



flourishing

SERMON ON THE MOUNT

DISCUSSION GUIDE

 **STONEGATE**

A. Background and Introduction

The Sermon on the Mount stands as a watershed message in ancient history. Prior to Jesus' teaching, there were many teachers and movements explaining what they believed to be "the good life." In a word, every group had their own ideas about how to *flourish*. For centuries philosophers, teachers, and Rabbis taught their people how to experience human flourishing through virtuous living.

Into this conversation, Jesus enters. In the process, He corrects misconceptions, challenges false assumptions, and elevates our expectations. In this way, the Sermon on the Mount stands as the paramount teaching on human flourishing.

Not only is it superior in its teaching, but also in its *teacher*. Throughout the Sermon, Jesus identifies Himself as the one who speaks on God's behalf. As a result, Jesus provides insight and instruction *from our Creator* for how we are to flourish in this life. James Boice beautifully said, "The preacher of the Sermon on the Mount *is* the Sermon on the Mount, and we are constantly brought into the most intimate contact with him."¹

At this time in history, philosophies and theories about what constituted a good, flourishing life were abundant. In order to understand the significance, power, and context of Jesus' teaching, it's helpful to look briefly at some of these ideas. In doing this, we'll briefly consider the cultural context Jesus was speaking into—specifically in relation to Jewish and Greek thought.

Jewish. Because Jesus was a first century Jew, He understood Himself to be speaking into distinctly Jewish notions about God, humanity, and the good life. Historically, "Jesus and the authors of the New Testament see themselves as part of the grand story of God's creation and redeeming work in the world, a world that had a beginning and will have an end, or at least a renewed beginning."²

In this worldview, God will one day reward the righteous and punish the wicked. As a result, the good life is found in aligning one's life with the laws and precepts of God. This (in the Jewish mind) not only ensured escape from final judgment, but a blessed life in the meantime.

The problem, however, is that this led to a merely external religion. Rather than aligning their hearts to God and trusting Him, the Old Testament is a series of stories and events that illustrate what Isaiah declared when God pronounced through him, "These people approach me with their speeches to honor me with lip-service—yet their hearts are far from me, and human rules direct their worship of me" (Isaiah 29:13 c.f. Matthew 15:7–9).

When Jesus speaks, He is directly confronting the Jewish notions of "the good life" that were popular at this time. Not only does He use the language of blessing found throughout the Old Testament, but He moves beyond mere external religion and draws attention to the heart. The focus was in the Jewish scriptures all along (Deuteronomy 6:4–5), but God's people had drifted away from it.

Not only does Jesus speak to the Jewish audience as a member of God's chosen people, but even more so, Jesus speaks to his Jewish audience *as a new Moses*. In the opening section of

¹ James Montgomery Boice, *The Sermon on the Mount: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1972), 11.

² Jonathan T. Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing: A Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), 25.

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His sermon, Jesus directly quotes from the 10 Commandments (Matthew 5:21, 27) and from the Torah (Matthew 5:31, 33, 38, 43)³—each of which were given to the Jewish people through Moses from God.

Specifically, in the 10 Commandments, God gave the instructions to Moses on top of Mount Sinai (Exodus 19) and then Moses delivered them to the people (Exodus 20:1–17). In a similar fashion, Matthew tells us “When he saw the crowds, *he went up on the mountain*, and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to teach them, saying...” (Matthew 5:1–2).⁴

In this way, Matthew is depicting Jesus as the new leader, rescuer, and messenger of God’s people who is greater than Moses. As a result, “the good life” is not one found merely in external religion or in submission to a particular teacher. Rather, it is found as we align our hearts and lives with the teachings of Jesus—the true and perfect messenger from God.

Greek. Ancient Greek philosophy was a persistent quest to find the meaning of happiness. In the Greco-Roman culture of the first century, Jesus’ audience was not only deeply Jewish, but many were deeply Gentile (non-Jewish). Within this Gentile worldview were layers of Greek philosophy that spoke of the good life in terms of personal happiness.

However, the Greek notion of happiness was not the modern notion of happiness that emphasizes temporary sensations of positive feelings. Rather, the ancient Greeks taught about pursuing a “life that is satisfied and meaningful.”

To use another phrase, the Greeks were focused on “human flourishing” and they believed we experienced human flourishing as we pursued a life of *virtue*—moral formation and character development.⁵

These ancient thinkers (i.e. Epicures, Plato, Aristotle) asked questions like: Who are we? Where did we come from? How do we get there? How should we live?⁶ Underneath each of these questions is the central question: How do we become *happy*—how do we *flourish* in this life?

In general, the Greek understanding of flourishing is one that “includes all of who we are as humans—reasoning, affections, and embodied actions—our whole person.”⁷ In contrast to Jewish thinking, the Greek view of “the good life” was more fully integrated. It was not merely external, but involved the affections and internal life of the person.

However, it was also incomplete. In the Greek view, there was no single God who gave revelation to mankind. Instead there were multiple gods and even they were not supreme. As a result, there was no ultimate source or standard by which to evaluate concepts such as “goodness,” “justice,” or even “virtuous.”

³ The first five books of the Old Testament: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy.

⁴ Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing*, 138–140; Scot McKnight, *Sermon on the Mount, The Story of God Bible Commentary*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 25.

⁵ Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing*, 31.

⁶ Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing*, 32.

⁷ Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing*, 33

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While the Jewish view of flourishing had the right *source* (God), it had the wrong *approach* (external religion). The Greek view of flourishing suffered from the opposite problem: it had the right *approach* (an integrated life), but it had the wrong *source* (different gods).

Enter Jesus.

Throughout the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus speaks directly into both of these conversations to affirm what's true and correct what's false. In this way, Jesus establishes as both the great Rabbi and the great philosopher who shows us the true path to human flourishing.

As a result, you'll notice a lot of overlap between the kingdom of God on the one hand (Jewish) and the importance of living an integrated life from the heart (Greek). Jonathan Pennington helpfully observes:

These two contexts overlap conceptually in a very significant way in that both are addressing the great topic of wholeness and human flourishing...the Sermon is offering Jesus's answer to the great question of human flourishing, the topic at the core of both the Jewish wisdom literature and that of the Greco-Roman virtue perspective.⁸

As a result, Jesus is presented as the great “Philosopher-King”⁹ who “came to seek and save the lost” (Luke 19:10) by teaching us how to flourish in a life of following Him. In this way, Jesus shows Himself to be a savior for *all* people—not just a select few.

No matter who you are or where you've come from, Jesus is someone for you to follow. As you do, life will still be difficult, but you can flourish in the midst of it. As you embark on your study of the Sermon on the Mount, we encourage you to honestly consider what it could look like for you to obey Jesus as your teacher and submit to Him as your King.

As we've already said, Jesus presents Himself as both—teacher and King. This is intentional. He wants to transform our lives through His teachings and example. Moreover, He wants to transform the world through the lives of His people—those who have chosen to follow Him.

When Jesus spoke these words, He was speaking into a particular context, but His words hold no less power for our context today. Within our culture there are many ideas of “the good life.” Every person has their own ideas about what it means to be happy and flourish, but only Jesus provides the answers we're looking for.

⁸ Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing*, 36.

⁹ Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing*, 36.

B. Some Important Observations

1. **A New Kingdom, A New People.** As you read the Sermon, you'll notice that Jesus talks about "the kingdom of heaven" a few times (Matthew 5:3,10,19–20; 6:10, 33; 7:21). While it's easy to think of Jesus' kingdom as merely *future* in orientation, it's important to realize that Jesus understood the kingdom of God has a *present* reality to be personally experienced.

Specifically, we experience the kingdom of Jesus when we give our hearts and lives to the King of the kingdom—Jesus. To live in the kingdom of God is to humbly submit to the rule and reign of Jesus. Jesus' sermon is in many ways an explanation for how His people are to do this. As we do, we participate in God's redemptive story by being His ambassadors who He uses to bring His kingdom to Earth.

In this way, everything written in the Sermon on the Mount is intended to be obeyed and applied by every follower of Jesus. There is not an elite group of Christians who these instructions are reserved for. All who have trusted in Christ are included in God's kingdom people and therefore, these instructions for kingdom-living apply to all of us. Scot McKnight observes, "The Sermon on the Mount is the moral portrait of Jesus' people."¹⁰

2. **Heart First, Behavior Second.** In light of this first observation, it may be tempting to view Jesus' sermon as simply a code of morals and ethics. If you view the Sermon this way, there's a good chance you'll become very frustrated as you try to align your life with its precepts. Instead seeing how Jesus is addressing your heart (which drives behavior), you'll only see a list of commands to obey and behaviors to modify.

Thankfully, there's a better—more accurate—way to understand Jesus' teachings here. Simply put: every one of Jesus' teachings is about our *hearts first* and our *behavior second*. Yes, Jesus does talk about behaviors, but He does so as a doorway to our hearts (Matthew 5:21–30; 7:13–23).

Moreover, Jesus begins His Sermon by describing the posture of heart that characterize his people (Matthew. 5:3–12). In this light, our effort to align ourselves with Jesus and live as His kingdom people is first a matter of the heart, and second a matter of behavior.

3. **Not By Your Own Strength.** Connected to these first two observations, it's important to stress that you cannot obey the Sermon on the Mount by relying on your own strength. As with any command in the Christian life, we must lean on the power of God's Spirit within us. It is God's Spirit who convicts us of sin, realigns our hearts, and empowers us to obey Jesus (John 16:8; Philippians 2:13). Indeed, "The lifestyle described in the [Sermon] is not the product of mere human effort. It is the result of transforming grace."¹¹ D.A. Carson puts it well:

At the very outset of the [Sermon], we learn that we do not have the spiritual resources to put any of the Sermon's precepts into practice. We cannot fulfill God's standards ourselves. We must come to him and acknowledge our spiritual

¹⁰ Scot McKnight, *Sermon on the Mount*, 1.

¹¹ Charles Quarles, *Sermon on the Mount: Restoring Christ's Message to the Modern Church*, NAC Studies in Bible & Theology (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2011), 66.

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bankruptcy, emptying ourselves of our self-righteousness, moral self-esteem, and personal vainglory. Emptied of these things we are ready for him to fill us. Much of the rest of the SOTM is designed to remove these self-delusions from us, and foster within us a genuine poverty of spirit. The genuineness and depth of this repentance is a prime requirement for entering into life.¹²

- 4. It's All About Flourishing.** As you read Jesus' Sermon, it is essential to understand that Jesus is showing us how to align our lives with God's design. In a word: He's teaching us how to *flourish*—how to come alive and experience the abundant life of following Him. This life of flourishing is not easy. In fact, there are some hard teachings we must embrace if we are to flourish as God intended. But these hard teachings are a worthy price to pay to experience whole-life renewal and flourishing under Jesus.

C. How To Use This Guide

Ok, so let's get practical. Maybe you skipped those first two sections, because this section is what you really want to know. That's ok! We would encourage to read the previous sections to help you understand what you're going to read in the Sermon on the Mount, but you certainly don't have to in order to understand Jesus' teachings in Matthew 5–7.

So, how do you use this guide? Answer: in the most convenient way for you to do so. There is no right way to use it, but there are some features to each week's reading you'll like to pay attention to. We'll briefly unpack each of these.

The Main Reading. This is the passage of Scripture for the week. It will also be the passage or passages you hear preached from the stage. This will be the focus of your discussion in your small group time.

Optional Extra Reading. These are passages that provide background information or supporting information for the main reading. If you'd like to work through the Sermon on the Mount in a day-by-day fashion, these are passages you can build into a daily routine to supplement your reading in the Sermon on the Mount.

Scripture Memory. Very simply, this is a passage from the main reading for you to commit to memory. Don't snub this off as something only children do. Scripture memory is a powerful tool to reorient and retrain your mind to think God's thoughts after Him.

Sermon Notes. This is a section for you to take some brief notes on the Sermon before you meet with your small group. You may want to bring this guide to Sunday morning service or just simply jot down some things you remember from the message before you meet with your group. It's up to you.

Discussion Questions. These are the questions for you to work through *before* you meet with your group and then discuss when your group meets.

As you begin reading, ask God to open your eyes to see wonderful things in His word (Psalm 119:18). Thankfully, we worship a God who lets us find Him when we seek Him (Jeremiah 29:13). As you work through this guide, we encourage you to just that: seek the face of God in the teachings of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount.

¹² D.A. Carson, *Jesus' Sermon on the Mount and His Confrontation with the World: A Study of Matthew 5–10* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2018), 22.

Main Reading

Date:

Matthew 5:1–2 CSB

When he saw the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. **2** Then he began to teach them...

Matthew 7:24–29 CSB

24 “Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. **25** The rain fell, the rivers rose, and the winds blew and pounded that house. Yet it didn’t collapse, because its foundation was on the rock. **26** But everyone who hears these words of mine and doesn’t act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. **27** The rain fell, the rivers rose, the winds blew and pounded that house, and it collapsed. It collapsed with a great crash.”

28 When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, **29** because he was teaching them like one who had authority, and not like their scribes.

Optional Extra Reading

- Exodus 19:1–25
- Exodus 20:1–17
- Deuteronomy 18:15–18
- Proverbs 1:20–23
- Proverbs 10:25
- Proverbs 12:3

Scripture Memory:

Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. — Matthew 7:24

Sermon Reflection

1. What were some key points that stood out to you from the sermon on this section?

2. Why did this stand out to you?

Discussion Questions

1. **Have you ever thought of Jesus as your personal teacher for life? Not just your Lord and Savior for the *after-life*, but someone to follow and obey for *this life*? Why or why not?**
2. **What reason does Jesus give for why it important for us to “build our lives on the rock” of His instruction (Hint: see v. 25)?**
3. **What are some of the practical challenges you face to obeying Jesus’ instruction in your everyday life?**
4. **Read 1 John 5:1–5. Would you say John’s words in verse 3 describe your experience? Why or why not?**
5. **After working through these questions, what are some of the thoughts, concerns, or emotions you are processing? Would you be willing to share them with your group this week?**

Main Reading

Date:

Matthew 5:2–12 CSB

Then he began to teach them, saying,

3 “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs. **4** Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. **5** Blessed are the humble, for they will inherit the earth. **6** Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. **7** Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. **8** Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. **9** Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God. **10** Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

11 “You are blessed when they insult you and persecute you and falsely say every kind of evil against you because of me. **12** Be glad and rejoice, because your reward is great in heaven. For that is how they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Optional Extra Reading

- Isaiah 61
- Psalm 86:1–5
- Psalm 51
- Psalm 37:1–11
- Psalm 63:1–5
- Psalm 24:3–6
- Romans 12:14–18

Scripture Memory

Your choice. Select one or two verses you will commit to memory this week.

Sermon Reflection

1. What were some key points that stood out to you from the sermon on this section?

2. Why did this stand out to you?

Discussion Questions

- 1. As you read through the Beatitudes (v.3–10), was there one that stood out to you more than the others? Why that one?**
- 2. Read Isaiah 61. Do you see any of the same words or ideas in this passage that are also in today's reading?**
- 3. Jesus begins and ends the Beatitudes speaking about the “kingdom of heaven” (v. 3 and v. 10.). What do you think this phrase means or refers to?**
- 4. Looking over today's reading, would you say there is one verse above the rest that you struggle to apply in your own life? Why or why not?**
- 5. After working through these questions, what are some of the thoughts, concerns, or emotions you are processing? Would you be willing to share them with your group this week?**

Main Reading

Date:

Matthew 5:13–16 CSB

“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt should lose its taste, how can it be made salty? It’s no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled under people’s feet.

14 “You are the light of the world. A city situated on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 No one lights a lamp and puts it under a basket, but rather on a lampstand, and it gives light for all who are in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

Matthew 5:38–48 CSB

“You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ 39 But I tell you, don’t resist an evildoer. On the contrary, if anyone slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. 40 As for the one who wants to sue you and take away your shirt, let him have your coat as well. 41 And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two. 42 Give to the one who asks you, and don’t turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

43 “You have heard that it was said, ‘**Love your neighbor** and hate your enemy.’ 44 But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 so that you may be children of your Father in heaven. For he causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. 46 For if you love those who love you, what reward will you have? Don’t even the tax collectors do the same? 47 And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what are you doing out of the ordinary? Don’t even the Gentiles do the same? 48 Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Optional Extra Reading

- Jeremiah 25:4–7
- Exodus 21:22–24
- Leviticus 19:17–18
- Titus 3:1–8

Scripture Memory

But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. — Matthew 5:44

Sermon Reflection

1. What were some key points that stood out to you from the sermon on this section?

2. Why did this stand out to you?

Discussion Questions

- 1. As you read through today's reading, why do you think Jesus gave these instructions to His followers—why are they important?**
- 2. Can you think of some examples in your own life when you have *not* been “salt and light” or “love[d] your neighbor”?**
- 3. Generally speaking, would you describe these commands as easy or hard? Please explain your answer.**
- 4. What are some practical things you and your small group can do to be “salt and light” and “love your neighbor” in our city?**
- 5. After working through these questions, what are some of the thoughts, concerns, or emotions you are processing? Would you be willing to share them with your group this week?**

Main Reading

Date:

Matthew 5:17–20 CSB

17 “Don’t think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. **18** For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or one stroke of a letter will pass away from the law until all things are accomplished. **19** Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commands and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever does and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. **20** For I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never get into the kingdom of heaven.

Optional Extra Reading

- Jeremiah 31:31–34
- Matthew 22:34–40
- Matthew 27:45–56
- John 19:16–30
- Romans 3:19–31
- Galatians 3:1–29
- Ephesians 2:11–22
- Hebrews 4:1–16
- Hebrews 7:11–28
- Hebrews 9:1–28
- Hebrews 10:1–18

Scripture Memory

Don’t think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. — Matthew 5:17

Sermon Reflection

1. What were some key points that stood out to you from the sermon on this section?

2. Why did this stand out to you?

Discussion Questions

1. What do you think Jesus meant when he said he came not to “*abolish* the law but to *fulfill*” it?
2. Read the four passages from Hebrews in the Option Reading. In light of these passages, what do you think the “all things” are that Jesus declared must be accomplished before the law can pass away?
3. In light of the passages, what is the basis for which we have forgiveness of our sins and a right standing before God? Is it by how good, moral, or religious we are? Is it something else?
4. Because Jesus has fulfilled the law for us, what kind of attitude should we have—toward God and toward others?
5. After working through these questions, what are some of the thoughts, concerns, or emotions you are processing? Would you be willing to share them with your group this week?

Main Reading

Date:

Matthew 5:21–30 CSB

“You have heard that it was said to our ancestors, ‘**Do not murder,**’ and whoever murders will be subject to judgment. **22** But I tell you, everyone who is angry with his brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Whoever insults his brother or sister, will be subject to the court. Whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be subject to hellfire. **23** So if you are offering your gift on the altar, and there you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, **24** leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled with your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift. **25** Reach a settlement quickly with your adversary while you’re on the way with him to the court, or your adversary will hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the officer, and you will be thrown into prison. **26** Truly I tell you, you will never get out of there until you have paid the last penny.

27 “You have heard that it was said, ‘**Do not commit adultery.**’ **28** But I tell you, everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. **29** If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of the parts of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. **30** And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of the parts of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.

Optional Extra Reading

- Exodus 20:1–21
- Matthew 18:15–18
- Romans 12:9–21
- Colossians 3:1–17
- Galatians 5:1–26

Scripture Memory

Your choice. Select one or two verses you will commit to memory this week.

Sermon Reflection

1. What were some key points that stood out to you from the sermon on this section?

2. Why did this stand out to you?

Discussion Questions

1. **What are some things that stand out to you in this passage? Why?**
2. **Of the two issues mentioned—anger and lust—would you say you struggle with one more than the other? What’s this like for you personally?**
3. **Looking at v.23–26, why do you think Jesus emphasized the importance of reconciliation between believers? Is this your natural response? Why or why not?**
4. **Looking at v. 29–30, would you say you approach sin with this sort of seriousness in your own life? Why or why not?**
5. **After working through these questions, what are some of the thoughts, concerns, or emotions you are processing? Would you be willing to share them with your group this week?**

Main Reading

Date:

Matthew 5:31–32 CSB

“It was also said, ‘**Whoever divorces his wife must give her a written notice of divorce.**’ 32 But I tell you, everyone who divorces his wife, except in a case of sexual immorality, causes her to commit adultery. And whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.”

Optional Extra Reading

- Matthew 19:1–12
- Matthew 18:21–35
- Deuteronomy 24:1–5
- Malachi 2:10–16
- Jeremiah 3:6–18
- 1 Corinthians 7:1–16
- 1 Corinthians 13:1–13
- Ephesians 5:15–33
- Colossians 3:12–25

Scripture Memory

Your choice. Select one or two verses you will commit to memory this week.

Sermon Reflection

1. What were some key points that stood out to you from the sermon on this section?

2. Why did this stand out to you?

Discussion Questions

1. **What are some things that stand out to you in this passage? Why?**
2. **Read Matthew 19:1–12 & 1 Corinthians 7:1–16. Taken together with our main reading, what three reasons are given as justifiable reasons for divorce?**
3. **Read Matthew 18:21–35 & 1 Corinthians 13:1–13. What do these passage teach about love & forgiveness?**
4. **Why do you think Jesus took such a firm stance on divorce?**
5. **After working through these questions, what are some of the thoughts, concerns, or emotions you are processing? Would you be willing to share them with your group this week?**

Main Reading

Date:

Matthew 5:33–37 CSB

“Again, you have heard that it was said to our ancestors, ‘**You must not break your oath, but you must keep your oaths to the Lord.**’ **34** But I tell you, don’t take an oath at all: either by heaven, because it is God’s throne; **35** or by the earth, because it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, because it is the city of the great King. **36** Do not swear by your head, because you cannot make a single hair white or black. **37** But let your ‘yes’ mean ‘yes,’ and your ‘no’ mean ‘no.’ Anything more than this is from the evil one.

Matthew 7:1–6 CSB

“Do not judge, so that you won’t be judged. **2** For you will be judged by the same standard with which you judge others, and you will be measured by the same measure you use. **3** Why do you look at the splinter in your brother’s eye but don’t notice the beam of wood in your own eye? **4** Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the splinter out of your eye,’ and look, there’s a beam of wood in your own eye? **5** Hypocrite! First take the beam of wood out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to take the splinter out of your brother’s eye. **6** Don’t give what is holy to dogs or toss your pearls before pigs, or they will trample them under their feet, turn, and tear you to pieces.

Optional Extra Reading

- Leviticus 19:12
- Numbers 30:1–2
- Deuteronomy 23:21–23
- Proverbs 12:17–23
- John 8:44
- Ephesians 4:15–32
- John 7:24
- 1 Corinthians 5:1–13
- Romans 14:1–23

Scripture Memory

Hypocrite! First take the beam of wood out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to take the splinter out of your brother’s eye. — Matthew 7:5

Sermon Reflection

1. What were some key points that stood out to you from the sermon on this section?

2. Why did this stand out to you?

Discussion Questions

1. What do you think Jesus is saying in Matthew 5:33–37?
2. Read Ephesians 4:15–32. Taken together with Matthew 5:33–37, why is it important for followers of Jesus to be committed to telling the truth? Is there a way to do this that is more or less honoring to Jesus?
3. In Matthew 7:1, do you think Jesus is forbidding His followers from making judgments? If yes, how do you reconcile that with John 7:24? If no, then what is Jesus saying?
4. In your own life, are there times when you judge people hypocritically? How so? What can we do in our group to cultivate honesty and love among each other?
5. After working through these questions, what are some of the thoughts, concerns, or emotions you are processing? Would you be willing to share them with your group this week?
6. **Bonus Question:** How do you reconcile Paul's command *to* judge believers in 1 Corinthians 5:1–13 with his command *not* to judge believers in Romans 14:1–23?

Main Reading

Date:

Matthew 6:5–18 CSB

5 “Whenever you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites, because they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by people. Truly I tell you, they have their reward. 6 But when you pray, go into your private room, shut your door, and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. 7 When you pray, don’t babble like the Gentiles, since they imagine they’ll be heard for their many words. 8 Don’t be like them, because your Father knows the things you need before you ask him.

9 “Therefore, you should pray like this:

Our Father in heaven, your name be honored as holy. 10 Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. 11 Give us today our daily bread. 12 And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13 And do not bring us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. 14 “For if you forgive others their offenses, your heavenly Father will forgive you as well. 15 But if you don’t forgive others, your Father will not forgive your offenses.

16 “Whenever you fast, don’t be gloomy like the hypocrites. For they make their faces unattractive so that their fasting is obvious to people. Truly I tell you, they have their reward. 17 But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, 18 so that your fasting isn’t obvious to others but to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Optional Extra Reading

- Daniel 9:1–17
- Joel 2:12–32
- Luke 4:1–14
- Ephesians 3:14–21
- Colossians 1:9–14
- 1 Thessalonians 5:17

Scripture Memory

Whenever you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites, because they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by people. Truly I tell you, they have their reward. — Matthew 6:5

Sermon Reflection

1. What were some key points that stood out to you from the sermon on this section?

2. Why did this stand out to you?

Discussion Questions

1. In v. 5–8, what are the issues Jesus is addressing? Why are these important to address?
2. Do you think Jesus is giving us a rigid script for our prayers in v.9–15? Why or why not?
3. Why do think Jesus says “*Whenever* you fast...” rather than “*If* you fast...”? Have you ever tried fasting? Why or why not?
4. Would you consider the idea of doing a fast together as a group? (For a helpful guide, see the “Prayer” resource on the Stonegate Website).
5. After working through these questions, what are some of the thoughts, concerns, or emotions you are processing? Would you be willing to share them with your group this week?

Main Reading

Date:

Matthew 6:1–4 CSB

“Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. Otherwise, you have no reward with your Father in heaven. **2** So whenever you give to the poor, don’t sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be applauded by people. Truly I tell you, they have their reward. **3** But when you give to the poor, don’t let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, **4** so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Matthew 6:19–24 CSB

“Don’t store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal. **20** But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves don’t break in and steal. **21** For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

22 “The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light. **23** But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. So if the light within you is darkness, how deep is that darkness!

24 “No one can serve two masters, since either he will hate one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

Optional Extra Reading

- Luke 12:13–34
- Deuteronomy 8:11–18
- 1 Timothy 6:6–19
- 2 Corinthians 6:3–10
- 2 Corinthians 8:1–15
- 2 Corinthians 9:1–15
- Acts 20:32–35

Scripture Memory

Your choice. Select one or two verses you will commit to memory this week.

Sermon Reflection

1. What were some key points that stood out to you from the sermon on this section?

2. Why did this stand out to you?

Discussion Questions

- 1. In Matthew 6:1–4, how does Jesus describe the way we should give? Why does He describe it this way?**
- 2. Have you ever been tempted to “practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them”? If so, how so?**
- 3. In Matthew 6:19–24, Jesus says, “where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” What does He mean by this? What does this look like practically?**
- 4. Read Luke 12:13–34. What does Jesus tell us to do in order to be generous, remove anxiety, and store up treasures in heaven (Hint: read v.33)?**
- 5. After working through these questions, what are some of the thoughts, concerns, or emotions you are processing? Would you be willing to share them with your group this week?**

Main Reading

Date:

Matthew 6:25–34 CSB

“Therefore I tell you: Don’t worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Isn’t life more than food and the body more than clothing? **26** Consider the birds of the sky: They don’t sow or reap or gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren’t you worth more than they? **27** Can any of you add one moment to his life span by worrying? **28** And why do you worry about clothes? Observe how the wildflowers of the field grow: They don’t labor or spin thread. **29** Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was adorned like one of these. **30** If that’s how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and thrown into the furnace tomorrow, won’t he do much more for you—you of little faith?

31 So don’t worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ **32** For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. **33** But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you. **34** Therefore don’t worry about tomorrow, because tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Matthew 7:7–12 CSB

“Ask, and it will be given to you. Seek, and you will find. Knock, and the door will be opened to you. **8** For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. **9** Who among you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? **10** Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? **11** If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him. **12** Therefore, whatever you want others to do for you, do also the same for them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

Optional Extra Reading

- Psalm 13
- Psalm 42
- Jeremiah 29:10–14
- Luke 12:22–34
- Philippians 4:4–8
- 1 John 4:9–19
- 1 Peter 5:6–8

Scripture Memory

Your choice. Select one or two verses you will commit to memory this week.

Sermon Reflection

1. What were some key points that stood out to you from the sermon on this section?
2. Why did this stand out to you?

Discussion Questions

- 1. As you read these passages, do you resonate with the feeling of anxiety? How so? Are there certain things in life that produce anxiety in you?**
- 2. What does Jesus say in v.25–34 that are intended to comfort us when we struggle with anxiety? Do you find this comforting? Why or why not?**
- 3. When you read Matthew 7:7–12, what are some main points Jesus is making? How can this help us in seasons of stress, anxiety, and worry?**
- 4. What can we do for each other to help prevent anxiety and serve each other in seasons of anxiety? Would anyone like to share any present concerns?**
- 5. After working through these questions, what are some of the thoughts, concerns, or emotions you are processing? Would you be willing to share them with your group this week?**

Main Reading

Date:

Matthew 7:13–23 CSB

13 “Enter through the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the road broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who go through it. 14 How narrow is the gate and difficult the road that leads to life, and few find it.

15 “Be on your guard against false prophets who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravaging wolves. 16 You’ll recognize them by their fruit. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes or figs from thistles? 17 In the same way, every good tree produces good fruit, but a bad tree produces bad fruit. 18 A good tree can’t produce bad fruit; neither can a bad tree produce good fruit. 19 Every tree that doesn’t produce good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 So you’ll recognize them by their fruit.

21 “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. 22 On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, didn’t we prophesy in your name, drive out demons in your name, and do many miracles in your name?’ 23 Then I will announce to them, ‘I never knew you. **Depart from me, you lawbreakers!**’”

Optional Extra Reading

- John 3:1–21
- Romans 6
- Romans 7
- Romans 8

Scripture Memory

“Enter through the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the road broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who go through it. How narrow is the gate and difficult the road that leads to life, and few find it. — Matthew 7:13–14

Sermon Reflection

1. What were some key points that stood out to you from the sermon on this section?

2. Why did this stand out to you?

Discussion Questions

- 1. Why do you think Jesus described the road to life as “narrow” and “difficult” while the road to destruction is “broad” and “wide”?**
- 2. How do v.15–20 fit within this passage? How does the condition of our hearts correspond to walking on the “narrow” road of life and entering “the kingdom of heaven”?**
- 3. What are your first reactions to v.21–23? Do you think Jesus is teaching we must be saved by our good works (Hint: think about how v.15–20 relate to this passage)?**
- 4. Read John 11:17–27. Have you experienced this reality of Jesus personally? If so, how so? If so, why not?**
- 5. After working through these questions, what are some of the thoughts, concerns, or emotions you are processing? Would you be willing to share them with your group this week?**

Resources

A. General Sermon on the Mount

- *Jesus' Sermon on the Mount and His Confrontation with the World* by DA Carson
- *The Sermon on the Mount* by Scot McKnight
- *The Sermon on the Mount* by Charles Quarles.
- *The Sermon on the Mount* by James Montgomery Boice
- *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing* by Jonathan Pennington

B. Following Jesus as our Great Teacher

- *Sitting at the Feet of Rabbi Jesus* by Lois Tverberg
- *The Life You've Always Wanted* by Jon Ortberg

C. Christian Character and Attitude

- *Humility* by CJ Mahaney
- *Pursuing Peace* by Robert Jones
- *In His Image* by Jen Wilken

D. Loving the World & Our Neighbor

- *Gospel Fluency* by Jeff Vanderstelt
- *The Unbelievable Gospel* by Jonathan Dodson
- *Why the Nations Rage* by Jonathan Leeman

E. Jesus and the Gospel

- *Gospel* by J.D. Greear
- *The Cross of Christ* by John Stott
- *The Explicit Gospel* by Matt Chandler

F. Addressing Sin and Temptation

- *Uprooting Anger* by Robert Jones
- *Finally Free* by Heath Lambert
- *Counterfeit gods* by Timothy Keller

G. Marriage & Divorce

- *The Meaning of Marriage* by Timothy & Kathy Keller
- *Love and War* by John and Staci Elderedge
- *Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage* by Jim Newheiser
- *Same-Sex Marriage* by Sean McDowell and John Stonestreet

H. Truth, Judgment, and Culture

- *The Reason for God* by Timothy Keller
- *Urban Apologetics* by Christopher Brooks

I. Money, Stewardship, and Generosity

- *Money, Possessions, and Eternity* by Randy Alcorn
- *Generous Justice* by Timothy Keller
- *Total Money Makeover* by Dave Ramsey

SERMON ON THE MOUNT DISCUSSION GUIDE

J. Prayer, Fasting, and Spiritual Disciplines

- *Praying the Bible* by Donald Whitney
- *Live a Praying Life* by Jennifer Kennedy Dean
- *A Hunger for God* by John Piper
- *Spiritual Disciplines of the Christian Life* by Donald Whitney
- *The Life You've Always Wanted* by John Ortberg

K. Anxiety and Depression

- *Spurgeon's Sorrows* by Zack Eswine
- *When the Darkness will not Lift* by John Piper
- *Victory over the Darkness* by Neil Anderson
- *Bondage Breaker* by Neil Anderson

L. The Narrow Way of Discipleship

- *The Pursuit of Holiness* by Jerry Bridges
- *Free to Live* by John Eldredge