus refers to the "law of retaliation" or *lex talionis*. The Old Testament law referenced here is in Exodus 21:22-25 and Deuteronomy 19:18-21. It involved exact, legal retaliation for wrongs committed. Its purpose was to maintain justice and purge evil from God's people. It was intended to prevent excessive punishment (the punishment should fit the crime). It was to be imposed by civil authorities rather than individuals.<sup>28</sup>

3. **Read Exodus 21:24-25.** How would this instruction to Israel's judges clarify the meaning of justice? How would it limit the extent of revenge?
4. The Pharisees extended this principle from the law courts (where it belonged) to personal relationships (where it did not belong). What consequences might have resulted?

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<sup>28</sup> ESVSB, 1830.

5. Is Jesus prohibiting the use of force in *all* situations by *all* people? What about governments, police, or soldiers when combating evil, or simple self defense?

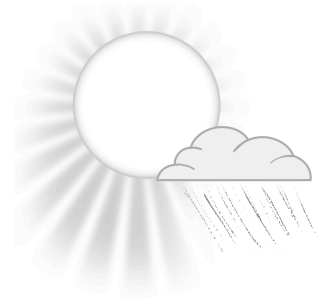
Jesus's focus is on *individual conduct*. He is prohibiting the human tendency to seek personal revenge.<sup>29</sup>

6. **Read Romans 12:17-21.** What is Paul's emphasis?
7. How would you contrast our natural human responses to the situations Jesus presents in verses 39-42 with the responses Jesus calls us to?
8. In verse 42 Jesus teaches that we should help those who are truly needy. Are you mindful of those in your life who are in need? How can you help them? When is giving harmful? See Matthew 7:6 and 2 Thessalonians 3:10.
9. In what situations might Christ's commands apply today?
10. What is the core challenge that Jesus is giving us? How might you paraphrase it? Or better yet, how might you explain this passage to a person unfamiliar with the Bible?

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<sup>29</sup> See Romans 13:1-7 for a biblical explanation for the role of government.

**STUDY SIXTEEN: MATTHEW 5:43-48**  
**LOVE YOUR ENEMIES**



**Read Matthew 5:43-48.** What initial observations, thoughts, impressions, or questions do you have from the text?

This is the final of the six antitheses that Jesus presents in His sermon. He has been contrasting the interpretation of the law of God by the religious leaders with His true interpretation of it. Nowhere does the Old Testament tell us to “hate your enemy.” Clearly Jesus is correcting the misinterpretation of the scribes and Pharisees.

1. Read Leviticus 19:17-18. What does the command actually say?
2. How does Jesus tell us to consider and treat our enemies, according to verses 44 and 45a?
3. How do these verses compare to the seventh Beatitude recorded earlier in the chapter at verse 9?
4. Verse 45 describes the doctrine of God’s common grace, that He gives a large measure of grace to all people in general. How else do we see God’s common grace being poured out on this world? What does this tell you about God’s disposition toward His enemies?
5. What is Jesus’s point in verses 46 and 47? What sort of love is He calling us to? Are you guilty of only loving the loveable? In what ways?

6. When was the last time you prayed for an enemy? What effect did it have? Maybe you don't think of people as your "enemies." But, think in terms of people whom you find difficult to like or relate to. Here are some examples:
- When was the last time you prayed for militant Muslims?
  - When was the last time you prayed for the homeless person who asked you for money?
  - When was the last time you prayed for political candidates with whom you disagree?
  - What other examples can you think of? Challenge yourself!
7. Verse 48 is one of the most alarming statements of our Lord Jesus. How do you understand this verse?

Consider the following quote:

This verse (48) provides the conclusion and summary to the antithesis section (vv. 21-48), showing that all of the Law and the Prophets find their perfect (Gk. *teleios*) fulfillment in the perfection of the Father, which is what all Jesus's disciples are called to pursue.<sup>30</sup>

8. In light of this, what attitude should we have toward God's Law and His will as revealed in the Scriptures? Do you regularly understand that your study of Scripture and obedience to it has as its goal, godliness?

**Pray!** Take some time to confess your lack of love for others. Perhaps you can think of specific individuals whom you struggle to love. Pray for them! Take some time to confess your sin and acknowledge that you are NOT perfect as God is perfect...none of us are! Ask the Lord to sanctify you through His Word.

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<sup>30</sup> ESVSB, 1831.

**STUDY SEVENTEEN: MATTHEW 6:1-4  
GIVING TO THE NEEDY**

**Read Matthew 6:1-4.** What initial observations, thoughts, impressions, or questions do you have from the text?



Jesus addresses the problem of hypocrisy in the first 18 verses of chapter six. He points out how faith can be expressed in a hypocritical way when giving to the needy (verses 2-4), praying (verses 5-15), and fasting (verses 16-18).

1. What is hypocrisy and why is it such a problem for people of faith?
2. Is Jesus saying that our righteousness should be merely a private thing? Is the problem that it is done in public, or something else? How does 6:1 square with 5:16? Explain!

“Hypocrites” originally referred to Greek actors who wore different masks to play various roles. Jesus criticizes the religious leaders for doing right things for the wrong reasons. Giving to the needy is a pillar of piety, but we must not give to the needy in order to be praised by others.

3. What are some examples of practicing righteousness in order to be seen by others?
4. What is the reward that our Father has for us? Why might hypocritical acts of righteousness disqualify us from God’s rewards?

5. How do you seek the recognition of others in your practices of faith? How might you combat this tendency so that you can be sure to hear your Father's "well done, good and faithful servant"?
  
6. What does it mean for our left hand to not know what our right hand is doing?

Notice that Jesus assumes His disciples will be giving to the needy. Jesus expects us to continually give gifts of mercy to those who are in need.

7. **Read Deuteronomy 15:7-11.** What is striking about this text? How are we to give?

8. What do these verses add?

Proverbs 14:21

Proverbs 14:31

Proverbs 19:17

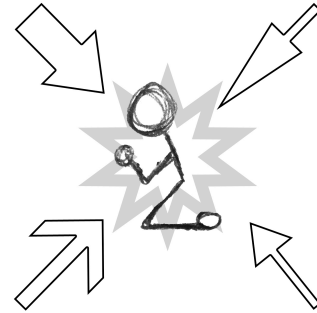
Proverbs 22:9

9. If our giving should be unselfish and openhanded, why do you think these Scriptures promise such great blessings for the giver? (See Acts 20:35 also!)
  
10. How are you doing in the area of meeting the needs of others? How might you grow in this personally?

Did you know that Calvary Baptist collects a special benevolence offering on the first Sunday of each month? This offering is set aside to help meet real, tangible needs within the church family. Pray about how you might help give to the needy when we take this special offering.

**STUDY EIGHTEEN: MATTHEW 6:5-8**  
**HOW NOT TO PRAY**

**Read Matthew 6:5-8.** What initial observations, thoughts, impressions, or questions do you have from the text?



1. After addressing hypocrisy in giving to the needy, Jesus addresses hypocrisy in prayer. What is the hypocrisy in prayer that Jesus addresses? What is an example of hypocritical prayer today?

Prayer was a pillar of Jewish religious life. It was common to hear public prayers said aloud in the morning, afternoon, and evening. In the synagogues Jews would pray with pretentious display.

2. Does Jesus condemn all public prayer? How are we to consider Jesus Himself praying publicly in **Matthew 14:19** and **15:36**?
3. Jesus is concerned with one's internal motivation. What would be the motivation of the hypocrite in prayer? What would be an appropriate motivation?
4. Why does prayer behind a "shut door" indicate a genuine prayer life? What is the advantage of such "secret" prayer for an individual or a group?
5. What do you think Jesus means by "reward" in verses 2 and 4? What is the reward that is received in each of these verses?

Jesus not only critiques the prayer practices of the religious. He also critiques the prayer practices of the pagans in verses 7 and 8. Pagan prayers would often repeat the names of their gods or other words over and over without thinking. They would whip themselves up into an ecstatic frenzy.

6. Look up the following verses as examples of such pagan practices:

**1 Kings 18:26**

**Acts 19:34**

7. Does this mean we should never use repetition in prayer? What about a heart that is pleading with God and imploring Him to act, as in **Mark 14:39**, **2 Corinthians 12:8**, **Psalms 136**, **Isaiah 6:3**, and **Revelation 4:8**? Look up these passages and explain the difference between them and Jesus's teaching here in the Sermon on the Mount.
8. Read the parable of the persistent widow in **Luke 18:1-8**. What is Jesus teaching here and how is it different than His teaching in our passage today?
9. Matthew 6:8 is a very powerful and comforting verse. How does the fact that God knows your every need before you even ask Him impact the way you pray?
10. Are you ever tempted to pray flowery, self-righteous, preachy, theologically profound prayers in order to be "seen by others"? If so, why? What should be the motivations of your hearts when praying with others?
11. What is your discipline of prayer? Do you set aside time daily to pray? Do you pray throughout your day? Do you pray Scripture? What are your habits? How can you grow in this discipline of grace?



**STUDY NINETEEN: MATTHEW 6:9-15**  
**HOW TO PRAY**



**Read Matthew 6:9-15.** What initial observations, thoughts, impressions, or questions do you have from the text?

The famous Lord’s Prayer might more accurately be called the Disciple’s Prayer because Jesus is teaching His disciples how to pray. The prayer has a beginning invocation followed by six petitions. The first three petitions focus on the preeminence of God while the final three focus on personal needs.<sup>31</sup>

1. Do you think Jesus is telling us to pray these exact words when we pray, or to use them as a pattern and model of prayer? How are we to make use of this model of prayer?
2. Break down this prayer into parts. List the categories or themes that you find.
3. What does the invocation, “Our Father in heaven,” tell us about how we are to relate to God in prayer?
4. Why do you think Jesus directs us to pray “Our Father” rather than “My Father”? Why is this important?

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<sup>31</sup> ESVSB, 1831. We see similar patterns in the Beatitudes and the Ten Commandments where the first half of these lists focuses on our relationship with God and the second half focuses on our relationships with others.

5. Consider again the first three petitions which focus on God and His glory. Re-write these petitions in a way that could be explained to someone who has never heard the Lord's Prayer.
  - "hallowed be your name"
  - "Your kingdom come"
  - "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven"
6. Look at verse 11. Think about the things you ask God to give you. How does Jesus's model inform your prayer life with respect to what you ask?
7. Look at verses 12, 14, and 15. It seems as though verse 12 is a conditional request, that God's forgiveness of us is predicated on our forgiving others. Verses 14 and 15 seem to support this. Is this so? How do you understand this?
8. How does God's forgiveness of your sins affect your forgiveness of others who have sinned against you?
9. Look at verse 13. The Greek word used here for "temptation" means "trials" or "trying circumstances." Consider Psalm 139:23-24. Have you ever had a time when you felt that God was specifically "trying" you? What was the result of this?
10. What does it mean to pray "deliver us from evil"?

Take some time to write out a list of prayers that would thematically fit under each of these 6 petitions. Be thoughtful, practical, and creative. Consider how you might create a prayer plan/list that follows the pattern of prayer that our Lord taught to us.

## **STUDY TWENTY: MATTHEW 6:16-18 FASTING**

**Read Matthew 6:16-18.** What initial observations, thoughts, impressions, or questions do you have from the text?



Jesus concludes His teaching on authentic righteousness with a teaching on fasting. He uses the same words and sentence structure that He has used for His previous two examples: alms and prayer. He tells us not to fast like the hypocrites, but rather to fast in a “secret” way, so that our Father will reward us.

1. Jesus assumes that His followers will fast. Have you ever fasted? If so, what was that experience like for you?
2. Fasting is typically associated with abstaining from food. It is intended to be much more than this. What is fasting? Why should we fast?
3. Read the following Old Testament passages. Identify the reasons for fasting:
  - 2 Chronicles 20:1-4
  - Ezra 8:15-23
  - Nehemiah 9:1-3
  - Jonah 3:1-10
  - Daniel 9:1-3
4. What is the motivation of the hypocrites who display their fasting? Why might that be tempting to us today?

5. What should our motivation be in fasting? Why is this important?
  
6. Think about other ways of “practicing your righteousness.” In what areas are you particularly susceptible to seeking the attention of others?

We can fast for different reasons. We can fast to break down an idol in our lives—an area of life that has become increasingly important in an unhealthy way—or we may fast to gain perspective on an issue God is revealing to us. Whatever the reason for our fasting, the ultimate goal of fasting is to intensify our focus on God.

7. How might fasting “intensify our focus on God”?

Respond to the following statement by John Piper:

If you don’t feel strong desires for the manifestation of the glory of God, it is not because you have drunk deeply and are satisfied. It is because you have nibbled so long at the table of the world. Your soul is stuffed with small things, and there is no room for the great.<sup>32</sup>

8. In light of Piper’s statement and the fact that fasting from something is a way to loosen its control or influence in our lives, what is something that you might consider fasting from? Here are some examples: screen time, sweets, coffee drinks, various amusements, hobbies, or non-essential activities.

**Pray:** Ask the Lord to reveal to you whether and how you should approach fasting. Ask Him to search you and reveal to you any area of your life that you should fast from. Ask Him for grace and strength to follow through with your fast.

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<sup>32</sup> John Piper, *A Hunger for God* (Crossway, 1997), 23.

**STUDY TWENTY ONE: MATTHEW 6:19-24**  
**TREASURES IN HEAVEN**



**Read Matthew 6:19-24.** What initial observations, thoughts, impressions, or questions do you have from the text?

We live in the wealthiest society in the history of the world. Not only are we rich, we are also consumers. Advertisements assault us with the notion that what we don't have we need. Yet, in the midst of unparalleled wealth there is a tremendous lack of contentment.

1. What is your perspective on material possessions? Are you content with little? Are you okay with having much, and discomforted by Jesus's teachings regarding wealth? Be honest.

In the second half of Matthew 6 Jesus addresses economics in His kingdom. The economy of life in the kingdom is to be built on trust in the King, rather than trust in material gain and "security." Once again, Jesus is concerned with our hearts: "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."<sup>33</sup>

2. What are the two commands from Jesus in verses 19 and 20?
3. What does it mean to "lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven"?
4. Why should we store up heavenly treasures rather than earthly ones?
5. Make a list of at least 5 actions that Jesus prescribes to counteract the temptation to lay up treasures on earth.

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<sup>33</sup> Verse 21.

6. Jesus points out the corrosive nature of possessions and their susceptibility to theft. This teaching has been interpreted by some to mean that we should reject private property and possessions in general. What is Jesus specifically prohibiting?
  
7. Do you struggle with reconciling financial and material provision with being a disciple of Jesus? Is Jesus teaching against saving or investment? What do the following verses tell us about the Bible's attitude toward money and possessions?
  - Proverbs 6:6-11
  - 2 Thessalonians 3:10
  - 1 Timothy 4:4-5
  - 1 Timothy 5:8
  
8. Practically speaking, how can we store up treasure in heaven?

In verse 21 Jesus shows that our attitude toward treasures is reflective of what lies in our hearts. Then in verses 22-23 He uses the image of the eye. The eye is often used interchangeably with the heart in scripture. The desires of the eye, or what we have set our eyes upon, reflect the desires of the heart.

9. With this in mind, what is Jesus's warning in verses 22 and 23? How would you explain these verses?
  
10. How can we cultivate a godly attitude toward our money and possessions? Are you serving God or mammon<sup>34</sup>? What is the drive behind your actions and pursuits? What changes do you need to make?

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<sup>34</sup> The word translated "money" in verse 24 is *mammon*, a Semitic word for money or possessions.

**STUDY TWENTY TWO: MATTHEW 6:25-34**  
**ANXIETY**



**Read Matthew 6:25-34.** What initial observations, thoughts, impressions, or questions do you have from the text?

1. Verse 25 begins with “therefore.” In other words, all that follows is a result of what comes before. How do verses 25-34 flow from the truths of verses 19-24?
2. There are three prohibitions stated in the negative in verses 25-34. What are they?
3. Jesus gives two examples of God’s providential care: the birds and the lilies. What is His point in giving these illustrations?
4. Why does Jesus say “O you of little faith” at the end of verse 30? How does worry reveal a lack of faith?
5. In verse 32 Jesus tells us that our heavenly Father knows that we need all these things. Does knowing that God your Father knows your needs help you not to worry? If so, why?
6. What does it mean to seek first God’s kingdom and righteousness? How can you strive for these at work, on campus, at home, or wherever you find yourself?

7. The observation of the birds reveals that they simply take what they need as they need it, and only take what is readily available to them. It is a *simple* way of living. What does living simply mean to you?
  
8. Give examples of how people today seek after the things listed in verses 31-32.
  
9. If God promises to feed and clothe His children, then why are many of them ill-clad and undernourished? See also Matthew 25:41-45. And consider this statement from John Stott: “The fact that God feeds and clothes His children does not exempt us from the responsibility of being the agents through whom He does it.”<sup>35</sup>
  
10. Respond to the following statement by Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Be prepared to discuss this with your fellowship group.

Be not anxious! Earthly possessions dazzle our eyes and delude us into thinking that they can provide security and freedom from anxiety. Yet all the time they are the very source of all anxiety. If our hearts are set on them, our reward is an anxiety whose burden is intolerable. Anxiety creates its own treasures and they in turn beget further care. When we seek for security in possessions we are trying to drive out care with care and the net result is the precise opposite of our anticipations. The fetters which bind us to our possessions prove to be cares themselves.<sup>36</sup>

11. How has this passage challenged you to reexamine your goals and ambitions?

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<sup>35</sup> Stott, 167.

<sup>36</sup> Bonhoeffer, 197.



## STUDY TWENTY THREE: MATTHEW 7:1-6

### JUDGING



Read Matthew 7:1-6. What initial observations, thoughts, impressions, or questions do you have from the text?

Jesus turns His attention to interpersonal relationships. In verses 1-5 He warns against inappropriate judging. In verse 6 He commends appropriate evaluation.<sup>37</sup>

1. The word “judge” carries connotations that may color how we interpret this passage. How do you understand Jesus’s injunction not to judge? Does this mean we cannot be critical of others or point out the sins of others?

In the New Testament the words *judgment* and *condemnation* are sometimes used interchangeably. The Greek word used here for “judge” is *krino*, which generally implies a condemnatory stance on the faults of others.

2. What do the following verses add to your understanding of Jesus’s prohibition against judgment?
  - Romans 2:1-4
  - 1 Corinthians 4:5
  - James 4:12

Jesus is using hyperbole with His metaphor of a log in your own eye.<sup>38</sup> Hyperbole is intentional overstatement to make a point. He does not forbid all evaluation or even all judgment of others. What Jesus does rule out is the prideful attitude that views oneself as better than others.

Consider John Stott’s perspective:

The command to “judge not” is not a requirement to be blind, but rather a plea to be generous. Jesus does not tell us to cease to be men (by suspending our critical powers which help to distinguish us from animals) but to renounce the presumptuous ambition to be God (by setting ourselves up as judges).<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> ESVSB, 1833.

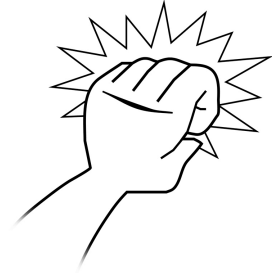
<sup>38</sup> Could Jesus have been drawing on His background as a carpenter for this metaphor?

<sup>39</sup> Stott, 177.

3. Evaluate our culture's understanding and definition of "tolerance" in light of what Jesus is teaching here. What is the difference? What is *true* tolerance?
4. According to Jesus, why are we often unfit to be judges?
5. In verses 3-5 what does Jesus call us to do before we do anything else? Why does He ask this?
6. What does taking the log out of our own eye enable us to do? Why is this important?
7. What does this tell you about the value of self-examination first? Can you think of an example from your own life? How can you foster this discipline?
8. Verse 6 seems very harsh coming from Jesus's lips. What kind of person would merit these titles? To whom do you think Jesus is referring?
9. What does this verse mean for our evangelistic strategy? At what point do we humbly step away from repeatedly sharing the gospel with those who repeatedly reject it?
10. It doesn't matter if you are on the left or the right, religious or non-religious. Human beings find it easy to view ourselves as better than others and condemn them. How does the Gospel obliterate this attitude?

**STUDY TWENTY FOUR: MATTHEW 7:7-11**  
**ASK, SEEK, KNOCK**

**Read Matthew 7:7-11.** What initial observations, thoughts, impressions, or questions do you have from the text?



Jesus continues His discussion about relationships by highlighting the Christian's relationship with God. Overall this teaching is an encouragement to cultivate our relationship with God through prayer.

1. How is your prayer life? Take some time to evaluate your relationship with God through prayer. Do you pray consistently, intentionally, and continually? What does your discipline of prayer look like practically?
  
2. In verse 7 Jesus uses three words to describe prayer. What connotations do you think each of these present regarding prayer?
  - Ask
  - Seek
  - Knock
  
3. What encouragement does Jesus give to those who ask, seek, and knock?
  
4. According to verses 9-11, how can we be assured of these promises?
  
5. When have you had an answer to prayer after a long season of asking, seeking, and knocking?

In verses 9-11 Jesus adapts a standard Jewish argument called *qal vahomer*, or arguing from the lesser to the greater. If the lesser is true, so much more the greater.

6. Understanding this argument from lesser to greater, what is Jesus's point? What is His encouragement to us?
  
7. Does this passage of Scripture teach that God will give us everything for which we ask? If not, what is it teaching?
  
8. What do you think Jesus means in verse 11 by "good things"?
  
9. Do you regularly pray to God for the things you need? Or rather, do you pray for the things you *think* you need? Do you trust Him to provide what is best for you?
  
10. What difference does it make to your prayer life—when you ask for what you need—to know that you are coming to "your Father who is in heaven"?
  
11. What do you hesitate to pray for, and why do you hesitate?
  
12. What are you asking, seeking, and knocking for most urgently right now?

**Pray!** Take some time to pray for your needs, both great and small. Bring your prayer requests to your Fellowship Group and take them together to your Father in heaven.

**STUDY TWENTY FIVE: MATTHEW 7:12**  
**THE GOLDEN RULE**

**Read Matthew 7:12.** What initial observations, thoughts, impressions, or questions do you have from the text?



Verse 12 is both a famous saying and also a summary of all that has preceded it in chapter 7. Jesus says that it also summarizes the Law and the Prophets. That's saying a lot! It is widely known that similar philosophies appear in the teachings of other great "religious" leaders. For example, the Jewish Talmud states, "What is hateful to you, do not do to anyone else." Likewise, Confucius told his followers, "Do not to others what you would not wish done to you."

1. How does Jesus's "Golden Rule" go beyond these commands by other teachers?
2. Why do you think this is such a high standard?
3. In what sense does this rule sum up the Law and the Prophets?
4. How does Jesus embody this principle in His life and ministry? How does this teaching express itself through the Gospel, the good news that Jesus died the death we deserve to die and lived the life we should have lived?

5. How might the Gospel empower us to live out the Golden Rule?
  
6. How do you imagine a consistent application of this teaching would transform the culture of Calvary Baptist Church? How might you begin to model this?
  
7. How might the application of this teaching transform your home life, neighborhood and community life, or work life?
  
8. Think of a relationship that is presently strained or broken. How would the “rule of love” apply to that relationship?
  
9. What steps do you want to take this week to help mend that relationship?
  
10. How else might you live out this “Golden Rule” this week? Write down some of these situations and ask God to help you apply Jesus’s words to your life.

**STUDY TWENTY SIX: MATTHEW 7:13-14**  
**THE NARROW GATE**



**Read Matthew 7:13-14.** What initial observations, thoughts, impressions, or questions do you have from the text?

Jesus concludes His Sermon on the Mount with four consecutive warnings contrasting two ways to live. The first of these warnings contrasts two gates and two paths or ways. The disciple is faced with a choice: will he or she choose to go in the direction of popular culture, or will the disciple choose to take the counter-cultural way of Jesus?

1. Write down the distinctions that you see between the two gates and the two ways:
  - Gates:
  
  - Ways:
  
2. Why are broad gates and easy ways so appealing to people today?
  
3. In what sense is the gate of Christianity narrow and the way of Christianity hard?
  
4. In what sense is the gate of the world wide and the way of the world easy?
  
5. Jesus is emphasizing the exclusive claims of the Gospel. How would you articulate a convincing argument for absolute truth to a friend who takes a more all-inclusive approach to faith?

Consider John Stott's comment on these verses:

What is striking about these verses is the absolute nature of the choice before us. We would all prefer to be given many more choices than only one, or better still to fuse them all into a conglomerate religion, thus eliminating the need for any choice. But Jesus cuts across our easy-going syncretism.<sup>40</sup> He will not allow us the comfortable solutions we propose. Instead He insists that ultimately there is only one choice, because there are only two possibilities to choose from.<sup>41</sup>

6. What do the following verses add to Jesus's teaching here?

- John 3:16-18
- John 14:6
- Acts 4:12
- Romans 12:1-2

7. Why do you think many people dislike the notion that there is only one true gate?

Jesus leads us to a fork in the road that will involve cost in either direction. The "easy" way will ultimately lead to our destruction. The path that leads to "life" has eternal rewards, but is difficult.

8. What are some of the costly decisions you have had to make in order to stay in step with Jesus? Did you experience a sense of reward? If so, how?

9. Where is God convicting you through this week's study? Where is He encouraging you? Why?

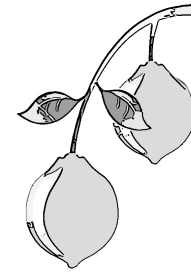
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<sup>40</sup> Syncretism: the combination of different forms of belief or practice.

<sup>41</sup> Stott, 193.



**STUDY TWENTY SEVEN: MATTHEW 7:15-20**  
**FRUIT**



**Read Matthew 7:15-20.** What initial observations, thoughts, impressions, or questions do you have from the text?

Even if we choose the narrow path of following Jesus, we will still face the allure and hazards of living in a world of temptations. False prophets stand poised to lead us off the path of life and onto the road of destruction. Jesus warns us to expect these false teachers.

1. Why is it significant that Jesus’s warning about false prophets comes immediately after His discussion of the narrow and wide gates?
2. Jesus tells us how to recognize these false teachers. Write down the characteristics—both stated and implied—by which we can recognize a false teacher.

Jesus describes these false prophets as “ravenous wolves” coming to us in “sheep’s clothing.” This is not a wild-eyed blasphemer; it is someone who looks like us. We are cautioned to be watchful and alert, paying close attention to subtle messages that draw us away from the truth of the Gospel.

3. In contemporary evangelicalism, where do you see “wolves in sheep’s clothing”? What messages do you hear that don’t square with the teachings of Jesus and the message of the Gospel? Be specific.
4. Why do you think false prophets are so appealing to people today?
5. Jesus warns us to “beware” of such false teachers. What are some ways that you stay alert and aware of the dangers of heresy and false teaching/teachers?

The second metaphor Jesus gives us to help recognize false teachers/teaching is a tree and its fruit. Trees are easy to recognize. Fruit takes time to grow. Here Jesus encourages *ongoing* vigilance with respect to the truth of the Gospel. We will need patience and unwavering attention to both doctrine and the lives of those who teach it. This will require a persevering familiarity with God's Word. When we understand the truth of God's Word, we will be able to discern truth from lies.

6. How can the quality of the fruit reveal the quality of the tree?
  
7. How can we keep from becoming "witch hunters" as we seek to recognize false prophets?
  
8. The warning about fruit bearing can also keep us from becoming complacent Christians. What does **John 15:1-11** add to our passage this week?
  
9. Notice in verse 19 that Jesus warns that every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Bad trees are only good for firewood. What does this tell us about the finality of eternal judgment?

Consider this comment from John Piper:

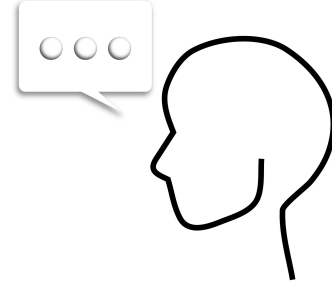
When He says that "a healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit," He does not mean that no follower of His ever sins. The natural way of thinking about the present tense of a Greek verb like "bear" is "go on bearing." So Jesus would be saying, "A healthy tree cannot *go on bearing* bad fruit." In other words, a tree is cut down not for bad fruit here and there. It is cut down for producing so much bad fruit that there is no evidence that the tree is good. What God will require at the judgment is not our perfection, but sufficient fruit to show that the tree had life—in our case, divine life.<sup>42</sup>

10. It takes time for a tree to bear good fruit. **Read Galatians 5:22-23** to see what kind of fruit God desires to grow in our lives. How are you growing in these?

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<sup>42</sup> John Piper, *What Jesus Expects of the World*, (Crossway, 2006), 211.

## STUDY TWENTY EIGHT: MATTHEW 7:21-23 LORD, LORD



**Read Matthew 7:21-23.** What initial observations, thoughts, impressions, or questions do you have from the text?

The community of the Kingdom must not only watch out for false prophets/teachers. It must also watch out for false disciples. What we say with our mouths might not be a reflection of the true status of our hearts. Merely saying to Jesus, “Lord, Lord,” does not always indicate a repentant heart, nor does religious activity indicate a personal, saving, knowledge of God.

1. On the surface, what might we admire about those described in verses 21-23?
2. In spite of their admirable statements or actions, why does Jesus condemn such people?

Verse 21 seems to indicate that we can *say* all the right things, but if we are not obedient to God’s will as expressed in His Word, we will not enter the Kingdom. This might be categorized as “easy-believe-ism,” or casual, nominal, Christianity. It is to perhaps enjoy Jesus as Savior and yet deny Him as Lord. On the other hand, verses 22-23 seem to indicate that we can be very busy doing good and religious things and yet never personally know Jesus. This might be categorized as “moralism” or legalism, a sort of works-righteousness that thinks it can enter the Kingdom through its “mighty works.” It is to perhaps fear Jesus as Lord but not to know Him as Savior. The message of the Gospel is that Jesus is both our Savior and Lord, and that Christianity is neither easy-believe-ism nor religious moralism.

3. Why is it so easy to confuse religious confession with doing the will of the Father? How do you understand the difference?

4. Why is it so easy to confuse religious activity with truly *knowing* Jesus? How do you understand the difference?
  
5. What are some practical examples of people saying “Lord, Lord” while not doing the will of the Father?
  
6. Why is it often so difficult to tell the difference between genuine Christians and counterfeit ones?
  
7. When you read these verses, do you feel nervous or reassured? Why?
  
8. What changes can you make to be a genuine disciple of Jesus?
  - How can you both confess Christ as Lord and pursue doing the will of His Father in heaven? In other words, how can you follow Jesus as Lord of your life?
  
  - How can you both serve the Lord with energy and urgency—doing many good works—and yet truly *know* Him as Savior? In other words, how can you follow Jesus as Savior of your life?

**Pray!** If you truly *know* Jesus, you will speak to Him in prayer. Take some time to ask Him to make you into the man or woman He wants you to be. Ask Him to be your Savior and Lord.

**STUDY TWENTY NINE: MATTHEW 7:24-29**  
**HOUSE ON THE ROCK**

**Read Matthew 7:24-29.** What initial observations, thoughts, impressions, or questions do you have from the text?



We have come to the final study of our series through Jesus's famous Sermon on the Mount. Jesus concludes His sermon with a parable calling for His audience to make a choice between Himself and any other foundation for life.

1. Jesus contrasts wise and foolish builders. How are their two houses similar? How are they different?
2. How did the storms reveal what was previously unseen?
3. Whom do you know that has built a spiritual house on rock and withstood storms?
4. What kinds of storms have you faced in life? What did they reveal about the foundation of your life?

- 5. Jesus’s comparison of the wise and foolish builders draws to mind recurring themes in the book of Proverbs. What do the following proverbs say about the wise person and the fool?

Proverbs	Wise Person	Foolish Person
1:7		
10:14		
12:15		
14:1		
14:3		
14:16		
28:26		
29:11		

- 6. The crowds were astonished at Jesus’s teaching, because He taught as One who had authority. What difference does it make to you that Jesus taught with authority?
- 7. How do these verses provide a fitting conclusion to the Sermon on the Mount?
- 8. Jesus declares that it is the one who hears and does His words who is the wise builder. What are some of the “words” of Jesus you have heard in the Sermon on the Mount that you want to stick with you?

We have been challenged in many ways by Jesus’s Sermon on the Mount! Pray that God would continue to give you and the whole Calvary Baptist family grace to follow Jesus wholeheartedly.

Thus the followers of Jesus are to be different—different from both the nominal church and the secular world, different from both the religious and the irreligious. The Sermon on the Mount is the most complete delineation anywhere in the New Testament of the Christian counter-culture. Here is a Christian value-system, ethical standard, religious devotion, attitude to money, ambition, life-style and network of relationships—all of which are totally at variance with those of the non-Christian world. And this Christian counter-culture is the life of the kingdom of God, a fully human life indeed but lived out under the divine rule.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Stott, 18.