THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

A Section-by-Section Study of Matthew 5 to 7



The words of Jesus on how
His people are to live

ANDREW DOMINGUEZ

TRINFINITY
Enterprises

The Sermon on the Mount

A Section-by-Section Study of Matthew 5 to 7

Andrew Dominguez

The Sermon on the Mount: A Section-by-Section Study of Matthew 5 to 7

Copyright 2026 by Andrew Dominguez.

I own the copyright to everything in this book. I freely allow anyone to read, copy, print, quote, share, and teach from it, and to hand out or post copies, at no cost, as long as the text is not changed and this notice stays with it.

Publishing this book, meaning releasing it as an edition of your own in print or electronic form, whether sold or given away, requires my written permission first. Requests go to andrew@trinfinityenterprises.com.

The full text can be read, printed and downloaded free at trinfinityenterprises.com.

Scripture quotations are taken from the Steadfast Literal Bible (SLB), with familiar English forms of personal names, copyright 2026 Andrew Dominguez. The complete SLB is free to read at trinfinityenterprises.com/slb.

Independently published.

Trinfinity Enterprises, Dayton, Nevada.

This book offers Bible teaching and pastoral encouragement. It is not a substitute for professional counseling or medical care.

Please read before you use this book. This book is for general information and education only. It is not legal, medical, financial, tax, or other professional advice, and reading it does not create a professional relationship of any kind. Laws, rules, prices, and research change, and every situation is different. Before you act on anything in this book, check it against current sources and talk with a lawyer, doctor, licensed professional, or other qualified expert as your situation calls for. I worked hard to get the facts right, but I can't promise that every detail is complete, correct, or current. You use this information at your own risk. To the fullest extent the law allows, Andrew Dominguez, Trinfinity Enterprises, and Andrew Dominguez's heirs, estate, successors, and assigns accept no responsibility or liability for any loss, injury, or damage of any kind that comes from using or relying on this book.

A Note on the Bible Translation Used in This Book

My preferred Bible for personal study, teaching, and research is the Steadfast Literal Bible (SLB). I chose it because it is a word-for-word translation in today's language, built on the ancient Scripture sources: the Hebrew and Aramaic of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New Testament. I prepared the SLB myself, and the Scripture in this book is taken from it.

Where a literal phrase would mislead an English reader, the SLB gives the writer's meaning in plain words. Words added for sense are set in bold italics so you can see what is in the original and what is not.

The complete Steadfast Literal Bible is free to read, search, download, and print at trinfinityenterprises.com/slb. If you want to check a verse in its full setting or read the translation's preface and principles, that is the place to go.

Above all, my desire is not to promote one translation over another, but to faithfully teach the Word of God, encourage careful examination of the Scriptures, and help readers grow in their knowledge, understanding, and relationship with the Lord.

May every page of this book direct attention not to the translation itself, but to the truth of God's Word and the One whom it reveals.

Contents

Before You Begin....1

Part One: The People of the Kingdom

Chapter 1: The Setting and the Beatitudes....4
Chapter 2: Salt and Light....6

Part Two: A Righteousness That Goes Deeper

Chapter 3: Not to Abolish but to Fulfill....9
Chapter 4: Anger Is a Heart Problem....11
Chapter 5: Purity of Heart....13
Chapter 6: Marriage Is Meant to Last....15
Chapter 7: Let Your Yes Be Yes....17
Chapter 8: The Other Cheek and the Second Mile....19
Chapter 9: Love Your Enemies....21

Part Three: Living Before the Father

Chapter 10: Giving in Secret....24
Chapter 11: Praying in Secret....26
Chapter 12: The Lord's Prayer....28
Chapter 13: Fasting Before the Father....30
Chapter 14: Where Your Treasure Is....32
Chapter 15: Do Not Worry....34

Part Four: Choosing the Narrow Way

Chapter 16: Judging Others....37
Chapter 17: Ask, Seek, Knock....39
Chapter 18: Two Gates and Two Trees....41
Chapter 19: Lord, Lord....43
Chapter 20: Two Builders....45
A Closing Word....47
Appendix A: The Sermon on the Mount....48
Appendix B: Scripture Index....53
About This Book....54

Before You Begin

> *And it came about, when Jesus had finished these words, the crowds were astonished at His teaching; for He was teaching them as **one** having authority, and not as the scribes.*
>
> Matthew 7:28-29 (SLB)

If you have ever said “turn the other cheek,” “go the extra mile,” “salt of the earth,” “a city on a hill,” “do unto others,” or “don’t throw your pearls before swine,” you have quoted the Sermon on the Mount. No speech in history has been quoted more. People who have never opened a Bible know pieces of it. And people who have read it all their lives still find it searching their hearts.

I have led many Bible study groups and served as a lay pastor, and few passages challenge believers more directly than Matthew 5 to 7. Translating the Steadfast Literal Bible, reading Jesus' words line by line stripped away excuses I made for my own attitudes. I wrote this study for Christians who want to follow Jesus at home, at work and at church without watering down what He said.

When Jesus finished, Matthew tells us, the crowds were astonished. He didn’t teach like the scribes, who quoted the opinions of other teachers. He taught as one who had authority. “You heard that it was said... but I say to you.” Only God can talk like that about God’s law. That alone tells you who was speaking.

Who Is This Sermon For?

Some people read the Sermon on the Mount as a list of rules for getting into heaven. Others say it is too high for real life and was meant only for a future kingdom. I believe both of those miss it.

Look at who Jesus was talking to. Matthew says that when He sat down, “His disciples came to Him,” and He taught them, with the crowds listening in. This is Jesus describing how the people of His kingdom live. It is not a ladder to climb up to God. It is a picture of what God’s grace makes of a person who has come to Him. That is why it starts with “Blessed are the poor in spirit,” people who know they have nothing to bring. It begins with grace before it ever gives a command.

At the same time, it is not a soft sermon. Jesus set the bar higher than the Pharisees did, not lower. He said anger is murder in the heart, and lust is adultery in the heart, and we are to be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect. Nobody reads that honestly and walks away proud. The sermon drives us to the cross, and then it shows us how to live after the cross.

How This Book Works

This book walks through the sermon in twenty chapters, grouped in four parts. Each chapter starts with the passage in full, so you can read it before you read anything I say. Then I explain what Jesus meant, show how it fits with the rest of the Bible, and ask what it looks like in our lives. Each chapter ends with study questions for personal reading or a small group.

This book is the companion to Theirs Is the Kingdom, my verse-by-verse study of the Beatitudes. So Chapter 1 sets the scene and gives the Beatitudes only a short overview, and Chapter 2 covers salt and light briefly. If you want to go deeper on those verses, read that book first. The rest of this book goes section by section from Matthew 5:13 to the end of chapter 7. At the back you will find the whole sermon printed straight through, so you can read it in one sitting, the way the crowd first heard it.

A Few Notes

Scripture quotations come from the Steadfast Literal Bible (SLB). Words set in bold italics inside a quotation are words added in English to make the sentence read clearly. I capitalize the pronouns that refer to God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. Inside Scripture quotations, I leave the capitals exactly as the translation prints them.

Luke 6 records a shorter sermon with many of the same teachings, given on a level place. Jesus surely taught these truths more than once. I stay with Matthew's account, and mention Luke where it helps.

Part One: The People of the Kingdom

Chapter 1: The Setting and the Beatitudes

> *And having seen the crowds, He went up on the mountain; and when He had sat down, His disciples came to Him. And having opened His mouth, He was teaching them, saying, "Blessed **are** the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens. 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. Blessed **are** the merciful, for they will receive mercy. Blessed **are** the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed **are** the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God. Blessed **are** those who have been persecuted on account of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens. Blessed are you when they insult you, and persecute **you**, and say every evil word against you, lying, on account of Me. Rejoice and exult, for your reward **is** great in the heavens; for thus they persecuted the prophets who **were** before you."* (Matthew 5:1-12)

Jesus had just begun His public ministry. He had been baptized by John, tempted in the wilderness, and had called His first disciples by the Sea of Galilee. Matthew 4 tells us He went through all Galilee teaching, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease. Great crowds followed Him from Galilee, the Ten Cities, Jerusalem, Judea and beyond the Jordan. So He went up on the mountain and sat down. Teachers in Israel sat to teach. His disciples gathered close, and the crowd listened.

Many readers have noticed a picture here. Moses went up a mountain and came down with God's law. Now Jesus goes up a mountain and explains what that law was always about. But there is a difference. Moses received the law from God. Jesus speaks it as God.

For a long time I thought I had my life together because I was successful at work and knew my Bible. On May 29, 2020, I finally saw how bankrupt I was on my own. Jesus starts the Beatitudes with the poor in spirit (Matthew 5:3) because you cannot receive grace with hands full of pride.

Blessed

The sermon opens with eight blessings, called the Beatitudes, from the Latin word for blessed. The Greek word is makarios. It means more than happy. It describes someone who is truly well off in God's eyes, whatever their circumstances look like. And look at who Jesus calls blessed. Not the rich, the strong, the popular, or the successful. The poor in spirit. The mourners. The meek. The hungry. It turns the world's idea of a good life upside down.

The Beatitudes in Brief

The poor in spirit come to God with empty hands. Those who mourn grieve over sin. The meek have their strength under God's control. The hungry and thirsty long to be right with God. The merciful pass on the mercy they have received. The pure in heart are undivided toward God. The peacemakers bring people to peace with God and with each other. And the persecuted pay a price for following Jesus.

Notice that the first and the eighth blessing end the same way: “theirs is the kingdom of the heavens.” These are not eight kinds of Christians. They are eight marks of every Christian. Then Jesus turns from “those who” to “you” (Matthew 5:11-12). He did not promise His followers an easy road. He promised them a great reward and good company.

Going Deeper

These eight blessings have a whole book of their own. My book Theirs Is the Kingdom: A Verse-by-Verse Study of the Beatitudes in Matthew 5 and Luke 6 takes each one slowly, sets Matthew beside Luke, and gives a full chapter to salt and light. This book is its companion. It gives the Beatitudes only this short overview, because everything Jesus says from here on describes how people like this live.

Study Questions

1. Read Matthew 5:1-2. Who was Jesus teaching, and why does that matter for how we read the sermon?
2. Which of the Beatitudes surprises you most? Why?
3. Why do you think being “poor in spirit” comes first?
4. Read Matthew 5:11-12. How should a Christian respond to being mocked for their faith?

Chapter 2: Salt and Light

> *You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt becomes tasteless, with what will it be salted? It is no longer strong for anything, except to be thrown out and to be trampled by men. You are the light of the world. A city lying on a mountain cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under the basket, but on the lampstand, and it shines for all who **are** in the house. Thus let your light shine before men, so that they may see your good works and may glorify your Father who **is** in the heavens.* (Matthew 5:13-16)

After describing the people of His kingdom, Jesus tells them what they are for. Look at the words. He doesn't say "try to become salt" or "you should be light." He says "you are." If you belong to Jesus, this is already true of you. The only question is whether your saltiness and light are being used or wasted.

Salt

In Jesus' day, salt did two big jobs. It gave flavor, and it kept meat from rotting before there were refrigerators. Both jobs fit. A Christian adds something good to every place he goes, and a Christian slows down the rot of a world that is falling apart. Salt only works when it touches what it is meant to preserve. Salt that stays in the shaker does nothing.

Then Jesus gives a warning. If salt loses its taste, it is good for nothing but to be thrown out and walked on. Pure salt can't really stop being salty, but the salt people gathered by the Dead Sea was mixed with other minerals. If the real salt washed out, what was left looked like salt but did nothing. That is the danger for a Christian: to look the part while the real thing has washed out, until we are so much like the world that we make no difference in it.

Light

Light shows what is real. It shows the way. It drives out darkness. Jesus said in John 8:12 that He is the light of the world. Here He says His followers are the light of the world. Both are true. We are like the moon. We have no light of our own. We reflect His.

A city on a hill can't be hidden. Many think Jesus may have pointed to a town on a nearby hilltop as He spoke. And nobody lights a lamp just to cover it with a basket. Light is meant to be seen.

So That They Glorify Your Father

Here is the key. "Let your light shine before men, so that they may see your good works and may glorify your Father who is in the heavens." The goal is not that people praise us. The goal is that they praise God. Later in this same sermon Jesus will warn against doing good deeds to be seen by people (Matthew 6:1). There is no conflict. Do good so that people see God. Don't do good so that people see you.

What does that look like? It looks like honesty at work when cutting corners would be easy. It looks like a marriage that lasts. It looks like kindness to a neighbor who doesn't deserve it, and patience with a

coworker who drives you crazy. It looks like speaking the name of Jesus without shame. Light doesn't have to be loud to be seen. It just has to be on.

Going Deeper

Theirs Is the Kingdom gives salt and light a full chapter, as the bridge from the Beatitudes into the rest of the sermon. Here I keep it short, because the next chapters show what salty, shining lives look like in practice.

Study Questions

1. Read Matthew 5:13-16. Why does Jesus say "you are" instead of "you should be"?
2. In what ways can Christians lose their saltiness?
3. Where has God placed you to be salt and light right now?
4. How do we let our light shine without seeking praise for ourselves?

Part Two: A Righteousness That Goes Deeper

Chapter 3: Not to Abolish but to Fulfill

> *Do not think that I came to abolish the law or the prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until the heaven and the earth pass away, one iota or one stroke will by no means pass away from the law until everything happens. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, will be called least in the kingdom of the heavens; but whoever does and teaches* ***them****, this one will be called great in the kingdom of the heavens. For I say to you that unless your righteousness abounds more than* ***that*** *of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter into the kingdom of the heavens.* (Matthew 5:17-20)

People were already asking: Was this new teacher throwing out the law of Moses? He healed on the Sabbath. He ate with sinners. He spoke with His own authority. So Jesus answered the question before going any further. He did not come to abolish the law or the prophets. He came to fulfill them.

How Jesus Fulfilled the Law

Jesus fulfilled the law in several ways. He kept it perfectly, the only person who ever did. He fulfilled what it pointed to. Every sacrifice pointed to His death, the Passover lamb pointed to Him, the priesthood pointed to Him as our great High Priest, and the prophets pointed to Him as the promised Messiah. And He fulfilled it by showing its full meaning, going past the surface to the heart, which is what the rest of Matthew 5 does.

That is why Christians don't offer animal sacrifices or keep the food laws today. Those parts of the law were not thrown away. They were completed. Hebrews 10 says Jesus offered one sacrifice for sins for all time. The shadow gave way to the real thing. But God's moral law, what is right and wrong, doesn't change. Jesus raised it higher, not lower.

Not One Stroke

Jesus said not one iota or one stroke would pass from the law until everything happens. The iota is the smallest Greek letter, like the Hebrew yod. The stroke is a tiny mark that tells one letter from another. Jesus believed every detail of Scripture was God's word and would come true. If He held the Bible that high, so should we.

Better Than the Pharisees

Then Jesus said something that must have shocked the crowd. Unless your righteousness abounds more than that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of the heavens. The Pharisees were the most careful law keepers in Israel. They tithed even their garden herbs. If they weren't good enough, who could be?

That is exactly the point. Nobody is good enough on their own. The Pharisees' righteousness was outward, measured by rules people could see. God looks at the heart. The righteousness we need is one we can't produce. It is given to us.

> *But indeed, rather, I also consider all things to be loss because of the surpassing **worth** of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, because of whom I was made to suffer the loss of all things, and I consider **them** to be rubbish, so that I may gain Christ and may be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which **is** from **the** law, but that which **is** through faith of Christ, the righteousness from God on the basis of faith* (Philippians 3:8-9)

When God gives us Christ's righteousness, He also gives us a new heart that wants to obey Him (Ezekiel 36:26-27). So our righteousness goes beyond the Pharisees' in two ways. We are counted righteous in Christ, and we are being changed from the inside out. The next six sections of the sermon show what that inside-out righteousness looks like.

Study Questions

1. Read Matthew 5:17-18. What does it mean that Jesus came to fulfill the law?
2. Why don't Christians keep the sacrifices and food laws today, while still keeping God's moral law?
3. Read Matthew 5:20 and Philippians 3:8-9. How can anyone's righteousness be greater than the Pharisees'?

Chapter 4: Anger Is a Heart Problem

> *You heard that it was said to the ancients, 'You shall not murder'; and 'Whoever murders will be liable to the judgment.' But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother without cause will be liable to the judgment; and whoever says to his brother, 'Raca,' will be liable to the Sanhedrin; and whoever says, 'Fool,' will be liable to the Gehenna of fire. Therefore if you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go away; first be reconciled to your brother, and then, having come, offer your gift. Be agreeing with your accuser quickly, while you are with him on the way, lest the accuser deliver you to the judge, and the judge deliver you to the officer, and you will be thrown into prison. Truly I say to you, you will by no means come out from there until you pay the last quadrans.* (Matthew 5:21-26)

Now Jesus begins six teachings that all follow the same pattern: "You heard that it was said... But I say to you." He wasn't arguing with Moses. He was correcting how the law had been taught and pressing it down to the heart.

In my lowest season, I had made choices that hurt my marriage and the people closest to me. Going through the motions of church while things were not right at home felt hollow. Jesus said to leave your gift at the altar and go be reconciled first (Matthew 5:23-24). God cares more about making things right with people than about religious routine.

Murder Starts Inside

"You shall not murder." Most people can say they have kept that one. But Jesus says that whoever is angry with his brother without cause is liable to judgment. Whoever says "Raca," an Aramaic insult meaning something like "empty head," answers to the council. Whoever says "Fool" is in danger of the fire of Gehenna, the Bible's word for hell.

Jesus is not saying all anger is sin. He was angry at the money changers and at hard-hearted Pharisees (Mark 3:5). Paul says "be angry, and do not sin" (Ephesians 4:26). There is righteous anger at evil. But most of our anger isn't that. Most of it is wounded pride, impatience, and a desire to get even. And Jesus says that kind of anger and the contempt that comes out in insults are murder in seed form. Every murder starts with anger that was fed instead of killed.

First Be Reconciled

Then Jesus gives two pictures. In the first, a man is at the altar about to offer his sacrifice, and he remembers that his brother has something against him. Jesus says to leave the gift at the altar, go make it right, and then come back. In other words, God doesn't want your worship while you are ignoring a broken relationship you could mend.

Notice it says "your brother has something against you." It doesn't matter who started it. If someone is holding something against you, you go. You don't wait for them to come to you.

In the second picture, two people are on the way to court. Jesus says to settle with your accuser quickly, before it goes before the judge and you end up in prison until you pay the last penny. The point is simple. Don't let conflict sit. It only gets worse and costs more.

What This Looks Like Today

Is there someone you won't speak to? A family member you have written off? A coworker you talk about behind their back? Jesus says that matters more than whether you were in church last Sunday. Go make it right as far as it depends on you (Romans 12:18). They may not respond the way you hope. But you will have obeyed your Lord.

Study Questions

1. Read Matthew 5:21-22. How does Jesus connect anger and murder?
2. What is the difference between righteous anger and sinful anger?
3. Read Matthew 5:23-24. Is there someone you need to go to before you worship?
4. Why does Jesus say to settle conflict quickly?

Chapter 5: Purity of Heart

> *You heard that it was said to the ancients, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. And if your right eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out and throw **it** from you; for it is better for you that one of your members perish, and not **that** your whole body be thrown into Gehenna. And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw **it** from you; for it is better for you that one of your members perish, and not **that** your whole body be thrown into Gehenna.* (Matthew 5:27-30)

"You shall not commit adultery." Again, many people think they have kept this command. But Jesus says that everyone who looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Notice the words "to lust for her." Jesus isn't talking about noticing that someone is attractive. He is talking about looking with the purpose of feeding desire, using a person in your mind as an object for your own pleasure. That is adultery in the heart. In a world of screens and images everywhere, this is one of the hardest teachings in the sermon, and one of the most needed.

Radical Action

Then Jesus says if your right eye makes you stumble, pluck it out; if your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off. It is better to lose one member than for your whole body to go to Gehenna.

Jesus is not telling us to injure ourselves. A blind man can still lust. The problem is the heart, not the eye. But He is using strong words to make a strong point: deal with sin ruthlessly. Whatever leads you into sin, cut it out of your life, even if it costs you something you value.

For one person that may mean getting rid of a phone, or putting a filter on a computer. For another it may mean ending a friendship, changing jobs, or not watching certain shows. Joseph didn't stay and reason with Potiphar's wife. He ran (Genesis 39:12). Paul told Timothy to flee youthful lusts (2 Timothy 2:22). Sometimes the wisest thing a believer can do is run.

The Stakes Are Real

Jesus mentions Gehenna twice in these four verses. He spoke about hell more than anyone else in the Bible, and He did it out of love, to warn us. Sin is not a small thing. Left alone, it destroys.

But there is hope. A man who has failed in this area can be forgiven and made clean. David committed adultery and murder, and he wrote Psalm 51 asking God to create in him a pure heart. God did. If this chapter has hit you hard, confess it to God, receive His forgiveness, and take whatever radical step you need to take today.

> *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous so that He may forgive us the sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* (1 John 1:9)

Study Questions

1. Read Matthew 5:27-28. What is the difference between noticing someone and looking to lust?
2. What does Jesus mean by plucking out the eye and cutting off the hand?
3. What radical step might you need to take to guard your purity?
4. How does 1 John 1:9 give hope to someone who has failed here?

Chapter 6: Marriage Is Meant to Last

> *And it was said, 'Whoever sends away his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' But I say to you that whoever sends away his wife, except for a matter of sexual immorality, causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a* ***woman*** *who has been sent away commits adultery.* (Matthew 5:31-32)

In Jesus' day, divorce was easy for men. Deuteronomy 24:1-4 required a man who sent his wife away to give her a certificate of divorce. That law was meant to protect the woman, so she could prove she was free and not be accused of adultery. But many teachers had turned it into permission. One school of rabbis said a man could divorce his wife for almost any reason at all. The certificate had become a loophole.

Jesus closes the loophole. Whoever sends away his wife, except for sexual immorality, causes her to commit adultery, and whoever marries a woman who has been sent away commits adultery. In a culture where a divorced woman often had to remarry to survive, a man who put away his wife without cause was pushing her into a second marriage that God did not recognize. The sin was on his head.

God's Design from the Beginning

Later the Pharisees tested Jesus on this same question (Matthew 19:3-9). He took them back to Genesis.

> *Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh.* (Genesis 2:24)

Then He said that Moses permitted divorce because of their hardness of heart, "but from the beginning it has not been so." God's plan is one man and one woman, joined for life. Divorce is always the result of sin, somewhere, by someone. Malachi 2:16 says God hates it, and He does, because He sees what it does to husbands, wives and children.

The Exception

Jesus gives one exception: sexual immorality. The Greek word, porneia, covers sexual sin of every kind. When one spouse has broken the marriage covenant that way, Jesus allows the other to end the marriage. He does not command it. Forgiveness and restoration are always better when both are willing, and many marriages have been healed after unfaithfulness.

Paul adds a second situation in 1 Corinthians 7:15. If an unbelieving spouse leaves, the believer "has not been enslaved in such cases." Many Bible teachers believe that also frees the believer.

Faithful Christians do not all agree on when remarriage is allowed after a divorce. I won't pretend that question is simple. If you are facing it, talk with your pastor, read these passages for yourself, and seek the Lord.

If You Have Been Divorced

Some reading this chapter have been through a divorce. Some were sinned against. Some did the sinning. Some were both. Hear this: divorce is not the unforgivable sin. Jesus spoke kindly to the woman at the well, who had had five husbands (John 4). If you have sinned, confess it and receive His forgiveness. If you were wronged, bring your hurt to Him. His grace is bigger than your past.

And if you are married, guard your marriage. Pray together. Keep short accounts. Don't let bitterness take root. My mini book Building a Marriage That Lasts is a good next step.

Study Questions

1. Read Matthew 5:31-32 and 19:3-9. What was Jesus correcting in how people treated divorce?
2. Why does Jesus point back to Genesis 2:24?
3. How can a church show both faithfulness to God's design and grace to people who have been divorced?
4. What is one thing you can do this week to strengthen your marriage or encourage someone else's?

Chapter 7: Let Your Yes Be Yes

> *Again, you heard that it was said to the ancients, 'You shall not swear falsely, but you shall pay your oaths to the Lord.' But I say to you, not to swear at all: neither by heaven, because it is **the** throne of God; nor by the earth, because it is **the** footstool of His feet; nor by Jerusalem, because it is **the** city of the great King. Nor shall you swear by your head, because you are not able to make one hair white or black. But let your word be 'Yes, yes,' 'No, no'; and what is more than these is from the evil **one**.* (Matthew 5:33-37)

The law said not to swear falsely, and to keep the vows you make to the Lord (Leviticus 19:12; Numbers 30:2). But by Jesus' day, people had invented ways to get around their promises. They taught that swearing by God's name was binding, but swearing by heaven, or the earth, or Jerusalem, or your own head was not. So people swore by those things and then broke their word with a clear conscience. Jesus called that out later in Matthew 23:16-22.

Here He cuts through all of it. Heaven is God's throne. The earth is His footstool. Jerusalem is the city of the great King. Even your own head belongs to Him, since you can't make one hair white or black. There is no place you can swear by that leaves God out. Every promise you make is made in His sight.

At work, a commitment only means something if people can take your word at face value. When I was drinking, I made promises to myself and others that I did not keep. Getting sober in May 2020 taught me that rebuilding trust starts with plain honesty and following through on small things (Matthew 5:37).

Just Tell the Truth

So Jesus says, "let your word be 'Yes, yes,' 'No, no'; and what is more than these is from the evil one." A person who always tells the truth doesn't need to swear. His yes means yes. When people add "I swear" or "to be honest," it can suggest that the rest of the time they aren't. The habit of piling on oaths comes from a world where people lie.

Does This Forbid Every Oath?

Some Christians believe this means a believer should never take an oath, even in court. I respect their conscience. But I don't believe that is what Jesus meant. God Himself swore an oath to Abraham (Hebrews 6:13-17). Jesus answered under oath at His trial (Matthew 26:63-64). Paul called God as his witness more than once (Romans 1:9; 2 Corinthians 1:23). What Jesus forbids is the casual swearing and the clever evasions people used to get out of telling the truth. A solemn oath in a courtroom, or a wedding vow before God, is not what He is condemning. James 5:12 makes the same point Jesus does: let your yes be yes, and your no be no.

Living It Out

Do people trust your word? Do you keep your promises, even the small ones, even when it costs you? Psalm 15 describes the person who may dwell with God as one who "swears to his own harm and does not

change" (Psalm 15:4). Pay what you owe. Show up when you said you would. Do what you told your kids you would do. A Christian whose word is good is a quiet, powerful witness.

Study Questions

1. Read Matthew 5:33-37. What trick were people using to get around their promises?
2. Why does every promise involve God, according to Jesus?
3. Does this passage forbid taking an oath in court? Why or why not?
4. Is there a promise you need to keep, or a habit of exaggerating you need to drop?

Chapter 8: The Other Cheek and the Second Mile

> *You heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' But I say to you, not to resist the evil **person**; but whoever will strike you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also. And to the **one** wanting to sue you and to take your tunic, yield to him the cloak also. And whoever compels you **to go** approximately 1,620 yards (one mile), go with him two. Give to the **one** asking you, and do not turn away from the **one** wanting to borrow from you.* (Matthew 5:38-42)

"Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth" comes from the law of Moses (Exodus 21:24). It was given to judges, not to individuals, and it was a law of fairness. It kept punishment equal to the crime. It stopped blood feuds where a small wrong turned into a killing. But people had turned a rule for courts into a right to personal revenge.

Jesus says, "not to resist the evil person." Then He gives four pictures.

Four Pictures

The cheek. A slap on the right cheek, by a right-handed person, is a backhand. In that world it was an insult more than an injury. Jesus says when someone insults you, don't hit back. Turn the other cheek.

The tunic and the cloak. If someone sues you for your inner garment, give him your outer coat too. The law said a poor man's cloak had to be returned to him by sundown, because he slept in it (Exodus 22:26-27). Jesus says to be willing to give up even what the law lets you keep.

The extra mile. Roman soldiers had the legal right to make a civilian carry their gear for one mile. Imagine a Jew forced to carry a Roman's pack. Jesus says to carry it two. Turn a forced burden into a free gift.

The borrower. Give to the one who asks, and don't turn away the one who wants to borrow.

What This Doesn't Mean

These commands are about how I respond when I am personally wronged. They are about giving up my rights, not about giving up justice. They don't mean a government should never punish criminals. Romans 13:4 says the governing authority "does not bear the sword in vain." They don't mean a police officer shouldn't stop a robber, or that a father shouldn't protect his family, or that a wife must stay where she is being abused. They don't mean we should hand money to someone who will use it to destroy himself. Love sometimes says no.

What It Does Mean

But don't let those limits make you miss the point. Jesus is calling His people to give up revenge. To absorb insults. To be generous beyond what's required. That is exactly how He lived.

> *who, being reviled, did not revile in return; suffering, He did not threaten, but He kept handing **Himself** over to the One who judges justly* (1 Peter 2:23)

When someone cuts you off in traffic, insults you on social media, or takes credit for your work, your flesh wants to hit back. Jesus says, let it go. Leave it to God. Romans 12:19 says vengeance belongs to Him. You are free from having to settle every score.

Study Questions

1. Read Matthew 5:38-42. What was “eye for eye” originally meant to do?
2. What do the four pictures have in common?
3. How do we balance these commands with protecting others and supporting justice?
4. Where are you holding on to a desire to get even?

Chapter 9: Love Your Enemies

> *You heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those cursing you, do good to those hating you, and pray for those mistreating you and persecuting you, so that you may be sons of your Father who **is** in **the** heavens; for He makes His sun rise on evil and good, and sends rain on righteous and unrighteous. For if you love those loving you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brothers only, what more do you do? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father who **is** in the heavens is perfect.* (Matthew 5:43-48)

The law said "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18). It never said "hate your enemy." That was added. Some teachers had decided that "neighbor" meant only fellow Israelites, or only fellow members of your group, and that everyone else was fair game for hatred.

Jesus says, "love your enemies, bless those cursing you, do good to those hating you, and pray for those mistreating you and persecuting you."

Why?

Because that is what God is like. He makes His sun rise on evil and good and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. God shows kindness every day to people who curse His name. When we love our enemies, we show that we are His children. We look like our Father.

And anyone can love people who love them back. Jesus says even the tax collectors do that. Even gang members love each other. What makes a Christian different is love that goes to people who don't deserve it.

That is the gospel. "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). We were God's enemies, and He loved us. Jesus prayed for the men who nailed Him to the cross: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." A Christian who has received that kind of love can begin to give it.

Love Is an Action

Notice that Jesus describes love with verbs: bless, do good, pray. He isn't asking you to feel warm toward someone who has hurt you. He's asking you to act for their good. Start with prayer. It is very hard to keep hating someone you pray for every day. Then look for ways to bless them, even small ones.

Be Perfect

The section ends with "Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father who is in the heavens is perfect." The Greek word, teleios, means complete or mature. In context, it means complete in love, loving like God loves, not just the people we choose. No one reaches this in this life. But it is the target. And it shows again why we need a Savior. The standard is God Himself.

Study Questions

1. Read Matthew 5:43-45. What reason does Jesus give for loving our enemies?
2. Why is love for enemies the clearest mark of a Christian?
3. Who is your “enemy” right now, and how could you bless them this week?
4. What does “be perfect” mean in this passage?

Part Three: Living Before the Father

Chapter 10: Giving in Secret

> *Beware not to do your charity before men in order to be seen by them; otherwise indeed, you have no reward with your Father who **is** in the heavens. Therefore whenever you do charity, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be glorified by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But when you are doing charity, do not let your left **hand** know what your right **hand** is doing, so that your charity may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.* (Matthew 6:1-4)

Chapter 6 opens with a warning that covers the next eighteen verses: "Beware not to do your charity before men in order to be seen by them." Then Jesus gives three examples from the three main acts of devotion in His day: giving, praying, and fasting. Each one follows the same pattern. Don't do it like the hypocrites, to be seen by people. Do it in secret, for your Father, and He will reward you.

The word "hypocrite" comes from the Greek word for an actor on a stage, someone wearing a mask and playing a part. That is the danger Jesus is warning about. Religion can become a performance.

I made all my faith books free to read, copy and share. Whether I was volunteering at church camp or helping lead trips to Baja, I know how easy it is to secretly hope people notice. Jesus warns that if we serve for applause, applause is all we get (Matthew 6:1-4). Serving quietly where only God sees keeps our motives clean.

Sounding the Trumpet

Jesus says the hypocrites sound a trumpet when they give. Whether they really blew horns or not, the picture is clear. They made sure everyone noticed. And Jesus says, "they have their reward in full." The phrase was used on business receipts: paid in full. They wanted applause. They got it. That's all they will get.

Don't Let Your Left Hand Know

Instead, Jesus says, give so quietly that your left hand doesn't know what your right hand is doing. Don't even keep score in your own head. Don't admire your own generosity. Give, and forget about it.

Does that mean a church can never have a giving campaign, or that you can never let anyone know you gave? No. In the early church Barnabas sold a field and laid the money at the apostles' feet in front of everyone (Acts 4:36-37). The issue is the motive. Who are you doing it for? A good test is to ask yourself: would I still give this if no one ever found out?

Your Father Sees

Here is the encouragement. "Your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly." God notices what no one else sees. The quiet check to the widow down the street. The groceries left on a porch. The extra tip for a tired waitress. None of it is wasted. God keeps better records than we do.

*Each **one should give** just as he purposes in the heart, not out of grief or out of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.* (2 Corinthians 9:7)

Study Questions

1. Read Matthew 6:1-4. What is Jesus warning against, and why?
2. What does “they have their reward in full” mean?
3. How can you tell if your giving is for God or for people?
4. Is there a way you could give in secret this week?

Chapter 11: Praying in Secret

> *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 wide streets, so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you that they have their reward in full. But you, when you pray, enter into your inner room, and having shut your door, pray to your Father who* ***is*** *in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. And when praying, do not babble like the Gentiles; for they think that they will be heard in their many words. Therefore do not be like them; for your Father knows what things you have need of before you ask Him.* (Matthew 6:5-8)

Jesus assumes His people pray. He says "when you pray," not "if you pray." But He warns against two wrong ways to pray.

Praying to Be Seen

The first is praying for an audience. In Jesus' day, set times of prayer found some men conveniently standing on busy street corners, praying loudly. Today it might look like praying in a group with fancy words to impress others, or talking about how much we pray so people will think we are spiritual. Jesus says again, "they have their reward in full."

So He says go into your inner room, shut the door, and pray to your Father in secret. The word for inner room was often the storeroom of the house, the one room with a door that shut. Jesus is saying find a private place, and make it just you and God.

This doesn't forbid praying with others. Jesus prayed in front of His disciples, and the early church prayed together often (Acts 2:42). But your private prayer life is the real test. What you are with God alone is what you really are.

Babbling

The second wrong way is babbling, piling up words, as if God will hear us because we say more. The pagans of that time thought they had to wear their gods down with long lists of names and repeated phrases. Jesus says, "your Father knows what things you have need of before you ask Him."

Then why pray at all? Because prayer isn't about informing God. It's about trusting Him, depending on Him, and having a relationship with Him. A child asks her father for things he already knows she needs. That doesn't make the asking pointless. It's part of being his child.

Long prayers are not wrong. Jesus prayed all night before choosing His apostles (Luke 6:12). Repeating a request isn't wrong either. Jesus told a parable about a widow who kept coming back to a judge (Luke 18:1-8). What is wrong is thinking our many words earn God's attention. We have His attention already. We're His children.

> *Let us therefore come with boldness to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace for timely help.* (Hebrews 4:16)

Study Questions

1. Read Matthew 6:5-8. What two wrong ways of praying does Jesus describe?
2. Do you have a regular place and time to pray alone? If not, where could it be?
3. If God already knows what we need, why should we pray?
4. How does knowing God as Father change the way you pray?

Chapter 12: The Lord's Prayer

> *Therefore you, pray in this way: 'Our Father who* ***is*** *in the heavens, let Your name be sanctified; let Your kingdom come; let Your will come about, as in heaven, also on the earth. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory into the ages. Amen.' For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.* (Matthew 6:9-15)

Jesus didn't only tell us how not to pray. He gave us a pattern. He said "pray in this way," not "pray these exact words only." It's a model. Every line teaches us something about how to talk to God. It has six requests. The first three are about God. The last three are about us. That order matters.

Our Father Who Is in the Heavens

Jesus teaches us to call God "Father." In the Old Testament God is called Father now and then, but Jesus made it the center of how His people pray. We come to God as children who belong. And the word is "our," not "my." We never pray alone. We pray as part of a family. "In the heavens" reminds us that our Father is also the great King over all.

Let Your Name Be Sanctified

To sanctify God's name is to treat it as holy. This is a request that God would show His holiness and that people everywhere, starting with me, would honor Him. Before we ask for anything, we ask that God be honored.

Let Your Kingdom Come

This asks God to bring His rule into more and more lives now, through the gospel, and to bring His kingdom in full when Jesus returns to reign on the earth. Every time we pray it we are praying for the Lord's return.

Let Your Will Come About, as in Heaven, Also on the Earth

In heaven, God's will is done perfectly and gladly. We ask for the same here, in the world and in our own lives. That is the hardest prayer to pray honestly. Jesus prayed it in Gethsemane: "not as I will, but as You will."

Give Us Today Our Daily Bread

Now we turn to our needs, and the first is the simplest: food for today. God cares about ordinary things. And we ask for today's bread, not a ten-year supply. Like Israel gathering manna each morning, we learn to depend on God one day at a time.

Forgive Us Our Debts, as We Also Forgive Our Debtors

Sin is a debt we owe God and can never pay. We need forgiveness as much as bread. And Jesus ties our forgiveness to our forgiving others. He even comes back to it right after the prayer, in verses 14-15. This doesn't mean we earn God's forgiveness by forgiving. It means a person who has truly been forgiven a huge debt will forgive smaller ones. If we refuse to forgive, it shows we haven't understood grace. Read the parable of the unforgiving servant in Matthew 18:21-35.

Do Not Lead Us into Temptation, but Deliver Us from the Evil

God tempts no one to sin (James 1:13). This is a humble request: keep us out of situations where we will fall, and rescue us from evil and from the evil one. It admits we are weak and need God's protection every day.

For Yours Is the Kingdom

The prayer ends with praise: the kingdom, the power and the glory belong to God forever. Many early manuscripts of Matthew do not have this line, but the words are true, and they echo David's prayer in 1 Chronicles 29:11. We start with God and we end with God.

If you want more on prayer, my mini books Making Room for Prayer and Praying Every Day are a good next step.

Study Questions

1. Why do you think the first three requests are about God before any are about us?
2. Which line of the Lord's Prayer is hardest for you to pray honestly?
3. Read Matthew 6:14-15 and 18:21-35. Why does Jesus tie our forgiveness to forgiving others?
4. Try praying through the Lord's Prayer slowly this week, line by line, in your own words.

Chapter 13: Fasting Before the Father

> *And whenever you fast, do not be gloomy like the hypocrites; for they disfigure their faces so that they may appear to men **to be** fasting. Truly I say to you that they have their reward in full. But you, when fasting, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you may not appear to men **to be** fasting, but to your Father who **is** in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.* (Matthew 6:16-18)

Fasting means going without food for a time to seek God. It may be the most forgotten practice in many churches today. But Jesus again says "whenever you fast," not "if." He expected His followers to fast. When He was asked why His disciples didn't fast like John's disciples, He said the days would come when the bridegroom was taken away, "and then they will fast in those days" (Mark 2:20). Those days are now.

Fasting for Show

Some in Jesus' day made sure everyone knew they were fasting. They looked gloomy, didn't wash, and disfigured their faces, maybe smearing ashes on them. They wanted people to see how holy they were. Jesus says, again, "they have their reward in full."

Instead, wash your face and comb your hair. Look normal. Let it be between you and your Father.

Why Fast?

In the Bible, God's people fasted when they were grieving over sin (Joel 2:12), when they faced danger and needed God's help (Esther 4:16), when they were seeking His guidance (Acts 13:2-3), and when they were mourning. Jesus fasted forty days in the wilderness before He began His ministry.

Fasting doesn't earn anything from God. It doesn't twist His arm. What it does is clear space. It says, "Lord, I want You more than food." Every time your stomach growls, it reminds you to pray. It shows you how much your appetites control you, and it teaches you to say no to yourself so you can say yes to God.

A Word of Wisdom

If you have never fasted, start small. Skip one meal and spend that time in prayer. People with diabetes or other medical conditions, pregnant or nursing mothers, and anyone with a history of eating disorders should talk with a doctor first. Some people fast from other things, like television, social media, or a favorite habit, as a way to seek God. The heart of it is the same.

And remember Isaiah 58. God told Israel that a fast that pleases Him goes along with justice and kindness to the poor. Fasting while mistreating people misses the point entirely.

> *Is not this the fast that I choose: to loosen the bonds of wickedness, to unfasten the bindings of the yoke-bar, and to let the crushed go free, and **that** you tear apart every yoke-bar? Is it not to break your bread for the hungry, and **that** you bring the afflicted homeless **into your** house;*

when you see the naked, and you cover him, and you do not hide yourself from your own flesh? (Isaiah 58:6-7)

Study Questions

1. Read Matthew 6:16-18. What does Jesus assume about His followers and fasting?
2. What are some reasons God's people fasted in the Bible?
3. How could fasting help your walk with God?
4. Read Isaiah 58:6-7. What kind of fast pleases God?

Chapter 14: Where Your Treasure Is

> *Do not store up for yourselves treasures on the earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in nor steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. The lamp of the body is the eye. Therefore if your eye is single, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eye is evil, your whole body will be full of darkness. Therefore if the light that* ***is*** *in you is darkness, how great* ***is*** *the darkness! No one is able to serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You are not able to serve God and wealth.* (Matthew 6:19-24)

Jesus now turns to money and possessions. He talked about money more than almost any other subject, because He knew how quickly it grabs the human heart.

Two Treasures

In Jesus' day, wealth was often kept in fine clothing, which moths could eat; in metal and goods, which could rust or rot; and in houses with mud brick walls that thieves could dig through. Everything on earth can be lost. Every possession you own will one day belong to someone else, or end up in a landfill.

But treasure in heaven can't be lost. What is treasure in heaven? It is what we invest in God's kingdom: giving to His work, caring for the poor, sharing the gospel, raising children who love the Lord, serving His people. Paul told Timothy to command the rich "to be rich in good works, to be generous, ready to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the future" (1 Timothy 6:18-19).

Then Jesus gives the reason. "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Your heart follows your money. If you want to know what you love, look at your bank statement. And if you want your heart to grow toward God, start putting your treasure there.

The Eye

Next Jesus says the eye is the lamp of the body. If your eye is "single," focused and generous, your whole body is full of light. If your eye is "evil," the whole body is dark. In Jewish speech, an "evil eye" meant a stingy, greedy eye (see Proverbs 28:22). So Jesus is still talking about money. What you set your eyes on shapes your whole life. Greed darkens everything.

Two Masters

Finally, no one can serve two masters. Notice Jesus didn't say we shouldn't. He said we can't. Sooner or later, one will win. You cannot serve God and wealth. The old word was "mammon," money treated almost like a god.

Money is not evil. It's a tool. But it makes a terrible master. Jesus' parable of the rich fool in Luke 12 shows a man who built bigger barns, planned to relax, and died that night. "So is the one who treasures up for himself and is not rich toward God."

Study Questions

1. Read Matthew 6:19-21. What does it mean to store up treasure in heaven?
2. How does where we put our money show where our heart is?
3. Read Matthew 6:24. Why can’t a person serve both God and money?
4. What is one step you could take to invest more in heaven this month?

Chapter 15: Do Not Worry

> *Because of this I say to you, do not be anxious for your life, what you will eat and what you will drink, nor for your body, what you will put on. Is not the life more than the food, and the body* ***more*** *than the clothing? Look at the birds of the sky, that they do not sow, nor do they reap, nor do they gather into barns, and your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? And which of you, being anxious, is able to add approximately 1.5 feet (one cubit) to his lifespan? And why are you anxious about clothing? Observe the lilies of the field, how they grow: they do not labor, nor do they spin; but I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory was clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is* ***here*** *today and tomorrow is thrown into an oven,* ***will He*** *not much more* ***clothe*** *you, you of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or, 'What shall we drink?' or, 'What shall we wear?' For the nations seek after all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 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 about its own things. Sufficient for the day* ***is*** *its trouble.*
> (Matthew 6:25-34)

"Because of this I say to you, do not be anxious." The "because of this" connects back to money and masters. If God is your master, not money, then you don't need to worry about money. Worry is often what happens when we try to carry what only God can carry.

Look at the Birds

Jesus points to the birds. They don't plant crops or store food in barns, and God feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they are? Jesus isn't saying birds don't work. Birds are busy all day. He is saying they don't worry. And He isn't saying we shouldn't work. Paul says if anyone will not work, he should not eat (2 Thessalonians 3:10). Work hard. But don't worry.

Look at the Lilies

Then He points to the wildflowers. They don't spin cloth or sew clothes, but not even King Solomon in all his glory was dressed like one of them. If God dresses the grass, which is here today and burned tomorrow, won't He clothe you, "you of little faith"?

And He adds, which of you, by worrying, can add one hour to your life? Worry doesn't change tomorrow. It only ruins today.

Seek First the Kingdom

The pagan world chases after food and drink and clothes, as if that were all life was about. But "your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things." So Jesus gives a command and a promise.

> *But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.* (Matthew 6:33)

Put God first, His rule in your life and His righteousness, and He will take care of the rest. That is not a promise of riches. It's a promise that your Father will give you what you truly need.

One Day at a Time

Finally, "do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its trouble." God gives grace for today, not for imaginary tomorrows. Most of what we worry about never happens. And when hard things do come, the grace comes with them.

Worry is a real struggle for many believers, and some anxiety has physical causes that need a doctor's care. There is no shame in that. But for all of us, the cure for worry is not trying harder to stop. It's turning our worries into prayers.

> *Be anxious about nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus.* (Philippians 4:6-7)

Study Questions

1. Read Matthew 6:25-34. What reasons does Jesus give for not worrying?
2. What is the difference between planning and worrying?
3. What does it look like for you to seek first the kingdom of God?
4. What worry can you turn into a prayer right now?

Part Four: Choosing the Narrow Way

Chapter 16: Judging Others

> *Do not judge, so that you may not be judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with what measure you measure, it will be measured back to you. And why do you look at the splinter that **is** in the eye of your brother, but the beam in your own eye you do not notice? Or how will you say to your brother, 'Allow me to cast out the splinter from your eye,' and look, the beam **is** in your eye? Hypocrite! First cast out the beam from your eye, and then you will see clearly to cast out the splinter from the eye of your brother. Do not give what is holy to the dogs, nor throw your pearls before the pigs, so that they do not trample them with their feet, and having turned, tear you to pieces.* (Matthew 7:1-6)

"Do not judge" may be the most quoted verse in the Bible today, often by people who don't know the verses around it. It's usually used to mean "you can never say anything is wrong." That is not what Jesus meant. A few verses later, He tells us to watch out for false prophets and to recognize them by their fruit. That requires judgment. John 7:24 says, "judge the righteous judgment." And Paul tells the church to judge those inside it who live in open sin (1 Corinthians 5:12).

So what does Jesus forbid? He forbids a harsh, proud, condemning spirit. The kind of person who is always looking for faults in others and never sees his own. The kind who decides he knows other people's motives and hearts, which only God knows.

The Splinter and the Beam

Jesus paints a funny picture. A man with a wooden beam sticking out of his eye is trying to pick a tiny splinter out of his brother's eye. Jesus calls him a hypocrite. The point is that we are usually much harder on other people's sins than on our own. We judge others by their actions and ourselves by our good intentions.

But notice what Jesus says next: "First cast out the beam from your eye, and then you will see clearly to cast out the splinter from the eye of your brother." He doesn't say leave your brother's splinter alone. He says deal with yourself first. Then you can help your brother, humbly and gently. Galatians 6:1 says to restore such a one "in a spirit of gentleness, watching yourself, lest you also be tempted."

And remember, "with what measure you measure, it will be measured back to you." If you're harsh, expect harshness. If you're merciful, you'll receive mercy (Matthew 5:7).

Pearls Before Pigs

Then Jesus balances it. "Do not give what is holy to the dogs, nor throw your pearls before the pigs." Dogs and pigs here are people who show by their response that they despise holy things. If someone keeps mocking and attacking the gospel, there comes a point where you stop pressing it on them. Jesus told His disciples to shake the dust off their feet where they weren't received (Matthew 10:14). That also takes discernment, which is a kind of judgment. So "do not judge" can't mean never discern anything.

Study Questions

1. Read Matthew 7:1-5. What kind of judging does Jesus forbid?
2. Why are we usually harder on others than on ourselves?
3. Read Galatians 6:1. How should we help a brother or sister caught in sin?
4. What does Matthew 7:6 teach about discernment?

Chapter 17: Ask, Seek, Knock

> *Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. Or what man is there of you who, if his son asks him **for** bread, will give him a stone? And if he asks **for** a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know **how** to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who **is** in the heavens give good things to those who ask Him? Therefore all things whatever you desire that men do to you, so you also do to them; for this is the law and the prophets.* (Matthew 7:7-12)

After warning us about judging others, Jesus turns back to prayer. How can we live this sermon? We can't, on our own. So we ask.

Keep on Asking

In Greek, the verbs ask, seek, and knock are in a form that means to keep on doing it. Keep asking. Keep seeking. Keep knocking. Prayer is not one try and done. And the promise is wide: everyone who asks receives, the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks, it will be opened.

Does that mean we get whatever we want? No. James 4:3 says we sometimes ask and don't receive because we ask wrongly, to spend it on our pleasures. Jesus Himself asked that the cup pass from Him, and it didn't, because the Father had something better. The promise is that God answers. Sometimes the answer is yes, sometimes it's no, and sometimes it's wait. But He always hears, and He always gives what is good.

How Much More

Then Jesus makes it personal. What father, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? Even sinful human fathers give good gifts to their children. How much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask Him?

Luke's version says God will give "the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him" (Luke 11:13). The best gift God gives is Himself.

If you want more on this passage, my mini book Ask Seek Knock walks through it in more detail.

The Golden Rule

Then comes the most famous sentence in the sermon. "Therefore all things whatever you desire that men do to you, so you also do to them; for this is the law and the prophets." Other ancient teachers said something like it in a negative form: don't do to others what you wouldn't want done to you. Jesus puts it positively. Not just "don't harm," but "go and do good." Think about what you would want, and then do that for others first.

Jesus says this sums up the law and the prophets. Everything God's law says about how to treat people comes down to this. And notice the word "therefore." Because God is so generous to us, we can be generous to others.

Study Questions

1. Read Matthew 7:7-8. What does it mean to keep asking, seeking and knocking?
2. Why doesn't God always give us exactly what we ask for?
3. Read Matthew 7:9-11. What does this tell you about God as Father?
4. How would your week change if you lived the Golden Rule in every conversation?

Chapter 18: Two Gates and Two Trees

> *Enter through the narrow gate; for wide **is** the gate and broad the way that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter through it. Because narrow **is** the gate and constricted the way that leads to life, and few are those who find it. And beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do they gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles? So every good tree produces good fruits, but the rotten tree produces evil fruits. A good tree is not able to produce evil fruits, nor a rotten tree to produce good fruits. Every tree not producing good fruit is cut down and thrown into fire. So then, by their fruits you will know them.* (Matthew 7:13-20)

As the sermon comes to its end, Jesus presents a choice. In these last verses there are two gates, two roads, two kinds of trees, two kinds of people, and two foundations. There is no third option.

After 36 years of marriage and two daughters, I have seen God rebuild areas of my life I nearly ruined. Since getting sober in May 2020, I have watched Him grow honesty where there used to be denial. But doing right today does not mean everyone has forgiven you. You have to give that to God and not dwell on what others think. A good tree bears good fruit over time (Matthew 7:16-20). Lasting fruit grows from staying rooted in Christ.

The Narrow Gate

"Enter through the narrow gate." The wide gate is easy to find and easy to walk through. You don't have to change anything. Many go that way. But it leads to destruction. The narrow gate is harder. You have to leave things behind. Few find it. But it leads to life.

What is the narrow gate? Jesus is. "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6). People say that is too narrow. But think about it. If there is only one cure for a deadly disease, the doctor who tells you about it isn't being narrow-minded. He's saving your life.

And the road after the gate is narrow too. Following Jesus costs something. It means turning from sin, denying yourself, and taking up your cross. But it's the only road that goes home.

Wolves in Sheep's Clothing

Then Jesus warns about false prophets. They don't look dangerous. They come in sheep's clothing. They use Christian words. They may be likeable and successful. But inside they are ravenous wolves, out to devour.

How do you spot them? "You will know them by their fruits." Look at their lives and their teaching over time. Does their teaching match the Bible? Do they lift up Jesus or themselves? Do they live holy lives or hide sin? Do they care about the sheep or about money and power? A good tree can't keep producing bad fruit, and a bad tree can't keep producing good fruit. Time tells.

> *But there were also false prophets among the people, as also among you there will be false teachers, who will secretly bring in heresies of destruction, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing on themselves swift destruction.* (2 Peter 2:1)

The same test works for us. What fruit is our life producing? Galatians 5:22-23 lists the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. None of us bears it perfectly. But a real believer bears it, and grows in it.

Study Questions

1. Read Matthew 7:13-14. What makes the narrow gate narrow?
2. Why do you think so many choose the wide gate?
3. Read Matthew 7:15-20. How can we recognize false teachers?
4. What fruit do you see God growing in your life?

Chapter 19: Lord, Lord

> *Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter into the kingdom of the heavens, but the one who does the will of My Father who **is** in **the** heavens. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name do many mighty works?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who work lawlessness.'* (Matthew 7:21-23)

These may be the most frightening words Jesus ever spoke. He describes people who call Him "Lord, Lord." They aren't atheists. They prophesied in His name, cast out demons in His name, and did many mighty works in His name. And He tells them, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who work lawlessness."

Pastor Jimmy Carter led me to Christ as a boy. Later I led Bible studies and preached, and there were seasons when I was drifting inside. There was even a season when I stepped back from leadership outside of work to deal with my pride. Jesus' warning in Matthew 7:21-23 sobers me, because religious activity can never replace knowing Him. What matters on the last day is whether we belong to Christ.

Saying Is Not the Same as Knowing

Notice what these people point to on that day: what they did. "Did we not prophesy... cast out demons... do many mighty works?" They are trusting in their religious activity. But Jesus didn't say, "You didn't do enough." He said, "I never knew you." Salvation is not about our record. It's about a real relationship with Jesus, being known by Him.

Notice also the word "never." Jesus doesn't say "I used to know you." These are not believers who lost their salvation. They were never saved at all. Jesus said of His true sheep, "I give them eternal life, and they will certainly never perish, and no one will snatch them out of My hand" (John 10:28).

Doing the Father's Will

The one who enters, Jesus says, is "the one who does the will of My Father who is in the heavens." Does that mean we are saved by our works? No. Ephesians 2:8-9 is clear that we are saved by grace through faith, not by works. But verse 10 goes on: we are created in Christ Jesus for good works. Real faith always shows itself in a changed life. James says faith without works is dead.

What is the Father's will? Jesus said in John 6:40 that it is that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him should have eternal life. It starts with trusting Jesus. Then a life of obedience follows.

Examine Yourself

This passage isn't meant to make true believers doubt. It's meant to wake up people who are trusting in religion instead of Christ. So ask yourself honestly: Am I trusting in what I've done for God, or in what Jesus has done for me? Do I know Him? Do I want to obey Him? If the answer is unclear, settle it today. Come to Him as the poor in spirit, with empty hands, and trust Him alone.

*that if you confess with your mouth Lord Jesus, and believe in your heart that God raised Him out of **the** dead, you will be saved* (Romans 10:9)

Study Questions

1. Read Matthew 7:21-23. What were these people trusting in?
2. Why is it significant that Jesus says “I never knew you”?
3. How do faith and works fit together, according to Ephesians 2:8-10?
4. How would you explain to a friend the difference between religion and knowing Jesus?

Chapter 20: Two Builders

> *Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain came down, and the torrents came, and the winds blew, and they fell against that house; and it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not do them will be likened to a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain came down, and the torrents came, and the winds blew, and they struck against that house; and it fell, and its fall was great. And it came about, when Jesus had finished these words, the crowds were astonished at His teaching; for He was teaching them as* ***one*** *having authority, and not as the scribes.* (Matthew 7:24-29)

Jesus ends His sermon with a story every child can understand. Two men built two houses. From the outside, the houses may have looked the same. The difference was underneath, where no one could see. One built on rock. The other built on sand.

The Storm Comes to Both

Notice that the storm hit both houses. The rain came down, the floods came up, and the winds blew. Following Jesus doesn't mean you avoid storms. Christians get sick, lose jobs, bury loved ones, and face hard days. The question is not whether the storm comes. The question is what you are standing on when it does.

In Israel, a dry wash could look like a fine flat place to build in summer. But when the winter rains came, it became a river. Luke's version says the wise man "dug and went deep and laid a foundation on the rock" (Luke 6:48). That takes more work. It isn't flashy. But it holds.

And there is a final storm coming for everyone, the day we stand before God. On that day, only one foundation will hold.

> *For no one is able to lay another foundation besides the* ***one*** *being laid, which is Jesus the Christ.* (1 Corinthians 3:11)

Hearing and Doing

Here is the key. Both men heard Jesus' words. The difference is that the wise man heard them and did them. The foolish man heard them and didn't. Hearing sermons, reading books like this one, and going to Bible studies are good things. But they are not the foundation. The foundation is Jesus Himself, trusted and obeyed.

Jesus said in Luke 6:46, "why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" That is the question the whole sermon leaves us with.

With Authority

Matthew closes by telling us how the crowds reacted. They were astonished, because He taught "as one having authority, and not as the scribes." The scribes quoted other rabbis. Jesus said, "I say to you." He spoke as the Lawgiver Himself, the One who will judge the world on the last day.

So we can't treat the Sermon on the Mount as nice advice from a good teacher. It's the word of the Lord. We will either build on it or be swept away without it.

If you have never built your life on Jesus, the invitation is open. He also said this:

> *Come to Me, all who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke* ***is*** *easy, and My burden is light.* (Matthew 11:28-30)

Study Questions

1. Read Matthew 7:24-27. What was the difference between the two builders?
2. What storms have tested the foundation of your life?
3. Why is hearing Jesus' words not enough?
4. Looking back over the whole sermon, which teaching do you most need to put into practice?

A Closing Word

When I finish reading the Sermon on the Mount, I feel two things at once. I feel how far short I fall. And I feel how beautiful a life like this would be. I think that is exactly what Jesus intended.

The sermon shows us that we need a Savior. No one keeps it perfectly. Anger, lust, worry, greed and pride live in all of us. But it also shows us what that Savior is making us into. The poor in spirit, the merciful, the pure in heart, salt and light, people who love enemies and pray in secret and build on the rock. That is not a list of things to do to earn God's love. It's a picture of what His love does in us.

So read it again. Read it often. Pick one section a week and pray it into your life. And when you fail, go back to the first words: blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens.

If you want to go further, my Matthew Bible Study walks through the whole Gospel verse by verse, and my mini book Ask Seek Knock looks more closely at Matthew 7:7-11.

Appendix A: The Sermon on the Mount

Here is the whole sermon from the Steadfast Literal Bible, Matthew 5:1 to 7:29, so you can read it straight through the way the crowd first heard it.

The Beatitudes

> *And having seen the crowds, He went up on the mountain; and when He had sat down, His disciples came to Him. And having opened His mouth, He was teaching them, saying, "Blessed **are** the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens. 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. Blessed **are** the merciful, for they will receive mercy. Blessed **are** the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed **are** the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God. Blessed **are** those who have been persecuted on account of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens. Blessed are you when they insult you, and persecute **you**, and say every evil word against you, lying, on account of Me. Rejoice and exult, for your reward **is** great in the heavens; for thus they persecuted the prophets who **were** before you."* (Matthew 5:1-12)

Salt and Light

> *You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt becomes tasteless, with what will it be salted? It is no longer strong for anything, except to be thrown out and to be trampled by men. You are the light of the world. A city lying on a mountain cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under the basket, but on the lampstand, and it shines for all who **are** in the house. Thus let your light shine before men, so that they may see your good works and may glorify your Father who **is** in the heavens.* (Matthew 5:13-16)

The Law Fulfilled

> *Do not think that I came to abolish the law or the prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until the heaven and the earth pass away, one iota or one stroke will by no means pass away from the law until everything happens. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, will be called least in the kingdom of the heavens; but whoever does and teaches **them**, this one will be called great in the kingdom of the heavens. For I say to you that unless your righteousness abounds more than **that** of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter into the kingdom of the heavens.* (Matthew 5:17-20)

Anger

> *You heard that it was said to the ancients, 'You shall not murder'; and 'Whoever murders will be liable to the judgment.' But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother without cause will be liable to the judgment; and whoever says to his brother, 'Raca,' will be liable to the Sanhedrin; and whoever says, 'Fool,' will be liable to the Gehenna of fire. Therefore if you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go away; first be reconciled to your brother, and then, having come, offer your gift. Be agreeing with your accuser quickly, while you are with*

him on the way, lest the accuser deliver you to the judge, and the judge deliver you to the officer, and you will be thrown into prison. Truly I say to you, you will by no means come out from there until you pay the last quadrans. (Matthew 5:21-26)

Lust

*You heard that it was said to the ancients, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. And if your right eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out and throw **it** from you; for it is better for you that one of your members perish, and not **that** your whole body be thrown into Gehenna. And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw **it** from you; for it is better for you that one of your members perish, and not **that** your whole body be thrown into Gehenna.* (Matthew 5:27-30)

Divorce

*And it was said, 'Whoever sends away his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' But I say to you that whoever sends away his wife, except for a matter of sexual immorality, causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a **woman** who has been sent away commits adultery.* (Matthew 5:31-32)

Oaths

*Again, you heard that it was said to the ancients, 'You shall not swear falsely, but you shall pay your oaths to the Lord.' But I say to you, not to swear at all: neither by heaven, because it is **the** throne of God; nor by the earth, because it is **the** footstool of His feet; nor by Jerusalem, because it is **the** city of the great King. Nor shall you swear by your head, because you are not able to make one hair white or black. But let your word be 'Yes, yes,' 'No, no'; and what is more than these is from the evil **one**.* (Matthew 5:33-37)

Revenge

*You heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' But I say to you, not to resist the evil **person**; but whoever will strike you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also. And to the **one** wanting to sue you and to take your tunic, yield to him the cloak also. And whoever compels you **to go** approximately 1,620 yards (one mile), go with him two. Give to the **one** asking you, and do not turn away from the **one** wanting to borrow from you.* (Matthew 5:38-42)

Love for Enemies

*You heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those cursing you, do good to those hating you, and pray for those mistreating you and persecuting you, so that you may be sons of your Father who **is** in **the** heavens; for He makes His sun rise on evil and good, and sends rain on righteous and unrighteous. For if you love those loving you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brothers only, what more do you do? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father who **is** in the heavens is perfect.* (Matthew 5:43-48)

Giving

*Beware not to do your charity before men in order to be seen by them; otherwise indeed, you have no reward with your Father who **is** in the heavens. Therefore whenever you do charity, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be glorified by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But when you are doing charity, do not let your left **hand** know what your right **hand** is doing, so that your charity may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.* (Matthew 6:1-4)

Prayer

*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 wide streets, so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you that they have their reward in full. But you, when you pray, enter into your inner room, and having shut your door, pray to your Father who **is** in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. And when praying, do not babble like the Gentiles; for they think that they will be heard in their many words. Therefore do not be like them; for your Father knows what things you have need of before you ask Him. Therefore you, pray in this way: 'Our Father who **is** in the heavens, let Your name be sanctified; let Your kingdom come; let Your will come about, as in heaven, also on the earth. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory into the ages. Amen.' For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.* (Matthew 6:5-15)

Fasting

*And whenever you fast, do not be gloomy like the hypocrites; for they disfigure their faces so that they may appear to men **to be** fasting. Truly I say to you that they have their reward in full. But you, when fasting, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you may not appear to men **to be** fasting, but to your Father who **is** in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.* (Matthew 6:16-18)

Treasure

*Do not store up for yourselves treasures on the earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in nor steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. The lamp of the body is the eye. Therefore if your eye is single, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eye is evil, your whole body will be full of darkness. Therefore if the light that **is** in you is darkness, how great **is** the darkness! No one is able to serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You are not able to serve God and wealth.* (Matthew 6:19-24)

Worry

*Because of this I say to you, do not be anxious for your life, what you will eat and what you will drink, nor for your body, what you will put on. Is not the life more than the food, and the body **more** than the clothing? Look at the birds of the sky, that they do not sow, nor do they reap, nor do they gather into barns, and your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more*

*valuable than they? And which of you, being anxious, is able to add approximately 1.5 feet (one cubit) to his lifespan? And why are you anxious about clothing? Observe the lilies of the field, how they grow: they do not labor, nor do they spin; but I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory was clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is **here** today and tomorrow is thrown into an oven, **will He** not much more **clothe** you, you of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or, 'What shall we drink?' or, 'What shall we wear?' For the nations seek after all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 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 about its own things. Sufficient for the day **is** its trouble.* (Matthew 6:25-34)

Judging

*Do not judge, so that you may not be judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with what measure you measure, it will be measured back to you. And why do you look at the splinter that **is** in the eye of your brother, but the beam in your own eye you do not notice? Or how will you say to your brother, 'Allow me to cast out the splinter from your eye,' and look, the beam **is** in your eye? Hypocrite! First cast out the beam from your eye, and then you will see clearly to cast out the splinter from the eye of your brother. Do not give what is holy to the dogs, nor throw your pearls before the pigs, so that they do not trample them with their feet, and having turned, tear you to pieces.* (Matthew 7:1-6)

Ask, Seek, Knock

*Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. Or what man is there of you who, if his son asks him **for** bread, will give him a stone? And if he asks **for** a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know **how** to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who **is** in the heavens give good things to those who ask Him? Therefore all things whatever you desire that men do to you, so you also do to them; for this is the law and the prophets.* (Matthew 7:7-12)

Two Gates and Two Trees

*Enter through the narrow gate; for wide **is** the gate and broad the way that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter through it. Because narrow **is** the gate and constricted the way that leads to life, and few are those who find it. And beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do they gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles? So every good tree produces good fruits, but the rotten tree produces evil fruits. A good tree is not able to produce evil fruits, nor a rotten tree to produce good fruits. Every tree not producing good fruit is cut down and thrown into fire. So then, by their fruits you will know them.* (Matthew 7:13-20)

Lord, Lord

*Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter into the kingdom of the heavens, but the one who does the will of My Father who **is** in **the** heavens. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your*

name do many mighty works?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who work lawlessness.' (Matthew 7:21-23)

Two Builders

Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain came down, and the torrents came, and the winds blew, and they fell against that house; and it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not do them will be likened to a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain came down, and the torrents came, and the winds blew, and they struck against that house; and it fell, and its fall was great. And it came about, when Jesus had finished these words, the crowds were astonished at His teaching; for He was teaching them as ***one*** *having authority, and not as the scribes.* (Matthew 7:24-29)

Appendix B: Scripture Index

This index lists the Bible passages quoted or cited in this book. The numbers after each passage are chapter numbers. “Intro” is Before You Begin, and “Back” is the closing pages.

- **Genesis:** 2:24 (6); 39:12 (5)
- **Exodus:** 21:24 (8); 22:26-27 (8)
- **Leviticus:** 19:12 (7); 19:18 (9)
- **Numbers:** 30:2 (7)
- **Deuteronomy:** 24:1-4 (6)
- **1 Chronicles:** 29:11 (12)
- **Esther:** 4:16 (13)
- **Psalm:** 15:4 (7)
- **Proverbs:** 28:22 (14)
- **Isaiah:** 58:6-7 (13)
- **Ezekiel:** 36:26-27 (3)
- **Joel:** 2:12 (13)
- **Malachi:** 2:16 (6)
- **Matthew:** 5:1 (Back); 5:1-12 (1, Back); 5:1-2 (1); 5:7 (16); 5:11-12 (1); 5:13 (Intro); 5:13-16 (2, Back); 5:17-18 (3); 5:17-20 (3, Back); 5:20 (3); 5:21-22 (4); 5:21-26 (4, Back); 5:23-24 (4); 5:27-28 (5); 5:27-30 (5, Back); 5:31-32 (6, Back); 5:33-37 (7, Back); 5:38-42 (8, Back); 5:43-45 (9); 5:43-48 (9, Back); 6:1 (2); 6:1-4 (10, Back); 6:5-15 (Back); 6:5-8 (11); 6:9-15 (12); 6:14-15 (12); 6:16-18 (13, Back); 6:19-21 (14); 6:19-24 (14, Back); 6:24 (14); 6:25-34 (15, Back); 6:33 (15); 7:1-5 (16); 7:1-6 (16, Back); 7:6 (16); 7:7-11 (Back); 7:7-12 (17, Back); 7:7-8 (17); 7:9-11 (17); 7:13-14 (18); 7:13-20 (18, Back); 7:15-20 (18); 7:21-23 (19, Back); 7:24-27 (20); 7:24-29 (20, Back); 7:28-29 (Intro); 10:14 (16); 11:28-30 (20); 18:21-35 (12); 19:3-9 (6); 23:16-22 (7); 26:63-64 (7)
- **Mark:** 2:20 (13); 3:5 (4)
- **Luke:** 6:12 (11); 6:46 (20); 6:48 (20); 11:13 (17); 18:1-8 (11)
- **John:** 6:40 (19); 7:24 (16); 8:12 (2); 10:28 (19); 14:6 (18)
- **Acts:** 2:42 (11); 4:36-37 (10); 13:2-3 (13)
- **Romans:** 1:9 (7); 5:8 (9); 10:9 (19); 12:18 (4); 12:19 (8); 13:4 (8)
- **1 Corinthians:** 3:11 (20); 5:12 (16); 7:15 (6)
- **2 Corinthians:** 1:23 (7); 9:7 (10)
- **Galatians:** 5:22-23 (18); 6:1 (16)
- **Ephesians:** 2:8-10 (19); 2:8-9 (19); 4:26 (4)
- **Philippians:** 3:8-9 (3); 4:6-7 (15)
- **2 Thessalonians:** 3:10 (15)
- **1 Timothy:** 6:18-19 (14)
- **2 Timothy:** 2:22 (5)
- **Hebrews:** 4:16 (11); 6:13-17 (7)
- **James:** 1:13 (12); 4:3 (17); 5:12 (7)
- **1 Peter:** 2:23 (8)
- **2 Peter:** 2:1 (18)
- **1 John:** 1:9 (5)

About This Book

The Sermon on the Mount is the longest teaching of Jesus recorded in the Bible, and the most quoted speech in history. It gave us the Beatitudes, salt and light, turn the other cheek, go the extra mile, love your enemies, the Lord's Prayer, do not worry, the Golden Rule, the narrow gate, and the wise man who built his house on the rock.

The Sermon on the Mount: A Section-by-Section Study of Matthew 5 to 7 walks through all three chapters in twenty short chapters, in plain words. Each chapter prints the passage in full, explains what Jesus meant and how it fits the rest of the Bible, and asks what it looks like in everyday life. It shows why Jesus set the bar higher than the religious leaders of His day, and how His grace makes a new kind of person who can begin to live it.

Every chapter ends with study questions for personal reading, a small group, or a class. The whole sermon is printed at the back so you can read it straight through.

It is the companion to Theirs Is the Kingdom, a verse-by-verse study of the Beatitudes, so it gives those opening blessings a short overview and spends its pages on the rest of the sermon.