



We live in an image-conscious world.

The advent of TV, the internet, and social media have elevated appearance above substance. Charisma has replaced character in the leaders we elect. Slick packaging and advertising have supplanted quality in the products we buy. Good looks and shallow words have replaced true commitment in the relationships we pursue.

Borrowing an analogy from Jesus, we have become an age of *white-washed tombs*—looking good on the outside but full of death and corruption on the inside.

The church is not immune to the spirit of this age.

The values of the world seep into the pews of the church. And to some extent we are all infected. We work for success more than righteousness. We are more eager for the applause of men than the approval of God. We focus on our image as Christians rather than our character as Christians.

The Sermon on the Mount speaks to our media-saturated, image-conscious, me-focused culture. In this famous and often misunderstood sermon, Jesus describes the life of a kingdom citizen.

**Jesus is the King.**

*And His kingdom is coming to earth.*

**Those in His kingdom are to live like Him.**

*No one qualifies for His kingdom on their own righteousness.*

**We all need the righteousness of Jesus, the King.**

To understand Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, we must first understand the gospel of Matthew.

**AUTHOR:** Matthew (Jewish name, Levi). Matthew was a tax collector (10:3), a despised profession among the Jews (5:46; 9:11; 11:19; 18:17; 21:31-32; Luke 18:11). He was probably a wealthy man based on the large banquet he was able to host for his friends (Luke 5:29). In Matthew 9:9, Jesus told him, "Follow Me," and Matthew followed Jesus immediately and wholeheartedly.

*Matthew's training and vocation as a tax gatherer would have uniquely equipped him not only with the languages of Galilee but with an orderly mind and the habit of jotting down notes. (D. A. Carson)*

**DATE:** The early church considered the Gospel of Matthew as the first gospel, written possibly as early as AD 40. More recent Bible scholars view Mark as the first gospel and thus date Matthew later, sometime between AD 50-70. The evidence seems to indicate that Matthew was written no later than AD 70 when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans (cf. Matthew 4:5, 27:53).

*According to the unanimous testimony of the early church, Matthew was the first gospel written. The church father Eusebius places the date of the gospel of Matthew in A.D. 41. (Don Stewart)*

**PURPOSE:** Matthew wrote primarily with a Jewish audience in mind, seeking to demonstrate that Jesus is the prophesied King and Messiah of the Old Testament. There are 54 direct quotations of the OT and as many as 262 allusions to the OT in Matthew (*UBS Greek New Testament*). Matthew also wrote to strengthen the early church as they fulfilled the Great Commission.

*During the first three centuries of the church, Matthew was the most highly revered and frequently quoted canonical Gospel. (D. A. Carson)*

*Of all the NT Writings, Matthew was the one whose literary influence was the most widespread and the most profound in Christian literature that extended into the last decades of the second century... Matthew's Gospel was the normative fact of Christian life. It created the background for ordinary Christianity. (Edouard Massaux)*

Together, the four Gospels present a fuller picture of the identity and life of Jesus Christ.

	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
Jesus	King	Servant	Son of Man	Son of God
Genealogy	Son of David	None	Son of Adam	Eternal
Audience	Jews	Romans	Greeks	Universal
Emphasis	Sermons	Miracles	Parables	Signs
Rev 4:7	Lion	Ox	Man	Flying Eagle

**OUTLINE:**

- I. The Preparation of the King (1:1-4:11)**
  - A. The King’s Birth (1:1-25)
  - B. The King’s Epiphany (2:1-23)
  - C. The King’s Messenger (3:1-17)
  - D. The King’s Test (4:1-11)
  
- II. The Proclamation of the King (4:12-16:20)**
  - A. The King’s Message (4:12-7:29)
  - B. The King’s Power (8:1-11:1)
  - C. The King’s Opposition (11:2-12:50)
  - D. The King’s Rejection (13:1-16:20)
  
- III. The Passion of the King (16:21-28:20)**
  - A. The King’s Instruction (16:21-25:46)
  - B. The King’s Crucifixion (26:1-27:66)
  - C. The King’s Resurrection (28:1-15)
  - D. The King’s Commission (28:16-20)

The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) is primarily addressed to the nation of Israel. The Jews were waiting for the Messiah and His kingdom. Thus, Jesus is describing to them the life of a *kingdom citizen*—one who has submitted to the authority of the Messiah. Historically, this sermon comes before Jesus' death and resurrection. Thus, the grace gospel (1 Corinthians 15:1-11), the new covenant (Matthew 26:28), and the church (Acts 2) have not yet been fully revealed.

Though this sermon is addressed primarily to Israel, it describes the ethic of all kingdom citizens—Old or New Testament. To those under the old covenant, it further elaborated the righteous requirements of God and confronted people with their need for a Savior. To those under the new covenant, it is a call to live more and more like Jesus, under His kingship, in this present world.

The Sermon on the Mount would have come as a shock to the ancient Jewish world. There were four major religious philosophies of that day. Jesus directly confronted them all.

	PHARISEES	SADDUCEES	ESSENES	ZEALOTS	KINGDOM CITIZENS
Emphasis	Moses	Modernity	Monks	Military	Messiah
Enemy	“Sinners”	Status Quo	Society	State	Selfishness
Cure	Regulation	Progression	Isolation	Revolution	Salvation
Motto	Go back!	Go ahead!	Go away!	Go against!	Go down!

(Adapted from Warren Wiersbe, *Living Like a King*)

The following study guide takes you through an exploration of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7. The five-day format for each week is designed to enhance your Bible study.

Day 1: **OBSERVATION**. Reading the passage and observing what it says.

Day 2: **MEDITATION**. Reading key verse(s) over and over and memorizing them.

Day 3: **INTERPRETATION**. Doing a word study and/or exploring parallel passages.

Day 4: **DEVOTION**. Reading an excerpt from a classic commentary on Matthew.

Day 5: **APPLICATION**. Seeking to live out God's Word in your daily life.

We encourage you to do this study individually *and* corporately. Spending time alone in God's Word is a daily discipline that grows us in the faith. However, our spiritual growth is also connected to and lived out in community. Sharing what you are learning with others, praising God together, and loving/praying for one another are essential to our growth and to our joy.

*It will be found that this Sermon returns again and again to one main idea:  
That of awakening men to a sense of their wretchedness,  
and shutting them up to the righteousness of God.  
That object could only be obtained by a spiritual application  
of the Law and by enforcing its inviolable exactions.  
Thereby alone could they be prepared to appreciate and embrace the Gospel.*

A.W. Pink (1886-1952)

## READING THROUGH THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Before studying the Sermon on the Mount, it is good to get an overview of the whole sermon. Pray and ask God to speak to your heart as you read. The NKJV version of Matthew 5-7 is included below. You may also want to read other versions to gain further insight.

**Read Matthew 5-7 in one sitting.** Mark key words or phrases as you read.

**5** And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. <sup>2</sup> Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying:

<sup>3</sup> “Blessed are the poor in spirit,  
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>4</sup> Blessed are those who mourn,  
For they shall be comforted.

<sup>5</sup> Blessed are the meek,  
For they shall inherit the earth.

<sup>6</sup> Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,  
For they shall be filled.

<sup>7</sup> Blessed are the merciful,  
For they shall obtain mercy.

<sup>8</sup> Blessed are the pure in heart,  
For they shall see God.

<sup>9</sup> Blessed are the peacemakers,  
For they shall be called sons of God.

<sup>10</sup> Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake,  
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>11</sup> Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. <sup>12</sup> Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

<sup>13</sup> “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.

<sup>14</sup> “You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup> Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. <sup>16</sup> Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

<sup>17</sup> “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. <sup>18</sup> For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. <sup>19</sup> Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of

these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>20</sup> For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>21</sup> “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.’ <sup>22</sup> But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, ‘Raca!’ shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be in danger of hell fire.

<sup>23</sup> Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, <sup>24</sup> leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. <sup>25</sup> Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. <sup>26</sup> Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny.

<sup>27</sup> “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ <sup>28</sup> But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. <sup>29</sup> If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. <sup>30</sup> And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.

<sup>31</sup> “Furthermore it has been said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ <sup>32</sup> But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery.

<sup>33</sup> “Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.’ <sup>34</sup> But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God’s throne; <sup>35</sup> nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. <sup>36</sup> Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. <sup>37</sup> But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’ For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.

<sup>38</sup> “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ <sup>39</sup> But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. <sup>40</sup> If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. <sup>41</sup> And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. <sup>42</sup> Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away.

<sup>43</sup> “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ <sup>44</sup> But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and

pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, <sup>45</sup> that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. <sup>46</sup> For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? <sup>47</sup> And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so?

<sup>48</sup> Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.

**6** “Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven. <sup>2</sup> Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. <sup>3</sup> But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, <sup>4</sup> that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.

<sup>5</sup> “And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. <sup>6</sup> But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. <sup>7</sup> And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words.

<sup>8</sup> “Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him. <sup>9</sup> In this manner, therefore, pray:

Our Father in heaven,  
Hallowed be Your name.

<sup>10</sup> Your kingdom come.

Your will be done

On earth as it is in heaven.

<sup>11</sup> Give us this day our daily bread.

<sup>12</sup> And forgive us our debts,

As we forgive our debtors.

<sup>13</sup> And do not lead us into temptation,

But deliver us from the evil one.

For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

<sup>14</sup> “For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. <sup>15</sup> But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

<sup>16</sup> “Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. <sup>17</sup> But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, <sup>18</sup> so that you do

not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.

<sup>19</sup> “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; <sup>20</sup> but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup> For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

<sup>22</sup> “The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. <sup>23</sup> But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

<sup>24</sup> “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

<sup>25</sup> “Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? <sup>26</sup> Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? <sup>27</sup> Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?

<sup>28</sup> “So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; <sup>29</sup> and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. <sup>30</sup> Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?

<sup>31</sup> “Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ <sup>32</sup> For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. <sup>33</sup> But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. <sup>34</sup> Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

**7** “Judge not, that you be not judged. <sup>2</sup> For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. <sup>3</sup> And why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? <sup>4</sup> Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me remove the speck from your eye’; and look, a plank is in your own eye? <sup>5</sup> Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.

<sup>6</sup> “Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces.

<sup>7</sup> “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

<sup>8</sup> For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be



opened.<sup>9</sup> Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone?<sup>10</sup> Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent?<sup>11</sup> If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!<sup>12</sup> Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

<sup>13</sup> “Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. <sup>14</sup> Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.

<sup>15</sup> “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. <sup>16</sup> You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? <sup>17</sup> Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. <sup>18</sup> A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. <sup>19</sup> Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. <sup>20</sup> Therefore by their fruits you will know them.

<sup>21</sup> “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. <sup>22</sup> Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ <sup>23</sup> And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’

<sup>24</sup> “Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: <sup>25</sup> and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.

<sup>26</sup> “But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: <sup>27</sup> and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.”

<sup>28</sup> And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, <sup>29</sup> for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

**What is your initial thought or feeling after reading through Jesus’ sermon? Does it encourage you, challenge you, comfort you, confuse you, or overwhelm you? Why?**

---

---

---

---

---

---

**What verse sticks out in your mind the most from Jesus' sermon? Why?**

---



---



---



---

**What verse confuses you or bothers you the most from Jesus' sermon? Why?**

---



---



---



---

**Go back over Matthew 5-7 section by section. Write down the key words or phrases in each section. Try to summarize the main theme or message of each section in ten words or less.**

	KEY WORDS & PHRASES	THEME/TITLE
5:1-16		
5:17-48		
6:1-7:12		
7:13-29		



---

**THE CHARACTER OF THE KINGDOM CITIZEN**  
**Matthew 5:1-12**

---

**DAY ONE**  
**Observation**

Jesus begins the Sermon on the Mount with the word “blessed” or “happy.” Deep down, we all long for the blessed life—the satisfied, content, abundant life. This section is often called the “beatitudes.”

**Ask God to speak to your heart as you read Matthew 5:1-12. Mark words or phrases that stand out to you. Write down the main message or your thoughts next to each paragraph.**

And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. <sup>2</sup> Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying:

<sup>3</sup> “Blessed are the poor in spirit,  
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>4</sup> Blessed are those who mourn,  
For they shall be comforted.

<sup>5</sup> Blessed are the meek,  
For they shall inherit the earth.

<sup>6</sup> Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,  
For they shall be filled.

<sup>7</sup> Blessed are the merciful,  
For they shall obtain mercy.

<sup>8</sup> Blessed are the pure in heart,  
For they shall see God.

<sup>9</sup> Blessed are the peacemakers,  
For they shall be called sons of God.

<sup>10</sup> Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake,  
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>11</sup> Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. <sup>12</sup> Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (NKJV)

**What thought or verse stands out to you in Matthew 5:1-12? Why?**

---

---

---

---

Don't overlook Matthew 5:1-2! Write down three observations that you can make from 5:1-2.

---



---



---

Jesus' words in Matthew 5:3-12 are often called the **"beatitudes"** (Latin for "blessing"). Jesus gives eight characteristics of the kingdom citizen. These eight characteristics are necessary for the "blessed life"—the life that is in right relationship to God and receptive to His promises.

Fill out the chart below based on Matthew 5:3-12.

	BLESSED ARE...	THE PROMISE
5:3	<i>the poor in spirit</i>	<i>theirs is the kingdom of heaven</i>
5:4		
5:5		
5:6		
5:7		
5:8		
5:9		
5:10-12		

Which beatitude stands out to you the most? Why?

---



---



---

**DAY TWO**  
**Meditation**

Quiet your heart and allow God to speak through His Word. Slowly read Matthew 5:3-6 several times. Reflect on each word. Meditate on them over and over until you memorize them.

*Blessed are the poor in spirit,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

*Blessed are those who mourn,  
for they will be comforted.*

*Blessed are the meek,  
for they will inherit the earth.*

*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,  
for they will be filled. (NIV)*

**Write down the observations that you can make from this passage, sketch out any images or thoughts that you have, or simply rewrite the passage below giving emphasis to key words.**

**Offer the passage back to God in the form of a personalized prayer.**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## DAY THREE Interpretation

In interpretation, you are digging deeper into the passage in order to better understand its meaning. A word study on a key word and/or looking up parallel passages can help you in your understanding.

Go to [blueletterbible.org](http://blueletterbible.org) and type "Matthew 5" into the "Search the Bible" box. Next click on Matthew 5:3 to bring up the verse in the Greek. Find the word "blessed" and click on the Strong's number (G3107) to bring up the Greek word, its definition, and its usage in other passages in the New Testament.

What is the Greek word for "blessed"? \_\_\_\_\_ (Use the transliteration.)

How many times is it used in the New Testament? \_\_\_\_\_ (See KJV Translation Count.)

How many times is it used in Matthew? \_\_\_\_\_ (See Search Results by Book.)

What is its definition? (See Strong's definition.) \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

**Read the following passages which also use this Greek word. Mark key words or phrases as you read. Think about what Scripture says brings blessing and happiness to our lives.**

*"But what about you?" He asked. "Who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Jesus replied, "**Blessed** are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven." (Matthew 16:15-17)*

*As Jesus was saying these things, a woman in the crowd called out, "**Blessed** is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you." He replied, "**Blessed** rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it." (Luke 11:27-28)*

*When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be **blessed** if you do them. (John 13:12-17)*

*A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; **blessed** are those who have not seen and yet have believed." (John 20:26-29)*





## DAY FOUR Devotion

Read the following commentary from J.C. Ryle's *Expository Thoughts on Matthew*. **J. C. Ryle** (1816-1900) was a brilliant scholar, being educated at Eton College and Oxford University, where he excelled in the Classics and seem destined for a successful life in law and politics. However, a bout of sickness caused him to reassess his life. He ended up visiting a church where he heard Ephesians 2 and came to faith in Jesus Christ. Ryle would eventually become the first Anglican bishop of Liverpool, where his sermons and writings would impact thousands in England and abroad. At the end of his life, he was described as "the man of granite with the heart of a child."

The three chapters which begin with these verses deserve the special attention of all readers of the Bible. They contain what is commonly called the Sermon on the Mount.

Every word of the Lord Jesus ought to be most precious to professing Christians. It is the voice of the chief Shepherd; it is the charge of the great Bishop and head of the church; it is the Master speaking; it is the word of Him who spoke as never man spoke, and by whom we shall all be judged at the last day.

Would we know what kind of people Christians ought to be? Would we know the character at which Christians ought to aim? Would we know the outward walk and inward habit of mind which become a follower of Christ? Then let us often study the Sermon on the Mount. Let us often ponder each sentence, and prove ourselves by it. Not least, let us often consider who they that are called "blessed" at the beginning of the Sermon. Those whom the great High Priest blesses are blessed indeed!

The Lord Jesus calls those "blessed" who are **poor in spirit**. He means the humble, and lowly-minded, and self-abased; he means those who are deeply convinced of their own sinfulness in God's sight: these are they who are not "wise in their own eyes and prudent in their own sight." They are not "rich" and increased with goods; they do not fancy they need nothing"; they regard themselves as "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and

blind and naked." Blessed are all such! Humility is the very first letter in the alphabet of Christianity. We must begin low, if we would build high. (Isaiah 6:21; Rev. 3:17)

The Lord Jesus calls those blessed who **mourn**. He means those who sorrow for sin, and grieve daily over their own shortcomings. These are they who trouble themselves more about sin than about anything on earth: the remembrance of it is grievous to them; the burden of it is intolerable. Blessed are all such! "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit" and a contrite heart. (Psalm 51:17) One day they will weep no more: "they shall be comforted."

The Lord Jesus calls those "blessed" who are **meek**. He means those who are of a patient and contented spirit. They are willing to put up with little honor here below; they can bear injuries without resentment; they are not ready to take offence. Like Lazarus in the parable, they are content to wait for their good things. Blessed are all such! They are never losers in the long run. One day they shall "reign on the earth" (Revelation 5:10)

The Lord Jesus calls those "blessed" who **hunger and thirst after righteousness**. He means those who desire above all things to be entirely conformed to the mind of God. They long not so much to be rich, or wealthy, or learned, as to be holy. Blessed are all such! They shall have enough one day. They shall awake up after God's likeness and be satisfied. (Psalm 17:15)

The Lord Jesus calls those “blessed” who are **merciful**. He means those who are full of compassion towards others. They pity all who are suffering either from sin or sorrow, and are tenderly desirous to make their sufferings less; they are full of good works and endeavor to do good. (Acts 9:36) Blessed are all such! Both in this life and in that which is to come they shall reap a rich reward.

The Lord Jesus calls those “blessed” who are **pure in heart**. He means those who do not aim merely at outward correctness, but at inward holiness. They are not satisfied with a mere external show of religion: they strive to have always a conscience void of offense and to serve God with the spirit and the inner man. Blessed are all such! The heart is the man. “Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.” (1 Samuel 16:7) He that is most spiritually-minded will have most communion with God.

The Lord Jesus calls those “blessed” who are **peacemakers**. He means those who use all their influence to promote peace and charity on earth, in private and in public, at home and abroad. He means those who strive to make all men love one another, by teaching that Gospel which says, “Love is the fulfilling of the law.” (Romans 13:10) Blessed are all such! They are doing the very work which the Son of God began when he came to earth the first time, and which he will finish when he returns the second time.

Lastly, the Lord Jesus calls those “blessed” who are **persecuted for righteousness’ sake**. He means those who are laughed at, mocked, despised and ill-used because they endeavor to live as true Christians. Blessed are all such! They drink of the same cup which their Master drank. They are now confessing him before men, and he will confess them before his Father and the angels at the last day. “Great is their reward.”

Such are the eight foundation stones which the Lord lays down at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount. Eight great testing truths are placed before us. May we mark well each one of them, and learn wisdom.

Let us learn how entirely contrary are the principles of Christ to the principles of the world. It is vain to deny it: they are almost diametrically opposed. The very characters which the Lord Jesus praises the world despises; the very pride, thoughtlessness, high tempers, worldliness, selfishness, formality, and lack of love, which abound everywhere, the Lord Jesus condemns...

Above all, let us learn how holy and spiritual-minded all believers should be. They should never aim at any standard lower than that of the Sermon on the Mount. Christianity is eminently a practical religion: sound doctrine is its root and foundation, but holy living should always be its fruit. And if we would know what holy living is, let us often think about who they are that Jesus calls “blessed.”

**What thought from J.C. Ryle’s words stands out to you the most? Why?**

---

---

---

---

## DAY FIVE Application

Re-read Matthew 5:1-12 and consider the truths that you have learned this week. Seek to apply the message of Matthew 5:1-12 to your daily life.

**What thought or truth impacted you this week from your study of Matthew 5:1-12?**

---

---

---

---

**Take time to evaluate your own life based on the eight beatitudes. Ask yourself these questions out loud one at a time. Be honest. Mark or circle any words that convict your heart.**

*Am I poor in spirit? Am I humble before the Lord?  
Or am I still striving to prove myself before God?*

*Am I mourning my sinful tendencies? Am I broken before the Lord?  
Or am I unwilling to see my sin and blaming others for my problems?*

*Am I meek? Am I submissive to the Lord?  
Or am I stubborn, fighting for my own way?*

*Am I hungering for God's righteousness? Am I thirsting for Him?  
Or am I distracted? Apathetic? Pursuing the world's things?*

*Am I merciful toward others? Am I extending grace?  
Or am I judgmental, bitter, and unforgiving?*

*Am I pure in heart? Am I living a life of integrity?  
Or am I hiding my sin and living a double life?*

*Am I a peacemaker? Am I seeking reconciliation in my relationships?  
Or am I causing conflict? Holding onto grudges? Spreading gossip?*

*Am I persecuted for righteousness? Am I standing for the Lord even when it costs?  
Or am I staying hidden and silent as a Christ-follower? Am I ashamed of my faith?*

**As you have reflected on these questions, what has the Lord revealed to your heart?**

---

---

---

---

### **SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR GROUP OR FAMILY DISCUSSION:**

The goal is not to get through all the questions but to spark discussion around the truth of Matthew 5:1-12. Use the questions below to interact together with what you learned.

- What was one of the happiest times in your life? Why do you think it made you so happy?
- What does the world say you need to be happy? Think through recent commercials or ads. How does this contrast with what the Lord Jesus says in Matthew 5:3-12?
- How would you define the “blessed life”? Deep down, what do you long for in life?
- How would you complete this sentence: “I would be happy if only \_\_\_\_\_.”
- Which beatitude stood out to you the most? Why?
- Which beatitude is the hardest for you to believe or to practice? Why?
- Which promise in Matthew 5:3-12 means the most to you? Why?
- Did you discover anything new, interesting, or meaningful in your study of this passage this week? Or in your reading of J. C. Ryle? If so, what?
- Take time to pray through Matthew 5:3-12. Go around and have a person read one verse at a time. After reading the verse, pause and respond in prayer. When one or two have prayed in response to the verse, then have someone read the next verse...and so on.

*For those who would learn God's ways,  
humility is the first thing,  
humility is the second thing,  
humility is the third thing.*

Augustine (354-430)

*To be hungry is not enough;  
I must be really starving to know what is in God's heart for me.  
When the prodigal son was hungry, he went to feed on the husks,  
but when he was starving, he turned to his father.*

John Darby (1800-82)

---

**THE IMPACT OF THE KINGDOM CITIZEN**  
**Matthew 5:13-16**

---

**DAY ONE**  
**Observation**

In Matthew 5:13-16, Jesus makes a transition from our character as kingdom citizens to our impact in this present world. Ultimately, the degree of our impact *in* the world will be directly proportional to the difference in our character *from* the world. It is our difference that makes a difference.

**Ask God to speak to your heart as you read Matthew 5:13-16. Mark words or phrases that stand out to you. Write down the main message or your thoughts next to each paragraph.**

<sup>13</sup> “You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.

<sup>14</sup> “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup> Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. <sup>16</sup> In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.” (ESV)

**Circle** four key words in this passage. Which words did you circle? What does each tell you?

---



---



---



---

**Fill in the following chart.** In this passage, Jesus identifies who His disciples are, what potential problem could hinder their effectiveness, and what their intended purpose is to be.

	You Are...	The Potential Problem	The Intended Purpose
5:13			
5:14-16			

**DAY TWO  
Meditation**

Quiet your heart and allow God to speak through His Word. Slowly read Matthew 5:14-16 several times. Reflect on each word. Meditate on them over and over until you memorize them.

*You are the light of the world.*

*A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.*

*Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.*

*Let your light so shine before men,*

*that they may see your good works*

*and glorify your Father in heaven. (NKJV)*

**Write down the observations that you can make from this passage, sketch out any images or thoughts that you have, or simply rewrite the passage below giving emphasis to key words.**

**Offer the passage back to God in the form of a personalized prayer.**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## DAY THREE Interpretation

In interpretation, you are digging deeper into the passage in order to better understand its meaning. A word study on a key word and/or looking up parallel passages can help you in your understanding.

In Matthew 5:13-16, Jesus uses two analogies to describe the character and impact of His disciples, of citizens of His kingdom who still live in this world. We are salt and light.

**Read the following passages about salt. Mark key words or phrases. Write down what you learn about the nature, qualities, importance, or impact of salt as it used in Scripture.**

*The Lord said to Moses, "Take sweet spices, stacte, and onycha, and galbanum, sweet spices with pure frankincense (of each shall there be an equal part), and make an incense blended as by the perfumer, seasoned with **salt**, pure and holy. (Exodus 30:34-35)*

*Moreover, you must season every one of your grain offerings with **salt**; you must not allow the **salt** of the covenant of your God to be missing from your grain offering—on every one of your grain offerings you must present **salt**. (Leviticus 2:13)*

*All the heave offerings of the holy things, which the children of Israel offer to the Lord, I have given to you and your sons and daughters with you as an ordinance forever; it is a covenant of **salt** forever before the Lord with you and your descendants with you. (Numbers 18:19)*

*And he said, "Bring me a new bowl, and put **salt** in it." So they brought it to him. Then he went out to the source of the water, and cast in the **salt** there, and said, "Thus says the Lord: 'I have healed this water; from it there shall be no more death or barrenness.'" So the water remains healed to this day, according to the word of Elisha which he spoke. (2 Kings 2:20-22)*

*Can flavorless food be eaten without **salt**? Or is there any taste in the white of an egg? (Job 6:6)*

*And as for your birth, on the day you were born your cord was not cut, nor were you washed with water to cleanse you, nor rubbed with **salt**, nor wrapped in swaddling cloths. (Ezekiel 16:4)*

***Salt** is good, but if it loses its **saltiness**, how can you make it **salty** again? Have **salt** in yourselves, and be at peace with each other. (Mark 9:50)*

*Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with **salt**, that you may know how you ought to answer each one. (Colossians 4:6)*

**What do you learn about salt from these passages?**

---

---

---

---

---

**Read the following passages about light. Mark key words or phrases. Write down what you learn about the nature, qualities, importance, or impact of light as it used in Scripture.**

*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be **light**"; and there was **light**. And God saw the **light**, that it was good; and God divided the **light** from the darkness. (Genesis 1:1-4)*

*And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them **light**, so as to go by day and night. (Exodus 13:21)*

*The Lord is my **light** and my salvation;  
Whom shall I fear?  
The Lord is the strength of my life;  
Of whom shall I be afraid? (Psalm 27:1)*

*Your word is a lamp to my feet and a **light** to my path. (Psalm 119:105)*

*The **light** of the righteous shines brightly, but the lamp of the wicked is snuffed out. (Proverbs 13:9)*

*Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil;  
Who put darkness for **light**, and **light** for darkness! (Isaiah 5:20a)*

*The people who walked in darkness have seen a great **light**; those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a **light** has shined. (Isaiah 9:2)*

*In Him was life, and that life was the **light** of all mankind.  
The **light** shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. (John 1:4-5)*

*And this is the condemnation, that the **light** has come into the world,  
and men loved darkness rather than **light**, because their deeds were evil. (John 3:19)*

*Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the **light** of the world.  
He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the **light** of life." (John 8:12)*

*For you were once darkness, but now you are **light** in the Lord.  
Walk as children of **light**. (Ephesians 5:8)*

**What do you learn about light from these passages?**

---

---

---

---

---



## DAY FOUR Devotion

Read the following excerpt from Alexander MacLaren's *Expositions of Holy Scriptures*. **Alexander MacLaren** (1826-1910) was a Baptist pastor in Manchester, England whose sermons were known for their "profundity of thought, logical arrangement, eloquence of appeal, and power over the human heart."

*You are the salt of the earth: but if the salt has lost its savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.*  
—Matthew 5:13

These words must have seemed ridiculously presumptuous when they were first spoken, and they have too often seemed mere mockery and irony in the ages since. A Galilean peasant, with a few of his rude countrymen who had gathered round him, stands up there on the mountain, and says to them, "You, a handful, are the people who are to keep the world from rotting, and to bring it to all its best light." Strange when we think that Christ believed that these men were able to do these grand functions because they drew their power from Himself! Stranger still to think that, notwithstanding all the miserable inconsistencies of the professing Church ever since, yet, on the whole, the experience of history has verified these words!

Although some wise men may curl their lips with a sneer as they say about us Christians, "*You are the salt of the earth!*" yet the most progressive, and the most enlightened, and the most moral portion of humanity has derived its impulse to progress, its enlightenment as to the loftiest truths, and the purest portion of its morality, from the men who received their power to impart these from Jesus Christ.

And so, dear brethren, I have to say two or three things now, which I hope will be plain and earnest and searching, about the function of the Christian Church, and of each individual member of it, as set forth in these words.

### **First, then, as to the high task of Christ's disciples as here set forth.**

You are the salt of the earth! The metaphor wants very little explanation, however much enforcement it may require. It involves two things: a grave judgment as to the actual state of society, and a lofty claim as to what Christ's followers are able to do to it.

A grave judgment as to the actual state of society—it is corrupt and tending to corruption. You do not salt a living thing. You salt a dead one that it may not be a rotting one. And, Christ says by implication here, what He says plainly more than once in other places—"Human society, without My influence, is a carcass that is rotting away and disintegrating; and you, faithful handful, who have partially apprehended the meaning of My mission, and have caught something of the spirit of My life, you are to be rubbed into that rotting mass to sweeten it, to arrest decomposition, to stay corruption, to give flavor to its insipidity, and to save it from falling to pieces of its own wickedness. You are the *salt* of the earth."

Now, it is not merely because we are the bearers of truth that will do all this, but we Christians are to do it by the influence of conduct and character.

There are two or three thoughts suggested by this metaphor. The chief one is that of our power, and therefore our obligation, to arrest the corruption round us, by our own purity. The presence of a good man hinders the devil from having elbow-room to do his work. Do you and I exercise a repressive influence (if we do not do anything better), so that evil and low-toned life is ashamed to show itself in

our presence, and skulks back as do wrongdoers from the bull's-eye of a policeman's flashlight? It is not a high function, but it is a very necessary one, and one that all Christian men and women ought to discharge—that of rebuking and hindering the operation of corruption, even if they have not the power to breathe a better spirit into the dead mass.

But the example of Christians is not only repressive. It ought to tempt forth all that is best and purest and highest in the people with whom they come in contact. Every man who does right helps to make public opinion in favor of doing right; and every man who lowers the standard of morality in his own life helps to lower it in the community of which he is a part. And so in a thousand ways that I have no need to dwell upon here, the men that have Christ in their hearts and something of Christ's conduct and character repeated in theirs are to be the preserving and purifying influence in the midst of this corrupt world.

There are two other points that I name, and do not enlarge upon. The first of them is—salt does its work by being brought into close contact with the substance upon which it is to work. And so we, brought into contact as we are with much evil and wickedness, by many common relations of friendship, of kindred, of business, of proximity, of citizenship, and the like—we are not to seek to withdraw ourselves from contact with the evil. The only way by which the salt can purify is by being rubbed into the corrupted thing.

And once more, salt does its work silently, inconspicuously, gradually. "You are the light of the world," says Christ in the next verse. Light is far-reaching and brilliant, flashing that it may be seen... But there is a very much humbler, and, as I fancy, a very much more useful, kind of work that we have all to do. We shall never be the "light of the world," except by being "the salt of the earth." You have to play the humble, inconspicuous,

silent part of checking corruption by a pure example before you can aspire to play the other part of raying out light into the darkness and so drawing men to Christ Himself...

### **Secondly, the grave possibility of the salt losing its savor.**

There is no need for asking the question whether such loss is a physical fact or not, whether in the natural realm it is possible for any forms of matter that have saline taste to lose it by any cause. That does not at all concern us. The point is that it is possible for us, who call ourselves—and are—Christians, to lose our penetrating pungency, which stays corruption; to lose all that distinguishes us from the men that we are to better.

Now I think that nobody can look upon the present condition of professing Christendom; or, in a narrower aspect, upon the present condition of English Christianity; or in a still narrower, nobody can look round upon this congregation; or in the narrowest view, none of us can look into our own hearts—without feeling that this saying comes perilously near being true of us. And I beg you, dear Christian friends, while I try to dwell on this point, to ask yourselves this question—Lord, is it I? and not to be thinking of other people whom you may suppose the cap will fit...

Christian men and women swallow down bodily, and practice thoroughly, the maxims of the world—in life, in what is pleasant and what is desirable, and in the application of morality to business. There is not a hair of difference in that respect between hundreds and thousands of professing Christian men, and the irreligious man that has his office up the same staircase. I know, of course, that there are in every communion saintly men and women who are laboring to keep themselves unspotted from the world, but I know too that in every communion there are those, whose religion has next to no influence on

their general conduct, and does not even keep them from corruption, to say nothing of making them sources of purifying influence...

If you take a red-hot ball out of a furnace and lay it down upon a frosty moor, two processes will go on—the ball will lose heat and the surrounding atmosphere will gain it. There are two ways by which you equalize the temperature of a hotter and a colder body: the one is by the hot one getting cold, and the other is by the cold one getting hot. If you are not heating the world, the world is freezing. Every man influences all men round him, and receives influences from them, and if there be not more exports than imports, if there be not more influences and mightier influences raying out from him than are coming into him, he is a poor creature, and at the mercy of circumstances. “Men must either be hammers or anvils”—must either give blows or receive them. I am afraid that a great many of us who call ourselves Christians get a great deal more harm from the world than we ever dream of doing good to it. Remember this, “You are the salt of the earth,” and if you do not salt the world, the world will rot...

Then there is another thing. There can be no doubt but that all round and shared by us, there are instances of the cooling of the fervor of Christian devotion. That is the reason for the small distinction in character and conduct between the world and the Church today. An Arctic climate will not grow tropical fruits, and if the heat has been let down, as it has been let down, you cannot expect the glories of character and the pure unworldliness of conduct that you would have had at a higher temperature. Nor is there any doubt but that the present temperature is, with some of us, a distinct *loss* of heat. It was not always so low. The thermometer has gone down.

There are, no doubt, some among us who had once a far more vigorous Christian life than they have today; who were once far more

afame with the love of God than they are now. And although I know, of course, that as years go on emotion will become less vivid, and feeling may give place to principle, yet I know no reason why, as years go on, fervor should become less, or the warmth of our love to our Master should decline...

Nor can there be any doubt, I think, but that the partial obliteration of the distinction between the Church and the world, and the decay of the fervor of devotion which leads to it, are both to be traced to a yet deeper cause, and that is the loss of actual fellowship with Jesus Christ. It was that which made these early disciples “salt.” It was that which made them “light.” It is that, and that alone, which makes devotion burn fervid, and which makes Christians glow with the strange saintliness that rebukes iniquity, and works for the purifying of the world. And so I would remind you that fellowship with Jesus Christ is no vague exercise of the mind but is to be cultivated by three things, which I fear are becoming less and less habitual amongst professing Christians—meditation, the study of the Bible, and private prayer. If you have not these—and you know best whether you have them or not—no power in heaven or earth can prevent you from losing your savor.

### **III. Is there a possibility of re-salting the saltless salt, of restoring the lost savor?**

“Wherewithal shall it be salted?” says the Master. That is plain enough, but do not let us push it too far. If the Church is meant for the purifying of the world, and the Church itself needs purifying, is there any power in the world that will do it? If the army joins the rebels, is there any force that will bring back the army to submission? Our Lord is speaking about ordinary means and agencies. He is saying in effect, if the one thing that is intended to preserve the meat loses its power, is there anything around that will salt that? So far, then, the answer seems to be—No.

But Christ has no intention that these words should be pushed to the extreme of asserting that if salt loses its savor...he cannot win it back by going again to the source from which he received it at first. There is no obstacle in the way of a penitent returning to the fountain of all power and purity, nor of the full restoration of the lost savor, if a man will only bring about a full reunion of himself with the source of the savor.

Dear brethren, the message is to each of us: “Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works.” And all the savor and the sweetness that flow from fellowship with Jesus Christ will come back to us in larger measure than ever, if we will come back to the Lord. Repentance and returning will bring back the saltiness to the salt, and the brilliancy to the light.

**IV. But one last word warns us what is the certain end of the saltless salt.**

As the other Evangelist puts it: “It is neither good for the land nor for the dunghill.” You cannot put it upon the soil; there is no fertilizing virtue in it. You cannot even fling it into the rubbish-heap... Pitch it out onto the road... That is all it is fit for. God has no use for it, man has no use for it. If it has failed in doing the only thing it was created for, it has failed altogether. Like a knife that will not cut...which may have a beautiful handle and may be highly artistic and decorated; but the question is: Does it cut? If not, it is a failure altogether... And so, for the salt that has lost its savor, there is only one thing to be done with it—cast it out and tread it under foot.

Where are the churches of Asia Minor, of Alexandria, of Antioch, of Constantinople? Where is the Church of North Africa, the Church of Augustine? “Trodden under foot of men!” Over the archway of a mosque in Damascus you can read the half-obliterated inscription—*Thy Kingdom, O Christ, is an everlasting Kingdom...* The salt has lost his savor and has been cast out...

I am sure of this, that in the days that are coming to us, the storm in which we are already caught, all dead branches will be whirled out of the tree. So much the better for the tree! And a great deal that calls itself organized Christianity will have to go down because there is not vitality enough in it to stand...

Brethren, remember this: Unless you go back close to your Lord, you will go further away from Him. The deadness will deepen, the coldness will become icier and icier; you will lose more and more of the life and show less and less of the likeness and purity of Jesus...

Let us return unto the Lord our God. Let us keep nearer Him than we ever have done and bring our hearts more under the influence of His grace and cultivate the habit of communion with Him. Let us pray and trust and leave ourselves in His hands, that His power may come into us, and that we in the beauty of our characters, and the purity of our lives, and the elevation of our spirits, may witness to all men that we have been with Christ; and may, in some measure, check the corruption that is in the world.

**What thought from Alexander MacLaren’s words stands out to you the most? Why?**

---

---

---

---

## DAY FIVE Application

Re-read Matthew 5:13-16 and consider the truths that you have learned this week. Seek to apply the message of Matthew 5:13-16 to your life.

**What thought or truth impacted you this week from your study of Matthew 5:13-16?**

---

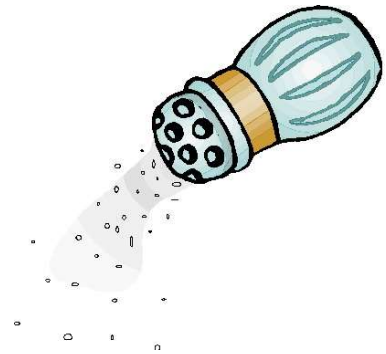
---

---

---

**You are the salt of the earth.**

You are called to be both a preservative and a seasoning in this world—living a life that both resists sin and promotes the beauty of righteousness. You can lose your effectiveness as salt when you allow the world to corrupt your thinking and your lifestyle.



**Be honest with yourself. In what ways has the world impacted your view of the following things?**

Money \_\_\_\_\_

Entertainment \_\_\_\_\_

Sex \_\_\_\_\_

Politics \_\_\_\_\_

Success \_\_\_\_\_

**How can you renew your mind and live a life different from the values of the world?**

---

---

---

**You are the light of the world.**

You are also called to be light in the world—living a life and doing good works which manifest the character of Christ to the world.

**Do an act of kindness this week for someone who may not know Jesus Christ. Visit them. Give them a gift. Mow their grass. Babysit their kids. Do something that lets them see the love of Christ in you!**



### **SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR GROUP OR FAMILY DISCUSSION:**

The goal is not to get through all the questions but to spark discussion around the truth of Matthew 5:13-16. Use the questions below to interact together with what you learned.

- Share a “light” story in your life—a time when having light made a big difference for you. For instance, a time when you were afraid of the dark or you couldn’t find something or you were lost at night or your headlights kept you from hitting something on the road, etc.
- List all the qualities and uses of salt that you can think of. Which qualities or uses of salt do you think can be an illustration of the Christian life?
- List all the qualities and uses of light that you can think of. Which qualities or uses of light do you think can be an illustration of the Christian life?
- How can salt lose its saltiness? In what ways can we lose our influence on the world?
- How can light be hidden? In what ways do we often hide our faith?
- Did you discover anything new, interesting, or meaningful in your study of this passage this week? Or in your reading of Alexander MacLaren? If so, what?
- Jesus said that our light shines through our good works—doing acts of kindness that manifest the character and compassion of Christ. Brainstorm different ways that you as a group or as individuals can shine the light of Christ this week. Pick one and do it for His glory!

*No human being can come into this world without increasing or diminishing the sum total of human happiness, not only of the present but of every subsequent age of humanity...*

*There is no sequestered spot in the universe, no dark niche along the disc of nonexistence to which he can retreat from his relations with others, where he can withdraw the influence of his existence upon the moral destiny of the world. Everywhere his presence or absence will be felt. Everywhere he will have companions who will be better or worse because of him...*

*Thousands of my fellow beings will yearly enter eternity with characters differing from those they would have carried thither had I never lived. The sunlight of that world will reveal my finger marks in their primary formations and in their successive strata of thought and life.*

Elihu Burritt (1810-79)

---

**THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE KINGDOM**  
**Matthew 5:17-20**

---

**DAY ONE**  
**Observation**

In Matthew 5:3-16, Jesus describes the “blessed life,” the life that manifests His character to the world. Now, in Matthew 5:17-48, He describes true righteousness as presented in the Law. If a person wants to be a part of the Messianic kingdom, then he or she needs the righteousness of the King.

**Ask God to speak to your heart as you read Matthew 5:17-20. Mark words or phrases that stand out to you. Write down the main message or your thoughts next to each paragraph.**

<sup>17</sup> “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. <sup>18</sup> For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.

<sup>19</sup> Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>20</sup> For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. (NKJV)

**What thought or verse stands out to you in Matthew 5:17-20? Why?**

---

---

---

---

**Complete the following sentences based on this passage:**

*Jesus did not come to destroy the Law or the Prophets but to \_\_\_\_\_ them.*

*One \_\_\_\_\_ or one \_\_\_\_\_ will by no means pass from the Law until all is fulfilled.*

*Whoever breaks the least of these commandments will be called \_\_\_\_\_ in the kingdom.*

*Whoever does and teaches these commandments will be called \_\_\_\_\_ in the kingdom.*

*Unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ you will by no means enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

**DAY TWO  
Meditation**

Quiet your heart and allow God to speak through His Word. Slowly read Matthew 5:17-18 several times. Reflect on each word. Meditate on them over and over until you memorize them.

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

*For truly I tell you,  
until heaven and earth disappear,  
not the smallest letter,  
not the least stroke of a pen,  
will by any means disappear from the Law  
until everything is accomplished. (NIV)*

**Write down the observations that you can make from this passage, sketch out any images or thoughts that you have, or simply rewrite the passage below giving emphasis to key words.**

**Offer the passage back to God in the form of a personalized prayer.**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## DAY THREE Interpretation

In interpretation, you are digging deeper into the passage in order to better understand its meaning. A word study on a key word and/or looking up parallel passages can help you in your understanding.

Go to [blueletterbible.org](http://blueletterbible.org) and type “Matthew 5” into the “Search the Bible” box. Next click on Matthew 5:20 to bring up the verse in the Greek. Find the word “righteousness” and click on the Strong’s number (G1343) to bring up the Greek word, its definition, and its usage in other passages in the New Testament.

What is the Greek word for “righteousness”? \_\_\_\_\_ (Use the transliteration.)

How many times is it used in the New Testament? \_\_\_\_\_ (See KJV Translation Count.)

How many times is it used in Matthew? \_\_\_\_\_ (See Search Results by Book.)

In which NT book is this word used the most? \_\_\_\_\_ (See Search Results by Book.)

What is its definition? (See Outline of Biblical Usage) \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

Righteousness is a key word throughout Scripture. For the Jew, one of the big questions was—“How can one be righteous before God?” The Jew often thought that righteousness could be achieved by obeying the Law. There is truth in this statement. But Jesus wants to make sure to show that to achieve this kind of righteousness, one must obey the Law perfectly in its fullness.

**Read the following passages about righteousness. Mark key words or phrases as you read. Think about what Scripture says about the meaning and attaining of God’s righteousness.**

*Abram believed the Lord, and He credited it to him as **righteousness**.* (Genesis 15:6)

*And if we are careful to obey all this law before the Lord our God, as He has commanded us, that will be our **righteousness**.* (Deuteronomy 6:25)

*“It is not because of your **righteousness** or the uprightness of your heart that you go in to possess their land, but because of the wickedness of these nations that the Lord your God drives them out from before you, and that He may fulfill the word which the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Therefore, understand that the Lord your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your **righteousness**, for you are a stiff-necked people.”* (Deuteronomy 9:4-6)

*For the Lord is righteous, He loves **righteousness**;  
His countenance beholds the upright.* (Psalm 11:7)

The Lord has made known His salvation;  
His **righteousness** He has revealed in the sight of the nations.  
He has remembered His mercy and His faithfulness to the house of Israel;  
All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God. (Psalm 98:2-3)

Wealth is worthless in the day of wrath,  
but **righteousness** delivers from death. (Proverbs 11:4)

I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God. For He has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of His **righteousness**. (Isaiah 61:10a)

All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our **righteous acts** are like filthy rags;  
We all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away. (Isaiah 64:6)

But now apart from the law the **righteousness** of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This **righteousness** is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:21-23)

If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in **righteousness**, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. (Romans 10:9-10)

For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the **righteousness** of God in Him. (2 Corinthians 5:21)

Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own **righteousness**, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the **righteousness** which is from God by faith. (Philippians 3:8-9)

**Write down 5-10 things that you learn about righteousness according to these verses.**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## DAY FOUR Devotion

Read the following excerpt from Alexander MacLaren's *Expositions of Holy Scriptures*. **Alexander MacLaren** (1826-1910) was a Baptist pastor in Manchester, England whose sermons were known for their "profundity of thought, logical arrangement, eloquence of appeal, and power over the human heart."

### **The King laying down the law of His kingdom in its relation to the older law of God.**

The first thing that strikes one in looking at Matthew 5:17-20 is its authoritative tone. There may, even thus early in Christ's career, have been some murmurs that He was taking up a position of antagonism to Moses, which may account for the "think not" which introduces the section. But however that may be, the swift transition from the Beatitudes to speak of Himself and of the meaning of His work is all of a piece with His whole manner; for certainly never did religious teacher open his mouth, who spoke so perpetually about Himself as did the meek Jesus.

"I came" declares that He is *the coming One*, and is a claim to have voluntarily appeared among men and to be the long-expected Messiah. With absolute decisiveness He states the purpose of His coming. He knows the meaning of His own work, which so few of us do, and it is safe to take His own account of what He intends, as it so seldom is. His opening declaration is singularly composed of blended humility and majesty. Its humility lies in His placing Himself, as it were, in line with previous messengers, and representing Himself as carrying on the sequence of divine revelation. It would not have been humble for anybody but Him to say that, but it was so for Him. Its majesty lies in His claim to "fulfill" all former utterances from God.

His fulfillment of the law is twofold: first, in His own person and life, He completes obedience to it, realizes its ideal; second, in His exposition of it, both by lip and life, He deepens and intensifies its meaning, changing it from a letter which regulates the actions to a spirit which moves the inward man.

So these first words point to the peculiarity of His coming as being His own act, and make two daring assertions, as to His character, which He claims to be sinless, and as to His teaching, which he claims to be an advance upon all the former divine revelation. As to the former, He speaks here as He did to John, "thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." No trace of consciousness of sin or defect appears in any words or acts of His. The calmest conviction that He was perfectly righteous is always manifest.

How comes it that we are not repelled by such a tone? We do not usually admire self-complacent religious teachers. Why has nobody ever given Christ the lie, or pointed to His unconsciousness of faults as itself the gravest fault? Strange inaugural discourse for a humble sage and saint to assert his own immaculate perfection, stranger still that a listening world has said, "Amen!"

Note, too, the royal style here. In this part of the Sermon, our Lord twice uses the phrase, "I say unto you," which He once introduces with His characteristic "verily." ... His simple word is given us as our surest light in the dark future, His bare command as the most imperative authority. This style goes kingly; it calls for absolute credence and unhesitating submission. When He speaks, even if we have nothing but His word, it is ours neither "to make reply" nor "to reason why," but simply to believe, and swiftly to do.

Rabbis might split hairs and quote other rabbis by the hour; philosophers may argue and base their teachings on elaborate demonstrations; moralists may seek to sway the conscience through reason; legislators to appeal to fear and hope. He speaks, and it is

done; He commands, and it stands fast. There is nothing else in the world the least like the superb and mysterious authority with which He fronts the world, and, as Fountain of knowledge and Source of obligation, summons us all to submit and believe, by that “Verily, I say unto you.”

**Verse 18.** Next we have to notice the exuberant testimony to the permanence of the law. Not the smallest of its letters, not even the little marks which distinguished some of them, or the flourishes at the top of some of them, should pass—as we might say, not even the stroke across a written “t,” which shows that it is not “l.” The law shall last as long as the world. It shall last till it be accomplished.

*And what then?* The righteousness which it requires can never be so realized that we shall not need to realize it anymore, and in the new heavens righteousness dwells. But in a very real sense law shall cease when fulfilled. There is no law to him who can say, “Thy law is within my heart.” When law has become both “law and impulse,” it has ceased to be law, in so far as it no longer stands over against the doer as an external constraint.

**Verse 19.** On this permanence of the law Christ builds its imperative authority in His kingdom. Obviously, the *kingdom of heaven* in verse 19 means the earthly form of that kingdom. The King republishes, as it were, the old code, and adopts it as the basis of His law. He thus assumes the absolute right of determining precedence and dignity in that

kingdom. The sovereign is the “fountain of honor,” whose word ennobles.

Observe the merciful accuracy of the language. The breach of the commandments either in theory or in practice does not exclude from the kingdom, for it is, while realized on earth, a kingdom of sinful men aiming after holiness; but the smallest deflection from the law of right, in theory or in practice, does lower a man’s standing therein, inasmuch as it makes him less capable of that conformity to the King, and consequent nearness to Him, which determines greatness and smallness there. Dignity in the kingdom depends on Christ-likeness, and Christ-likeness depends on fulfilling, as He did, all righteousness. Small flaws are most dangerous because least noticeable. More Christians lose their chance of promotion in the kingdom by a multitude of little sins than by single great ones.

**Verse 20.** As the King has Himself by His perfect obedience fulfilled the law, His subjects likewise must, in their obedience, transcend the righteousness of those who best knew and most punctiliously kept it. Inward holiness is the essence of the character of all its subjects. How that holiness is to be ours is not here told, except in so far as it is hinted by the fact that it is regarded as the issue of the King’s fulfilling the law. These last words would have been terrible and excluding if they had stood alone. When they follow “I am come to fulfill,” they are a veiled gospel, implying that by His fulfilment the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us.

**What thought from Alexander MacLaren’s words stands out to you the most? Why?**

---

---

---

---

## DAY FIVE Application

Re-read Matthew 5:17-20 and consider the truths that you have learned this week. Seek to apply the message of Matthew 5:17-20 to your life.

**What thought or truth impacted you this week from your study of Matthew 5:17-20?**

---

---

---

---

The scribes and Pharisees of Jesus' day would have been the best that the world had to offer when it came to righteousness. They tried to keep the Law to the best of their ability. They were considered the most moralistic people around. In most people's minds, if anyone was qualified for the Messianic kingdom it would be them. **In our own culture, who would be some of the people that society would say are "good" and "holy," the ones definitely going to heaven?**

---

---

**How do you think people would react if Jesus said something like: "Unless you are 1000x more good and righteous than Billy Graham and Mother Teresa, you will never get into heaven"?**

---

---

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus raises the standard of righteousness to its original level, to the perfect character of God. You must be perfectly righteous to make it into God's kingdom.

**Have you acknowledged and recognized your own sin?**  Yes  No

**Do you realize that your own good works are not enough to get you into heaven?**  Yes  No

**Have you put your faith in Jesus Christ for your salvation?**  Yes  No  Unsure

Jesus took your sin on the cross so that He could give you His perfect righteousness. It is not your good works which get you into heaven, it is His good work on your behalf. This is the gospel. This is the message that Jesus is preparing people to receive in the Sermon on the Mount. None of us have perfectly obeyed the Law, but Jesus has. He has fulfilled its righteous requirements for us.

**If you have trusted in Jesus as your Savior, take time to thank God for His grace. Pray for someone you know that is still trying to earn God's salvation through their own good works.**

The person(s) that I prayed for today: \_\_\_\_\_

**If you are unsure if you have trusted Jesus as your Savior, then settle the issue now. Pray to God, acknowledge your sin, thank Him for the cross, and declare your faith in Him for salvation.**

*Dear God, I know I am a sinner.  
I know my sin deserves to be punished.  
I believe Christ died for me and rose from the grave.  
I trust Jesus alone as my Savior.  
Thank you for the gift of forgiveness and everlasting life.  
In Jesus' name, Amen.*

**SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR GROUP OR FAMILY DISCUSSION:**

The goal is not to get through all the questions but to spark discussion around the truth of Matthew 5:17-20. Use the questions below to interact together with what you learned.

- What is one of the earliest sins that you can remember committing (e.g., disobeying your parents, lying, stealing something, hitting someone, etc.)? When did you realize your action was wrong? How did you feel? How did you respond?
- When someone tells you that you have done something wrong, what is typically your first reaction? Defend yourself? Ignore them? Attack back? Blame your circumstances? Give a superficial apology? Why do you think it is so hard for us to admit our own sin and failures?
- How would you define righteousness?
- Can a person gain righteousness from obeying the Old Testament Law? If so, how?
- Jesus identified the scribes and the Pharisees as the religious people who would seem the most righteous to the people of His day. If Jesus were speaking in today's world, who do you think He would use as His example in Matthew 5:20?
- What do you think it means that Jesus fulfilled the Law and the Prophets?
- Did you discover anything new, interesting, or meaningful in your study of this passage this week? Or in your reading of Alexander MacLaren? If so, what?
- Share your testimony of how you came to trust in Jesus as your Savior. When did you realize your need? Who shared the gospel with you? How has your life changed since then?

---

## TRUE RIGHTEOUSNESS IN RELATIONSHIPS

### Matthew 5:21-26

---

#### DAY ONE Observation

Beginning in 5:21, Jesus begins to give the true interpretation of the Law. There are six sections within 5:21-48. Each section follows the same pattern: *You have heard... But I say to you...*

**Ask God to speak to your heart as you read Matthew 5:21-26. Mark words or phrases that stand out to you. Write down the main message or your thoughts next to each paragraph.**

<sup>21</sup> “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.’ <sup>22</sup> But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, ‘Raca!’ shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be in danger of hell fire.

<sup>23</sup> Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, <sup>24</sup> leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

<sup>25</sup> Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. <sup>26</sup> Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny. (NKJV)

**What thought or verse stands out to you in Matthew 5:21-26? Why?**

---

---

---

In these verses, Jesus interprets the sixth commandment in the Law: *Thou shalt not murder.*

**What was Jesus’ interpretation of this command (5:22)?** \_\_\_\_\_

---

The sixth command calls us to much more than just not physically killing someone. It calls us to the high value of human life and to the respect of each person as made in the image of God.

**How does Jesus apply God’s command (5:23-26)?** \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

**DAY TWO  
Meditation**

Quiet your heart and allow God to speak through His Word. Slowly read Matthew 5:23-24 several times. Reflect on each word. Meditate on them over and over until you memorize them.

*So if you are offering your gift on the altar,  
and there you remember that your brother or sister has something against you,  
leave your gift there in front of the altar.*

*First go and be reconciled with your brother or sister,  
and then come and offer your gift. (CSB)*

**Write down the observations that you can make from this passage, sketch out any images or thoughts that you have, or simply rewrite the passage below giving emphasis to key words.**

**Offer the passage back to God in the form of a personalized prayer.**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## DAY THREE Interpretation

In interpretation, you are digging deeper into the passage in order to better understand its meaning. A word study on a key word and/or looking up parallel passages can help you in your understanding.

Go to [blueletterbible.org](http://blueletterbible.org) and type “Matthew 5” into the “Search the Bible” box. Next click on Matthew 5:22 to bring up the verse in the Greek. Find the word “angry” and click on the Strong’s number (G3710) to bring up the Greek word, its definition, and its usage in other passages in the NT. In this particular case, click on G3709 under Strong’s definition to bring up the root word.

**What is the Greek word for “anger”?** \_\_\_\_\_ (Use the transliteration.)

**How many times is it used in the New Testament?** \_\_\_\_\_ (See KJV Translation Count.)

**What is its definition?** (See Outline of Biblical Usage. Also click on *Vine’s Expository Dictionary* and scroll down to the Notes section which describes the difference between *thumos* and *orge*.)

---

---

---

---

**Read the following passages about anger.** Mark key words or phrases as you read. Think about what Scripture says about the danger and motives behind human anger.

*And Abel also brought an offering—fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering He did not look with favor. So Cain was very **angry**, and his face was downcast. Then the Lord said to Cain, “Why are you **angry**? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it.” Now Cain said to his brother Abel, “Let’s go out to the field.” While they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him. (Genesis 4:4-8)*

*Be **angry**, and do not sin.  
Meditate within your heart on your bed, and be still. Selah  
Offer the sacrifices of righteousness,  
And put your trust in the Lord. (Psalm 4:4-5)*

*Refrain from **anger** and turn from wrath;  
Do not fret—it leads only to evil. (Psalm 37:8)*

*Make no friendship with an **angry** man,  
And with a furious man do not go,  
Lest you learn his ways  
And set a snare for your soul. (Proverbs 22:24-25)*

An **angry** person stirs up conflict,  
And a hot-tempered person commits many sins. (Proverbs 29:22)

Don't let your spirit rush to be **angry**,  
For **anger** abides in the heart of fools. (Ecclesiastes 7:9)

"In your **anger** do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still **angry**,  
and do not give the devil a foothold. (Ephesians 4:26-27)

Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to **anger**;  
for the **anger** of man does not produce the righteousness of God. (James 1:19-20)

**Write down five things that you learn about anger according to these verses.**

---

---

---

---

---

---

Anger in our hearts has a way of manifesting itself in our words and in our actions. In Matthew 5:22, Jesus describes the danger of words spoken to someone out of anger. Such anger in our words shows our disregard and hatred for others and our desire to attack them at their core.

Go to [blueletterbible.org](http://blueletterbible.org) and type "Matthew 5" into the "Search the Bible" box. Next click on Matthew 5:22 to bring up the verse in the Greek. Find the word "Raca" and click on the Strong's number (G4469) to bring up the Greek word, its definition, and its usage in the New Testament.

**What is the Greek word for "Raca"?** \_\_\_\_\_ (Use the transliteration.)

**How many times is it used in the New Testament?** \_\_\_\_\_ (See KJV Translation Count.)

**What is its definition?** (See Outline of Biblical Usage and Strong's definition.)

---

---

**Reflect on these two verses:**

*Death and life are in the power of the tongue.* (Proverbs 18:21)

*What comes out of the mouth comes from the heart, and this defiles a person.* (Matthew 15:18)

## DAY FOUR Devotion

Read the following excerpt from William Barclay's *Daily Study Bible*. **William Barclay** (1907-78) was a Scottish minister, Greek scholar, and theological professor at the University of Glasgow. Though liberal in many of his beliefs, his *Daily Study Bible* is considered a masterpiece of scholarly and biblical insight.

### The New Authority (Matthew 5:21-48)

This section of the teaching of Jesus is one of the most important in the whole NT. Before we deal with it in detail, there are certain general things about it which we must note.

In it Jesus speaks with an authority which no other man had ever dreamed of assuming: the authority which Jesus assumed always amazed those who came into contact with him. Right at the beginning of his ministry, after he had been teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum, it is said of his hearers: "They were astonished at his teaching; for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes" (Mark 1:22). Matthew concludes his account of the Sermon on the Mount with the words: "And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching for he taught them as one who had authority and not as their Scribes" (7:28-29).

It is difficult for us to realize just how shocking a thing this authority of Jesus must have seemed to the Jews who listened to him. To the Jew the Law was absolutely holy and absolutely divine; it is impossible to exaggerate the place that the Law had in their reverence. "The Law," said Aristeeus, "is holy and has been given by God." "Only Moses' decrees," said Philo, "are everlasting, unchangeable and unshakable, as signed by nature herself with her seal." The Rabbis said, "Those who deny that the Law is from heaven have no part in the world to come." ... The first act of every synagogue service was the taking of the rolls of the Law from the ark in which they were stored, and the carrying of them round the congregation, that the congregation might show their reverence for them...

The great Jewish teachers had always had characteristic phrases in their teaching. The characteristic phrase of the prophet was: "Thus saith the Lord." He claimed no personal authority at all; his only claim was that what he spoke God had told him. The characteristic phrase of the Scribe and the Rabbi was: "There is a teaching that..." The Scribe or the Rabbi never dared to express even an opinion of his own unless he could buttress it with supporting quotations from the great teachers of the past. Independence was the last quality that he would claim. But to Jesus a statement required no authority other than the fact that he made it. He was his own authority.

Clearly one of two things must be true—either Jesus was mad, or he was unique; either he was a megalomaniac or else he was the son of God...

The amazing thing about authority is that it is self-evidencing. No sooner does a man begin to teach than we know at once whether or not he has the right to teach. Authority is like an atmosphere about a man. He does not need to claim it; he either has it, or he has not.

Orchestras which played under Toscanini, the master conductor, said that as soon as he mounted the rostrum they could feel a wave of authority flowing from him. Julian Duguid tells how he once crossed the Atlantic in the same ship as Sir Wilfred Grenfell; and he says that when Grenfell came into one of the ship's public rooms, he could tell (without even looking round) that he had entered the room, for a wave of authority went out from the man. It was supremely so with Jesus.

Jesus took the highest wisdom of men and corrected it, because he was who he was. He did not need to argue; it was sufficient for him to speak. No one can honestly face Jesus and honestly listen to him without feeling that this is God's last word beside which all other words are inadequate, and all other wisdom out of date.

But startling as was Jesus' accent of authority, the standard which he put before men was more startling yet. Jesus said that in God's sight it was not only the man who committed murder who was guilty, the man who was angry with his brother was also guilty and liable to judgment. It was not only the man who committed adultery who was guilty; the man who allowed the unclean desire to settle in his heart was also guilty...

It may be that we have never struck a man; but who can say that he never wished to strike a man? It may be that we have never committed adultery; but who can say that he has never experienced the desire for the forbidden thing? It was Jesus' teaching that thoughts are just as important as deeds, and that it is not enough not to commit a sin; the only thing that is enough is not to wish to commit it. It was Jesus' teaching that a man is not judged only by his deeds, but is judged even more by the desires which never emerged in deeds. By the world's standards a man is a good man, if he never does a forbidden thing. The world is not concerned to judge his thoughts. By Jesus' standards, a man is not a good man until he never even desires to do a forbidden thing. Jesus is intensely concerned with a man's thoughts...

If that be so, then God alone can judge men. We see only a man's outward actions; God alone sees the secret of his heart. And there will be many a man, whose outward actions are a model of rectitude, whose inward thoughts stand condemned before God. There

is many a man who can stand the judgment of men, which is bound to be a judgment of externals, but whose goodness collapses before the all-seeing eye of God.

And if that be so, it means that every one of us is in default; for there is none who can stand this judgment of God. Even if we have lived a life of outward moral perfection, there is none who can say that he never experienced the forbidden desire for the wrong things. For the inner perfection the only thing that is enough for a man to say is that he himself is dead and Christ lives in him. "I have been crucified with Christ," said Paul. "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (Galatians 2:19-20).

The new standard kills all pride, and forces us to Jesus Christ who alone can enable us to rise to that standard which he himself has set before us.

### **The Forbidden Anger (5:21-22)**

Here is the first example of the new standard which Jesus takes. The ancient law had laid it down: "You shall not kill" (Exodus 20:13); but Jesus lays it down that even anger against a brother is forbidden. In the King James Version, the man who is condemned is the man who is angry with his brother *without a cause*. But the words without a cause are not found in any of the great manuscripts, and this is nothing less than a total prohibition of anger. It is not enough not to strike a man; the only thing that is enough is not even to wish to strike him; not even to have a hard feeling against him within the heart.

In this passage Jesus is arguing as a Rabbi might argue. He is showing that he was skillful in using the debating methods which the wise men of his time were in the habit of using. There is in this passage a neat gradation of anger, and an answering neat gradation of punishment.

**There is first the man who is angry with his brother.** The verb here used is *orgizesthai*. In Greek there are two words for anger. There is *thumos*... It is the anger which quickly blazes up and which just as quickly dies down. It is an anger which rises speedily and which just as speedily passes. There is *orge*... It is the long-lived anger; it is the anger of the man who nurses his wrath to keep it warm; it is the anger over which a person broods, and which he will not allow to die.

That anger is liable to the judgment court. The judgment court is the local village council which dispensed justice. That court was composed of the local village elders, and varied in number from three in villages of fewer than one hundred and fifty inhabitants, to seven in larger towns and twenty-three in still bigger cities.

So, then, Jesus condemns all selfish anger. The Bible is clear that anger is forbidden. "The anger of man," said James, "does not work the righteousness of God" (1:20). Paul orders his people to put off all "anger, wrath, malice, slander" (Colossians 3:8). Even the highest pagan thought saw the folly of anger. Cicero said that when anger entered into the scene "nothing could be done rightly and nothing sensibly." In a vivid phrase Seneca called anger "a brief insanity."

So Jesus forbids forever the anger which broods, the anger which will not forget, the anger which refuses to be pacified, the anger which seeks revenge. If we are to obey Jesus, all anger must be banished from life, and especially that anger which lingers too long.

**Then Jesus goes on to speak of two cases where anger turns into insulting words.** The Jewish teachers forbade such anger and such words. They spoke of "oppression in words," and of "the sin of insult." They had a saying, Anger in a man's heart, and anger in a man's speech are equally forbidden.

First, the man who calls his brother *Raca* is condemned. *Raca* is an almost untranslatable word, because it describes a tone of voice more than anything else. Its whole accent is the accent of contempt. To call a man *Raca* was to call him a brainless idiot, a silly fool, an empty-headed blunderer. It is the word of one who despises another with an arrogant contempt.

There is a Rabbinic tale of a certain Rabbi, Simon ben Eleazar. He was coming from his teacher's house, and he was feeling uplifted at the thought of his own scholarship and erudition and goodness. A very ill-favored passer-by gave him a greeting. The Rabbi did not return the greeting, but said, "You *Raca*! How ugly you are! Are all the men of your town as ugly as you?" "That," said the passer-by, "I do not know. Go and tell the Maker who created me how ugly is the creature he has made." So there the sin of contempt was rebuked...

There is no sin quite so unchristian as the sin of contempt. There is a contempt which comes from pride of birth, and snobbery is in truth an ugly thing. There is a contempt which comes from position and from money, and pride in material things is also an ugly thing. There is a contempt which comes from knowledge, and of all snobberies intellectual snobbery is the hardest to understand, for no wise man was ever impressed with anything else than his own ignorance. We should never look with contempt on any man for whom Christ died.

Then Jesus goes on to speak of the man who calls his brother *moros*. *Moros* also means fool, but the man who is *moros* is the man who is a moral fool... To call a man *moros* was not to criticize his mental ability; it was to cast aspersions on his moral character; it was to take his name and reputation from him, and to brand him as a loose-living, immoral person.

So Jesus says that he who destroys his brother's name and reputation is liable to the severest judgment of all, the judgment of the fire of *Gehenna*.

*Gehenna* is a word with a history; often the RSV translates it "hell." ...It really means the Valley of Hinnom. The Valley of Hinnom is a valley to the southwest of Jerusalem. It was notorious as the place where Ahaz had introduced into Israel the fire worship of the heathen God Molech, to whom little children were burned in the fire. "He burned incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and burned his sons as an offering" (2 Chr. 28:3). Josiah, the reforming king, had stamped out that worship, and had ordered that the valley should be forever after an accursed place... In consequence of this the Valley of Hinnom became the place where the refuse of Jerusalem was cast out and destroyed. It was a kind of public incinerator. Always the fire smoldered in it, and a pall of thick smoke lay over it, and it bred a loathsome kind of worm which was hard to kill (Mark 9:44-48). So *Gehenna*, the Valley of Hinnom, became identified in people's minds with all that was accursed and filthy, the place where useless and evil things were destroyed. That is why it became a synonym for the place of God's destroying power, for hell.

So, then, Jesus insists that the gravest thing of all is to destroy a man's reputation and to take his good name away. No punishment is too severe for the malicious tale-bearer, or the gossip over the teacups which murders people's reputations. Such conduct, in the most literal sense, is a hell-deserving sin...

### **The Insurmountable Barrier (5:23-24)**

When Jesus said this, he was doing no more than recall the Jews to a principle which they well knew and ought never to have forgotten. The idea behind sacrifice was quite simple. If

a man did a wrong thing, that action disturbed the relationship between him and God, and the sacrifice was meant to be the cure which restored that relationship.

But two most important things have to be noted. First, it was never held that sacrifice could atone for deliberate sin, for what the Jews called "the sin of a high hand." If a man committed a sin unawares, if he was swept into sin in a moment of passion when self-control broke, then sacrifice was effective; but if a man deliberately, defiantly, callously and open-eyed committed sin, then sacrifice was powerless to atone.

Second, to be effective, sacrifice had to include confession of sin and true penitence; and true penitence involved the attempt to rectify any consequences sin might have had. The Day of Atonement was held to make atonement for the sins of the whole nation, but the Jews were quite clear that not even the sacrifices of the Day of Atonement could avail for a man unless he was first reconciled to his neighbor. The breach between man and God could not be healed until the breach between man and man was healed. If a man was making a sin-offering to atone for a theft, the offering was held to be completely unavailing until the thing stolen had been restored; and, if it was discovered that the thing had not been restored, then the sacrifice had to be destroyed as unclean and burned outside the Temple...

In some sense sacrifice was substitutionary. The symbol of this was that, as the victim was about to be sacrificed, the worshipper placed his hands upon the beast's head, and pressed them down upon it, as if to transfer his own guilt to it. As he did so he said, "I entreat, O Lord; I have sinned, I have done perversely, I have rebelled; I have committed ... (here the sacrificer specified his sins); but I return in penitence, and let this be for my covering."...

Jesus is quite clear about this basic fact—we cannot be right with God until we are right with men; we cannot hope for forgiveness until we have confessed our sin, not only to God, but also to men, and until we have done our best to remove the practical consequences of it. We sometimes wonder why there is a barrier between us and God; we sometimes wonder why our prayers seem unavailing. The reason may well be that we ourselves have erected that barrier, through being at variance with our fellow-men, or because we have wronged someone and have done nothing to put things right.

### **Make Peace in Time (5:25-26)**

Here Jesus is giving the most practical advice; he is telling men to get trouble sorted out in time, before it piles up still worse trouble for the future.

Jesus draws a picture of two opponents on their way together to the law courts; and he tells them to get things settled and straightened out before they reach the court, for, if they do not, and the law takes its course, there will be still worse trouble for one of them at least in the days to come.

The picture of two opponents on the way to court together seems to us very strange, and indeed rather improbable. But in the ancient world it often happened. Under Greek law there was a process of arrest called *apagoge* which means summary arrest. In it the plaintiff himself arrested the defendant. He caught him by his robe at the throat, and held the robe in such a way that, if the man

struggled, he would strangle himself. Obviously the causes for which such an arrest was legal were very few and the male-factor had to be caught red-handed...

Again and again it is the experience of life that, if a quarrel, or a difference, or a dispute is not healed immediately, it can go on breeding worse and worse trouble as time goes on. Bitterness breeds bitterness. It has often happened that a quarrel between two people has descended to their families, and has been inherited by future generations, and has in the end succeeded in splitting a church or a society in two.

If at the very beginning one of the parties had had the grace to apologize or to admit fault, a grievous situation need never have arisen. If ever we are at variance with someone else, we must get the situation put right straight away. It may mean that we must be humble enough to confess that we were wrong and to make apology; it may mean that, even if we were in the right, we have to take the first step towards healing the breach. When personal relations go wrong, in nine cases out of ten immediate action will mend them; but if that immediate action is not taken, they will continue to deteriorate, and the bitterness will spread in an ever-widening circle...

What Jesus is saying is: “If you want happiness in time, and happiness in eternity, never leave an unreconciled quarrel or an unhealed breach between yourself and your brother man. Act immediately to remove the barriers which anger has raised.”

**What thought from William Barclay’s words stands out to you the most? Why?**

---

---

---

---

## DAY FIVE Application

Re-read Matthew 5:21-26 and consider the truths that you have learned this week. Seek to apply the message of Matthew 5:21-26 to your life.

**What thought or truth impacted you this week from your study of Matthew 5:21-26?**

---

---

---

---

One of the most common emotions that we deal with in life is anger. Usually we justify it. We like to think that all of our anger is “righteous anger.” But more often than not, our anger is rooted in fear, sorrow, selfishness, or our own inner conflicts.

*Do you know where your fights and arguments come from? They come from the selfish desires that war within you. (James 4:1)*

**Think of the last conflict that you had with someone. You can probably clearly see what they did wrong. But can you see your own contribution? In what ways did you add to the conflict?**



---

---

We like to think that we are pretty righteous in God’s eyes, but the way we treat others is a reflection of our true heart before the Lord. Each person is made in God’s image. And when we mistreat others, slander them, gossip about them, or hurt them, we are attacking God’s image.

- Is there someone that you have recently attacked with your words?  Yes  No
- Is there someone that has been hurt or offended by something you did?  Yes  No
- If so, have you asked for their forgiveness or sought reconciliation with them?  Yes  No

**If you truly saw every individual as made in the image of God and a priceless treasure in His eyes, how would it change the way you treat them? Speak to them? Talk about them?**

---

---

Ask God to search your heart and reveal any bitterness or unresolved conflicts deep inside you. Make it a priority to seek peace with others as much as it is possible (Romans 12:18).



### **SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR GROUP OR FAMILY DISCUSSION:**

The goal is not to get through all the questions but to spark discussion around the truth of Matthew 5:21-26. Use the questions below to interact together with what you learned.

- Talk about a time when you got really angry and did something stupid. What did you learn from this experience?
- What do you typically do when you get angry? Internalize it? Sulk? Complain? Criticize? Withdraw? Explode?
- How does anger and verbal slander violate the heart of the sixth commandment—*Thou shalt not murder*?
- Read the D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones' quote below. Do you agree or disagree? Why?
- If you were to examine your words this week, what would they say about your heart?
- Why do you think Jesus says that you should seek reconciliation with another person whom you may have hurt before you approach God in worship?
- What makes seeking reconciliation with another person so difficult?
- Did you discover anything new, interesting, or meaningful in your study of this passage this week? Or in your reading of William Barclay? If so, what?
- Share about a time when you sought reconciliation with another person and things were resolved between you. What did you learn from this experience? How did it impact you?

*There are ways in which men can be destroyed short of murder.*

*We can destroy a man's reputation.*

*We can shake somebody else's confidence in him  
by whispering criticism or deliberate fault-finding.*

*Killing does not only mean destroying life physically,  
it means still more trying to destroy the spirit and the soul,  
destroying the person in any shape or form.*

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

---

**TRUE RIGHTEOUSNESS IN MARRIAGE**  
**Matthew 5:27-32**

---

**DAY ONE**  
**Observation**

In Matthew 5:27-32, Jesus continues His interpretation of the Law, showing how it judges not only our actions but also our thoughts. Here, He addresses the seventh command—*Thou shalt not commit adultery*.

**Ask God to speak to your heart as you read Matthew 5:27-32. Mark words or phrases that stand out to you. Write down the main message or your thoughts next to each paragraph.**

<sup>27</sup> “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ <sup>28</sup> But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

<sup>29</sup> If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. <sup>30</sup> And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.

<sup>31</sup> “Furthermore it has been said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ <sup>32</sup> But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery. (NKJV)

**What thought or verse stands out to you in Matthew 5:27-32? Why?**

---

---

---

**What was Jesus’ interpretation of the seventh command (5:28)?** \_\_\_\_\_

---

**What does Jesus say to do if something in your life is continually causing you to sin (5:29-30)?**

---

---

**What is the exception that Jesus gives for divorce (5:31-32)?** \_\_\_\_\_

**How important was marriage in Jesus’ eyes?** \_\_\_\_\_

**DAY TWO  
Meditation**

Quiet your heart and allow God to speak through His Word. Slowly read Matthew 5:27-30 several times. Reflect on each word. Meditate on them over and over until you memorize them.

*“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’  
But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully  
has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*

*If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away.  
It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.*

*And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away.  
It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell. (NIV)*

**Write down the observations that you can make from this passage, sketch out any images or thoughts that you have, or simply rewrite the passage below giving emphasis to key words.**

**Offer the passage back to God in the form of a personalized prayer.**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## DAY THREE Interpretation

In interpretation, you are digging deeper into the passage in order to better understand its meaning. A word study on a key word and/or looking up parallel passages can help you in your understanding.

Matthew 5:31-32 is a key (and controversial) passage on marriage and divorce. The Jewish scribes basically taught that *whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce* (5:31). Their teaching was based exclusively on Deuteronomy 24:1-4. **Read this passage below.**

*If a man marries a woman, but she becomes displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her, he may write her a divorce certificate, hand it to her, and send her away from his house. <sup>2</sup> If after leaving his house she goes and becomes another man's wife, <sup>3</sup> and the second man hates her, writes her a divorce certificate, hands it to her, and sends her away from his house or if he dies, <sup>4</sup> the first husband who sent her away may not marry her again after she has been defiled, because that would be detestable to the Lord. You must not bring guilt on the land the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance.*

**What did the scribes leave out or not emphasize in their teaching of Deuteronomy 24:1-4?**

---

---

---

---

**Read the following passages and write down what you learn about marriage from them.**

*Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. (Genesis 2:24)*

*Another thing you do: You flood the Lord's altar with tears. You weep and wail because he no longer looks with favor on your offerings or accepts them with pleasure from your hands. You ask, "Why?" It is because the Lord is the witness between you and the wife of your youth. You have been unfaithful to her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant. Has not the one God made you? You belong to him in body and spirit. And what does the one God seek? Godly offspring. So be on your guard, and do not be unfaithful to the wife of your youth. "The man who hates and divorces his wife," says the Lord, the God of Israel, "does violence to the one he should protect," says the Lord Almighty. "So be on your guard, and do not be unfaithful." (Malachi 2:13-16)*

*Some Pharisees came to Him to test Him. They asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?" "Haven't you read," He replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate." "Why then," they asked, "did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?" Jesus replied, "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery." (Matthew 19:3-8)*

**What do you learn about marriage from these verses?**

---

---

---

---

---

Divorce is a very difficult topic to address not only because of the challenge in interpreting some passages of Scripture but also because of the emotional impact that it has on everyone involved.

Traditionally there have been three primary views of divorce and remarriage in church history:

1. **The Bible prohibits all divorce.** The “except for sexual immorality” clause in Matthew 5:32 only dealt with incestuous marriages that were not legitimate in the first place.
2. **The Bible allows for divorce** in cases of sexual immorality but it does not give permission for remarriage after divorce.
3. **The Bible allows for divorce and remarriage** in cases of sexual immorality or desertion by an unbelieving spouse (cf. 1 Corinthians 7:10-15).

Go to [blueletterbible.org](http://blueletterbible.org) and type “Matthew 5” into the “Search the Bible” box. Next click on Matthew 5:32 to bring up the verse in the Greek. Find the word “fornication” and click on the Strong’s number (G4202) to bring up the Greek word, its definition, and its usage in the NT.

**What is the Greek word for “fornication”?** \_\_\_\_\_ (Use the transliteration.)

**How many times is it used in the New Testament?** \_\_\_\_\_ (See KJV Translation Count.)

**What is its definition?** (See Outline of Biblical Usage and Strong’s definition.)

---

---

---

**Read the following excerpt from John MacArthur’s commentary on Matthew 5.**

The condition **except for unchastity** (5:32) is the only grounds for divorce that Jesus will recognize. Some say that this "exception clause" allows divorce for Jews only, and only in the case of the sin of marrying a near

relative, a practice forbidden in Lev. 18. They point out that the exception clause appears only in Matthew. Of course, God has only to say a thing once for it to be true....

God never condoned divorce, because what he joins together is not to be separated by man (Matt. 19:6). Adultery, another reality that God never intended, is the only thing that can break the bond of marriage. In fact, under the Old Testament law, adultery would necessarily dissolve a marriage, because the guilty party was put to death (Lev. 20:10).

Because Jesus specifically mentions divorce being permissible on the ground of adultery (Matt. 5:32; 19:9), and because He also specifically says that He did not come to contradict or annul the least part of the law (5:18-19), it seems evident that sometime during Israel's history divorce was allowed to take the place of execution as legitimate penalty for adultery...

God divorced Israel and Judah for spiritual adultery (Jer. 3:8) rather than put them to death. Also Joseph, a righteous man, was prepared to divorce Mary rather than stone her for her presumed adultery (Matt. 1:19). ...Apart from the death penalty, divorce became the divine alternative, tolerated only because of the hardness of the human heart, as Jesus states in Matthew 19:8.

Divorce was never *commanded*, even for adultery. ...It was a last resort—to be used only when unrepentant immorality had exhausted the patience of the innocent

spouse, and the guilty one would not be restored.

If God permitted divorce rather than death as a merciful concession to man's sinfulness, why would He not also permit remarriage, since remarriage would be perfectly allowable under the original law of death for the adulterer?

**Unchastity** (*porneia*) refers to any illicit sexual intercourse, whether or not either of the parties is married. It was a broad term that included adultery... Because Matthew 5:31-32 focuses on marriage and divorce, the primary **unchastity** involved here would be adultery. But *porneia* also included incest, prostitution, homosexuality, and bestiality—all of the sexual acts for which the Old Testament demanded the death penalty (Lev. 20:10-14). In other words, any of those corrupt and perverted sexual activities was a permissible ground for divorce.

Jesus does not advocate divorce in such cases, much less demand it. He simply says that divorce and remarriage on any other grounds always leads to adultery. As God, Jesus hates divorce (Mal. 2:16), but by implication He acknowledges that there are times when it does not result in adultery. The innocent party who has made every effort to maintain the marriage is free to remarry if his or her spouse insists on continued adultery or divorce.

**What are your thoughts after reading this excerpt from John MacArthur?**

---

---

---

---

---

## DAY FOUR Devotion

Read the following excerpt from William Barclay's *Daily Study Bible*. **William Barclay** (1907-78) was a Scottish minister, Greek scholar, and theological professor at the University of Glasgow. Though liberal in many of his beliefs, his *Daily Study Bible* is considered a masterpiece of scholarly and biblical insight.

### The Forbidden Desire (Matthew 5:27-28)

Here is Jesus' second example of the new standard. The Law laid it down: *You shall not commit adultery* (Ex. 20:14). So serious a view did the Jewish teachers take of adultery that the guilty parties could be punished by nothing less than death (Leviticus 20:10); but once again Jesus lays it down that not only the forbidden action, but also the forbidden thought is guilty in the sight of God.

It is necessary that we should understand what Jesus is saying here. He is not speaking of the natural, normal desire, which is part of human instinct and human nature. According to the literal meaning of the Greek the man who is condemned is the man who looks at a woman with the deliberate intention of lusting after her. The man who is condemned is the man who deliberately uses his eyes to awaken his lust, the man who looks in such a way that passion is awakened and desire deliberately stimulated.

The Jewish Rabbis well knew the way in which the eyes can be used to stimulate the wrong desire. They had their sayings. "The eyes and the hand are the two brokers of sin." "Eye and heart are the two handmaids of sin." "Passions lodge only in him who sees." As someone has said, "There is an internal desire of which adultery is only the fruit."

In a tempting world there are many things which are deliberately designed to excite desire—books, pictures, advertisements. The man whom Jesus here condemns is the man who deliberately uses his eyes to stimulate his desires; the man who finds a strange delight in things which waken the desire for

the forbidden thing. To the pure all things are pure. But the man whose heart is defiled can look at any scene and find something in it to titillate and excite the wrong desire.

### The Surgical Cure (5:29-30)

Here Jesus makes a great and a surgical demand: he insists that anything which is a cause of, or a seduction to, sin should be completely cut out of life.

The word he uses for a stumbling-block is interesting. It is the word *skandalon*. *Skandalon* is a form of the word *skandalgithron*, which means the bait-stick in a trap. It was the stick or arm on which the bait was fixed and which operated the trap to catch the animal lured to its destruction. So the word came to mean anything which causes a man's destruction.

Behind it there are two pictures. First, there is the picture of a hidden stone in a path against which a man may stumble, or of a cord stretched across a path, deliberately put there to make a man trip. Second, there is the picture of a pit dug in the ground and deceptively covered over with a thin layer of branches or of turf, and so arranged that, when the unwary traveler sets his foot on it, he is immediately thrown into the pit. The *skandalon*, the stumbling-block is something which trips a man up, something which sends him crashing to destruction, something which lures him to his own ruin.

Of course, the words of Jesus are not to be taken with a crude literalism. What they mean is that anything which helps to seduce us to sin is to be ruthlessly rooted out of life. If there is a habit which can be seduction to evil,

if there is an association which can be the cause of wrongdoing, if there is a pleasure which could turn out to be our ruin, then that thing must be surgically excised from our life.

Coming as it does immediately after the passage which deals with forbidden thoughts and desires, this passage compels us to ask: How shall we free ourselves from these unclean desires and defiling thoughts? It is the fact of experience that thoughts and pictures come unbidden into our minds, and it is the hardest thing on earth to shut the door to them.

There is one way in which these forbidden thoughts and desires cannot be dealt with—and that is to sit down and to say, *I will not think of these things*. The more we say, *I will not think of such and such a thing*, the more our thoughts are in fact concentrated on it.

The outstanding example in history of the wrong way to deal with such thoughts and desires was the hermits and the monks in the desert in the time of the early Church. They were men who wished to free themselves from all earthly things, and especially of the desires of the body. To do so they went away into the Egyptian desert with the idea of living alone and thinking of nothing but God.

The most famous of them all was Saint Anthony. He lived the hermit's life; he fasted; he did without sleep; he tortured his body. For thirty-five years he lived in the desert, and these thirty-five years were a non-stop battle, without respite, with his temptations. The story is told in his biography. "First of all the devil tried to lead him away from discipline, whispering to him the remembrance of his wealth, cares for his sister, claims of kindred, love of money, love of glory, the various pleasures of the table, and the other relaxations of life, and, at last, the difficulty of virtue and the labor of it... The

one would suggest foul thoughts. and the other counter them with prayers; the one fire him with lust, the other, as one who seemed to blush, fortify his body with prayers, faith and fasting. The devil one night even took, upon him the shape of a woman, and imitated all her acts simply to beguile Anthony." So for thirty-five years the struggle went on.

The plain fact is that, if ever anyone was asking for trouble, Anthony and his friends were. It is the inevitable law of human nature that the more a man says he will not think of something, the more that something will present itself to his thoughts. There are only two ways to defeat the forbidden thoughts.

The first way is by Christian action. The best way to defeat such thoughts is to do something, to fill life so full with Christian labor and Christian service that there is no time for these thoughts to enter in; to think so much of others that in the end we entirely forget ourselves; to rid ourselves of a diseased and morbid introspection by concentrating not on ourselves but on other people. The real cure for evil thoughts is good action.

The second way is to fill the mind with good thoughts. There is a famous scene in Barrie's Peter Pan. Peter is in the children's bedroom; they have seen him fly; and they wish to fly too. They have tried it from the floor and they have tried it from the beds and the result is failure. "How do you do it?" John asked. And Peter answered: "You just think lovely, wonderful thoughts and they lift you up in the air." The only way to defeat evil thoughts is to begin to think of something else.

If any man is harassed by thoughts of the forbidden and unclean things, he will certainly never defeat the evil things by withdrawing from life and saying, *I will not think of these things*. He can do so only by plunging into Christian action and Christian



thought. He will never do it by trying to save his own life; he can do it only by flinging his life away for others.

## **The Bond Not to Be Broken (5:31-32)**

### **1. Marriage amongst the Jews**

When Jesus laid down this law for marriage he laid it down against a very definite situation. There is no time in history when the marriage bond stood in greater peril of destruction than in the days when Christianity first came into this world. At that time the world was in danger of witnessing the almost total break-up of marriage and the collapse of the home.

Christianity had a double background. It had the background of the Jewish world, and of the world of the Romans and the Greeks. Let us look at Jesus' teaching against these two backgrounds.

Theoretically no nation ever had a higher ideal of marriage than the Jew had. Marriage was a sacred duty which a man was bound to undertake. He might delay or abstain from marriage for only one reason—to devote his whole time to the study of the Law. If a man refused to marry and to beget children he was said to have broken the positive commandment which bade men to be fruitful and to multiply, and he was said to have “lessened the image of God in the world,” and “to have slain his posterity.”

Ideally the Jew abhorred divorce. The voice of God had said, “I hate divorce” (Mal. 2:16). The Rabbis had the loveliest sayings: “We find that God is longsuffering to every sin except the sin of unchastity. Unchastity causes the glory of God to depart. Every Jew must surrender his life rather than commit idolatry, murder or adultery. The very altar sheds tears when a man divorces the wife of his youth.”

The tragedy was that practice fell so far short of the ideal. One thing vitiated the whole marriage relationship. The woman in the eyes of the law was a thing. She was at the absolute disposal of her father or of her husband. She had virtually no legal rights at all. To all intents and purposes a woman could not divorce her husband for any reason, and a man could divorce his wife for any cause at all. “A woman,” said the Rabbinic law, “may be divorced with or without her will; but a man only with his will.”

The matter was complicated by the fact that the Jewish law of divorce was very simple in its expression and very debatable in its meaning. It is stated in Deuteronomy 24:1: “When a man takes a wife and marries her, if then she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a bill of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house.”

The process of divorce was extremely simple. The bill of divorcement simply ran:

*Let this be from me thy writ of divorce and letter of dismissal and deed of liberation, that thou may marry whatsoever man thou wilt.*

All that had to be done was to hand that document to the woman in the presence of two witnesses and she stood divorced.

Clearly the crux of this matter lies in the interpretation of the phrase *some indecency*. In all matters of Jewish law there were two schools. There was the school of Shammai, which was the strict, severe, austere school, and there was the school of Hillel which was the liberal, broad-minded, generous school. Shammai and his school defined some indecency as meaning unchastity and nothing but unchastity. “Let a wife be as mischievous as the wife of Ahab,” they said, “she cannot be divorced except for adultery.”

On the other hand, the school of Hillel defined some indecency, in the widest possible way. They said that it meant that a man could divorce his wife if she spoiled his dinner by putting too much salt in his food, if she went in public with her head uncovered, if she talked with men in the streets, if she was a brawling woman, if she spoke disrespectfully of her husband's parents in his presence, if she was troublesome or quarrelsome. Rabbi Akiba said that the phrase, *if she find no favor in his sight*, meant that a man might divorce his wife if he found a woman whom he considered to be more attractive than she.

Human nature being as it is, it is easy to see which school would have the greater influence. In the time of Jesus, divorce had grown easier and easier, so that a situation had arisen in which girls were actually unwilling to marry, because marriage was so insecure.

When Jesus said this, he was not speaking as some theoretical idealist; he was speaking as a practical reformer. He was seeking to deal with a situation in which the structure of family life was collapsing, in which national morals were becoming ever more lax...

## 2. Marriage amongst the Greeks

A. W. Verrall, the great classical scholar, said that one of the chief diseases from which ancient civilization died was a low view of women. The first thing which wrecked the marriage situation among the Greeks was the fact that relationships outside marriage carried no stigma whatsoever, and were in fact the accepted and the expected thing. Such relationships brought not the slightest discredit; they were part of the ordinary routine of life. Demosthenes laid it down as the accepted practice of life: "We have courtesans for the sake of pleasure; we have concubines for the sake of daily cohabitation; we have wives for the purpose of having children

legitimately, and of having a faithful guardian for all our household affairs." ...Relationships outside marriage were the ordinary and the conventional thing.

The Greek view of marriage was an extraordinary paradox. The Greek demanded that the respectable woman should live such a life of seclusion that she could never even appear on the street alone, and that she did not even have her meals in the apartments of the men. She had no part even in social life. From his wife the Greek demanded the most complete moral purity; for himself he demanded the utmost immoral license. To put it bluntly, the Greeks married a wife for domestic security, but found their pleasure elsewhere...

So, then, in Greece an extraordinary situation arose. The Temple of Aphrodite at Corinth had a thousand priestesses, who were sacred courtesans; they came down to the streets of Corinth at evening time so that it became a proverb: "Not every man can afford a journey to Corinth." This amazing alliance of religion with prostitution can be seen in an almost incredible way in the fact that Solon was the first to allow the introduction of prostitutes into Athens and the building of brothels, and with the profits of the brothels a new temple was built to Aphrodite the goddess of love. The Greeks saw nothing wrong in the building of a temple with the proceeds of prostitution...

In Greece we see a whole social system based on relationships outside marriage; we see that these relationships were accepted as natural and normal, and not in the least blameworthy; we see that these relationships could, in fact, become the dominant thing in a man's life. We see an amazing situation in which Greek men kept their wives absolutely secluded in a compulsory purity, while they themselves found their real pleasure and their real life in relationships outside marriage.

The second thing which vitiated the situation in Greece was that divorce required no legal process whatsoever. All that a man had to do was to dismiss his wife in the presence of two witnesses. The one saving clause was that he must return her dowry intact.

It is easy to see what an incredible novelty the Christian teaching about chastity and fidelity in marriage was in a civilization like that.

### 3. Marriage amongst the Romans

The history of the development of the marriage situation amongst the Romans is the history of tragedy. The whole of Roman religion and society was originally founded on the home. The basis of the Roman commonwealth was the *patria potestas*, the father's power; the father had literally the power of life and death over his family. A Roman son never came of age so long as his father was alive. He might be a consul; he might have reached the highest honor and office the state could offer but so long as his father was alive he was still within his father's power.

To the Roman the home was everything. The Roman matron was not secluded like her Greek counterpart. She took her full part in life. "Marriage," said Modestinus, the Latin jurist, "is a life-long fellowship of all divine and human rights." Prostitutes, of course, there were, but they were held in contempt and to associate with them was dishonorable. There was, for instance, a Roman magistrate who was assaulted in a house of ill-fame, and who refused to prosecute or go to

law about the case, because to do so would have been to admit that he had been in such a place. So high was the standard of Roman morality that for the first 500 years of the commonwealth there was not one single recorded case of divorce. The first man to divorce his wife was Spurius Carvilius Ruga in the year 234 BC, and he did so because she was childless and he desired a child.

Then there came the Greeks. In the military and the imperial sense Rome conquered Greece; but in the moral and the social sense Greece conquered Rome. By the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C., Greek morals had begun to infiltrate into Rome, and the descent was catastrophic. Divorce became as common as marriage. Seneca speaks of women who were married to be divorced and who were divorced to be married. He tells of women who identified the years, not by the names of the consuls, but by the names of their husbands... Marriage had become nothing more than an unfortunate necessity. There was a cynical Roman jest: "Marriage brings only two happy days—the day when the husband first clasps his wife to his breast, and the day when he lays her in the tomb."

There lay the Roman tragedy, what Lecky called "that outburst of ungovernable and almost frantic depravity which followed upon the contact with Greece." Again it is easy to see with what a shock the ancient world must have heard the demands of Christian chastity... With Christianity there had come into the world an ideal of chastity of which men did not dream.

**What thought from William Barclay's words stands out to you the most? Why?**

---

---

---

---

**DAY FIVE**  
**Application**

Re-read Matthew 5:27-32 and consider the truths that you have learned this week. Seek to apply the message of Matthew 5:27-32 to your life.

**What thought or truth impacted you this week from your study of Matthew 5:27-32?**

---

---

---

---



The marriage bond is to be the strongest human bond on earth. If it fails, then all other relationships are impacted. If we can't remain committed to the one person that we voluntarily and solemnly pledge lifelong commitment to, then no relationship is secure.

Yet, as Jesus said, the *hardness of the human heart* (Matt. 19:8) often means that marriages are neglected, discarded, and violated by one party or even by both.

Regardless of whether you are married or not, God calls us to a heart of purity.

**Evaluate your eyes. What did you feed your mind this week through the lens of your eyes?**

---

---

Is there something that is consistently pulling you into sin and into lustful desires (i.e., internet sites, TV shows, smartphone apps, etc.)? If so, are you willing to remove them from your life?

**Write down what you can specifically do to pursue greater purity in your thought life.**

---

---

**If you are married**, take time this week to evaluate your marriage. How can you strengthen your marriage bond? What can you do this week to renew your commitment to your spouse?

**If you are single**, offer your mind and body to the Lord. Let Him be your greatest love and security. What can you do this week to strengthen your relationship with other believers in Christ?

**If you are widowed or divorced**, take time to reflect on God's goodness and grace. Allow Him to heal any hurts or wounds in your heart. What can you do this week to find deeper peace in Him?

## SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR GROUP OR FAMILY DISCUSSION:

The goal is not to get through all the questions but to spark discussion around the truth of Matthew 5:27-32. Use the questions below to interact together with what you learned.

- How would you describe your parents' marriage? What did you learn about marriage (or what did you not learn about marriage) from their example?
- What do you remember most about your marriage ceremony? Or what marriage ceremony have you seen that particularly impressed or impacted you? Why?
- Read the traditional marriage vow. *I do take you to be my lawfully wedded husband/wife; to have and to hold; from this day forward; for better or for worse; for richer or for poorer; in sickness and in health; until death do us part. With God as my witness; I give you this promise.* What stands out to you in this vow? What does it say about us as individuals or as a society when this vow is routinely broken?
- How is lust a violation of the seventh commandment: *Thou shalt not commit adultery?*
- What do you think Jesus means when He says to gouge out your eye or cut off your hand if it is causing you to sin? What would this look like in a practical sense?
- How has divorce impacted you (whether it is yourself, your parents, or someone else)?
- Did you discover anything new, interesting, or meaningful in your study of this passage this week? Or in your reading of William Barclay? If so, what?
- Share one way that your group can help you or pray for you as you seek a stronger marriage bond and/or seek to live a deeper life of purity and peace in Christ.

*Christianity teaches that marriage is for life. There is, of course, a difference here between different Churches: some do not admit divorce at all; some allow it reluctantly in very special cases. It is a great pity that Christians should disagree about such a question; but for, an ordinary layman the thing to notice is that the Churches all agree with one another about marriage a great deal more than any of them agrees with the outside world. I mean, they all regard divorce as something like cutting up a living body, as a kind of surgical operation. Some of them think the operation so violent that it cannot be done at all; others admit it as a desperate remedy in extreme cases. They are all agreed that it is more like having both your legs cut off than it is like dissolving a business partnership or even deserting a regiment. What they all disagree with is the modern view that it is a simple readjustment of partners, to be made whenever people feel they are no longer in love with one another, or when either of them falls in love with someone else.*

C. S. Lewis

---

## TRUE RIGHTEOUSNESS IN WORDS & ACTIONS

### Matthew 5:33-48

---

#### **DAY ONE** **Observation**

In Matthew 5:33-48, Jesus continues His true interpretation of the Law and its demand for perfect righteousness. In this section, Jesus deals with how we speak, how we respond to mistreatment, and how we love.

**Ask God to speak to your heart as you read Matthew 5:33-48. Mark words or phrases that stand out to you. Write down the main message or your thoughts next to each paragraph.**

<sup>33</sup> “Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.’ <sup>34</sup> But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, <sup>35</sup> or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. <sup>36</sup> And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. <sup>37</sup> Let what you say be simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything more than this comes from evil.

<sup>38</sup> “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ <sup>39</sup> But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. <sup>40</sup> And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. <sup>41</sup> And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. <sup>42</sup> Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.

<sup>43</sup> “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ <sup>44</sup> But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, <sup>45</sup> so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. <sup>46</sup> For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? <sup>47</sup> And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?

<sup>48</sup> You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. (ESV)

**What thought or verse stands out to you in Matthew 5:33-48? Why?**

---



---



---



---

In this section of Jesus' sermon, He follows a similar pattern. He notes the traditional teaching of the scribes (*you have heard...*). He gives the true interpretation of the Law and its righteous requirements (*but I say to you...*). Then He gives a personal application of how they should live.

**Fill in the chart below.**

	<i>You Have Heard...</i>	<i>But I Say to You...</i>	<i>How You Should Live</i>
5:33-37			
5:38-42			
5:43-47			

**Which verse in this section of Jesus' sermon is the most challenging to you? Why?**

---



---

**Complete the following sentences based on Matthew 5:33-48.**

*When you speak, let your \_\_\_\_\_ be \_\_\_\_\_ and your \_\_\_\_\_ be \_\_\_\_\_.*

*Instead of hating those who persecute you, \_\_\_\_\_ for them.*

*This is God's righteous standard: You be \_\_\_\_\_ as God is \_\_\_\_\_.*

**DAY TWO  
Meditation**

Quiet your heart and allow God to speak through His Word. Slowly read Matthew 5:43-45 several times. Reflect on each word. Meditate on them over and over until you memorize them.

*You have heard that it was said,  
‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’*

*But I say to you,  
love your enemies,  
bless those who curse you,  
do good to those who hate you,  
and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,  
that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.*

*For He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good,  
and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. (NKJV)*

**Write down the observations that you can make from this passage, sketch out any images or thoughts that you have, or simply rewrite the passage below giving emphasis to key words.**

**Offer the passage back to God in the form of a personalized prayer.**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## DAY THREE Interpretation

In interpretation, you are digging deeper into the passage in order to better understand its meaning. A word study on a key word and/or looking up parallel passages can help you in your understanding.

This section in the Sermon on the Mount is probably the most misunderstood and misapplied. Some groups have used these verses to reject all oath-taking (even in court), to refuse all aspects of self-defense or national defense (such as police or military service), and to subject oneself to all manner of abuse. It is important to understand three things as you study this passage:

1. Jesus is correcting the misinterpretation and misapplication of the law by the scribes.
2. Jesus is confronting individuals in personal relationships not governmental policies.
3. Jesus is communicating in highly illustrative language to convey His points (cf. 5:29-30).

This does not lessen the impact of this passage. Jesus is not trying to make us feel comfortable. He is raising the bar of righteousness, selflessness, and love to its highest level—God’s perfection.

### Read the following Old Testament verses regarding oath-taking.

*Do not steal. Do not act deceptively or lie to one another. Do not swear falsely by My name, profaning the name of your God; I am the Lord. (Leviticus 19:11-12)*

*If a man vows a vow to the Lord, or swears an oath to bind himself by a pledge, he shall not break his word. He shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth. (Numbers 30:2)*

*If you make a vow to the Lord your God, you shall not delay fulfilling it, for the Lord your God will surely require it of you, and you will be guilty of sin. But if you refrain from vowing, you will not be guilty of sin. You shall be careful to do what has passed your lips, for you have voluntarily vowed to the Lord your God what you have promised with your mouth. (Deuteronomy 23:21-23)*

### How would you summarize the main principles of these verses?

---

---

---

The scribes took these verses and created an elaborate system of oath-taking by which *only* oaths to the Lord had to be fulfilled. Thus, a person could take an oath on all kinds of other things, expressing greater and greater language (e.g., “I swear on my mother’s grave!”), but not being bound to honor his word or his promise unless it specifically invoked the Lord’s name.

### In light of this historical background, what is the main principle that Jesus is teaching in 5:37?

---

---

**Read the following Old Testament passage regarding the principle of “an eye for an eye.”**

*A single witness shall not suffice against a person for any crime or for any wrong in connection with any offense that he has committed. Only on the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses shall a charge be established. If a malicious witness arises to accuse a person of wrongdoing, then both parties to the dispute shall appear before the Lord, before the priests and the judges who are in office in those days. The judges shall inquire diligently, and if the witness is a false witness and has accused his brother falsely, then you shall do to him as he had meant to do to his brother. So you shall purge the evil from your midst. And the rest shall hear and fear, and shall never again commit any such evil among you. Your eye shall not pity. It shall be life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot. (Deuteronomy 19:15-21)*

**What is the context of the principle of “an eye for an eye”? How was it intended to be applied?**

---

---

---

The scribes took this passage and applied it to personal relationships. If someone hurt you, then you were not only allowed but also mandated to hurt them back in the same way. Jesus corrected this view and raised the standard of the law in personal relationships to the selflessness of love.

**Read Leviticus 19:16-18 which is one of the key passages in the Old Testament law.**

*Do not go about spreading slander among your people. Do not do anything that endangers your neighbor’s life. I am the Lord. Do not hate a fellow Israelite in your heart. Rebuke your neighbor frankly so you will not share in their guilt. Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord.*

**What does God call His people to do in the context of personal relationships?**

---

---

**What reason is given for the people to treat others in this way? \_\_\_\_\_**

Go to [blueletterbible.org](http://blueletterbible.org) and type “Matthew 5” into the “Search the Bible” box. Next click on Matthew 5:48 to bring up the verse in the Greek. Find the word “perfect” and click on the Strong’s number (G5046) to bring up the Greek word, its definition, and its usage in the NT.

**What is the Greek word for “perfect”? \_\_\_\_\_ (Use the transliteration.)**

**What is its definition? (See Outline of Biblical Usage and Thayer’s Greek Lexicon.)**

---

---

## DAY FOUR Devotion

Read the following excerpt from William Barclay's *Daily Study Bible*. **William Barclay** (1907-78) was a Scottish minister, Greek scholar, and theological professor at the University of Glasgow. Though liberal in many of his beliefs, his *Daily Study Bible* is considered a masterpiece of scholarly and biblical insight.

### A Word Is a Pledge (Matthew 5:33-37)

One of the strange things about the Sermon on the Mount is the number of occasions when Jesus was recalling to the Jews that which they already knew. The Jewish teachers had always insisted on the paramount obligation of telling the truth... "One who has given his word and who changes it is as bad as an idolater." The school of Shammai was so wedded to the truth that they forbade the ordinary courteous politenesses of society, as, for instance, when a bride was complimented for her charming appearance when in fact she was plain.

Still more did the Jewish teachers insist on the truth, if the truth had been guaranteed by an oath... But in the time of Jesus there were two unsatisfactory things about taking oaths.

The first was what might be called frivolous swearing, taking an oath where no oath was necessary or proper. It had become far too common a custom to introduce a statement by saying, "By thy life," or, "By my head," or, "May I never see the comfort of Israel if. . ."

The second Jewish custom was in some ways even worse than that; it might be called evasive swearing. The Jews divided oaths into two classes, those which were absolutely binding and those which were not. Any oath which contained the name of God was absolutely binding; any oath which succeeded in evading the name of God was held not to be binding. The result was that if a man swore by the name of God in any form, he would rigidly keep that oath; but if he swore by heaven, or by earth, or by Jerusalem, or by his head, he felt quite free to break that oath. The

result was that evasion had been brought to a fine art.

The idea behind this was that, if God's name was used, God became a partner in the transaction; whereas if God's name was not used, God had nothing to do with the transaction. The principle which Jesus lays down is quite clear. In effect Jesus is saying that, so far from having to make God a partner in any transaction, no man can keep God out of any transaction. God is already there. The heaven is the throne of God; the earth is the footstool of God; Jerusalem is the city of God; a man's head does not belong to him; he cannot even make a hair white or black; his life is God's; there is nothing in the world which does not belong to God; and, therefore, whether God is actually named in so many words or not, does not matter. God is there already.

Here is a great eternal truth. Life cannot be divided into compartments in some of which God is involved and in others of which he is not involved; there cannot be one kind of language in the Church and another kind of language in the shipyard or the factory or the office; there cannot be one kind of standard of conduct in the Church and another kind of standard in the business world. The fact is that God does not need to be invited into certain departments of life, and kept out of others. He is everywhere, all through life and every activity of life. He hears not only the words which are spoken in his name; he hears all words; and there cannot be any such thing as a form of words which evades bringing God into a transaction. We will regard all promises as sacred, if we remember that all promises are made in the presence of God.

## The End of Oaths (5:37)

This passage concludes with the commandment that when a man has to say yes, he should say yes, and nothing more; and when he has to say no, he should say no, and nothing more.

The ideal is that a man should never need an oath to buttress or guarantee the truth of anything he may say. The man's character should make an oath completely unnecessary. His guarantee and his witness should lie in what he is himself. Isocrates, the great Greek teacher and orator, said, "A man must lead a life which will gain more confidence in him than ever an oath can do." Clement of Alexandria insisted that Christians must lead such a life and demonstrate such a character that no one will ever dream of asking an oath from them. The ideal society is one in which no man's word will ever need an oath to guarantee its truth, and no man's promise ever need an oath to guarantee its fulfilling.

Does this saying of Jesus then forbid a man to take an oath anywhere--for instance, in the witness box? ...There were occasions when Paul as it were, put himself upon oath. "I call God to witness against me," he writes to the Corinthians (2 Cor. 1:23)... He writes to the Galatians, "In what I am writing to you, before God, I do not lie!" (1:20). On these occasions Paul is putting himself on oath.

Jesus himself did not protest at being put on oath. At his trial before the High Priest, the High Priest said to him: "I adjure you by the living God—I put you on oath by God himself—tell us if you are the Christ, the son of God" (Matt. 26:63).

What then is the situation? ...

What Jesus is saying is this—the truly good man will never need to take an oath; the truth

of his sayings and the reality of his promises need no such guarantee. But the fact that oaths are still sometimes necessary is the proof that men are not good men and that this is not a good world...

## The Ancient Law (Matthew 5:38-42)

Here is the characteristic ethic of the Christian life, and the conduct which should distinguish the Christian from other men.

Jesus begins by citing the oldest law in the world—an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. That law is known as the *Lex Talionis*, and it may be described as the law of tit for tat... The principle is clear and apparently simple—if a man has inflicted an injury on any person, an equivalent injury shall be inflicted upon him.

The *Lex Talionis*, the law of tit for tat, so far from being a savage and bloodthirsty law, is in fact the beginning of mercy. Its original aim was definitely the limitation of vengeance. In the very earliest days the vendetta and the blood feud were characteristic of tribal society. If a man of one tribe injured a man of another tribe, then at once all the members of the tribe of the injured man were out to take vengeance on all the members of the tribe of the man who committed the injury; and the vengeance desired was nothing less than death. This law deliberately limits vengeance. It lays it down that only the man who committed the injury must be punished, and his punishment must be no more than the equivalent of the injury he has inflicted and the damage he has done. Seen against its historical setting this is not a savage law, but a law of mercy.

Further, this was never a law which gave a private individual the right to extract vengeance; it was always a law which laid down how a judge in the law court must assess

punishment and penalty (Deut. 19:18). This law was never intended to give the individual person the right to indulge even in the vengeance of tit for tat. It was always intended as a guide for a judge in the assessment of the penalty which any violent or unjust deed must receive...

And most important of all, it must be remembered that the *Lex Talionis* is by no means the whole of OT ethics. There are glimpses and even splendors of mercy in the OT. "You shall not take vengeance or bear any grudge against the sons of your own people" (Lev. 19:18). "If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink" (Prov. 25:21). "Do not say, I will do to him as he has done to me" (Prov. 24:29). "Let him give his cheek to the smiter; and be filled with insults" (Lam. 3:30). There is abundant mercy in the Old Testament too.

### **The End of Resentment and Retaliation**

So, then, for the Christian, Jesus abolishes the old law of limited vengeance and introduces the new spirit of non-resentment and of non-retaliation. He goes on to take three examples of the Christian spirit in operation. To take these examples with a crude literalism is completely to miss their point. It is therefore very necessary to understand what Jesus is saying.

He says that if anyone smites us on the right cheek we must turn to him the other cheek also. There is far more here than meets the eye, far more than a mere matter of blows on the face. Suppose a right-handed man is standing in front of another man, and suppose he wants to slap the other man on the right cheek, how must he do it? Unless he goes through the most complicated contortions, and unless he empties the blow of all force, he can hit the other man's cheek only in one way—with the back of his hand. Now ac-

ording to Jewish Rabbinic law to hit a man with the back of the hand was twice as insulting as to hit him with the back of the hand. So, then, what Jesus is saying is this: "Even if a man should direct at you the most deadly and calculated insult, you must on no account retaliate, and you must on no account resent it." ...

Jesus goes on to say that if anyone tries to take away our tunic in a law suit, we must not only let him have that, but must offer him our cloak also. Again there is much more than meets the eye.

The tunic was the long, sack-line inner garment made of cotton or of linen. The poorest man would have a change of tunics. The cloak was the great, blanket-like outer garment which a man wore as a robe by day, and used as a blanket at night. Of such garments the Jew would have only one. Now it was actually the Jewish law that a man's tunic might be taken as a pledge, but not his cloak. "If ever you take your neighbors garment in pledge, you shall restore it to him before the sun goes down; for that is his only covering, it is his mantle for his body; in what else shall he sleep?" (Ex. 22:26-27). The point is that *by right* a man's cloak could not be taken permanently from him...

There are people who are forever standing on their rights, who clutch their privileges to them and who will not be pried loose from them, who will militantly go to law rather than suffer what they regard as the slightest infringement of them. Churches are tragically full of people like that, officials whose territory has been invaded, office-bearers who have not been accorded their proper place, courts which do business with a manual of practice and procedure on the table all the time, lest anyone's rights should be invaded. People like that have not even begun to see what Christianity is. The Christian

thinks not of his rights, but of his duties; not of his privileges, but of his responsibilities...

Jesus then goes on to speak of being compelled to go one mile; and says that in such a case the Christian must willingly go two miles.

There is here a picture of which we know little, for it is a picture from an occupied country...In an occupied country, citizens could be compelled to supply food, to provide billets, to carry baggage. Sometimes the occupying power exercised this right of compulsion in the most tyrannical and unsympathetic way. Always this threat of compulsion hung over the citizens. Palestine was an occupied country. At any moment a Jew might feel the touch of the flat of a Roman spear on his shoulder, and know that he was compelled to serve the Romans, it might be in the most menial way. That, in fact, is what happened to Simon of Cyrene, when he was compelled to bear the Cross of Jesus.

So, then, what Jesus is saying is: "Suppose your masters come to you and compel you to be a guide or a porter for a mile. Don't do a mile with bitter and obvious resentment; go two miles with cheerfulness and with a good grace." What Jesus is saying is: "Don't be always thinking of your liberty to do as you like, be always thinking of your duty and your privilege to be of service to others. When a task is laid on you, even if the task is unreasonable and hateful, don't do it as a grim duty to be resented; do it as a service to be gladly rendered."

There are always two ways of doing things. A man can do the irreducible minimum and not a stroke more; he can do it in such a way as to make it clear that he hates the whole thing; he can do it with the barest minimum of efficiency and no more; or he can do it with

a smile, with a gracious courtesy, with a determination, not only to do this thing, but to do it well and graciously. He can do it, not simply as well as he has to, but far better than anyone has any right to expect him to. The inefficient workman, the resentful servant, the ungracious helper have not even begun to have the right idea of the Christian life. The Christian is not concerned to do as he likes; he is concerned only to help...

### **Gracious Giving (5:42)**

Finally, it is Jesus' demand that we should give to all who ask and never turn away from him who wishes to borrow. At its highest the Jewish law of giving was a lovely thing..."If there is among you a poor man, one of your brethren, in any of your towns within your land which the Lord your God gives you, you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother, but you shall open your hand to him, and lend him sufficient for his need, whatever it may be." (Deut. 15:7-8)

Giving was at once a privilege and an obligation for in reality all giving is nothing less than giving to God. To give to some needy person was not something which a man might choose to do; it was something he must do; for, if he refused, the refusal was to God. "He who befriends the poor lends to the Lord, and he will repay him for his good deed." (Prov. 19:17)...

Are we then to say that Jesus urged upon men what can only be called indiscriminate giving? The answer cannot be given without qualification. It is clear that the effect of the giving on the receiver must be taken into account. Giving must never be such as to encourage him in laziness and in shiftlessness, for such giving can only hurt. But at the same time it must be remembered that many people who say that they will give only through official channels, and who refuse to

help personal cases, are frequently merely producing an excuse for not giving at all, and are removing the personal element from giving altogether. And it must also be remembered that it is better to help a score of fraudulent beggars than to risk turning away the one man in real need...

### **Christian Love (5:43-48)**

When we study this passage we must first try to find out what Jesus was really saying, and what he was demanding of his followers. If we are to try to live this out, we must obviously first of all be quite clear as to what it is asking. What does Jesus mean by loving our enemies?

Greek is a language which is rich in synonyms; its words often have shades of meaning which English does not possess. In Greek there are four different words for love.

There is *storgi*...the characteristic word of family love...of a parent for a child.

There is *eros*...describing the love of a man for a maid...passion...sexual love.

There is *philia*...the warmest and best Greek word for love. It describes real love, real affection... a man's closest and truest friends.

There is *agape*...unconquerable benevolence, invincible goodwill... It means that no matter what that person does to us, no matter how he treats us, no matter if he insults us or injures us or grieves us, we will never allow any bitterness against him to invade our hearts but...will seek nothing but his highest good.

Jesus never asked us to love our enemies in the same way as we love our nearest and our dearest. The very word is different (*agape*); to love our enemies in the same way as we love our nearest and our dearest would

neither be possible nor right. This is a different kind of love.

Wherein does the main difference lie? In the case of our nearest and our dearest we cannot help loving them; we speak of falling in love; it is something which comes to us quite unsought; it is something which is born of the emotions of the heart. But in the case of our enemies, love is not only something of the heart, it is also something of the will. It is not something which we cannot help; it is something which we have to will ourselves into doing. It is in fact a victory over that which comes instinctively to the natural man...

It is then quite obvious that the last thing *agape* Christian love means is that we allow people to do absolutely as they like, and that we leave them quite unchecked. No one would say that a parent really loves his child if he lets the child do as he likes. If we regard a person with invincible goodwill, it will often mean that we must punish him, that we must restrain him, that we must discipline him, that we must protect him against himself. But it will also mean that we do not punish him to satisfy our desire for revenge, but in order to make him a better man. It will always mean that all Christian discipline and all Christian punishment must be aimed, not at vengeance, but at cure. Punishment will never be merely retributive; it will always be remedial.

It must be noted that Jesus laid this love down as a basis for personal relationships. People use this passage as a basis for pacifism and as a text on which to speak about international relationships... But it deals with our personal relationships with our family and our neighbors and the people we meet with every day in life. It is very much easier to go about declaring that there should be no such thing as war between nation and nation, than to live a life in which we personally never allow any

such thing as bitterness to invade our relationships with those we meet with every day. First and foremost, this commandment of Jesus deals with personal relationship. It is a commandment of which we should say first and foremost: “This means me.”

We must note that this commandment is possible only for a Christian. Only the grace of Jesus Christ can enable a man to have this unconquerable benevolence and this invincible goodwill in his personal relationships with other people. It is only when Christ lives in our hearts that bitterness will die and this love spring to life. It is often said that this world would be perfect if only people would live according to the principles of the Sermon on the Mount; but the plain fact is that no one can even begin to live according to these principles without the help of Jesus Christ. We need Christ to enable us to obey Christ's command.

Lastly—and it may be most important of all—we must note that this commandment does not only involve allowing people to do as they like to us; it also involves that we should do something for them. We are bidden to pray for them. No man can pray for another man and still hate him. When he takes himself and the man whom he is tempted to hate to God, something happens. We cannot go on hating another man in the presence of God. The surest way of killing bitterness is to pray for the man we are tempted to hate...

Why, then, does Jesus demand that a man should have this love, this unconquerable

benevolence, this invincible goodwill? The reason is very simple and tremendous—it is that such a love makes a man like God...

Jesus says that we must have this love that we may become “the sons of our Father who is in heaven.” Hebrew is not rich in adjectives; and for that reason Hebrew often uses *son of...* with an abstract noun, where we would use an adjective. For instance, a son of peace is a peaceful man; a son of consolation is a consoling man. So, then, a son of God is a godlike man. The reason why we must have this unconquerable benevolence and goodwill is that God has it; and, if we have it, we become nothing less than sons of God, godlike men...

So, then, a man will be perfect (*teleios*) if he fulfils the purpose for which he was created. For what purpose was man created? The Bible leaves us in no doubt as to that. In the old creation story we find God saying, “Let us make man in our image after our likeness” (Gen. 1:26). Man was created to be like God. The characteristic of God is this universal benevolence, this unconquerable goodwill, this constant seeking of the highest good of every man. The great characteristic of God is love to saint and to sinner alike. No matter what men do to him, God seeks nothing but their highest good...

It is the whole teaching of the Bible that we realize our humanity only by becoming godlike. The one thing which makes us like God is the love which never ceases to care for men, no matter what men do to it.

**What thought from William Barclay’s words stands out to you the most? Why?**

---

---

---

---



## DAY FIVE Application

Re-read Matthew 5:33-48 and consider the truths that you have learned this week. Seek to apply the message of Matthew 5:33-48 to your life.

**What thought or truth impacted you this week from your study of Matthew 5:33-48?**

---

---

---

**Evaluate your words.** Mark an “X” where you think you are on the following scales. Ask someone who knows you well for their honest evaluation as well. Be willing to let the Lord search you.

◆-----◆  
*I tend to exaggerate and stretch the truth* *I speak simply and honestly*

◆-----◆  
*I tend to beat around the bush* *I am direct and clear*

◆-----◆  
*I speak a good game but often don't follow through* *What I say I will do, I do*

◆-----◆  
*People often question my words* *People can count on my words being true*

◆-----◆  
*I break my promises if I find something better* *I keep my promises even if it costs me*

**Read Romans 12:14-21 slowly and thoughtfully.** This is a good application of Matthew 5:38-48.

*Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.*

*Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

**How can you specifically apply these verses to your life? What is God calling you to do?**

---

---

---




### **SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR GROUP OR FAMILY DISCUSSION:**

The goal is not to get through all the questions but to spark discussion around the truth of Matthew 5:33-48. Use the questions below to interact together with what you learned.

- What is one of the greatest acts of love that you have witnessed in your life? What made it so impactful to you?
- When is a time that you broke a promise to someone? How did they respond? How did you respond? When is a time that someone broke a promise to you? How did this impact you?
- Why do you think it is so important for us to mean what we say and say what we mean?
- What is your natural tendency when someone insults you or is unfair to you? How difficult is it to obey the teachings of Jesus in this passage?
- Where do you think the line is between selflessness and non-retaliation and the need for self-defense and stopping someone who is abusive?
- Did you discover anything new, interesting, or meaningful in your study of this passage this week? Or in your reading of William Barclay? If so, what?
- This is perhaps one of the most difficult passages to apply in all of Scripture. It calls us to a standard of righteousness and love that is far beyond our own natural tendencies or abilities. In one sense, we do not want to lower the standard to feel better about ourselves but, in another sense, we do not want to overburden ourselves with a standard that we can never meet. The purpose of Jesus' words, first and foremost, is to expose us to the reality that we all fall short of God's righteousness and we all need a Savior. Only when we are saved by Christ Jesus, empowered by the Spirit, and secure in God's grace can we allow God to expose our hearts and progressively change us more and more into His image. Share one area in your life where God is confronting you or challenging you to be more like Him. Pray together, thanking Him for His abundant grace and asking Him for that grace to transform your heart.

*Think for yourself whether much of your sorrow has not arisen from someone else speaking slightly of you. As long as you set yourself up as a little god...there will be those who will delight to offer affront to your idol. How then can you hope to have inward peace? The heart's fierce effort to protect itself from every slight, to shield its touchy honor from the bad opinion of friend and enemy, will never let the mind have rest. Continue this fight through the years and the burden will become intolerable. Yet the sons of earth are carrying this burden continually, challenging every word spoken against them, cringing under every criticism, smarting under every fancied slight, tossing sleepless if another is preferred before them.*

A.W. Tozer (1897-1963)

LOVE  YOUR  
 neighbor  
as  yourself

Free Coloring Page by Jennifer Flanders at [FlandersFamily.info](http://FlandersFamily.info)

---

## THE HYPOCRISY OF RELIGION

### Matthew 6:1-8, 16-18

---

#### **DAY ONE** **Observation**

Matthew 6:1 begins a new section in Jesus' sermon. He has taught the true character of a kingdom citizen (5:3-16) and the true righteousness of a kingdom citizen (5:17-48). Now, He shifts to teach about the true conduct of a kingdom citizen (6:1-7:12). A kingdom citizen is not focused on impressing others with his religiosity. Rather his heart is on loving God, loving others, and seeking His kingdom.

**Ask God to speak to your heart as you read Matthew 6:1-8, 16-18. Mark words or phrases that stand out to you. Write down the main message or your thoughts next to each section.**

“Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

<sup>2</sup>“So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. <sup>3</sup>But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, <sup>4</sup>so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

<sup>5</sup>“And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. <sup>6</sup>But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. <sup>7</sup>And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. <sup>8</sup>Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. ...

<sup>16</sup>“When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. <sup>17</sup>But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, <sup>18</sup>so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. (NIV)

What thought or verse stands out to you in Matthew 6:1-8, 16-18? Why?

---




---

---

---

In this passage, Jesus addresses three practices that the Jew of His day (and many religious people) would consider to be foundational to spirituality—giving, praying, and fasting. Jesus contrasts the actions of the “hypocrite” versus the actions of a true follower of God.

Fill in the chart below.

	ACTIONS OF HYPOCRITE	ACTIONS OF TRUE DISCIPLE
6:1-4 		
6:5-8 		
6:16-18 		

What is the reward of the hypocrite? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What is the reward of the true disciple? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**DAY TWO  
Meditation**

Quiet your heart and allow God to speak through His Word. Slowly read Matthew 6:5-8 several times. Reflect on each word. Meditate on them over and over until you memorize them.

*When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites;  
for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners  
so that they may be seen by men.  
Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.  
But you, when you pray, go into your inner room,  
close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret,  
and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.*

*And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do,  
for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words.  
So do not be like them;  
for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him. (NASB)*

**Write down the observations that you can make from this passage, sketch out any images or thoughts that you have, or simply rewrite the passage below giving emphasis to key words.**

**Offer the passage back to God in the form of a personalized prayer.**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## DAY THREE Interpretation

In interpretation, you are digging deeper into the passage in order to better understand its meaning. A word study on a key word and/or looking up parallel passages can help you in your understanding.

Go to [blueletterbible.org](http://blueletterbible.org) and type “Matthew 6” into the “Search the Bible” box. Next click on Matthew 6:2 to bring up the verse in the Greek. Find the word “hypocrite” and click on the Strong’s number (G5273) to bring up the Greek word, its definition, and its usage in the NT.

**What is the Greek word for “hypocrite”?** \_\_\_\_\_ (Use the transliteration.)

**How many times is it used in the New Testament?** \_\_\_\_\_ (See KJV Translation Count.)

**How many times is it used in Matthew?** \_\_\_\_\_ (See Search Results by Book.)

**What is its definition?** (See Outline of Biblical Usage and Vine’s Expository Dictionary.)

---

---

Now go to Matthew 6:7 in [blueletterbible.org](http://blueletterbible.org) and find the word “vain repetitions” (G945).

**What is the Greek word for “vain repetitions”?** \_\_\_\_\_ (Use the transliteration.)

**How many times is it used in the New Testament?** \_\_\_\_\_ (See KJV Translation Count.)

**What is its definition?** (See Outline of Biblical Usage and Vine’s Expository Dictionary.)

---

---

### Read Jesus’ condemnation of the scribes and the Pharisees in Matthew 23:23-28.

*“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel. Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean. Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.”*

**What are the characteristics of religious hypocrisy?** \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

## DAY FOUR Devotion

Read the following commentary from J.C. Ryle's *Expository Thoughts on Matthew*. **J. C. Ryle** (1816-1900) was the Anglican bishop of Liverpool, where his sermons and writings impacted thousands in England and abroad. At the end of his life, he was described as "the man of granite with the heart of a child."

### Matthew 6:1-8

In this part of the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord Jesus gives us instruction on two subjects. One is that of giving alms. The other is that of prayer. Both were subjects to which the Jews attached great importance. Both in themselves deserve the serious attention of all professing Christians.

Observe that our Lord takes it for granted, that *all who call themselves His disciples will GIVE ALMS*. He assumes as a matter of course, that they will think it a solemn duty to give, according to their means, to relieve the needs of others. The only point He handles is the *manner* in which the duty should be done. This is a weighty lesson. It condemns the selfish stinginess of many in the matter of giving money. How many are "rich towards themselves," but poor towards God! How many never give a farthing to do good to the bodies and souls of men! Have such people a right to be called Christians with such a mindset? It may be well doubted. A giving Savior should have giving disciples.

Observe again that our Lord takes it for granted, that *all who call themselves His disciples will PRAY*. He assumes this also as a matter of course. He only gives directions as to the best way of praying. This is another lesson which deserves to be continually remembered. It teaches plainly that prayerless people are not genuine Christians. It is not enough to join in the prayers of the congregation on Sundays, or attend the prayer of a family on week-days. There must be private prayer also. Without this we may be outward members of Christ's church, but we are not living members of Christ.

But what are the rules laid down for our guidance about almsgiving and praying? They are few and simple. But they contain much matter for thought.

In **GIVING**, *everything like ostentation is to be abhorred and avoided*. We are not to give as if we wished everybody to see how liberal and charitable we are, and desired the praise of our fellow men. We are to shun everything like *display*. We are to give quietly, and make as little noise as possible about our charities. We are to aim at the spirit of the proverbial saying, "Don't let your left hand know what your right hand does."

In **PRAYING**, *the principal object to be sought, is to be alone with God*. We should endeavor to find some place where no mortal eye sees us, and where we can pour out our hearts with the feeling that no one is looking at us but God. This is a rule which many find it very difficult to follow. The poor man and the servant often find it almost impossible to be really alone. But it is a rule which we must all make great efforts to obey. Necessity, in such cases, is often the mother of invention. When a person has a real desire to find some place, where he can be in secret with his God, he will generally find a way.

In all our duties, whether giving, or praying, the great thing to be kept in mind is, that *we have to do with a heart-searching and all-knowing God*. Everything like artificiality, formality, or mere bodily service, is abominable and worthless in God's sight. He takes no account of the quantity of money we give, or the quantity of words we use. The one thing at which His all-seeing eye looks is the



nature of our motives, and the state of our hearts. "Our Father sees in secret."

May we all remember these things. Here lies a rock, on which many are continually making spiritual shipwreck. They flatter themselves that all must be right with their souls, if they only perform a certain amount of "religious duties." They forget that God does not regard the quantity, but the quality of our service. His favor is not to be bought, as many seem to suppose, by the formal repetition of a number of words, or the self-righteous payment of a sum of money to a charitable institution.

Where are our hearts? Are we doing all, whether we give or pray, "as to the Lord, and not to men?" Do we realize the eye of God? Do we simply and solely desire to please Him, who "sees in secret," and by whom "actions are weighed?" (1 Sam. 2:3) Are we sincere? These are the sort of questions with which we should daily ply our souls...

**Matthew 6:16-18**

*Fasting*, or occasional abstinence from food, in order to bring the body into subjection to the spirit, is a practice frequently mentioned in the Bible, and generally in connection with prayer. David fasted, when his child was sick.

Daniel fasted, when he sought special light from God. Paul and Barnabas fasted, when they appointed elders. Esther fasted, before going in to Ahasuerus. It is a subject about which we find no direct command in the New Testament. It seems to be left to every one's discretion, whether he will fast or not. There is great wisdom in this. Many a poor man never has enough to eat, and it would be an insult to tell him to fast. Many a sickly person can hardly be kept well with the closest attention to diet, and could not fast without bringing on illness. It is a matter in which everyone must be persuaded in his own mind, and not be hasty to condemn others, who do not agree with him. One thing only must never be forgotten. Those who fast should do it *quietly, secretly, and without ostentation*. Let them not "appear to men" to fast. Let them not fast to man, but to God.

Let us learn from our Lord's instruction about fasting, *the great importance of cheerfulness in our religion*. Those words, "anoint your head, and wash your face," are full of deep meaning. They should teach us to aim at letting men see, that we find Christianity makes us happy. Never let us forget that there is no religion in looking melancholy and gloomy. Are we dissatisfied with Christ's wages, and Christ's service? Surely not! Then let us not look as if we were.

**What thought from J. C. Ryle's words stands out to you the most? Why?**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## DAY FIVE Application

Re-read Matthew 6:1-8, 16-18 and consider the truths that you have learned this week. Seek to apply the message of this passage to your life.

**What thought or truth impacted you this week from your study of Matthew 6:1-8, 16-18?**

---

---

---

---

Let's face it... it is easy to be a "hypocrite" in our Christian life. It is easy to be an actor. It is easy to play a part. It is easy to look spiritual on Sundays but live selfishly the rest of the week. The question Jesus asks in this passage is not whether you have given to charity or whether you have prayed or fasted. His question is, "Has your heart been transformed by God's grace and is it motivated to give to others, to pray honestly to your Father, and to live joyfully for Him?"

**Consider the three aspects of the Christian life that Jesus addressed in Matthew 6:1-8, 16-18.** Honestly evaluate your life. Beside each area, write down one way in which you can play the hypocrite or seek the applause of others. Then write out one way in which you desire the Lord to change your heart and help you live for Him authentically.



*I can be a hypocrite in my giving when...*

*Lord, in my giving, help me to...*



*I can be a hypocrite in my praying when...*

*Lord, in my prayer life, help me to...*



*I can be a hypocrite in my fasting when...*

*Lord, when it comes to fasting, help me to...*

### **SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR GROUP OR FAMILY DISCUSSION:**

The goal is not to get through all the questions but to spark discussion around the truth of Matthew 6:1-8, 16-18. Use the questions below to interact together with what you learned.

- Who is one of your favorite actors or actresses? What makes them such a good actor/actress? What role did they play that really captured your attention and made you believe that they were actually the person that they were playing?
- In what ways can we act like Christians outwardly but not really have a true heart change? How have you seen this in your own experience in church life?
- How should we not give according to Jesus? How should we give?
- How should we not pray according to Jesus? How should we pray?
- How should we not fast according to Jesus? How should we fast?
- What principles can you learn from this passage about living the Christian life?
- Did you discover anything new, interesting, or meaningful in your study of this passage this week? Or in your reading of J.C. Ryle? If so, what?
- Not being a hypocrite involves being honest before God and before others. We must learn to take off the masks that we so often wear. Being vulnerable is scary but freeing at the same time. If you feel safe in the group that you are in, share one thing that you have really been struggling with in your Christian life. What burden is on your heart? What anxiety do you feel? What wound do you have? What doubt do you struggle with? What sin are you battling? When we are vulnerable with each other, then our prayers are more powerful and effective.

*Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.  
The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.*

James 5:16



---

**THE SIMPLICITY OF PRAYER**  
**Matthew 6:9-15**

---

**DAY ONE**  
**Observation**

Jesus has instructed His disciples how not to give, to pray, and to fast. Now He teaches His disciples how to pray. This model prayer, commonly called “the Lord’s prayer,” is really “the Disciple’s Prayer.”

**Ask God to speak to your heart as you read Matthew 6:9-15. Mark words or phrases that stand out to you. Write down the main message or your thoughts next to each section.**

<sup>9</sup> In this manner, therefore, pray:

Our Father in heaven,  
Hallowed be Your name.

<sup>10</sup> Your kingdom come.

Your will be done

On earth as it is in heaven.

<sup>11</sup> Give us this day our daily bread.

<sup>12</sup> And forgive us our debts,

As we forgive our debtors.

<sup>13</sup> And do not lead us into temptation,

But deliver us from the evil one.

For Yours is the kingdom and the power  
and the glory forever. Amen.

<sup>14</sup> “For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. <sup>15</sup> But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. (NKJV)

**Mark or highlight the pronouns used in 6:9-13. Underline “Your” and circle “us/our” or use a different color highlighter to distinguish between these two pronouns. Notice the shift in the prayer from a focus on God (6:9-10) to a focus on ourselves and our needs (6:11-13).**

**Summarize, in your own words, the six requests in this prayer.**

6:9 \_\_\_\_\_

6:10a \_\_\_\_\_

6:10b \_\_\_\_\_

6:11 \_\_\_\_\_

6:12 \_\_\_\_\_

6:13 \_\_\_\_\_

**What does God call us to do when we pray (6:14-15)?** \_\_\_\_\_

**DAY TWO  
Meditation**

Quiet your heart and allow God to speak through His Word. Slowly read Matthew 6:9b-13 several times. Reflect on each word. Meditate on them over and over until you memorize them.

*Our Father in heaven!  
May your Name be kept holy.  
May your Kingdom come,  
Your will be done on earth as in heaven.  
Give us the food we need today.  
Forgive us what we have done wrong,  
as we too have forgiven those who have wronged us.  
And do not lead us into hard testing,  
but keep us safe from the Evil One.  
For kingship, power and glory are Yours forever. Amen.*

(CJB, Complete Jewish Bible)

**Write down the observations that you can make from this passage, sketch out any images or thoughts that you have, or simply rewrite the passage below giving emphasis to key words.**

**Offer the passage back to God in the form of a personalized prayer.**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## DAY THREE Interpretation

In interpretation, you are digging deeper into the passage in order to better understand its meaning. A word study on a key word and/or looking up parallel passages can help you in your understanding.

Go to [blueletterbible.org](http://blueletterbible.org) and type “Matthew 6” into the “Search the Bible” box. Next click on Matthew 6:12 to bring up the verse in the Greek. Find the word “forgive” and click on the Strong’s number (G863) to bring up the Greek word, its definition, and its usage in the New Testament.

What is the Greek word for “forgive”? \_\_\_\_\_ (Use the transliteration.)

How many times is it used in the New Testament? \_\_\_\_\_ (See KJV Translation Count.)

How many times is it used in Matthew? \_\_\_\_\_ (See Search Results by Book.)

What is its definition? (See Outline of Biblical Usage and Vine’s Expository Dictionary.)

---

---

---

Forgiveness is a key concept in this prayer. The only responsibility that we have in this prayer is to forgive others (*as we forgive our debtors*, 6:12b). **Read and consider these parallel passages.**

*Then Peter came to Him and said, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I **forgive** him? Up to seven times?” Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.” (Matthew 18:21-22; see also the parable that follows, 18:23-35)*

*“And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, **forgive** him, that your Father in heaven may also **forgive** you your trespasses. But if you do not **forgive**, neither will your Father in heaven **forgive** your trespasses.” (Mark 11:25-26)*

*“Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful. Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. **Forgive**, and you will be **forgiven**.” (Luke 6:36-37)*

*Bear with one another; if anyone has a complaint against someone else, **forgive** him. Indeed, just as the Lord has **forgiven** you, so you must **forgive**. (Colossians 3:13)*

This passage can raise some questions—Does God’s forgiveness depend on my forgiveness? Can I be condemned to hell for not forgiving someone? Can I earn salvation by forgiving others?

The rest of the NT is clear that God’s forgiveness cannot be earned by our works. We also know that, in Christ, all our sins are forgiven—past, present, and future (cf. Eph. 1:7; Rom. 3:21-26). Thus, these passages seem to refer to the forgiveness of fellowship not salvation. Just like two brothers fighting in a family. They are still sons of their father but their relationship with their father is affected. There is a principle in Scripture that indicates that God often chooses to relate to us in the same way that we choose to relate to others (cf. Psalm 18:25-27; James 2:13).

The other challenge in the Disciple's Prayer is understanding the request: *Do not lead us into temptation* (6:13a). Does God ever lead us into temptation? What does this request mean?

Go to [blueletterbible.org](http://blueletterbible.org) and type "Matthew 6" into the "Search the Bible" box. Next click on Matthew 6:13 to bring up the verse in the Greek. Find the word "temptation" and click on the Strong's number (G3986) to bring up the Greek word, its definition, and its usage in the NT.

**What is the Greek word for "temptation"?** \_\_\_\_\_ (Use the transliteration.)

**How many times is it used in the New Testament?** \_\_\_\_\_ (See KJV Translation Count.)

**What is its definition?** (See Outline of Biblical Usage.) \_\_\_\_\_

**Read the following passages which use this Greek word (either in the noun or verb form).**

*Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be **tempted** by the devil.* (Matthew 4:1)

*The Pharisees and Sadducees came to Jesus and **tested** him by asking him to show them a sign from heaven.* (Matthew 16:1)

*Watch and pray, lest you enter into **temptation**. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.* (Matthew 26:41)

*Then Jesus lifted up His eyes, and seeing a great multitude coming toward Him, He said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?" But this He said to **test** him, for He Himself knew what He would do.* (John 6:5-6)

***Test** yourselves to see if you are in the faith. Examine yourselves. Or do you yourselves not recognize that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless you fail the test.* (2 Corinthians 13:5)

*By faith Abraham, when he was **tested**, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son.* (Hebrews 11:17)

*Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under **trial**, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.* (James 1:12)

*Let no one say when he is **tempted**, "I am **tempted** by God"; for God cannot be **tempted** by evil, nor does He Himself **tempt** anyone.* (James 1:13)

**Based on the definition of the word and the various ways that it is used in the NT, how would you interpret the request to God: *Do not lead us into temptation*?**

---

---



## DAY FOUR Devotion

Read the following commentary from J.C. Ryle's *Expository Thoughts on Matthew*. **J. C. Ryle** (1816-1900) was the Anglican bishop of Liverpool, where his sermons and writings impacted thousands in England and abroad. At the end of his life, he was described as "the man of granite with the heart of a child."

Perhaps no part of Scripture is so well known as this. Its words are familiar, wherever Christianity is found. Thousands, and tens of thousands, who never saw a Bible, or heard the pure Gospel, are acquainted with "Our Father," and "Paternoster." Happy would it be for the world, if this prayer was as well known in the spirit, as it is in the letter!

Perhaps no part of Scripture is so full, and so simple at the same time, as this. It is the first prayer which we learn to offer up, when we are little children. Here is its simplicity. It contains the germ of everything which the most advanced saint can desire. Here is its fullness. The more we ponder every word it contains, the more we shall feel, "this prayer is of God."

The Lord's prayer consists of ten parts or sentences. There is one declaration of the Being to whom we pray. There are three prayers respecting His name, His kingdom, and His will. There are four prayers respecting our daily needs, our sins, our weakness, and our dangers. There is one profession of our feeling towards others. There is one concluding ascription of praise. In all these parts we are taught to say "we," and "our." We are to remember others, as well as ourselves. On each of these parts a volume might be written. We must content ourselves at present with taking up sentence by sentence, and marking out the direction in which each sentence points.

The first sentence declares *to whom we are to pray*—"Our Father who is in heaven." We are not to cry to saints and angels, but to the everlasting Father, the Father of spirits, the Lord of heaven and earth. We call Him

Father, in the lowest sense, as our Creator; as Paul told the Athenians, "in Him we live, and move, and have our being—we are also his offspring." (Acts 17:28.) We call Him Father in the highest sense, as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, reconciling us to Himself, through the death of His Son. (Col. 1:20-22) We profess that which the Old Testament saints only saw dimly, if at all—we profess to be His children by faith in Christ, and to have "the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father." (Rom. 8:15) This, we must never forget, is the sonship that we must desire, if we would be saved. Without faith in Christ's blood, and union with Him, it is vain to talk of trusting in the Fatherhood of God.

The second sentence is *a petition respecting God's name*—"May your name be kept holy." By the "name" of God we mean all those attributes under which He is revealed to us—His power, wisdom, holiness, justice, mercy, and truth. By asking that they may be "holy," we mean that they may be made known and glorified. The glory of God is the first thing that God's children should desire. It is the object of one of our Lord's own prayers—"Father, glorify your name." (John 12:28) It is the purpose for which the world was created. It is the end for which the saints are called and converted. It is the chief thing we should seek, that "in all things God may be glorified." (1 Peter 4:11)

The third sentence is *a petition concerning God's kingdom*—"May your kingdom come." By His kingdom we mean first, the kingdom of grace which God sets up and maintains in the hearts of all living members of Christ, by His Spirit and word. But we mean chiefly, the kingdom of glory which

shall one day be set up, when Jesus shall come the second time, and “all men shall know Him from the least to the greatest.” This is the time when sin, and sorrow, and Satan shall be cast out of the world. It is the time when the Jews shall be converted, and the fullness of the Gentiles shall come in, (Rom. 11:25) and a time that is above all things to be desired. It therefore fills a foremost place in the Lord's prayer. We ask that which is expressed in the words of the Burial service, “that it may please you to hasten your kingdom.”

The fourth sentence is *a petition concerning God's will*—“May your will be done, as in heaven, so on earth.” We here pray that God's laws may be obeyed by men as perfectly, readily, and unceasingly, as they are by angels in heaven. We ask that those who now obey not His laws, may be taught to obey them, and that those who do obey them, may obey them better. Our truest happiness is perfect submission to God's will, and it is the highest charity to pray that all mankind may know it, obey it, and submit to it.

The fifth sentence is *a petition respecting our own daily needs*—“give us this day our daily bread.” We are here taught to acknowledge our entire dependence on God, for the supply of our daily necessities. As Israel required daily manna, so we require daily “bread.” We confess that we are poor, weak, needy creatures, and beseech Him who is our Maker to take care of us. We ask for “bread,” as the simplest of our needs, and in that word we include all that our bodies require.

The sixth sentence is *a petition respecting our sins*—“Forgive us our debts.” We confess that we are sinners, and need daily grants of pardon and forgiveness. This is a part of the Lord's prayer which deserves especially to be remembered. It condemns all self-righteousness and self-justifying. We are

instructed here to keep up a continual habit of confession at the throne of grace, and a continual habit of seeking mercy and remission. Let this never be forgotten. We need daily to “wash our feet.” (John 13:10)

The seventh sentence is *a profession respecting our own feelings towards others*—we ask our Father to “forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors.” This is the only profession in the whole prayer, and the only part on which our Lord comments and dwells, when He has concluded the prayer. The plain object of it is, to remind us that we must not expect our prayers for forgiveness to be heard, if we pray with malice and spite in our hearts towards others. To pray in such a frame of mind is mere formality and hypocrisy. It is even worse than hypocrisy. It is as much as saying, “Do not forgive me at all.” Our prayer is nothing without charity. We must not expect to be forgiven, if we cannot forgive.

The eighth sentence is *a petition respecting our weakness*—“Bring us not into temptation.” It teaches us that we are liable, at all times, to be led astray, and fall. It instructs us to confess our infirmity, and beseech God to hold us up, and not allow us to run into sin. We ask Him, who orders all things in heaven and earth, to restrain us from going into that which would injure our souls, and never to allow us to be tempted above that which we are able to bear.

*No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. (1 Corinthians 10:13)*

The ninth sentence is *a petition respecting our dangers*—“deliver us from evil.” We are here taught to ask God to deliver us from the

evil that is in the world, the evil that is within our own hearts, and not least from that evil one, the devil. We confess that, so long as we are in the body, we are constantly seeing, hearing, and feeling the presence of evil. It is about us, and within us, and around us on every side. And we entreat Him, who alone can preserve us, to be continually delivering us from its power. (John 17:15)

The last sentence is *an ascription of praise*—“yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory.” We declare in these words our belief, that the kingdoms of this world are the rightful property of our Father—that to Him alone belongs all “power,”—and that He alone deserves to receive all “glory.” And we conclude by offering to Him the profession of our hearts, that we give Him all honor and praise, and rejoice that He is King of kings, and Lord of lords.

And now let us all examine ourselves, and see whether we really desire to have the things which we are taught to ask for in the Lord's Prayer. Thousands, it may be feared, repeat these words daily as a form, but never consider what they are saying. They care nothing for the “glory,” the “kingdom,” or the “will” of God. They have no sense of dependence, sinfulness, weakness, or danger. They have no love or charity towards their enemies. And yet they repeat the Lord's Prayer! These things ought not to be so.

May we resolve that, by God's help, our hearts shall go together with our lips! Happy is he who can really call God his Father through Jesus Christ his Savior, and can therefore say a heartfelt “Amen” to all that the Lord's Prayer contains.

**What thought from J. C. Ryle’s words stands out to you the most? Why?**

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Additional Note.** Many people may notice that the final doxology in 6:13b, *For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever*, is not included in some modern translations. Why? To simplify things, there are close to 6000 manuscripts of the Greek NT (along with close to 20,000 ancient manuscripts in other languages). When insignificant differences are eliminated (e.g., spelling, word order, etc.), there is almost 99% agreement in these manuscripts. Where there are differences, there are two basic theories on how to determine the true reading. One, go with the older manuscripts. Or two, go with the majority of manuscripts. In the case of Matthew 6:13, the oldest manuscripts do not include it while the majority of later manuscripts do. The parallel passage in Luke’s gospel (11:2-4) also does not include it. One theory is that the Lord’s prayer became so much a part of the early church that soon a doxology was added. *The Didache*, a 2<sup>nd</sup> century church handbook, includes the doxology. Thus, it is possible that the inclusion of the doxology in so many early church prayers led to its inclusion in later Greek manuscripts of Matthew.

**DAY FIVE**  
**Application**

Re-read Matthew 6:9-15 and consider the truths that you have learned this week. Seek to apply the message of this passage to your life.

**What thought or truth impacted you this week from your study of Matthew 6:9-15?**

---

---

---

One of the requests of the Lord's Prayer is that God's name would be set apart and magnified. **Read the following names of God in Scripture and spend time praising God for Who He is.**

- Yahweh***, I AM, LORD, the Self-Existent, Eternal God. The One who is always with us.
- El Shaddai***, Lord God Almighty, the All-Sufficient One. The One who completely satisfies us.
- El Elyon***, the Most High God. The One who is sovereign in power and glorious in majesty.
- Yahweh Nissi***, the Lord My Banner. The One who gives me victory in my battles.
- Yahweh Rohi***, the Lord My Shepherd. The One who loves me, leads me, and protects me.
- Yahweh Rapha***, the Lord Who Heals. The One who heals my physical and emotional needs.
- Yahweh Tsidkenu***, the Lord Our Righteousness. The One who forgives and gives salvation.
- Yahweh Jireh***, the Lord Who Provides. The One who knows my needs and meets them.
- Yahweh Shalom***, the Lord Is Peace. The One who quiets my heart and makes me whole.
- Yahweh Sabaoth***, the Lord of Hosts. The One who commands the angelic armies.

**Which name of God encourages you the most today? Why?** \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

**What do you need today?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Who do you need to forgive?** \_\_\_\_\_

**In what ways are you being tested or tempted?** \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

**What are you longing for?** \_\_\_\_\_

---

Spend time praying to God using the Lord's Prayer as your guide.

### **SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR GROUP OR FAMILY DISCUSSION:**

The goal is not to get through all the questions but to spark discussion around the truth of Matthew 6:9-15. Use the questions below to interact together with what you learned.

- What is one of the earliest prayers that you can remember praying?
- What can you learn about prayer from the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:9-13?
- What name of God means the most to you? Why?
- How does addressing God as "Father" (or even more intimately, *Abba*, "Daddy,") impact you? Do you have a hard time seeing Him as Father? What is your perception of a father?
- What are you longing for in life? How will the coming of Christ's kingdom fill this longing?
- Why do you think being willing to forgive others is such a vital part of praying to God? What does it say about our hearts if we are unwilling to forgive others?
- In what ways are you being tested in your life right now? How can we pray for you?
- Did you discover anything new, interesting, or meaningful in your study of this passage this week? Or in your reading of J.C. Ryle? If so, what?
- Spend time in prayer together as a group. Use the Lord's Prayer as your model. Have one person read a verse of the Lord's Prayer and then pause to allow people to respond in prayer. For instance, have someone read verse 9, "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name." Then spend time as a group praising God and exalting His name. After a few have prayed, then the next person reads verse 10, "Your kingdom come, Your will be done..." and so on.

*True prayer is an approach of the soul by the Spirit of God to the throne of God.  
True prayer is not a mere mental exercise nor a vocal performance, but it is deeper than that—  
it is spiritual communion with the Creator of heaven and earth.*

Charles Spurgeon (1834-92)

*The worst sin is prayerlessness.  
We usually think of murder, adultery, or theft as among the worst.  
But the root of all sin is self-sufficiency—independence from God.  
When we fail to wait prayerfully for God's guidance and strength we are saying,  
with our actions if not our lips, that we do not need Him.*

Charles Hummel (1923-2004)

---

**THE CORRUPTIBILITY OF MONEY**  
**Matthew 6:19-24**

---

**DAY ONE**  
**Observation**

After contrasting the true devotion of a kingdom citizen with the hypocrisy of religion (6:1-18), Jesus turns to the issue of money. How a person handles their material possessions is an indication of their true heart.

**Ask God to speak to your heart as you read Matthew 6:19-24. Mark words or phrases that stand out to you. Write down the main message or your thoughts next to each section.**

<sup>19</sup> “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, <sup>20</sup> but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup> For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

<sup>22</sup> “The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, <sup>23</sup> but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

<sup>24</sup> “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money. (ESV)

**What command is given (6:19-20)?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What reason is given for this command (6:19-20)?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What do you learn about your heart (6:21)?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What do you learn about your eyes (6:22-23)?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Why can't a person serve two masters (6:24)?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Complete this sentence:** *You cannot serve* \_\_\_\_\_ *and* \_\_\_\_\_.

**DAY TWO  
Meditation**

Quiet your heart and allow God to speak through His Word. Slowly read Matthew 6:19-21 several times. Reflect on each word. Meditate on them over and over until you memorize them.

*“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth,  
where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal;  
but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven,  
where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.*

*For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (NKJV)*

**Write down the observations that you can make from this passage, sketch out any images or thoughts that you have, or simply rewrite the passage below giving emphasis to key words.**

**Offer the passage back to God in the form of a personalized prayer.**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## DAY THREE Interpretation

In interpretation, you are digging deeper into the passage in order to better understand its meaning. A word study on a key word and/or looking up parallel passages can help you in your understanding.

When Jesus talks about a “good” or “healthy” eye (6:22), He uses a unique Greek word.

Go to [blueletterbible.org](http://blueletterbible.org) and type “Matthew 6” into the “Search the Bible” box. Next click on Matthew 6:22 to bring up the verse in the Greek. Find the word “single” (KJV) and click on the Strong’s number (G573) to bring up the Greek word, its definition, and its usage in the NT.

**What is the Greek word for “single”?** \_\_\_\_\_ (Use the transliteration.)

**How many times is it used in the New Testament?** \_\_\_\_\_ (See KJV Translation Count.)

**What is its definition?** (See Outline of Biblical Usage and Vine’s Expository Dictionary.)

---

---

When it comes to our use of money, we are either focused on the Lord or on many other things.

**Read the following Bible verses regarding money. Mark or highlight key phrases as you read.**

*Honor the Lord with your wealth,  
with the firstfruits of all your crops;  
then your barns will be filled to overflowing,  
and your vats will brim over with new wine. (Proverbs 3:9-10)*

*Lazy hands make for poverty, but diligent hands bring wealth. (Proverbs 10:4)*

*Do not wear yourself out to get rich;  
Do not trust your own cleverness.  
Cast but a glance at riches, and they are gone,  
For they will surely sprout wings and fly off to the sky like an eagle. (Proverbs 23:4-5)*

*Whoever loves money never has enough;  
whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with their income.  
This too is meaningless.  
As goods increase,  
so do those who consume them.  
And what benefit are they to the owners  
except to feast their eyes on them?  
The sleep of a laborer is sweet,  
whether they eat little or much,  
but as for the rich, their abundance  
permits them no sleep. (Ecclesiastes 5:10-12)*





## DAY FOUR Devotion

Read the following excerpt from William Barclay's *Daily Study Bible*. **William Barclay** (1907-78) was a Scottish minister, Greek scholar, and theological professor at the University of Glasgow. Though liberal in many of his beliefs, his *Daily Study Bible* is considered a masterpiece of scholarly and biblical insight.

### The True Treasure (Matthew 6:19-21)

In the ordinary, everyday management of life it is simple wisdom to get to oneself only those things which will last. Whether we are buying a suit of clothes, or a motor car, or a carpet for the floor, or a suite of furniture, it is common sense to avoid shoddy goods, and to buy the things which have solidity and permanence and craftsmanship wrought into them. That is exactly what Jesus is saying here; he is telling us to concentrate on the things which will last.

Jesus calls up three pictures from the three great sources of wealth in Palestine.

**1. He tells men to avoid the things that the moth can destroy.** In the east, part of a man's wealth often consisted in fine and elaborate clothes... One of the things which tempted Achan to sin was a beautiful mantle from Shinar (Joshua 7:21). But such things were foolish things to set the heart upon, for the moths might eat at them, when they were stored away. and all their beauty and their value be destroyed. There was no permanence about possessions like that.

**2. He tells men to avoid the things that rust can destroy.** The word translated rust is *broxis*. It literally means *an eating away*. It is nowhere else used to mean rust. Most likely the picture is this. In the east, many a man's wealth consisted in the corn and the grain that he had stored away in his great barns. But into that corn and rain there could come the worms, rats, and mice until the store was polluted and destroyed. In all probability, the reference is to the way in which vermin could get into a granary and eat away the grain...

**3. He tells men to avoid the treasure, which thieves can steal by digging through.** In Palestine the walls of many of the houses were made of nothing stronger than baked clay; and burglars did effect an entry by literally digging through the wall. The reference here is to the man who has hoarded up in his house a little store of gold, only to find, when he comes home one day, that the burglars have dug through his flimsy walls and that his treasure is gone...

If any man is wise, he will build his happiness on things which he cannot lose, things which are independent of the chances and the changes of this life.

Anyone whose happiness depends on things like that is doomed to disappointment. Any man whose treasure is in things is bound to lose his treasure, for in things there is no permanence, and nothing lasts forever.

### Treasure in Heaven (6:19-21)

The Jews were very familiar with the phrase *treasure in heaven*. They identified such treasure with two things in particular.

**1. They said that the deeds of kindness which a man did upon earth became his treasure in heaven.** The Jews had a famous story about a certain King Monobaz who became a convert to Judaism. "Monobaz distributed all his treasures to the poor in the year of famine. His brothers sent to him and said, 'Thy fathers gathered treasures, and added to those of their fathers, but thou hast dispersed yours and theirs.' He said to them, 'My fathers gathered treasures for below, I have gathered treasures for above; my fathers

gathered treasures of money, I have gathered treasures in souls; my fathers gathered treasures in this world, I have gathered treasures for the world to come.”

Both Jesus and the Jewish Rabbis were sure that what is selfishly hoarded is lost, but that what is generously given away brings treasure in heaven...

**2. The Jews always connected the phrase treasure in heaven with character.** When Rabbi Yose ben Kisma was asked if he would dwell in a heathen city on condition of receiving very high pay for his services, he replied that he would not dwell anywhere except in a home of the Law, “for,” he said, “in the hour of a man's departure neither silver, nor gold, nor precious stones accompany him, but only his knowledge of the Law, and his good works.” As the grim Spanish proverb has it, “There are no pockets in a shroud.”

The only thing which a man can take out of this world into the world beyond is himself; and the finer the self he brings, the greater his treasure in heaven will be.

Jesus ends this section by stating that where a man's treasure is, his heart is there also. If everything that a man values and sets his heart upon is on earth, then he will have no interest in any world beyond this world; if all through his life a man's eyes are on eternity, then he will evaluate lightly the things of this world. If everything which a man counts valuable is on this earth, then he will leave this earth reluctantly; if a man's thoughts have been ever in the world beyond, he will leave this world with gladness, because he goes at last to God. Once Dr. Johnson was shown through a noble castle and its grounds; when he had seen round it he turned to his companions and said, “These are the things which make it difficult to die.”

Jesus never said that this world was unimportant; but he said and implied over and over again that its importance is not in itself, but in that to which it leads. This world is not the end of life, it is a stage on the way; and therefore a man should never lose his heart to this world and to the things of this world. His eyes ought to be forever fixed on the goal beyond.

### **The Distorted Vision (6:22-23)**

The idea behind this passage is one of childlike simplicity. The eye is regarded as the window by which the light gets into the whole body. The state of a window decides what light gets into a room. If the window is clear, clean, and undistorted, the light will come flooding into the room, and will illuminate every corner of it. If the glass of the window is colored or frosted, distorted, dirty, or obscure, the light will be hindered, and the room will not be lit up.

The amount of light which gets into any room depends on the state of the window through which it has to pass. So, then, says Jesus, the light which gets into any man's heart and soul and being depends on the spiritual state of the eye through which it has to pass, for the eye is the window of the whole body...

One of the most necessary things in life is the fearless self-examination which will enable us to see when we are acting on principle and when we are the victims of our own unreasonable and unreasoning prejudices. In any man who is swayed by prejudice the eye is darkened and the vision distorted...

Self-conceit doubly affects a man's vision, for it renders him incapable of seeing himself as he really is, and incapable of seeing others as they really are. If a man is convinced of his own surpassing wisdom, he will never be able to realize his own foolishness; and if he

is blind to everything except his own virtues, he will never be aware of his own faults. Whenever he compares himself with others, he will do so to his own advantage, and to their disadvantage. He will be forever incapable of self-criticism, and therefore forever incapable of self-improvement. The light in which he should see himself and see others will be darkness.

### **The Generous Eye (6:22-23)**

But here Jesus speaks of one special virtue which fills the eye with light, and one special fault which fills the eye with darkness. The KJV speaks here about the eye being single and the eye being evil. Certainly that is the literal meaning of the Greek, but the words single and evil are here used in a special way which is common enough in the Greek in which scripture is written.

The word for “single” is *haplous*, and its corresponding noun is *haplotes*. Regularly in the Greek, these words mean *generous and generosity*. James speaks of God who gives generously (1:5). The adverb he uses is *haplos*. In Romans 12:8, Paul urges his friends to give in liberality (*haplos*). ...It is the generous eye which Jesus is commending.

The word which is in the KJV translated evil is *poneros*. Certainly that is the normal meaning of the word; but in the NT, it regularly means *grudging*...

So Jesus is saying, “There is nothing like generosity for giving you a clear and undistorted view of life and of people; and there is nothing like the grudging and ungenerous spirit for distorting your view of life and of people.” ...

The grudging eye distorts our vision; the generous eye alone sees clearly, for it alone sees as God sees.

### **The Exclusive Service (6:24)**

To one brought up in the ancient world this is an even more vivid saying than it is to us... We get the meaning far better, if we translate it: *No man can be a slave to two owners.*

To understand all that this means and implies we must remember two things about the slave in the ancient world. First, the slave in the eyes of the law was not a person but a thing. He had absolutely no rights of his own; his master could do with him absolutely as he liked... Second, in the ancient world a slave had literally no time which was his own. Every moment of his life belonged to his master...

Here, then, is our relationship to God. In regard to God we have no rights of our own; God must be undisputed master of our lives. We can never ask, “What do I wish to do?” We must always ask, “What does God wish me to do?” We have no time which is our own. We cannot sometimes say, “I will do what God wishes me to do,” and, at other times, say, “I will do what I like.” The Christian has no time off from being a Christian; there is no time when he can relax his Christian standards, as if he was off duty. A partial or spasmodic service of God is not enough. Being a Christian is a full-time job. Nowhere in the Bible is the exclusive service which God demands more clearly set forth.

Jesus goes on to say, “You cannot serve God and mammon.” *Mammon* was a Hebrew word for material possessions. Originally it was not a bad word at all. The Rabbis, for instance, had a saying, “Let the *mammon* of thy neighbor be as dear to thee as thine own.” That is to say, a man should regard his neighbor’s material possessions as being as sacrosanct as his own. But the word *mammon* had a most curious and a most revealing history. It comes from a root which means to

entrust; and *mammon* was that which a man entrusted to a banker or to a safe deposit of some kind. *Mammon* was the wealth which a man entrusted to someone to keep safe for him. But as the years went on *mammon* came to mean, not that which is entrusted, but that in which a man puts his trust. The end of the process was that *mammon* came to be spelled with a capital M and came to be regarded as nothing less than a god.

The history of that word shows vividly how material possessions can usurp a place in life which they were never meant to have. Originally a man's material possessions were the things which he entrusted to someone else for safe-keeping; in the end they came to be the things in which a man puts his trust.

Surely there is no better description of a man's god, than to say that his god is the power in whom he trusts; and when a man puts his trust in material things, then material things have become, not his support, but his god.

This saying of Jesus is bound to turn our thoughts to the place which material possessions should have in life. At the basis of Jesus' teaching about possessions there are three great principles.

**1. In the last analysis all things belong to God.** Scripture makes that abundantly clear. "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof; the world and those who dwell therein" (Ps. 24:1)...

Men can buy and sell things; men can to some extent alter and rearrange things; but man cannot create things. The ultimate ownership of all things belongs to God. There is nothing in this world of which a man can say, "This is mine." Of all things he can only say, "This belongs to God, and God has given me the use of it."

**2. People are always more important than things.** If possessions have to be acquired, if money has to be amassed, if wealth has to be accumulated at the expense of treating people as things, then all such riches are wrong. Whenever and wherever that principle is forgotten, or neglected, or defied, far-reaching disaster is certain to follow...

Whenever people are treated as things, as machines, as instruments for producing so much labor and for enriching those who employ them, then as certainly as the night follows the day disaster follows. A nation forgets at its peril the principle that people are always more important than things.

**3. Wealth is always a subordinate good.** The Bible does not say that, "Money is the root of all evil," it says that "The love of money is the root of all evils" (1 Tim. 6:10). It is quite possible to find in material things what someone has called "a rival salvation." A man may think that, because he is wealthy, he can buy anything, that he can buy his way out of any situation. Wealth can become his measuring-rod; wealth can become his one desire; wealth can become the one weapon with which he faces life. If a man desires material things for an honorable independence, to help his family and to do something for his fellow-men, that is good; but if he desires it simply to heap pleasure upon pleasure, and to add luxury, if wealth has become the thing he lives for and lives by, then wealth has ceased to be a subordinate good, and has usurped the place in life which only God should occupy.

One thing emerges from all this—the possession of wealth, money, material things is not a sin, but it is a grave responsibility. If a man owns many material things it is not so much a matter for congratulation as it is a matter for prayer, that he may use them as God would have him to do.

## Two Great Questions about Wealth

There are two great questions about possessions, and on the answer to these questions everything depends.

**1. How did a man gain his possessions?** Did he gain them in a way that he would be glad that Jesus Christ should see, or did he gain them in a way that he would wish to hide from Jesus Christ?

A man may gain his possessions at the expense of honesty and honor. George Macdonald tells of a village shop-keeper who grew very rich. Whenever he was measuring cloth, he measured it with his two thumbs inside the measure so that he always gave short measure. George Macdonald says of him, "He took from his soul, and he put it in his silver-bag." A man can enrich his bank account at the expense of impoverishing his soul.

A man may gain his possessions by deliberately smashing some weaker rival. Many a man's success is founded on someone else's failure. Many a man's advancement has been gained by pushing someone else out of the way. It is hard to see how a man who prospers in such a way can sleep at nights.

There are possessions which can be acquired at too great a cost. A man must ask himself:

"How do I acquire the things which I possess?"

**2. How does a man use his possessions?** There are various ways in which a man may use the things he has acquired.

He may not use them at all. He may have the miser's acquisitiveness which delights simply in possession. His possessions may be quite useless—and uselessness always invites disaster.

He may use them completely selfishly. A man may desire a bigger pay for no other reason than that he wants a bigger car, a new television set, a more expensive holiday. He may think of possessions simply and solely in terms of what they can do for him...

A man may use his possessions for his own sufficiency and for the happiness of others. It does not need great wealth to do that, for a man can be just as generous with half a crown as with a thousand pounds. A man will not go far wrong, if he uses his possessions to see how much happiness he can bring to others. Paul remembered a saying of Jesus which everyone else had forgotten: "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). It is characteristic of God to give, and, if in our lives giving always ranks above receiving we will use aright what we possess, however much or however little it may be.

**What thought from William Barclay's words stands out to you the most? Why?**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## DAY FIVE Application

Re-read Matthew 6:19-24 and consider the truths that you have learned this week. Seek to apply the message of this passage to your life.

**What thought or truth impacted you this week from your study of Matthew 6:19-24?**

---

---

---

---



**What was your view of money growing up? What messages about money did you pick up from your family?** (e.g., “money is scarce, don’t spend it; money is success, make a lot of it!”)

---

---

---

**What messages does the world tell you about money and material possessions?**

---

---

Jesus says that the use of our money reveals something about our heart (what we value the most) and about our eyes (what we focus on in life). It also reveals where our true devotion really lies.

**Honestly think through your spending. What things are priorities to you based on your budget?**

---

---

---

**If you have extra funds, what is one of the first things that you think of doing with them?**

---

---

**Which do you focus on more?**  Treasures on Earth  Treasures in Heaven

**What do you have more of?**  Treasures on Earth  Treasures in Heaven

Make giving a priority in your life. If you are not giving regularly to your local church or to other ministries, then start doing so. If you have extra funds, surprise someone this week with a gift.

## SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR GROUP OR FAMILY DISCUSSION:

The goal is not to get through all the questions but to spark discussion around the truth of Matthew 6:19-24. Use the questions below to interact together with what you learned.

- What do you learn about money from your dad and/or your mom?
- What does the world tell us about money and material possessions? Think through the messages that are conveyed on TV, in ads, or in our culture in general.
- Have you ever been blessed with an unexpected financial gift? If so, how did this impact you?
- How do we lay up treasures in heaven?
- How does our use of money reveal our heart?
- What does it mean to have a “healthy” eye according to Matthew 6:22?
- What principles do you learn about money from the Bible verses on pages 96-97?
- Did you discover anything new, interesting, or meaningful in your study of this passage this week? Or in your reading of William Barclay? If so, what?
- As a group, think through a way that you could collect a financial gift to bless someone in need or support a local Christian ministry. If possible, give this gift anonymously.

*“The love of money,” we know, “is the root of all evil;” but not the thing itself.  
The fault does not lie in the money, but in them that use it.  
It may be used ill: and what may not? But it may likewise be used well.*

...

*It is an excellent gift of God, answering the noblest ends.  
In the hands of His children, it is food for the hungry, drink for the thirsty,  
raiment for the naked, a defense for the oppressed,  
a means of health to the sick, of ease to them that are in pain.*

...

***Make all you can, save all you can, give all you can.***

John Wesley (1703-91)

*God prospers me not to raise my standard of living,  
but to raise my standard of giving.*

Randy Alcorn



# Recommended Percentages

You nerds will love this one! Calculate how you compare to these suggestions.

## How much of your money should go where?

We've got some recommendations based on experience and research. If you find that you spend much more in one category than we recommend, consider adjusting your lifestyle in that area in order to enjoy more freedom and flexibility across the board. These are only suggestions though. For example, if you have a higher income, your percentage for things like food will be lower.

Use this formula to get your target percentages

$$\text{Total monthly Income} \times \text{Recommended Percentage}$$

Use this formula to get your actual percentages

$$\frac{\text{Budgeted Amount}}{\text{Total monthly Income}} \times 100$$

ITEM	RECOMMENDED %	TARGET	ACTUAL
Charitable Gifts	10-15%		
Saving	10-15%		
Housing	25-35%		
Utilities	5-10%		
Food	5-15%		
Transportation	10-15%		
Clothing	2-7%		
Medical/Health	5-10%		
Insurance	10-25%		
Personal	5-10%		
Recreation	5-10%		
Debts	5-10%		

Other free financial forms are available at [ramseysolutions.com/tools](http://ramseysolutions.com/tools)

---

**THE ANXIETY OF LIFE**  
**Matthew 6:25-34**

---

**DAY ONE**  
**Observation**

Jesus gives three primary commands in Matthew 6—*do not be like the hypocrites* (6:1-18), *do not lay up your treasures on earth* (6:19-24), and *do not worry about your life* (6:25-34). Our anxiety is something that reveals what is truly important to us and where we have placed our ultimate trust and security.

**Ask God to speak to your heart as you read Matthew 6:25-34. Mark words or phrases that stand out to you. Write down the main message or your thoughts next to each section.**

<sup>25</sup> “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? <sup>26</sup> Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? <sup>27</sup> Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?

<sup>28</sup> “And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. <sup>29</sup> Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. <sup>30</sup> If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith?

<sup>31</sup> So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’

<sup>32</sup> For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. <sup>33</sup> But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

<sup>34</sup> Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. (NIV)

**Which verse or thought strikes you the most after reading this passage? Why?**

---

---

---

---

“Therefore” indicates that this passage flows out of the previous one on money (6:19-24). **What correlation do you see between our view and use of money and our experience of anxiety?**

---



---

**What is the primary command of this passage (6:25)?** \_\_\_\_\_

---

Jesus asks five questions in this passage intended to get us to examine our hearts more deeply.

**Complete the chart below.**

THE QUESTION		THE IMPLIED ANSWER
6:25b	<i>Is not life more than food and the body more than clothes?</i>	<i>Yes, life is more important than the things that I often worry about.</i>
6:26b		
6:27		
6:28a		
6:30		

**What two additional reasons does Jesus give for not worrying (6:32)?** \_\_\_\_\_

---



---

**Instead of worrying, what should we do (6:33)?** \_\_\_\_\_

---

**Why should we not worry about the future (i.e., “tomorrow”) (6:34)?** \_\_\_\_\_

---

**DAY TWO  
Meditation**

Quiet your heart and allow God to speak through His Word. Slowly read Matthew 6:31-34 several times. Reflect on each word. Meditate on them over and over until you memorize them.

*Therefore do not be anxious,  
saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'  
For the Gentiles seek after all these things,  
and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.*

*But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness,  
and all these things will be added to you.*

*Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow,  
for tomorrow will be anxious for itself.  
Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. (ESV)*

**Write down the observations that you can make from this passage, sketch out any images or thoughts that you have, or simply rewrite the passage below giving emphasis to key words.**

**Offer the passage back to God in the form of a personalized prayer.**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### DAY THREE Interpretation

In interpretation, you are digging deeper into the passage in order to better understand its meaning. A word study on a key word and/or looking up parallel passages can help you in your understanding.

Go to [blueletterbible.org](http://blueletterbible.org) and type “Matthew 6” into the “Search the Bible” box. Next click on Matthew 6:25 to bring up the verse in the Greek. Find the word “thought” (KJV) and click on the Strong’s number (G3309) to bring up the Greek word, its definition, and its usage in the NT.

**What is the Greek word for “thought”?** \_\_\_\_\_ (Use the transliteration.)

**How many times is it used in the New Testament?** \_\_\_\_\_ (See KJV Translation Count.)

**What is its definition?** (See Outline of Biblical Usage and Vine’s Expository Dictionary.)

---

---

For more insight, click on the Root Word (Etymology) (G3088). Then click on *Vine’s Expository Dictionary* or read *Thayer’s Greek Lexicon*. **What is the meaning of this root word for “anxiety”?**

---

---

**Read the following verses regarding fear and worry. Mark or highlight key phrases as you read.**

*Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them,  
for the Lord your God goes with you;  
He will never leave you nor forsake you. (Deuteronomy 31:6)*

*Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,  
I will fear no evil, for You are with me;  
Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. (Psalm 23:4)*

*The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear?  
The Lord is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid? (Psalm 27:1)*

*Why, my soul, are you downcast?  
Why so disturbed within me?  
Put your hope in God,  
For I will yet praise him,  
My Savior and my God. (Psalm 42:5)*

*God is our refuge and strength,  
A very present help in trouble.  
Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way,  
Though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea. (Psalm 46:1-2)*

*Cast your burden on the Lord, and He will sustain you;  
He will never allow the righteous to be shaken. (Psalm 55:22)*

*The fear of man brings a snare,  
But whoever trusts in the Lord shall be safe. (Proverbs 29:25)*

*Fear not, for I am with you;  
Be not dismayed, for I am your God.  
I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you,  
I will uphold you with My righteous right hand. (Isaiah 41:10)*

*Therefore don't worry about tomorrow, because tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. (Matthew 6:34)*

*Others are like seed sown among thorns; these are the ones who hear the word, but the worries of this age, the deceitfulness of wealth, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. (Mark 4:18-19)*

*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you.  
Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. (John 14:27)*

*Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7)*

*For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. (2 Tim. 1:7)*

**According to these verses, what kinds of things do we tend to worry about?**

---

---

**According to these verses, what are some of the dangers of fear and anxiety?**

---

---

**According to these verses, what are some of the reasons why we should not worry?**

---

---

---

---

---

---

## DAY FOUR Devotion

Read the following commentary from J.C. Ryle's *Expository Thoughts on Matthew*. **J. C. Ryle** (1816-1900) was the Anglican bishop of Liverpool, where his sermons and writings impacted thousands in England and abroad. At the end of his life, he was described as "the man of granite with the heart of a child."

### Matthew 6:25-34

These verses are a striking example of the combined wisdom and compassion of our Lord Jesus Christ's teaching. He knows the heart of a man. He knows that we are all ready to turn off warnings against worldliness, by the argument that we cannot help being anxious about the things of this life. "Have we not our families to provide for? Must not our bodily needs be supplied? How can we possibly get through life, if we think first of our souls?" The Lord Jesus foresaw such thoughts, and furnished an answer.

**He forbids us to keep up an anxious spirit about the things of this world.** Four times over He says, *Don't be anxious*. About life. About food. About clothing. About tomorrow. *Don't be anxious!* Be not over-careful. Be not over-anxious. Prudent provision for the future is right. Wearing, corroding, self-tormenting anxiety is wrong.

**He reminds us of the providential care that God continually takes of everything that He has created.** Has He given us *life*? Then He will surely not let us lack anything necessary for its maintenance. Has He given us a *body*? Then He will surely not let us die for lack of clothing. He that calls us into being, will doubtless find food to feed us.

**He points out the uselessness of over-anxiety.** Our life is entirely in God's hand. All the care in the world will not make us continue a minute beyond the time which God has appointed. We shall not die until our work is done.

**He sends us to the birds of the air for instruction.** They make no provision for the future. "They don't sow, neither do they reap." They lay up no stores against time yet to come. They do not "gather into barns." They literally live from day to day on what they can pick up, by using the instinct God has put in them. They ought to teach us that no man doing his duty in the station to which God has called him, shall ever be allowed to come to poverty.

**He bids us to observe the flowers of the field.** Year after year they are decked with the gayest colors, without the slightest labor or exertion on their part. "They don't toil, neither do they spin." God, by His almighty power, clothes them with beauty every season. The same God is the Father of all believers. Why should they doubt that He is able to provide them with clothing, as well as the lilies "of the field?" He who takes thought for perishable flowers, will surely not neglect the bodies in which dwell immortal souls.

**He suggests to us, that anxiety about the things of this world is most unworthy of a Christian.** One great feature of heathenism is living for the present. Let the heathen, if he will, be anxious. He knows nothing of a Father in heaven. But let the Christian, who has clearer light and knowledge, give proof of it by his faith and contentment. When bereaved of those whom we love, we are not to "sorrow as those who have no hope." When tried by cares about this life, we are not to be over-anxious, as if we had no God, and no Christ.

**He offers us a gracious promise, as a remedy against an anxious spirit.** He assures us that if we “seek first” and foremost to have a place in the kingdom of grace and glory, everything that we really need in this world shall be given to us. It shall be “added,” over and above our heavenly inheritance.

*And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.*  
(Romans 8:28)

*For the Lord God is a sun and shield;  
The Lord will give grace and glory;  
No good thing will He withhold  
From those who walk uprightly.* (Ps. 84:11)

Last of all, He seals up all His instruction on this subject, by **laying down one of the wisest maxims.**

*Tomorrow will be anxious for itself.  
Each day's own evil is sufficient.*

We are not to carry cares before they come. We are to attend to today's business, and leave tomorrow's anxieties until tomorrow

dawns. We may die before tomorrow. We know not what may happen on the morrow. This only we may be assured of, that if tomorrow brings a cross, He who sends it, can and will send grace to bear it.

In all this passage, there is a treasury of golden lessons. Let us seek to use them in our daily life. Let us not only read them, but turn them to practical account. Let us watch and pray against worry, and an over-anxious spirit. It deeply concerns our happiness.

Half our miseries are caused by imagining things that we think are coming upon us. Half the things that we expect to come upon us, never come at all. Where is our faith? Where is our confidence in our Savior's words? We may well take shame to ourselves, when we read these verses, and then look into our hearts.

But this we may be sure of, that David's words are true,

*I have been young, and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his children begging for bread.* (Psalm 37:25.).

**What thought from J.C. Ryle's words stands out to you the most? Why?**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



**DAY FIVE**  
**Application**

Re-read Matthew 6:25-34 and consider the truths that you have learned this week. Seek to apply the message of this passage to your life.

**What thought or truth impacted you this week from your study of Matthew 6:25-34?**

---

---

---

---

**Make a worry list in the space below.** Think through your current conflicts, problems, concerns or frustrations. List anything that is “bugging” you. No matter how small the item is, if it is of concern to you, list it. Ask God to reveal to you anything else which is a point of concern.

**Now go through the list item by item.** Circle those items that are beyond your direct control, the things that bother you or concern you but that you can do very little or nothing to change (e.g., other people’s choices, your past sins or mistakes, the sinful realities of the world, etc.). Put a star (\*) by those things that you can do something about, things that you can make a choice to confront or resolve or deal with in some tangible way.

**Take the things that you have circled and cast them on the Lord.** These are the things that God wants you to persevere through with His strength and to trust Him for their ultimate resolution.

**Take the things that you have put a star (\*) by and prioritize them.** Make a list of three to four things that you can choose to do in these situations. Pray for God’s strength to follow through.

The best antidote to anxiety and worry is prayer and thanksgiving.

*Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, **with thanksgiving**, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

**You have made a worry list, now it is time to make a Thanksgiving List!** In the space below, write all the things in your life that you can be thankful for. Try not to leave anything off. Remember God's attributes, His blessings in your life (big or small), your family, friends, church, and nation, good events and also bad events that shaped you, and the little things you often take for granted. Be artistic and have fun making your list.

### **SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR GROUP OR FAMILY DISCUSSION:**

The goal is not to get through all the questions but to spark discussion around the truth of Matthew 6:25-34. Use the questions below to interact together with what you learned.

- What age was one of the most stressful or anxious times in your life? What made that time in your life so stressful?
- How did your dad or your mom deal with stress and anxiety?
- Is it possible to not be worried in this life? What is the difference between being content and worry-free and being apathetic and unconcerned about anything?
- What things do you tend to worry about the most? Why?
- Which of Jesus' five questions in Matthew 6:25-30 catches your attention the most? Why?
- Which Bible verse on pages 109-110 encourages you the most? Why?
- Did you discover anything new, interesting, or meaningful in your study of this passage this week? Or in your reading of J.C. Ryle? If so, what?
- Share some of the things on your worry list. What things are beyond your control that you need to hand over completely to the Lord? What things can you make a choice to deal with? How can this group pray for you this week?

*Every tomorrow has two handles.  
We can take hold of it with the handle of anxiety or the handle of faith.*

Henry Ward Beecher

*Worry is the antithesis of trust.  
You simply cannot do both.  
They are mutually exclusive.*

Elisabeth Elliot

*The illusion of control lurks inside your anxiety.  
Anxiety and control are two sides of one coin.  
When we can't control something, we worry about it.*

David Powlison

---

## THE HUMILITY OF RELATIONSHIPS

### Matthew 7:1-12

---

#### **DAY ONE** **Observation**

Jesus has revealed to us the true character of a kingdom citizen (5:1-16) and shown us the true righteousness that is required in the law (5:17-48). In this current section of Jesus' sermon (6:1-7:12), He has focused on the true conduct of a kingdom citizen in relation to God (6:1-18), in relation to money & possessions (6:19-24), and in relation to anxiety and the uncertainties of life (6:25-34). Now, Jesus focuses on our true conduct as kingdom citizens in our relationships with other people (7:1-12).

**Ask God to speak to your heart as you read Matthew 7:1-12. Mark words or phrases that stand out to you. Write down the main message or your thoughts next to each section.**

“Judge not, that you be not judged. <sup>2</sup>For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.

<sup>3</sup>And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?

<sup>4</sup>Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me remove the speck from your eye’; and look, a plank is in your own eye? <sup>5</sup>Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

<sup>6</sup>“Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces.

<sup>7</sup>“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. <sup>8</sup>For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. <sup>9</sup>Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? <sup>10</sup>Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? <sup>11</sup>If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!

<sup>12</sup>Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets. (NKJV)

Which verse or thought strikes you the most after reading this passage? Why?

---

---

---

---

Jesus gives five commands in this passage along with the reason for obeying these commands.

Complete the chart below.

	THE COMMAND	REASON FOR THE COMMAND
7:1-2		
7:3-5		
7:6		
7:7-11		
7:12		



In 7:3-5, Jesus uses a vivid analogy to teach His point about judging others.

What do you think the speck represents? \_\_\_\_\_

What do you think the plank represents? \_\_\_\_\_

What does Jesus call this type of person? \_\_\_\_\_

How does Jesus summarize all the relational commands of the OT (7:12)?

---

---

## DAY TWO Meditation

Quiet your heart and allow God to speak through His Word. Slowly read Matthew 7:7-11 several times. Reflect on each word. Meditate on them over and over until you memorize them.

*Ask and it will be given to you;  
seek and you will find;  
knock and the door will be opened to you.  
For everyone who asks receives;  
the one who seeks finds;  
and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.*

*Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone?  
Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake?  
If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children,  
how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! (NIV)*

**Write down the observations that you can make from this passage, sketch out any images or thoughts that you have, or simply rewrite the passage below giving emphasis to key words.**

**Offer the passage back to God in the form of a personalized prayer.**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## DAY THREE Interpretation

In interpretation, you are digging deeper into the passage in order to better understand its meaning. A word study on a key word and/or looking up parallel passages can help you in your understanding.

Go to [blueletterbible.org](http://blueletterbible.org) and type "Matthew 7" into the "Search the Bible" box. Next click on Matthew 7:1 to bring up the verse in the Greek. Find the word "judge" and click on the Strong's number (G2919) to bring up the Greek word, its definition, and its usage in the New Testament.

What is the Greek word for "judge"? \_\_\_\_\_ (Use the transliteration.)

How many times is it used in the New Testament? \_\_\_\_\_ (See KJV Translation Count.)

What is its definition? (See particularly V. in the Outline of Biblical Usage.)

---

---

Read the following verses that use this Greek word. Mark or highlight key phrases as you read.

*"Do not **judge**, and you will not be **judged**. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."* (Luke 6:37-38)

*For God did not send his Son into the world to **condemn** the world, but to save the world through Him.* (John 3:17)

*Do not **judge** according to external appearance, but **judge** with proper judgment.* (John 7:24)

*You, therefore, have no excuse, you who **pass judgment** on someone else, for at whatever point you **judge** another, you are condemning yourself, because you who **pass judgment** do the same things. Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. So when you, a mere human being, **pass judgment** on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment?* (Romans 2:1-3)

*The one who eats everything must not treat with contempt the one who does not, and the one who does not eat everything must not **judge** the one who does, for God has accepted them. Who are you to **judge** someone else's servant? To their own master, servants stand or fall. And they will stand, for the Lord is able to make them stand.* (Romans 14:3-4)

*Therefore, let us stop **passing judgment** on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in the way of a brother or sister.* (Romans 14:13)

*Therefore, **judge** nothing before the appointed time; wait until the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of the heart. At that time each will receive their praise from God.* (1 Corinthians 4:5)

*If we were properly **judging** ourselves, we would not be **judged**. (1 Corinthians 11:31)*

*Therefore, no one is to **act as your judge** in regard to food and drink, or in respect to a festival or a new moon, or a Sabbath day—things which are only a shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ. Take care that no one keeps defrauding you of your prize by delighting in humility and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind. (Colossians 2:16-18)*

*Don't criticize one another, brothers and sisters. Anyone who defames or **judges** a fellow believer defames and **judges** the law. If you **judge** the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. There is one lawgiver and judge who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to **judge** your neighbor? (James 4:11-12)*

**Based on these passages, what do you think it means to “judge” someone?**

---

---

---

---

**Based on these passages, what reasons are given for not judging someone?**

---

---

---

---

**Instead of judging others, what should we do?** \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

It is clear in this passage that Jesus is not telling us to be gullible or to have a tolerant attitude that never confronts any wrong behavior. Indeed, He says that *we are to remove the speck from our brother's eye*. We just have to make sure we do so with the right heart and the right attitude, removing any plank from our own eye first. Jesus also instructs us to have the wise discernment necessary to avoid casting our pearls before swine (7:6) and to identify false teachers (7:15-20).

**What do you think is the difference between judging others and using wise discernment?**

---

---

---



## DAY FOUR Devotion

Read the following commentary from J.C. Ryle's *Expository Thoughts on Matthew*. **J. C. Ryle** (1816-1900) was the Anglican bishop of Liverpool, where his sermons and writings impacted thousands in England and abroad. At the end of his life, he was described as "the man of granite with the heart of a child."

The first portion of Matthew 7:1-12 is one of those passages of Scripture which we must be careful not to strain beyond its proper meaning. It is frequently abused and misapplied by the enemies of true religion.

*It is possible to press the words of the Bible so far that they yield not medicine, but poison.*

Our Lord does not mean that it is wrong, under any circumstances, to pass an unfavorable judgment on the conduct and opinions of others. We ought to have decided opinions. We are to "prove all things." We are to "test the spirits." Nor yet does He mean that it is wrong to reprove the sins and faults of others, until we are perfect and faultless ourselves. Such an interpretation would contradict other parts of Scripture. It would make it impossible to condemn error and false doctrine. It would debar any one from attempting the office of a minister or a judge. The earth would be "given into the hands of the wicked." (Job 9:24) Heresy would flourish—and wrong-doing would abound.

**7:1-5. What our Lord means to condemn, is a censorious and fault-finding spirit.** A readiness to blame others for trifling offenses or matters of indifference—a habit of passing rash and hasty judgments—a disposition to magnify the errors and infirmities of our neighbors, and make the worst of them—this is what our Lord forbids. This was common among the Pharisees—and it has always been common from their day down to the present time. We must all watch against it. We should *believe all things*, and *hope all things* about others—and be very slow to find fault. This is real Christian charity. (1 Corinthians 13:7)

**7:6.** The second lesson contained in this passage is **the importance of exercising discretion as to the person with whom we speak on the subject of religion.** Everything is beautiful in its place and season. Our zeal is to be tempered by a prudent consideration of times, places, and people. "Don't reprove a scoffer," says Solomon, "lest he hate you." (Proverbs 9:8) It is not everybody to whom it is wise to open our minds and hearts on spiritual matters. There are many, who from violent tempers, or openly profligate habits—are utterly incapable of valuing the things of the Gospel. They will even fly into a passion, and run into greater excesses of sin—if you try to do good to their souls. To name the name of Christ to such people, is truly to *cast your pearls before swine*. It does them not good, but harm. It rouses all their corruption, and makes them angry. In short, they are like the Jews at Corinth (Acts 18:6) or like Nabal who was "such a worthless fellow, that a man could not speak to him!" (1 Samuel 25:17)

This is a lesson which it is peculiarly difficult to use in the proper way. The right application of it needs great wisdom. We are most of us far more likely to err on the side of *over-caution*—than of *over-zeal*. We are generally far more disposed to remember *the time to be silent*—than *the time to speak*. It is a lesson, however, which ought to stir up a spirit of self-inquiry in all our hearts. By our crabbiness and irritability of temper—do we ourselves ever hinder our friends from giving us good advice? By our pride and impatient contempt of counsel—have we ever caused others to say nothing? Have we ever turned against our kind advisers and silenced them by our angry passion? Alas! we may well fear that we have erred in this matter.

**7:7-11.** The next lesson contained in this passage is **the duty of prayer**, and the rich encouragement to pray. There is a beautiful connection between this lesson and that which goes before it. Would we know when to be *silent*, and when to *speak*—when to bring forward *holy* things, and produce our *pearls*? We must pray. This is a subject to which the Lord attaches great importance. The language He uses is plain proof of this. He employs three different words to express the idea of prayer. “Ask.” “Seek.” “Knock.” He holds out the broadest, fullest promise to those who pray. *Everyone who asks, receives.* He illustrates God's readiness to hear our prayers by an argument drawn from the practice of parents on earth. Evil and selfish as they are by nature—they do not neglect the needs of their children. Much more will a God of love and mercy attend to the cries of those who are His children by grace.

Let us take special notice of these words of our Lord about prayer. Few of His sayings are so well known and so often repeated as this. The poorest and most unlearned can tell you, that “if we do not seek—then we shall not find.” But what is the good of knowing it, if we do not use it? Knowledge which is not improved and well employed—will only increase our condemnation at the last day.

*Do we know anything of this asking, seeking, and knocking?* Why should we not? There is nothing so simple and plain as praying—if a man really has a desire to pray. Sadly, there is nothing which men are so slow to do—as sincere secret prayer. They will use many of the forms of religion, attend many ordinances, do many things that are right—

before they will do this. And yet without this, no soul can be saved...

*Do we indeed pray?* Then let us pray on, and not faint. It is not lost labor. It is not useless. It will bear fruit after many days. That promise has never yet failed, *Everyone who asks, receives.*

**7:12.** Jesus lays down a principle for our guidance in all doubtful questions between man and man. **We are to do to others—as we would have others do unto us.** We are not to deal with others—as others deal with us. This is mere selfishness and heathenism. We are to deal with others as we would like others to deal with us. This is real Christianity.

*This is a golden rule indeed!* It does not merely forbid all petty malice and revenge, all cheating and taking advantage of others. It does much more. It settles a hundred difficult points which in a world like this are continually arising between man and man. It prevents the necessity of laying down endless little rules for our conduct in specific cases. It sweeps the whole debatable ground with one mighty principle. It shows us a balance and measure, by which every one may see at once, what his duty is.

Is there a thing which we would not like our neighbor to do unto us? Then let us always remember that this is the thing which we ought not to do unto him. Is there a thing which we would like him to do unto us? Then this is the very thing which we ought to do unto him. How many intricate questions would be decided at once if this rule were honestly used!

**What thought from J.C. Ryle's words stands out to you the most? Why?**

---

---

---

**DAY FIVE**  
**Application**

Re-read Matthew 7:1-12 and consider the truths that you have learned this week. Seek to apply the message of this passage to your life.

**What thought or truth impacted you this week from your study of Matthew 7:1-12?**

---

---

---

---

**How often do you have a judgmental or critical spirit?**  Frequently  Sometimes  Never

**Toward what people or in what situations do you struggle with a critical spirit? Why?**

---

---

---

*Are you willing to examine your own weaknesses, failures, sins, and self-righteousness?*

**What specks do you have in your life? In what areas of your life do you often struggle or fail?**

---

---

**What planks do you have in your life? What heart attitudes hinder you from loving like Jesus?**

---

---

**Read and meditate on Galatians 6:1-3.** Mark key words or phrases as you read.

*Brothers and sisters, if someone is overtaken in any wrongdoing, you who are spiritual, restore such a person with a gentle spirit, watching out for yourselves so that you also won't be tempted. Carry one another's burdens; in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone considers himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.*

**According to this passage, how should we deal with the failings and sins of others?**

---

---

---

If the Lord has brought someone to mind, then practice Galatians 6:1-3 with them this week.

### **SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR GROUP OR FAMILY DISCUSSION:**

The goal is not to get through all the questions but to spark discussion around the truth of Matthew 7:1-12. Use the questions below to interact together with what you learned.

- What is one of your pet peeves? Why do you think it tends to bother you so much?
- Describe a critical spirit. What is it like? What does it do? What are its results?
- What is the difference between judging others and exercising discernment with others? Between being a “speck inspector” and being a “fruit inspector”?
- In this passage, what is a speck? What is a plank?
- What does it mean to cast your pearls before swine?
- How does Matthew 7:7-11 fit in the context of this passage? Why does Jesus go from talking about human relationships to talking about asking God for what you need?
- How do you want to be treated? What things do you desire from other people? Make a list.
- Why is it so hard to treat others the way that we want to be treated?
- Did you discover anything new, interesting, or meaningful in your study of this passage this week? Or in your reading of J. C. Ryle? If so, what?
- We all like to be appreciated and encouraged. Go around and share a word of encouragement for each person in your group.

*Unless we are willing to help a person overcome his faults,  
there is little value in pointing them out.*

Robert Hastings

*What is this spirit that condemns?  
It is a self-righteous spirit...a feeling of superiority,  
and a feeling that we are right while others are not.*

D. Martyn Lloyd Jones

**Write the names of 3-5 people in each category below.**

People Who Have Prayed for, Encouraged, and Helped Me:

People for Whom I Can Pray:

People Whom I Can Encourage:

People Whom I Can Help:

---

## THE TRUE FOUNDATION OF A KINGDOM CITIZEN

### Matthew 7:13-29

---

#### **DAY ONE** **Observation**

Jesus concludes His sermon with a call to a decision. There are only two roads in life—the narrow road to life and the broad road to destruction. There are only two foundations in life—one is temporary (sand) and the other is eternal (rock). Jesus calls people to build their lives on Him and follow Him as their King.

**Ask God to speak to your heart as you read Matthew 7:13-29. Mark words or phrases that stand out to you. Write down the main message or your thoughts next to each section.**

<sup>13</sup> “Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. <sup>14</sup> Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.

<sup>15</sup> “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. <sup>16</sup> You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? <sup>17</sup> Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. <sup>18</sup> A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. <sup>19</sup> Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. <sup>20</sup> Therefore by their fruits you will know them.

<sup>21</sup> “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. <sup>22</sup> Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ <sup>23</sup> And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’

<sup>24</sup> “Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: <sup>25</sup> and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.

<sup>26</sup> “But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: <sup>27</sup> and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.”

<sup>28</sup> And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, <sup>29</sup> for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. (NKJV)

**Which verse or thought strikes you the most after reading this passage? Why?**

---



---



---



---

Jesus draws a line in the sand. There are only two ways in life; there are only two types of people.

**Fill in the chart below.** Note the clear contrast in each section.

	FALSE DISCIPLE	TRUE DISCIPLE
<b>Two Paths</b> 7:13-14		
<b>Two Trees</b> 7:15-20		
<b>Two Groups</b> 7:21-23		
<b>Two Foundations</b> 7:24-27		

Jesus uses another vivid analogy to conclude His sermon—a house built on the sand and a house built on the rock. **What do you think each of these symbols represents in Jesus’ analogy?**



**The House:** \_\_\_\_\_

**The Rock:** \_\_\_\_\_

**The Sand:** \_\_\_\_\_

**The Storms:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DAY TWO**  
**Meditation**

Quiet your heart and allow God to speak through His Word. Slowly read Matthew 7:24-27 several times. Reflect on each word. Meditate on them over and over until you memorize them.

*“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.*

*But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.” (NIV)*

**Write down the observations that you can make from this passage, sketch out any images or thoughts that you have, or simply rewrite the passage below giving emphasis to key words.**

**Offer the passage back to God in the form of a personalized prayer.**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## DAY THREE Interpretation

In interpretation, you are digging deeper into the passage in order to better understand its meaning. A word study on a key word and/or looking up parallel passages can help you in your understanding.

The Bible constantly warns us about false teachers and false doctrine. Anything that is valuable will be counterfeited and the same is true with the message of Jesus Christ. Jesus highlights the danger of false teachers at the end of His sermon because He knows that people will tend to believe a lie and will follow after that which sounds the most pleasing to them. Unfortunately, believing lies and following after false teachers will always lead to destruction.

**Read the following passages about false teachers.** Mark key words or phrases as you read.

*You may say to yourself, "How can we recognize a message the Lord has not spoken?" When a prophet speaks in the Lord's name, and the message does not come true or is not fulfilled, that is a message the Lord has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him. (Deuteronomy 18:21-22)*

*"I have heard what the prophets say who prophesy lies in My name. They say, 'I had a dream! I had a dream!' How long will this continue in the hearts of these lying prophets, who prophesy the delusions of their own minds? They think the dreams they tell one another will make My people forget My name, just as their ancestors forgot My name through Baal worship. Let the prophet who has a dream recount the dream, but let the one who has My word speak it faithfully. For what has straw to do with grain?" declares the Lord. "Is not My word like fire," declares the Lord, "and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?" (Jeremiah 23:25-29)*

*"Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them." (Matthew 7:15-16a)*

*"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to Me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and cast out demons in Your name, and do many mighty works in Your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you workers of lawlessness.'" (Matthew 7:21-23)*

*"For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect." (Matthew 24:24)*

*Now I urge you, brothers and sisters, to watch out for those who create divisions and obstacles contrary to the teaching that you learned. Avoid them, because such people do not serve our Lord Christ but their own appetites. They deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting with smooth talk and flattering words. (Romans 16:17-18)*

*For such people are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no great surprise if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will be according to their works. (2 Corinthians 11:13-14)*

*For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. (2 Timothy 4:3-4)*

*There were indeed false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, and will bring swift destruction on themselves. Many will follow their depraved ways, and the way of truth will be maligned because of them. They will exploit you in their greed with made-up stories. Their condemnation, pronounced long ago, is not idle, and their destruction does not sleep. (2 Peter 2:1-3)*

**According to these passages, what are the characteristics of false teachers?**

---

---

---

---

---

**How are we to respond to false teachers?** \_\_\_\_\_

---

Jesus is the Rock. He is the only foundation on which we can build our lives and have eternal life!

**Read the following passages about the Rock.** Mark key words or phrases as you read.

*For who is God besides the Lord?  
And who is a rock? Only our God! (Psalm 18:31)*

*Rest in God alone, my soul,  
For my hope comes from Him.  
He alone is my rock and my salvation,  
My stronghold; I will not be shaken. (Psalm 62:5-6)*

*I will give you thanks, for you answered me;  
You have become my salvation.  
The stone the builders rejected  
Has become the cornerstone. (Psalm 118:21-22)*

*You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You.  
Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord God is an everlasting rock. (Isaiah 26:3-4)*

*Therefore the Lord God said: "Look, I have laid a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious  
cornerstone, a sure foundation; the one who believes will be unshakable." (Isaiah 28:16)*

*For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 3:11)*

## DAY FOUR Devotion

Read the following excerpt from Alexander MacLaren's *Expositions of Holy Scriptures*. **Alexander MacLaren** (1826-1910) was a Baptist pastor in Manchester, England whose sermons were known for their "profundity of thought, logical arrangement, eloquence of appeal, and power over the human heart."

Our Lord closes the Sermon on the Mount, which is really the King's proclamation of the law of His Kingdom, with three pairs of contrasts, all meant to sway us to obedience. The first is that of the two ways: one broad, leading down to abysses of destruction; the other narrow, leading up to shining heights of life. The second is that of the two trees, one good and one bad, each bearing fruit according to its nature; by which our Lord would teach us that conduct is the outcome and revelation of character, and the test of being a follower of His. The third is that of the two houses on the two foundations, and their fate before the one storm; by which our Lord would teach us that the only foundation on which can be built a life that will stand the blast of final judgment is His sayings and Himself.

Now, there are many very important links of connection between these three contrasted pictures, but I only point to one thing here, and that is that in all of them Jesus Christ most decisively divides all His hearers—for it is about them that He is speaking—into two classes: either on the broad road or on the narrow, not a foot in each; either the good tree or the bad; either the house on the sand or the house on the rock. Such a sharp division is said nowadays to be narrow, and to be contradicted by the facts of life, in which the great mass of men are neither very white nor very black, but a kind of neutral grey. Yes, they are—on the surface. But if you go down to the bottom, and grasp the life in its inmost principles and essential nature, I fancy that Jesus Christ's narrowness is true to fact.

Following the imagery of our text, I wish to bring before you the two foundations, the two houses, the one storm, and the two endings.

### I. The Two Foundations: Rock, Sand.

To build on the Rock, Jesus Christ Himself explains to us as being the same thing as to hear and do His sayings. The one representation is plain fact, the other is metaphor which points precisely in the same direction. It is scarcely a digression if I pause for a moment, and point you to the singular and unique attitude which this Carpenter's Son of Nazareth takes up here...alleging that His sayings are an infallible law for conduct, and that He has the right absolutely to command every man, woman, and child of the sons and daughters of Adam. And the strange thing is that the best men have admitted His claim and have seen that His precepts are the very ideal of human conduct, and, if they have ventured to criticize at all, their criticism has only been that the precepts are too good to be obeyed, and contemplate an ideal that is unreachable in human society. Be that as it may, there stands the fact that this Man assumes an attitude which nothing can warrant and nothing explain except the full-toned belief that in Him we have God manifest in the flesh.

But what I desire to point to now is the significance of this demand that He makes, that we shall take His sayings as the foundation of our lives. The metaphor is a very plain one, by which the principles that underlie or dominate and mold our conduct are regarded as the foundation upon which we build the structure of our lives. But the Sermon on the Mount is not all of these *sayings of Mine*. It is fashionable in certain quarters today to isolate these precepts, and to regard them as being the part of Christian revelation by which men who...reject the mysteries of the Incarnation and the Atone-

ment, may still abide. But I would have you notice that it is absurd to isolate this Sermon on the Mount, or to deal with it as if it were the very center of the Christian revelation. It is nothing of the sort. Beautiful as it is, wonderful as it is as a high ideal of human conduct, it is a law still, though it is a perfect law; and it has all the impotencies and all the deficiencies that attach to a law, if you take it and rend it out of its place, and insist upon dealing with it as if it stood alone. There is not a word in it that tells you how to keep its precepts. There is no power in it to make a man obey any one of its commandments. It comes radiant and beautiful, but imperative. Because no man keeps it to the full, its very beauty becomes menacing, and it stands there over against us, showing us what we ought to be, and, by consequence, what we are not. And is that all that Jesus Christ came into the world to do? God forbid! If He had only spoken this Sermon—which some of you take for the Alpha and the Omega of Christianity as far as you are concerned—He would not have been different in essence from other teachers—though high above them in degree—who speak to us of the shining heights of duty that we are to scale, but leave us groveling in the mire.

The Sermon on the Mount, with its stringent requirements, absolutely demands to be completed by other thoughts and other *sayings of Mine*. And so I remind you that there is no keeping of it without keeping other sayings first. For the highest of Christ's commandments is 'Believe also in Me,' and you have to take Him as your Redeemer and Savior from death before you will ever thoroughly accept Him as your Guide and Pattern for life. We must first draw near to Him in humble penitence and lowly faith, and then there comes into our hearts a power which makes it possible and delightful to keep even the loftiest, and in other aspects the hardest, of those *sayings of Mine*. So,

brethren, the obedience of which this text speaks is second, and the building of ourselves on Jesus Christ Himself, by faith in Him, is first. Only when we build on Him as our Savior shall we build our lives upon Him in obedience to His commands.

*Behold! I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried cornerstone, a sure foundation, and he that believeth shall not make haste; and long after the prophet said that, the Apostle catches up the same thought when he says, Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid. Let every man take heed how he builds thereon.* Jesus Christ is the foundation of our lives, if we have any true life at all. He ought to be the foundation of all our thinking. His word should be the absolute truth, His life the final all-satisfying, perfect revelation of God, to our hearts. *In Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.* The facts of His Incarnation, earthly life, Death, Resurrection, Ascension, and present Sovereignty—these facts, with the truths that are deduced from them, and the great glimpses which they afford into the heart of God, are the foundations of all true thinking... Christ in His revelation gives us the ultimate truth on which we have to build.

He is also the foundation of all our hope, the foundation of all our security, the foundation of all our effort and aspiration. His Cross goes before the nations and leads them, His Cross stands by the individual, and anodynes the sense of guilt, and breaks the bondage and captivity of sin, and stirs to all lofty emotions and holy living... It is Christ Himself who is the foundation, and His death and sacrifice which are the sure basis of our hope, safety, and blessedness; and it is only because He Himself is the Foundation, and what He has done for us is the basis of hope and blessedness, that He has the right to come to us and say, "Take My commandments as the foundation on which you build your lives."

The Rock of Ages cleft for us, is the Rock on which we build if we are Christians; the other man built his house upon the sand—shifting inclinations, short-lived appetites, transitory aims, varying judgments of men, the fashions of the day in morality, the changing judgments of our own consciences—these are the things on which men build, if they are not building upon Jesus Christ...

How many of us are pursuing the objects which we pursued five-and-twenty years ago, if we have numbered so many years? What has become of aims that were everything to us then? We have won some of them, and they have turned out not half as good as we thought they would be. We have missed some of them, and we scarcely remember that we once wanted them. We have outlived a great many, and they lie away behind us... There is nothing that lasts but God and Christ, and the people that build their lives upon them.

I press upon all your hearts that one simple thought—what an absurdity it is for us to choose for our life's object anything that is shorter-lived than ourselves!... So, friend, dig deeper down to the Eternal Rock. That is the only foundation on which an immortal man or woman like you is wise to build your life...

## II. The Two Houses

The one is built upon the rock. That just means a life which is based upon, and shaped after, the commandments of Jesus Christ. And that life will stand... On the other side, the life that is built on the sand is the life which is not thus regulated by Christ's will and known commandments.

But I desire to bring out some of the lessons that may be gathered from this general metaphor of a man's life as a house. And the first that I would suggest is this—*Have you ever thought of your life as being a whole, with a definite moral characteristic stamped*

*upon it?* I look upon the men and women that I come across in the world, and I cannot help seeing that a great many of them have never got into their heads the idea that their life is a whole. A house? No. A cartload of bricks, tumbled down at random, would be a better metaphor... For anything like the living consciousness that life is a whole, with a definite moral character for which you are responsible, it has never dawned upon your mind. And so you go on haphazard, never bringing reflection to bear upon the trend and drift of your days; doing what you must do because your occupation is this, that, or the other thing; doing what you incline to do in the matter of recreation; now and then sporadically, and for a minute or two, bringing conscience to bear, and being very uncomfortable sometimes when you do. But as for recognizing the mystic solemnity of all these days of yours in that they are welded together, and are all tending to one end, and that each passing moment contributes its infinitesimal share to the awful solemn whole—that has seldom entered your minds, and for a great many of you it has never had any effect in restraining or stimulating or regulating your conduct.

Then there is another consideration which this metaphor suggests—that the house is built up by slow degrees, brick upon brick, course by course, day by day, and moment by moment. It is slow work, but certain work. *Let every man take heed how he builds,* and never despise the little things. Very small bricks make a large house.

Then there is another consideration that I would suggest, and that is, you have to live in the house that you build. Your deeds make the house that Christ is here speaking of. Like the chrysalis that spins out of its own entrails the cocoon in which it lies, so are you spinning what you lodge in, until you eat your way through it, and pass into the next stage of

being. Our deeds seem transient, but although we are building on the sand we are building for Eternity, because, though the deeds are transient in appearance, they abide.

They abide in memory. Some of you know how true that is. Black memories haunt some of us, and there could be for some no worse hell than that God should say, ‘Son, remember.’ You have to live in the house that you build. The deeds abide in habit. They abide in limiting and determining what we can be and do in the future; and in a hundred other ways that I must not touch upon. Only, I bring to you this question, and I pray God that you may listen to it and answer it: What are you building? A shop? That is a noble ambition, is it not? A pleasure-house? That is worse. A prison? Some of you are rearing for your incarceration a jail where you will be tied and held by the cords of your sins, and whence you will be unable to break out. Or are you building a temple? If you are building on Christ it is all right. Only take heed what you build on that foundation.

### III. The Storm

I need not dwell upon the picturesque force of our Lord’s description... The house is attacked on all sides. From above, the rain comes down to beat on the roof, the wind rages round the walls, the flood comes swirling round the eaves from beneath, and if the house stands upon a rock, it turns the flood away, but if it stands upon sand, the furious rush of waters eats a way beneath and undermines the whole...

A sensible builder calculates the strain to which his work will be exposed before he begins to put it up... You have to stand the hurtling black storm. Take into account the strain which your building will have to resist, and build accordingly.

### IV. The Two Endings

*It stood; it fell;* that is all. A life of obedience to Christ is stable, a life not based on Christ vanishes; and these two statements are true because whatsoever a man does for himself, apart from God in Christ, he is sowing to corruption, and he will reap corruption. As I said, nothing lasts but God, and what is done according to the will of God. And when the storm comes, all which was not built on Christ will be swept away, as the flimsy habitation, made of bamboos and oiled paper, is whirled away before the typhoon. All that was not built upon Christ will have to go.

*And what about the builders?* ...If any man has reared a structure of a life ignoring Jesus Christ, and with no connection with Him, then house and builder will perish together.

Jesus Christ does not speak in my text about the righteousness or the unrighteousness of these two courses of conduct. He does not say, “a good man does so-and-so, or a bad man does the other thing,” but he says: *A wise man builds his house on the Rock, and a foolish man builds his on the sand.* To live by faith and obedience is supreme wisdom. Every life which is not built upon Christ is the perfection of folly!

**What thought from Alexander MacLaren’s words stands out to you the most? Why?**

---

---

---

---

## DAY FIVE Application

Re-read Matthew 7:13-29 and consider the truths that you have learned this week. Seek to apply the message of this passage to your life.

**What thought or truth impacted you this week from your study of Matthew 7:13-29?**

---

---

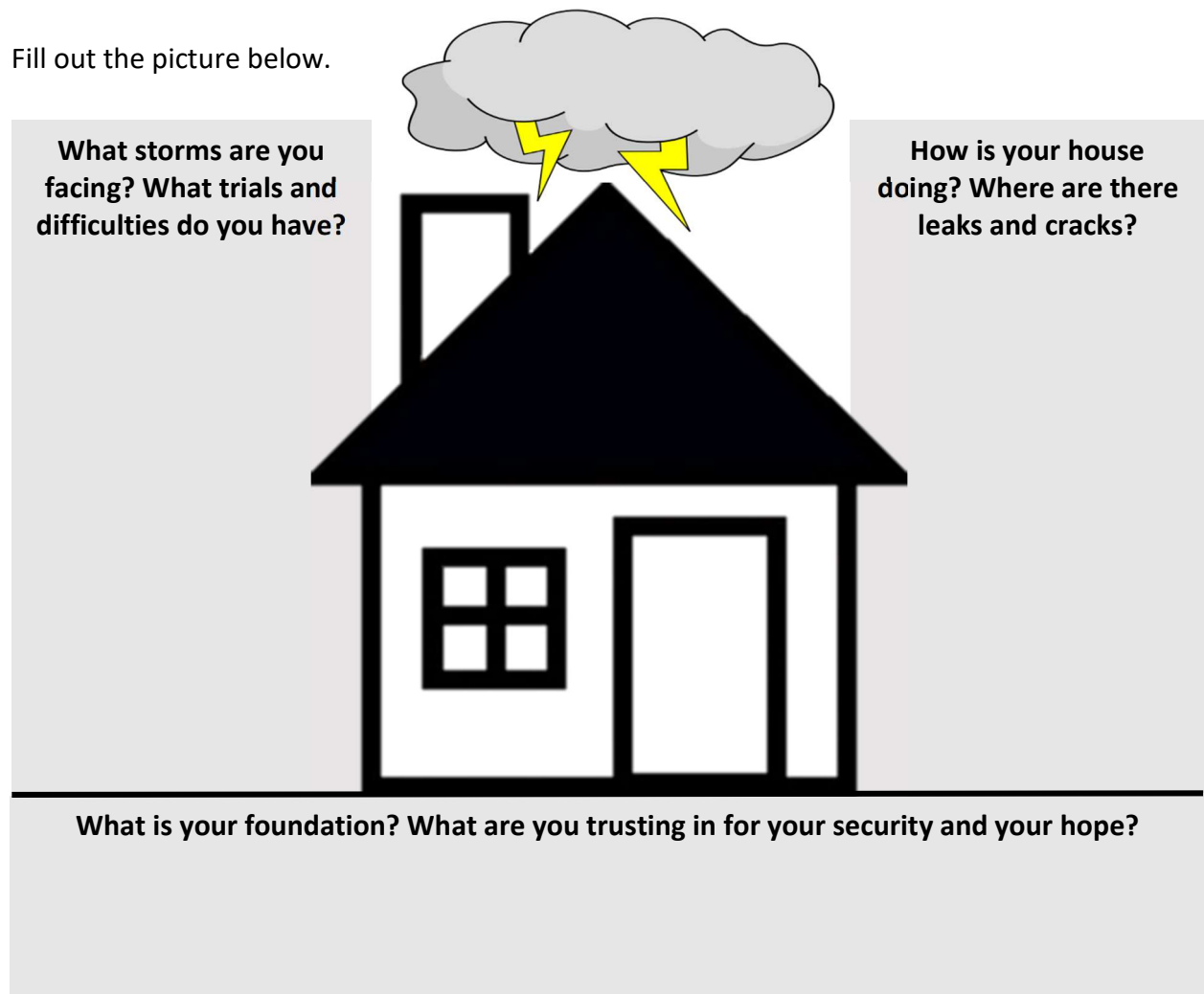
---

---

Jesus' final words in the Sermon on the Mount force each of us to confront ourselves.

- **Which road am I on?** Am I following the crowd or following Jesus?
- **Which tree am I?** Am I producing the works of the flesh or the fruit of the Spirit?
- **Which person am I?** Am I spouting my own spiritual heroics or boasting in Christ alone?
- **Which foundation do I have?** Am I building my life on sand or on the Rock, Jesus Christ?

Fill out the picture below.



### **SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR GROUP OR FAMILY DISCUSSION:**

The goal is not to get through all the questions but to spark discussion around the truth of Matthew 7:13-29. Use the questions below to interact together with what you learned.

- What was one of the biggest decisions that you can remember facing as a younger person? How did you make your decision? What were the results?
- Describe a time in your life when you needed to take the “narrow road” and go against the crowd. How difficult of a decision was this?
- How does Jesus describe false teachers in this passage? How can we spot them?
- What surprises you the most about Jesus’ words in Matthew 7:21-23?
- What does a person need to do to build their house on the rock?
- Picturing your life as a house, what storms are you facing? What is the condition of your house? Where do you have some leaks and repairs to do? What is your foundation?
- Did you discover anything new, interesting, or meaningful in your study of this passage this week? Or in your reading of Alexander MacLaren? If so, what?
- Share one storm that you have recently gone through or are going through now. What do you need in the midst of the storm? Pray for one another.

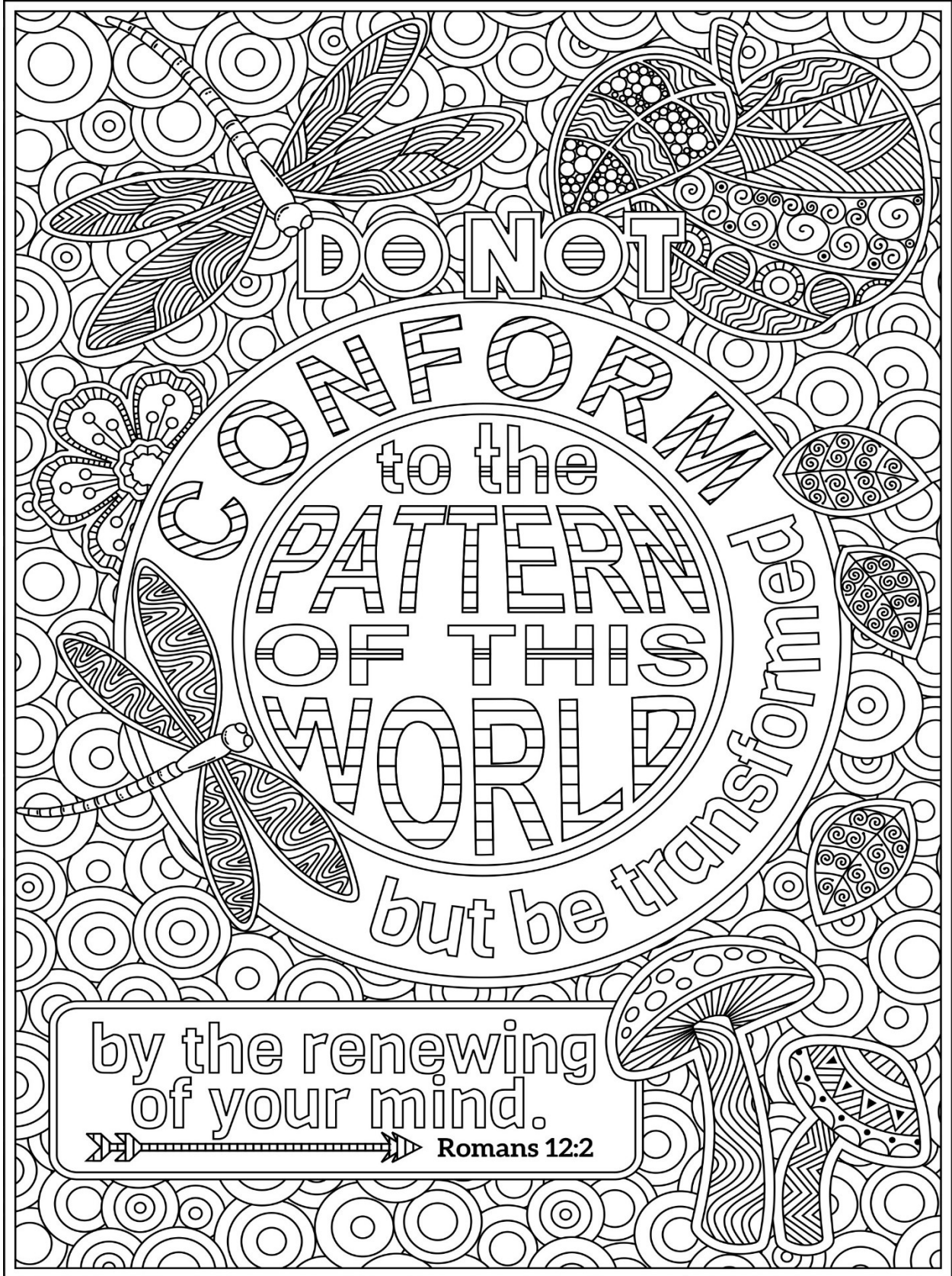
*The safest road to hell is the gradual one—  
the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings,  
without milestones, without signposts.*

C.S. Lewis (1898-1963)

*Resolution One: I will live for God.  
Resolution Two: If no one else does, I still will.*

Jonathan Edwards (1703-58)





Designed by RicLDPartworks. Purchased online at etsy.com. Permission granted to include in study guide.

## FINAL NOTES FROM THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Things that I have learned during this study:

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

The Sermon on the Mount is a blunt reminder that none of us qualify for the kingdom of heaven on our own. God’s standard for entrance into His kingdom is clear: *Be perfect, therefore, as your Heavenly Father is perfect* (Matthew 5:48). We all fall short. If Jesus would have set up His earthly kingdom during His first coming, then no other human would have been in it. That is why Jesus came to die for our sins. He offers us His righteousness—a perfect righteousness that far exceeds even the best human righteousness—as a free gift when we place our trust in Him. It is only after we build our lives on His foundation that we will be empowered by His Spirit to begin to live out the principles and practices of the Sermon on the Mount. Have you placed your faith in Him?

*If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.* —Romans 10:9-10

This study guide was written by Pastor Steve Foster for use with the Gospel of Matthew sermon series at Community Bible Church, Baton Rouge, LA. You are welcome to reproduce any part of it for your own personal study. For any other use, please contact [pastor@516church.org](mailto:pastor@516church.org).



COMMUNITY  
BIBLE CHURCH

8354 Jefferson Highway  
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70809  
[www.516church.org](http://www.516church.org)