

ELEVATE: Lessons from the Sermon on the Mount

A WORD FROM PASTOR DANIEL:

Dear Church Family,

In Malcolm Gladwell's book, Outliers: The Story of Success, he states that in order to develop world class proficiency in any field, you need 10,000 hours of deliberate practice. I wonder if anything about that rule applies to our spiritual lives? How many hours do we spend reading and studying our Bibles? How many hours do we spend in prayerful adoration, confession, petition and intercession? Can we develop proficiency in this area of our lives AND do we even know how?

If you've been watching the first two seasons of the Chosen, toward the end of season 2, we've seen Jesus preparing to deliver the Sermon on the Mount. The show did a great job of portraying the weight and significance that He felt preparing for this most significant public address. The Sermon on the Mount is the longest recorded single address by our Savior in the Bible during His earthly ministry. The lessons and principles in this address are truly the first great spiritual reformation in history. It truly elevated the spiritual life and stands as a historic "reset" of all things spiritual and moral for all time. When Jesus said, "You have heard it said..., but I say unto you...", it was a call to revolution and revival. It also set up this pivotal shift. He specifically dealt with what it means to be blessed, what His followers were called to do and be, new standards of practical Godly living, a radical new ethic of how we love one another and our enemies, how to pray and fast, what it means to live in true peace and what it really means to be focused on the Kingdom of God. Jesus attacked old ways, confronted hypocrisy, called out prejudice and bias for personal gain and raised the bar of expectation far beyond what any human is capable of alone. The solution to the Christian life then is far more simple than adherence to a set of laws or regulations. It's not based on family line or religious position, but is entirely grounded in personal relationship with Christ Jesus as Lord of all. In one sermon, the Savior of the world elevated the standard of righteousness. He called His followers to something more. Something greater. He elevated the standard for them and for us. Will you follow Him?

VISION STATEMENT

At Easthaven Baptist Church, we guide people on the journey to follow Jesus.

STRATEGY STATEMENT

We GATHER to Encounter Jesus

We GROW in our Relationship with God and others

We GO to live and serve in the power of the Holy Spirit

THE 5% LIFE

1% - 15 minutes/day – Personal Bible Study and Prayer

1% - 1 ½ hours/week – Gather together for Worship

1% - 1 ½ hours/week – Grow together in Small Groups

1% - 1 ½ hours/week – Serve others in the church/community

1% - 1 week/year – Go on mission (trips, camps, etc.)

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY GUIDE:

Study the week leading up to the sermon to prepare. There are five daily sessions each week.

- Pray that God would speak to you through His word.
- Read the passage for the week.
- Follow the study guide and answer the questions.
- Write down your thoughts and questions.
- Pray: Adore God, Confess your sins, Thank God, Pray for your requests and for others

Take notes on the sermon – write down observations, questions, and action points to apply to your life.

Process through the sermon and study guide together with your small group using the suggested small group questions. Feel free to add your own questions and observations as you study.

OTHER IDEAS:

Consider using this study guide as a family devotion time. Talk through the daily sessions and/or use the weekly small group questions with your family.

Encourage others in your family to join you in studying God's Word.

Consider memorizing one verse from the Theme passage each week. We have suggested one or two verses each week, but choose your own if you would like. Check in with others in your small group to see how your memorization is going.

If you are not currently in a small group and would like to join one, fill out a Response Card and drop it in the black buckets on the weekend.

ABOUT THIS STUDY GUIDE:

For this series, we have moved our study guides to a digital format to be economical, flexible, and portable.

Use the guide online or print it out for yourself. If you don't have access to the online resource or a printer, please contact the church office.

This guide is written by several different people. They have different styles and emphasis. We hope you appreciate the unique contribution of each author and section.

Thanks for taking this journey together with us. We pray that as you study Jesus Words your lives will be transformed.

WEEK 1

Sermon: April 30-May 1

Matthew 5:1-7

Suggested Memory Verse: (Matthew 5:3) *Blessed are the poor in spirit, because the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.*

Week 1, Day 1 (April 25)

Read Matthew 5:1-12.

Verses 3-12 are commonly known as The Beatitudes which we will be studying for the next two weeks. What does the word “beatitude” mean? If you are unsure, check the dictionary definition.

Describe the setting of the Sermon on the Mount (verses 1 and 2). Where is Jesus? Who is gathered around Him? Why do you think this is significant?

Jesus is described as sitting down, which was the common posture for a teacher in that culture while his pupils would stand to hear his words.

Reread Matthew 5:3.

What does “poor in spirit” mean? Isaiah 66:2b and Psalm 37:11 can help you answer this question.

According to verse 3, the poor in spirit are blessed. What does Jesus say is theirs?

What does the second part of verse 3 mean? (See Matthew 25:34)

The very first beatitude Jesus offers is for the poor in spirit. Why do you think Jesus teaches on this first?

Do you show yourself to be poor in spirit before God, acknowledging your internal poverty without Him? Take some time today to humble yourself before God and thank Him for His great mercies.

Week 1, Day 2 (April 26)

Read Matthew 5:4.

In verse 4, Jesus teaches that those who mourn are blessed. This statement seems like a contradiction as mourning and blessing do not usually appear together. How would you describe a person who is in mourning?

Read 2 Corinthians 7:10. Describe the two different types of grief Paul addresses in this verse. Can you give a real-life example of each of these types of grief?

Read Luke 18:11-13. What is the tax collector mourning over in verse 13? What type of grief would you call this?

How might the tax collector's sorrow relate to the mourning that leads to blessing in Matthew 5:4?

According to Matthew 5:4, what will happen to those who mourn?

Based on this verse, who will comfort those who mourn?

Describe a time when you received comfort from God.

Yesterday, we read Jesus's words on being poor in spirit. How does yesterday's teaching lead into today's verse?

List some of the things that cause you godly grief. Take some time to mourn before your Heavenly Father and seek His comfort and restoration.

Week 1, Day 3 (April 27)

Read Matthew 5:5.

Our modern culture often views meekness or gentleness as a sign of weakness, but Jesus indicates it is a strength and something strive for. Describe someone you know who exhibits gentleness or meekness. How does society treat this person?

Read Matthew 11:29 and 2 Corinthians 10:1. How is Jesus described in these verses?

How do these two verses affect your understanding of gentleness/meekness?

Is gentleness or meekness a character trait you appreciate in others?

How are the gentle blessed according to Matthew 5:5?

What does it mean to “inherit the earth”? Matthew 19:28-29 can help you answer this question.

In what ways do you need to seek to be gentler? Take some time today to pray for God to help you in these areas.

Week 1, Day 4 (April 28)

Read Matthew 5:6.

What do you think of when someone says the words “hunger” or “thirst”?

Recall a time when you were particularly hungry and/or thirsty. Describe how you felt. Were you able to think about anything else until this need was satisfied?

Why do you think Jesus used the words “hunger” and “thirst” to describe a believer’s desire for righteousness?

How are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness blessed?

What does it mean to be filled?

Read Isaiah 55:1-2, John 4:14, and John 6:51. How will those who hunger and thirst for righteousness be filled? How do these truths give you hope?

In what ways do you hunger and thirst for righteousness? Are there things that you currently hunger or thirst after that are interfering with your relationship with Jesus? Take some time today to confess anything that is holding you back from a deeper relationship with Christ.

Week 1, Day 5 (April 29)

Read Matthew 5:7.

In your own words, what is mercy?

How are the merciful blessed according to this verse?

Read Matthew 18:21-35. Why does the master feel the first slave should have had mercy on his fellow slave?

How does the parable of the unforgiving slave relate to Matthew 5:7?

How has God shown you mercy in your life? How have you paid that mercy forward?

What ways can you show mercy to those around you?

Is there a situation where you have withheld mercy or mercy has been withheld from you? Seek Jesus for help in reconciling this situation.

SERMON NOTES: (APRIL 30-MAY 1)

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

WEEK 1 – The Beatitudes (Part 1)

Read Matthew 5:1-7.

1. Discuss the setting of the Sermon on the Mount, the most famous and well-known sermon taught by Jesus. Where is Jesus sitting? Who is His audience? Where are His listeners?
2. What does “beatitudes” mean? Why is this section of the Sermon on the Mount titled “the beatitudes”?
3. What are the 5 conditions that lead to blessings discussed in verses 3-7? Discuss what each of these mean. Why do you think Jesus presents them in the order He does?
4. What are the blessings promised for each of these behaviors? Why do you think these blessings are attributed to these specific behaviors? Do you see any correlation?
5. Hunger and thirst are physical reactions telling your body you need something in order to survive. What do you hunger and thirst for? Have you ever felt this intense desire for righteousness?

WEEK 2

Sermon: May 7-8

Matthew 5:8-12

Suggested Memory Verse: (Matthew 5:8)

Blessed are the pure in heart, because they will see God.

Week 2, Day 1 (May 2)

Read Matthew 5:8.

What does it mean to be “pure in heart”?

Read 1 John 3:3. Who is pure according to this verse? How are we to become pure?

How will the pure in heart be blessed?

Take a moment to imagine what it will be like to see God.

There are many people who appear to be pure on the outside. However, Jesus specifically offers a blessing to those who are pure on the inside. Read Hebrews 4:12. What can judge the ideas and thoughts of the heart?

Based on Hebrews 4:12, spend some time contemplating the Word of God. Does it reveal anything in you that needs to be purified?

Week 2, Day 2 (May 3)

Read Matthew 5:9.

Describe a person that you consider a peacemaker. What are that person's attributes?

Read Colossians 1:20. How was peace made according to this verse? Who is the peacemaker?

Based Colossians 1:20, what do we need in order to become peacemakers?

How are peacemakers blessed according to Matthew 5:9?

What does it mean to be called a son of God?

Read Romans 8:14. Who are God's sons according to this verse? What might this say about Matthew 5:9?

What are some areas where you need to be more of a peacemaker? Ask God to help you make peace in these areas.

Week 2, Day 3 (May 4)

Read Matthew 5:10.

Who are blessed according to this verse?

What is the reason for the persecution? Do you see any persecution for righteousness around us right now?

What is the reward for those who are persecuted for righteousness?

Take a moment to imagine what the kingdom of heaven will be like.

Read Acts 5:41. Peter and the apostles have been arrested by the high priest and hauled before the Sanhedrin for teaching about Jesus. How did Peter and the apostles respond to their persecution?

What does that tell you about the Spirit of God in the apostles?

How do you think you would react if faced with similar persecution from the authorities?

Have you faced persecution, large or small, for your faith? Share your story.

Week 2, Day 4 (May 5)

Read Matthew 5:10-12.

Compare verse 10 and verse 11.

In verse 10, why is the believer persecuted?

In verse 11, why is the believer persecuted?

What is the difference between these?

The previous beatitudes each had one verse of description. Why do you think Jesus spends more time on this topic?

What are the multiple blessings of persecution according to Matthew 5:10-12?

In whose company is the persecuted believer according to verse 12?

There are persecuted believers all over the world right now and their reward will be great in heaven. Spend some time in prayer for the persecuted church throughout the world.

Week 2, Day 5 (May 6)

Read Matthew 5:3-12.

List all of the beatitudes Jesus describes in these verses. Circle the one that is the biggest challenge for you. Work on this one during the week. In what ways can you practice this in your daily life?

SERMON NOTES: (MAY 7-8)

Small Group Questions

WEEK 2 – The Beatitudes (Part 2)

Read Matthew 5:8-12.

1. What does it mean to be “pure in heart”?
2. Describe a person that you consider a peacemaker. What are that person’s attributes?
3. Read Colossians 1:20. What does this tell you about being a peacemaker?
4. Reread Matthew 5:10-12. Who are blessed according to these verses? What are the multiple blessings listed in these verses?
5. In verses 10-11, Jesus lists two different reasons for persecution. What are they? Why do you think Jesus lists these two reasons separately?
6. The previous beatitudes each had one verse, but there are 3 verses on persecution in this section. Why do you think Jesus spends more time on persecution?
7. Review all of the beatitudes in verses 3-12. Which do you struggle the most with?
8. Look back at the blessings offered in verses 3-12. Which of these blessings inspire you the most? Why?

WEEK 3

Sermon: May 14-15

Matthew 5:13-16

Suggested Memory Verse: (Matthew 5:16)

In the same way, let your light shine before men, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

Week 3, Day 1 (May 9)

Read Matthew 5:13.

What does Jesus call believers in this verse?

What are some everyday purposes of salt that you can think of?

What do you think Jesus means in calling believers salt?

Read Exodus 30:35-36. How is salt described in these verses?

What is the purpose of the salt according to Exodus 30:35-36?

Read 2 Kings 2:19-22. What does Elisha ask for when the men tell him the water in their city is bad?

What does Elisha do with the salt? What is the result?

Based on these two passages, what are some of the purposes of salt that Jesus may be thinking of in calling believers salt in Matthew 5:13?

Week 3, Day 2 (May 10)

Read Matthew 5:13.

What do you do with salt that has gone bad?

What does Jesus mean when He talks about salt losing its taste? What could make someone who professes to be a believer lose his or her taste?

Read Judges 9:45. Why do you think Abimelech sowed the destroyed city with salt?

Read Deuteronomy 29:23. What is the result of soil that has salt in it?

Yesterday, we looked at passages in the Old Testament that showed salt to represent holiness and act as purifying agent, but today's passages show a different use for salt. How is salt used in these passages?

How does this usage of salt affect your reading of Matthew 5:13?

What is Jesus saying about believers as salt?

Do you feel that your spiritual life is salty or has it lost some of its flavor? Spend some time in prayer about your flavor before the Lord.

Week 3, Day 3 (May 11)

Read Matthew 5:14-16.

What does Jesus call the believer in verse 14?

Read John 8:12 and 9:5. What does Jesus say about Himself in these verses?

How long is Jesus the light of the world according to John 9:5?

Based on these two verses in John, where does the believer's light come from in order to be the light of the world as stated in Matthew 5:14?

Why do you think Jesus references a city on a hill when talking about believers being the light of the world?

Why would a city be put on a hill?

Why can't a city on a hill be hidden?

Why would a city on a hill try to hide?

How is a believer like a city on the hill that cannot be hidden?

Week 3, Day 4 (May 12)

Read Matthew 5:14-16.

What would be the purpose of lighting a lamp and putting it under a basket?

Why do you think Jesus used this somewhat absurd image of lighting a lamp and then immediately hiding it? What is He saying about a believer's faith?

Are there times when you are tempted to hide your light?

What is the purpose of putting a lamp on a lampstand?

Verse 15 indicates the light on the lampstand is for all who are in the house. Who are those in your "house" or sphere of influence that need your light?

The world around us is very dark. We hear constantly about public shootings, riots, war, economic concerns, rising prices, immoral laws . . . the list goes on and on. We are the light of the world amidst constant chaos. Whose path do you need to shine your light on today? Spend some time in prayer for that person to see the light of Jesus shining in you.

Week 3, Day 5 (May 13)

Read Matthew 5:14-16.

What is the purpose of shining your light according to verse 16?

What are some ways you can shine your light before those around you?

We spent the previous two weeks of study on the beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12). How might these attributes help you show your light and good works to those around you?

SERMON NOTES: (MAY 14-15)

Small Group Questions

WEEK 3 – Call to Be Salt and Light

Read Matthew 5:13-16.

1. List some everyday purposes of salt. Why do you think Jesus tells believers they are salt?
2. Read Exodus 30:35-36 and 2 Kings 2:19-22. What is the purpose of salt in these verses? What insight does this give you into why Jesus called believers the “salt of the earth”?
3. Read Judges 9:45 and Deuteronomy 29:23. How is salt used in these verses? Compare/contrast how salt is used in these verses and those in question #2. What insight does this give you into Matthew 5:13?
4. Read John 8:12 and 9:5. What does Jesus say about Himself in these verses?
5. If Jesus is the light of the world, why does He say believers are the light of the world in Matthew 5:14?
6. Why does Jesus bring up a city on a hill that cannot be hidden? How does this relate to believers being the light of the world?
7. What is the purpose of light? Why do you think Jesus uses the image of lighting a lamp and then immediately hiding it? What is He saying about a believer’s faith?
8. Based on Matthew 5:16, what is the purpose of the light? What are some ways you can let your light shine before others so they may come to know Jesus?

WEEK 4

Sermon: May 21-22

Matthew 5:17-20

Suggested Memory Verse: (Matthew 5:17)

*Don't assume that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets.
I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.*

Week 4, Day 1 (May 16)

Read Matthew 5:17-18.

The Jews of Jesus's day referred to the Holy Scriptures as 'the Law and the Prophets.' 'The Law' is the books written by Moses that laid down God's rules for the Hebrews which includes the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17). 'The Prophets' refers to the many Scriptures of prophesy. Together, 'the Law and the Prophets' generally refers to what we now call the Old Testament.

Many of the religious leaders of the day accused Jesus of trying to destroy or distort the Law and the Prophets. What does Jesus say about this claim?

What did Jesus come to do, based on Matthew 5:17?

Read Luke 13:10-17. The leader of the synagogue, speaking for a group of religious leaders, claims that Jesus broke the commandment to not work on the Sabbath by healing the disabled woman. How does Jesus respond to the accusation?

What does Jesus say his accusers would do on the Sabbath day even though they think healing a disabled woman is wrong?

According to Luke 13:17, how do these adversaries feel after Jesus responds to them? Why do you think they felt this way?

The synagogue leader and his cronies believe Jesus healing people on the Sabbath is an example of Jesus trying to destroy the Law. How might this actually be an example of Jesus fulfilling the Law as he claimed in Matthew 5:17?

Week 4, Day 2 (May 17)

Read Matthew 5:17-18.

In verse 18, what does Jesus say will happen before the smallest letter or one stroke of a letter will pass away from the law?

What does verse 18 say about Jesus's respect for the law?

Read Matthew 22:35-40. Again, the religious leaders are trying to trick Jesus. Notice they have a law expert ask a question on Jewish law. Why do you think they ask this question of Jesus?

How does Jesus respond to the law expert's question?

Matthew does not record how the religious leaders respond to Jesus's answer. How do you think the religious leaders reacted?

Read Romans 13:8-10. What does Paul say is the fulfillment of the Law? How is Jesus this fulfillment?

Think back to the story of Jesus healing the disabled woman from yesterday's study. Based on today's readings, why was Jesus's healing of the woman on the Sabbath lawful?

Week 4, Day 3 (May 18)

Read Matthew 5:18-20.

In verse 18, Jesus indicates that not the tiniest part of a letter written in the law will pass away until all things are accomplished. What does He mean by this?

How do verses 19 and 20 reinforce what Jesus says in verse 18?

Who will be called the least in the kingdom of heaven according to verse 19?

Why do you think Jesus adds the distinction of not just breaking a command, but teaching others to do so?

Read Luke 17:1-2. How does Jesus feel about those whose sins cause others to stumble in their faith?

Are there any sins in your life that could be causing others to stumble? Take some time with God today to weed out those areas of your life.

Week 4, Day 4 (May 19)

Read Matthew 5:19.

Who will be called great in the kingdom of heaven according to Matthew 5:19?

Why do you think Jesus adds the distinction of not only practicing, but teaching these commands to be called great in the kingdom? Look back at Matthew 5:16 from last week's lesson to help you answer this.

Read James 1:22-25. What does James say about hearing and doing?

What does James say about the man who is a hearer only? What happens when that man turns away from the mirror?

How is the man who studies and does good works different from the man who only hears and does not do?

Is there a person in your life to whom you need to be teaching the commands of God? Spend some time in prayer for this person.

Week 4, Day 5 (May 20)

Read Matthew 5:17-20.

How did Jesus fulfill the Law and the Prophets? Read Hebrews 2:10 and 5:9 to help you answer this question.

What sort of righteousness is required to enter the kingdom of heaven under the law according to verse 20?

Read Isaiah 64:6. What is our righteousness worth according to this verse?

Read Philippians 3:4-9. What does Paul say about his righteousness according to the law as practiced by the Pharisees?

How did Paul's view of righteousness change after he became a follower of Christ?

What righteousness does Paul depend on now, based on verse 9?

Spend some time in prayer thanking Jesus for His righteousness that He passes on to us through faith in Him.

Sermon Notes: (May 21,22)

Small Group Questions

WEEK 4 - Living the Commandments in Righteousness

Read Matthew 5:17-20.

1. What does Jesus mean when He talks about the Law and the Prophets?
2. What does Jesus mean when He says He did not come to destroy the Law or the Prophets, but to fulfill? Why do some of the religious leaders of the day believe He came to destroy the Law and the Prophets?
3. What does Jesus mean when He says, “not the smallest letter or one stroke of a letter will pass from the law until all things are accomplished”? What does this say about how Jesus views the Law?
4. Read Romans 13:8-10. What does Paul say is the fulfillment of the Law? How is Jesus this fulfillment?
5. According to Matthew 5:19, who will be called least in the kingdom of heaven? Why?
6. Read Luke 17:1-2. How does Jesus feel about those whose sins cause others to stumble in their faith? What insight does this give you into Matthew 5:19?
7. Who does Jesus say will be called great in the kingdom of heaven in Matthew 5:19? Why do you think Jesus adds the distinction of not only practicing, but teaching these commands to be called great in the kingdom?

8. What sort of righteousness is required to enter the kingdom of heaven under the law according to Matthew 5:20? Now read Isaiah 64:6. What is our righteousness worth according to this verse?

9. If our righteousness is filthy rags, how then are we to enter the kingdom of heaven?

WEEK 5

Sermon: May 28-29

Matthew 5:21-26

Suggested Memory Verse: (Matthew 5:23-24)

So if you are offering your gift on the altar, and there you remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

Week 5, Day 1 (May 23)

Read Matthew 5:21.

What was the context of when God spoke these words in the “long ago” Jesus references? (Ref. Ex 20:13 and Dt 5:17)

The word for “murder” used in Exodus and Deuteronomy is the word for premeditated, intentional taking of a life outside of the legal system. What can cause a person to be predisposed to contemplate murder?

What does Jesus promise to the murderer?

What is the purpose behind this commandment, and why do you think Jesus is so firm on judgement for murder?

Who is going to pass judgement over anyone who murders?

Think: Jesus says “you have heard”, indicating that the people have heard the Old Testament words recited and taught to them, but they have not studied it for themselves. In the following verses it seems that they may have missed His heart in what He wants from those who follow Him. What passages or stories have you heard, but never fully studied for yourself? Have you fully studied, meditated, and sought His heart, or have you been content with the surface?

Week 5, Day 2 (May 24)

Read Mathew 5:22.

Jesus says “But I say to you” after discussing the old law of Moses. Is Jesus altering the old law referenced in verse 21, or giving any contradiction? Why or why not?

What kind of anger is being discussed in this verse?

What does Jesus say about holding on to anger?

“Raca” is a word used to express anger and contempt towards a person, and no longer see them as a brother; they indicate a contempt of the person. What are some ways we see that in the world around us today? How have we been guilty of this?

Who is the person who calls “raca” to his brother answerable to?

What are we in danger of when we hold onto our anger?

Think: The Old Testament words in verse 21 outlaw murder, but those that studied the law left it open that anything and everything up to murder was allowable. In doing to so, they missed the true message of Jesus. This passage speaks to not only following the letter of the law, but instead analyzing your heart. What are some areas you can change your heart? Can you have a relationship with Jesus and still hold onto anger, even if you never murder?

Week 5, Day 3 (May 25)

Read Matthew 5:23.

What gift is being referred to as being left at the altar? What gift do you leave?

What does it mean that Jesus expects his followers to realize a strained relationship with a brother when approaching his altar?

Does this verse allow for routine or rote following of the law, or just “going through the motions”? Why or why not?

Read Romans 12:18. What is the relationship between these verses?

Who does Jesus call us to reconcile with?

Think: Jesus says to reconcile with those who have something against you. He doesn't say what or why - the reason there is dispute is not relevant at this moment. We are called to live peaceably, and not with anger. If someone has anger against you, do whatever is in your power to reconcile. What are some relationships you can seek to reconcile? Are you considering your heart when you offer your gifts to Jesus?

Week 5, Day 4 (May 26)

Read Matthew 5:24.

Why would Jesus tell them to leave the gift in front of the altar, instead of offering it?

What does this verse say about how Jesus prioritizes our relationships with each other?

Read Ephesians 4:26-27. What similarities do you see between that passage and Matthew 5:24?

How can you reconcile with your brothers?

How much value is placed on reconciliation of your anger? Why?

Think: This verse really speaks to the priorities and heart of Jesus. Following the letter of the law in offering your gifts is not enough; follow the heart of Jesus and pursue Him to the point where you live at peace, and don't harbor anger or contempt for your brother, and you reconcile any that is held towards you. Do you have any priorities that need to be adjusted? Is there any anger you need to address in your heart?

Week 5, Day 5 (May 27)

Ready Matthew 5:25-26.

What shift does Jesus make in verse 26 that is different from the 3 verses preceding it?

How does Jesus want matters with your adversary settled?

Read 1 Corinthians 6:7. How does this apply to today's verse?

When does Jesus want matters resolved? How does that relate back to verse 23?

What are the consequences of holding onto anger and refusing resolution?

What judge and prison do you think verse 26 refers to?

What is the relationship between verse 22 and verse 26?

Think: Jesus often spoke in figures of speech and parables, yet through today's verses is very clear in regards to the consequences of unresolved conflict. Verse 26 references how long we will be imprisoned - when do you think that debt is paid? How?

SERMON NOTES: (MAY 28-29)

Small Group Questions

WEEK 5 – The Hazards of Hanging onto Anger

Read Matthew 5:21-26

1. What are some ways to examine your heart when you present yourself and your gifts before the altar?
2. What does Matthew 5:24 say about how Jesus prioritizes our relationships with each other?
3. What are the consequences of holding onto anger and refusing resolution, both to your own heart as well as the people around you?
4. Are there times when *both* anger and humility are able to coexist in your heart?
5. Jesus speaks often in parables. What does it say about the value of this message, that he speaks clearly? Does it place more importance on this than other parables?

WEEK 6

Sermon: June 4-5

Matthew 5:27-32

Suggested Memory Verse: (Matthew 5:28)

But I tell you, everyone who looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Week 6, Day 1 (May 30)

Read Matthew 5:27-28.

To whom is Jesus speaking? (See Matthew 4:25-5:2)

You have heard it said, “You shall not commit adultery” ... comes from the ten commandments (Exodus 20:14). Why do you think Jesus references this passage to THIS crowd?

What was the punishment for the crime of adultery in that culture? (Leviticus 20:10)

This passage is part of a consistent pattern of Jesus’ teaching, which is that attitudes and thoughts can be sinful on the same level as a capital offense.

What do you think the response of this crowd, including the disciples, would have been to this teaching?

What is YOUR heart response to this teaching?

Jesus is leaving no room for legalism or technicalities here. How does He seem to be defining sin?

Week 6, Day 2 (May 31)

Read Matthew 5:29-30.

Jesus repeats this admonition in Matthew 18:8-9, although He adds the need to dispense with a foot as well! This graphic, less than family-friendly message raises the question of how literally we should take Jesus' commands.

Does Jesus actually mean to say we should pluck out our eyes or sever an appendage if we are prone to sin?

Hyperbole: noun Rhetoric. Obvious and intentional exaggeration. An extravagant statement or figure of speech not intended to be taken literally.

How do we know if He is using hyperbole?

Could Jesus' purpose in this verse be to magnify in the Hearer's minds the heinous nature of sin?

Jesus warns of hell because of course He doesn't want people to go there. Nothing is worth missing Heaven for... not even an eye or a hand. Nothing. We never need to self-mutilate as a punishment for our sin, rather, we should prepare to make exceptional sacrifices to follow Him.

Read Matthew 16:24. How can this passage relate to Matthew 5:29, 30?

Read 1 Peter 1:15.

What are we called to? How does this calling relate to Matthew 5:29, 30?

Does today's study encourage and inspire you, or does it bring despair?

How can you determine to become inspired by this passage, if you are not?

Week 6, Day 3 (June 1)

Read Matthew 5:31-32.

God seems to allow the practice of divorce for Israel in Deuteronomy 24:1-4 if a man decided he found something “indecent” about his wife. Later in Matthew, Jesus said that God only allowed this through Moses, because Israel’s men were stubborn. “Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.” (Matthew 19:8).

How do you think the leaders of the day responded to Matthew 19:8?

What do you think the Rabbis who were hearing Jesus’ teaching thought about divorce prior to this sermon?

What might they have thought about divorce AFTER hearing this teaching?

Regarding Moses’ decree of God’s law, in actuality a certificate of divorce provided protection for a woman. It gave her legal standing to remarry if she could.

Do you find anything compassionate about vs. 31, 32? Do you find anything difficult?

What is the exception listed in verse 32? See Matthew 19:9. What does that exception include? Exclude?

Week 6, Day 4 (June 2)

Read Matthew 5:27- 32.

Clearly there is some content in this passage that can be uncomfortable for some of us to discuss, particularly lust and divorce... No one likes talking about these issues.

Should we talk about them? Why or why not?

If Jesus says we can sin in our thoughts, actions, and even in our relationships, what does that tell us about where we need righteousness?

Lust is just as worthy of judgment as adultery, Jesus says. Where does this sin originate?

At the heart of divorce is a broken covenant and a broken relationship. At various times in their history, Israel lived in a place of a broken covenant and a broken relationship with God. Did God take that seriously? Did He show compassion even in the midst of the broken covenant?

Do you think God takes divorce seriously?

Does He have compassion and grace for those living with the hurt of the broken relationship divorce creates?

How should we then respond?

Week 6, Day 5 (June 3)

Read Matthew 5:27- 32.

What is interesting about this passage is the fact that Jesus is overturning cultural assumptions. He is saying, essentially, that lust is adultery of the heart. Anger is murder of the heart. This would have been unsettling to His audience.

Do you find this passage unsettling? Why or why not?

At first glance, some may have wondered at His commands regarding cutting off your hand, or plucking out your eye.

How can we know if this is meant to be a literal, physical command?

This passage ultimately tells us that being led by our urges rather than keeping our desires under control is a path to destruction. In that light, is it worth losing an eye rather than letting it drag you into sin?

Read Matthew 5:20. What does the kingdom of God require?

Can we earn this?

How should we view sin... even “minor” sins, in light of what God requires?

SERMON NOTES: JUNE 4-5

Small Group Questions

WEEK 6 – Serious Standards of Sin

Read Matthew 5:27-32.

1. One of the most obvious things about this passage is how seriously Jesus takes this message. Do *you* have an appropriate view of sin?
2. What does 5:27-32 say about the seriousness of our sin, and how we should respond to even our "minor" sins?
3. Through this passage, Jesus continually comes back to the tendency of the people to be legalistic and follow the law only to the letter and miss the heart of God in doing so. Are there any areas in your life or beliefs that could be in danger of doing this?
4. Matthew 19:8 refers to the hardness of the people's hearts, and is referred to again in 5:31-32 in regards to divorce. What are precautions we can take to keep our hearts from becoming hard?
5. The passage of Matthew 27-32 talks about a very unsettling and uncomfortable topic, and speaks to a world that has moved away from the plan and intentions of God. In spite of this, however, it is a passage full of compassion. What are some ways Jesus is showing compassion here?

WEEK 7

Sermon: June 11-12

Matthew 5:33-37

Suggested Memory Verse: (Matthew 5:37a)

But let your word 'yes' be 'yes' and your 'no' be 'no'.

Week 7, Day 1 (June 6)

Read Matthew 5:33.

What is the context of the “long ago” referenced in today's verse?
(Ref Nu 30:2, Dt 23:23)

According to today's verse, what vows were the people to fulfill?

How might scribes and Pharisees have twisted this law, in teaching people to follow the law to the letter?

Do you think this old teaching pursues the heart of God? Why or why not?

What oaths might be made in the name of the Lord or to the Lord?

Why is this valuable?

Think: The Israelite nation knew the name of the Lord was sacred, and not to be taken in vain. But as their scholars had done before, what loopholes might they have exploited? Do you think the intent behind the sacred name of Jesus was for any words not spoken in His name to be meaningless, and not binding?

Week 7, Day 2 (June 7)

Read Matthew 5:34.

How does today's verse contrast to verse 33?

What do you think Jesus is teaching in telling us to swear no oath?

Why does Jesus not want the Israelites to swear an oath by heaven?

Jesus refers to "swearing" often. In the context of these verses, what is swearing?

Is Jesus teaching that they should not enter into any binding commitment? Why or why not?

Think: We are told to swear no oath. Why should we place more value in some words we speak than others? What are some areas you will casually make a promise, but not consider it binding? Are there areas your honesty could improve in that regard?

Week 7, Day 3 (June 8)

Read Matthew 5:35.

Reference back to verse 34. What are we to do with these things Jesus lists?

What things are the people not to swear by?

Why does Jesus say to not swear by the earth or Jerusalem?

Do you think Jesus is putting more or less value in earth and Jerusalem in this verse?

What are some ways you might make an oath that you don't uphold?

Think: If we are not to swear by heaven, the earth, or Jerusalem because they are of God, what do you think that indicates about the value of your word? As we are created in the image of God and we are his children, our words carry His weight behind them. How can you best use your words for Him and proclaim honesty and value?

Week 7, Day 4 (June 9)

Read Matthew 5:36.

What does this verse have to say about our power over our bodies?

What does this mean in regards to an oath we have no control or power over?

Why is our power over ourselves relevant to making an oath?

As a creation of God, who are we really swearing by when we do this?

Why do people feel the need to swear by something at all?

Think: Jesus gives a very inclusive list of things to not swear by. Why? What are the alternatives to swearing by the Lord, heaven, the earth, Jerusalem, or ourselves? Do we have any right to swear by the things under God's dominion?

Week 7, Day 5 (June 10)

Read Matthew 5:37.

What are we to do in place of swearing an oath?

Where does Jesus say anything more than a “yes” or “no” comes from?

What does this verse indicate about the value of our yes and no?

What does this say about the seriousness of our daily speech and honesty in our words?

Why is the value and honesty of our words important?

How does this relate to our heart status?

Think: Today's verse speaks to the magnitude of our words, even a simple yes or no. It is easy to tell “white lies” or “stretch the truth”. How might your life be different if every word was spoken with the power and honesty of an oath? How can you make this a normal part of your life and your speech?

SERMON NOTES: (JUNE 11-12)

Small Group Questions

WEEK 7 – Absolute Honesty

Read Matthew 5:33-37

This passage speaks to the sacred name of Jesus - what are some ways to preserve and honor His name and give it the respect it deserves?

Jesus' message to the people places great value on the power of our word and our honesty. What are some ways in our everyday life we can place more value on our words?

"White lies" are common in our world and our culture. Are these acceptable? Do you think white lies are dishonest?

Jesus calls for absolute honesty. Why is this difficult for us? What are some things that are easy to let slide?

Are there other areas of scripture where we see examples of honesty in action, whether it's easy or hard? How has that affected the course of history in those cases?

Do we have any right to swear by the things under God's dominion? Why or why not? Do we have this authority over ourselves or creation?

WEEK 8

Sermon: June 18-19

Matthew 5:33-37

Suggested Memory Verse: (Matthew 5:44)

But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.

Week 8, Day 1 (June 13)

Read Matthew 5:38-39.

Read Romans 12:19.

How does this passage shed light on Matthew 5:38-39?

A slap on the cheek in Jesus' day was more of a social insult than a physical injury... much like we might say something insulting. Can you think of a way we may actually "slap the cheek" today?

What is your honest response to when someone hurts or injures you, whether physical or emotional?

Read 1 Corinthians 6:7.

How can we humble ourselves for the sake of the kingdom when it comes to being wronged?

Week 8, Day 2 (June 14)

Read Matthew 5:40-42.

Compare and contrast “endure” vs “retaliate”.

Can personal attacks provide believers with the opportunity to demonstrate God’s strength and goodness?

Why or why not?

Is it possible for God to demonstrate His goodness even in the face of those with the most evil intent?

Choosing to give is a powerful act because you have chosen to do so. In this choice, what are you demonstrating about where you place your trust?

Read Matthew 10:16.

How can we fulfill both Jesus’ admonition in Matthew 5:42 and the directive in Matthew 10:16?

Week 8, Day 3 (June 15)

Read Matthew 5:43-45.

Now read Leviticus 19:18. The Jews would have been very familiar with this passage. How does Matthew 5:43, 44 raise the bar regarding the Leviticus passage?

What would the Jewish leaders have thought of Jesus' teaching as it went above and beyond the familiar?

Have you ever prayed for someone you did not like? What did this do for the person you prayed for? What did praying for them do for *you*?

Does seeing God's pattern of non-discriminatory care for both the righteous and the unrighteous help you follow His pattern?

How do you practice showing no discrimination in loving others?

As we grow in our ability to not fight back, but love back, should we base this on their character or on ours (by God's grace)?

Week 8, Day 4 (June 16)

Read Matthew 5:46-47.

Why do you think Jesus uses tax collectors as his example in verse 46?

How is a pearl formed? If there is no sand or “irritant” in the oyster what will happen? How can God use people in our lives in the same way as an oyster forming a pearl?

Re-read verse 47. How could this look for us today?

Who are *your* people?

What can we do in the church setting to pay attention to Jesus’ admonition in verse 47?

What can you do to set yourself apart from unbelievers in your everyday life?

Week 8, Day 5 (June 17)

Read Matthew 5:38-48.

Is it possible for human beings to live up to the standard of the final verse in this passage?

Why do you think this final verse was included as a part of Jesus' teaching?

Is it possible for us to live up to *any* of the standards Jesus sets forth in these verses?
(Read Romans 3:10)

What does this force us to realize about attaining to the kingdom of heaven?
(Ephesians 2:8,9)

Is it always easy to love the people you love? How about loving people you don't necessarily love?

Who did Jesus love? (John 3:16)

So then, as we strive to emulate Jesus, who should we love?

How can we be perfect, as we are called to in verse 48, in love?

Read 1 John 4:18. How does this passage relate to the love we are called to in Matthew 5:38-48?

SERMON NOTES: (JUNE 18-19)

Small Group Questions

WEEK 8 – Extreme Love

Read Matthew 5:38-48.

1. It is sadly common to be hurt, either emotionally or physically, by the people around us. For most of us, love is not our first reaction. How can we condition ourselves for love to be instinctive?
2. How are some ways God uses people and situations for good where the intent is evil? We know He works all things together, but what does that look like?
3. How does prayer affect your heart condition in regards to people who have wronged you?
4. How is a pearl formed? If there is no sand or “irritant” in the oyster what will happen? How can God use people in our lives in the same way as an oyster forming a pearl?
5. Can love be reckless? What might that look like?
6. Scripture is full of one story after another of extreme love, beyond human explanation. What are some examples?
7. What is the ultimate source of love?

WEEK 9

Sermon: June 25-26

Matthew 6:1-4

Suggested Memory Verse: (Matthew 6:3-4)

But when you give to the poor, don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Week 9, Day 1 (June 20)

The main thrust of this section of Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount is that the disciple's piety, giving, and prayer are not to be like that of the hypocrites who did their righteous deeds to be seen and admired by others. The disciple's prayer is also to be different from that of the Gentiles. Although disciples are to let their lives shine as light (5:14), they are not to do so in order to be seen and admired by others. The reward of a public display of deeds is the public acclamation of others. The reward of righteous piety is the reward from the Father in heaven. Jesus is reacting to the public performance of piety practiced by many of the Jewish leaders of His time.

What is piety?

Why is it that we are prone to put on a public display for others rather than a private display for the Lord?

Why, do you think, covert generosity is celebrated by the Lord?

Reflect on how you pray and give. Are you generous privately? Do you seek the adoration on people when you are generous in prayer and giving?

Pray – for humility, and wisdom. Ask that God find no ulterior motives in your prayer life.

Week 9, Day 2 (June 21)

Matthew appropriately connects piety (The quality of being religious or reverent) with the practice of giving. Specifically the word used here is the term “Almsgiving”. Almsgiving is the practice of giving money to the poor and was a common act of religion among the Jews. Jesus had a great concern for the poor (Matthew 5:3). The problem of Jewish giving as an act to be seen by men was of considerable concern to Jesus. Jesus uses very strong language to condemn this practice as an outward display. The English word “Hypocrite” comes from the word that originally referred to one who performs in front of others, literally ‘an actor’. Jesus sees the acts of the Scribes and Pharisees as insincere and not beneficial to the kingdom. When Jesus uses the expression “do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing”, He is using a Hebrew idiom indicating the discretion needed while doing kind and generous deeds.

In what ways do you or your family practice ‘almsgiving’?

Why were the Pharisees and Scribes prone to outward displays of public giving?

Is this a trait common in our society today?

What are some personal areas that you can see as hypocritical in your life?

How can you be defined by generosity done in secret?

Pray – for humility. Ask God to remove any hypocrisy in your life. Seek the Lord in ways that you can be generous.

Week 9, Day 3 (June 22)

In Matthew 5 Jesus presents moral issues, but at the start of chapter 6 Jesus starts to examine certain issues that require faith in the life of a believer. Jesus assumes that His followers will live righteously and in doing so they will meet the needs of the poor and needy. True spiritual worship is contrasted with traditional hypocritical religion as historically practiced by the Jewish leadership. Jesus moves us from outward conformity to the law to inward conviction of the Spirit. True worship is the result from the desire to serve God, not people, since pleasing God is far more important than pleasing man. From these verses we know that we are to serve the Lord because we love Him, and in loving Him, we also love His people.

What are the motives of a God honoring disciple?

How does loving God result in serving others?

What does living a life in humble obedience to the Lord look like for you in this season of your life?

Pray – For a God pleasing heart. Ask for a desire to seek Him first.

Week 9, Day 4 (June 23)

The phrase “Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing” (vs. 3) means that our giving of finances to the work of the Lord, while balanced to the needs of our family, also should be done so freely that our right hands cannot keep up with our left. We literally empty our pockets as fast as we can as an act of sacrificial faith that the Lord will provide as we give. At times giving is to be spontaneous. Notice that this passage does not state that it is wrong to give systematically, use church envelopes, or receive tax-deductible receipts. One thing it does teach is that one should not give by those means only. There are examples of giving done through the institution of the church, for example, the planned giving to provide for, build, and repair the temple. But the type of giving described here is giving that happens through the moving of the Spirit for the needs of God’s people, and the benefit of the Kingdom.

When was the last time you felt led to give sacrificially and spontaneously?

What practices can you implement in your life to be defined by generosity?

Are you withholding from God what He is asking you to give?

Pray – to be a generous saint. For opportunities to put to the test God’s faithfulness through your giving and His provision.

Week 9, Day 5 (June 24)

The key to successful generosity is found in the phrase “your Father who sees in secret will repay you” (vs. 4). Giving by faith, out of a cheerful heart, depends on our total confidence in the fact that God does indeed see us and know our needs. God sees in secret that which no person may observe and rewards His own. The woman who gave her two mites gave not to be seen by people but simply by God. The reason why she could give 100% of her income was because she had learned that God was able to supply 100% of her needs (Luke 21:1-4, Mark 12:41-44). It took faith on her part to give while trusting God wholly. We are likewise to give not to receive rewards, but so that our love might be expressed to God who shall reward us. Our giving to the work of Christ spreads the message of the Gospel throughout the world. Public giving isn't to be condemned, but we should guard against giving out of the wrong attitude or with the wrong motive.

Are you challenged to give generously, like the widow with her mites?

Are you a cheerful giver? Do you demonstrate generosity for your family to imitate?

How can you give financially for the sake of the Kingdom and the spread of the Gospel?

Pray – That God would check your heart and make sure your generosity is from pure motives. Pray for opportunities to give and then boldness to not only give but share the Gospel with the recipient.

SERMON NOTES: (JUNE 25-26)

Small Group Questions

WEEK 9 – Covert Generosity

Read Matthew 6:1-4

Why is it that we are prone to put on a public display for others rather than a private display for the Lord?

Why, do you think, covert generosity is celebrated by the Lord?

In what ways do you or your family practice ‘almsgiving’?
Why were the Pharisees and Scribes prone to outward displays of public giving?

Is this a trait common in our society today?

What are the motives of a God honoring disciple?

What does living a life in humble obedience to the Lord look like for you in this season of your life?

Where have you seen others demonstrate generosity?

WEEK 10

Sermon: July 2-3

Matthew 6:5-8

Suggested Memory Verse: (Matthew 5:44)

But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.

Week 10, Day 1 (June 27)

Public prayer can be a challenge, especially to the one leading the prayer. There is a danger of it being said to impress others rather than being addressed to God. Jesus takes exception to the prayers of both the Jews and the Gentiles. Apparently some people prayed in public only to be seen by others. Jesus again observes that those who pray to be seen by others have their human reward in the acclamation of others, but those who pray unobtrusively will be seen by God. In regard to the Gentiles, the empty phrases (babbling, rambling, repeating) are apparently attempts to manipulate God into fulfilling some desire of the one offering the prayer by repeating words in a hope to magically sway God. Prayer should be an important aspect of a Christian's life.

How is your prayer life?

When praying publicly, do you find yourself praying to be heard by people? How do you guard against such prayers? What would a change in your prayer life consist of moving forward?

Pray – For an intimate prayer life. Pray that you would guard against inappropriate prayer.

Week 10, Day 2 (June 28)

Praying, like giving, is to be done for the Lord and not for people. Many professing Christians, if they were honest, would have to admit that they pray to be heard by men. Jesus said that they hypocrites of His day “love to stand and pray in the synagogues” (vs. 5). Both a time and place for prayer were customary in the ancient Jewish synagogue (Mark 11:25). Therefore, Jesus is not condemning the practice of public prayer, but the misuse of it. There are numerous examples, commandments, and restrictions regarding prayer and even examples of prayer meetings (Acts 12:12, 1 Timothy 2:8). Therefore, the idea of an inner room or prayer closet is symbolic as to help our public prayer life by removing distractions that would hinder our prayer life and allows the complete pouring out of our hearts before God.

What does your prayer closet look like?

How does our private prayer life set the example for our public prayers?

Can you be a better person of prayer privately? How so?
What areas can you practice a prayer life publicly? (Family, small groups, friends, neighbors)

Pray – For an intimate prayer life. That you could practice private prayer better so that when the moment arises, you can publicly pray with the right words and motives.

Week 10, Day 3 (June 29)

The principal Jesus is giving us in this portion of the Sermon on the Mount is that we should not make a show of prayer in such a way that it calls unnecessary attention to ourselves. Again, it is God who sees in secret who rewards us openly. Here the intimate father-child relationship between God and believers is clearly expressed. It is the experience of private devotional prayer that ultimately prepares us to pray effectively in public. Therefore it is often that one cannot pray publicly because they do not have a vibrant private prayer life. We can use outlines and guides to help our private prayer life. Maybe try something like this:

- Delight in God's Law day and night (Psalm 1)
- Quietly wait to hear from the Lord (Psalm 62)
- Practice regular alone time with the Lord (Daniel 6:10)
- Find a time for regular private prayer (Mark 6:46)

When is the best time for you to habitually pray privately?

What does private prayer look like for you currently? What do you want it to look like in the near future?

Pray – For an intimate prayer life. Ask God for a desire to have a better prayer life.

Week 10, Day 4 (June 30)

Jesus warns us against “meaningless repetition”. The Greek here literally means babbling or speaking without thinking. Such praying was a characteristic of heathen worship of the time. A good example would be the incoherent babbling of the false prophets of Baal who confronted Elijah on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18:26-29). Jesus condemns the use of empty repetition as an attempt to overcome the will of God by wearing Him out. It is not the length of prayer, but the strength of prayer that prevails with God. Jesus Himself prayed all night prior to His crucifixion but on most other occasions prayed very briefly in public. Jesus isn’t condemning lengthy prayers, although there may not be anything particular spiritual about them, He is merely emphasizing that prayer must be a sincere expression of the heart, not a mere accumulation of verbiage. God is not impressed by words (He created them!), but He is moved by the genuine outcry of a humble heart.

Have you found yourself in a habit of repetitive prayer?

If not length and babbling, what could be a caution for our prayer lives in this passage?

What lengths can you go to in order to be motivated by your heart and not your words?

Pray – For proper words to pray. Seek the Lord to change your heart and not allow you to fall into a simple habit of prayer.

Week 10, Day 5 (July 1)

Verse 8 can be a confusing and challenging verse. Jesus says “your Father knows what you need, before you ask Him”. If this is the case, then why should we pray at all? Prayer is not a human’s attempt to change the will of God. God’s method of changing our will is to bring it into conformity to His will, and He chooses to do it by the spiritual discipline of prayer. More than changing THINGS, prayer changes PEOPLE. Prayer is not conquering God’s answers, but laying hold to His willingness to help. Prayer, in the life of a true believer, is an act of total confidence and assurance in the plan and purpose of God. It is not an act of panic or desperation; it is an act of faith and trust.

Do you pray as an act of faith and trust that God is listening?

How does vibrant prayer change the person of prayer?

When you pray, do you pray with the knowledge of the holiness and faithfulness of God?

Pray – To see God for who He really is. Pray that God change your heart as your change your prayer life.

SERMON NOTES: (JULY 2-3)

Small Group Questions

WEEK 10 – Private Prayer Life

Read Matthew 6:5-8

When praying publicly, do you find yourself praying to be heard by people? How do you guard against such prayers?

What would a change in your prayer life consist of moving forward?

When is the best time for you to habitually pray privately?

Have you found yourself in a habit of repetitive prayer?

What lengths can you go to in order to be motivated by your heart and not your words?

Do you pray as an act of faith and trust that God is listening?

How does vibrant prayer change the person of prayer?

WEEK 11

Sermon: July 9-10

Matthew 6:9-15

Suggested Memory Verse: (Matthew 6:9-14)

If you have never memorized the Lord's prayer, consider doing it this week. It is most familiar in the King James Version, but choose the version you use.

Week 11, Day 1 (July 4)

This set of Scripture is what is commonly referred to as the Lord's Prayer. Some may commonly call it the Model Prayer. It is indeed intended to be a model pray from our Lord, so either title is appropriate. From what we know about Judaism in Jesus day, His model prayer is shaped by the prayer tradition and pattern of the synagogue. The primary concern is a redemptive theme, and not a concern for earthly matters. The opening of the prayer is a petition; "On earth as it is in heaven". What this means is that disciples are to pray that: 1) God's name would be holy....on earth as it is in heaven. 2) God's kingdom would come...on earth as it is in heaven. 3) God's will be done...on earth as it is in heaven. This is not a prayer that God's kingdom would come sometime in the near future, but a prayer that God's kingdom would be presently on earth just as it is in heaven. This would happen by God's name being holy and His will being done.

Slowly read through the Lord's Prayer taking a moment to pray each section. If a section is particularly challenging or confusing, pray for the Holy Spirits illumination.

How do you long to see God's kingdom come? What are you doing to actively make the Lord's name holy and His will be done?

How would praying the Lord's prayer intentionally and daily change your prayer life and perspective on life?

Pray – The Lord’s Prayer. Pray specifically the Holiness of God, His Kingdom come, and His Will Be done.

Week 11, Day 2 (July 5)

The second petition of the Lord's Prayer, "give us this day our daily bread", seems simple on the surface. What does Jesus mean by the request of daily bread? This isn't simply a request for daily food provision. The term daily in the Greek literally means "Indispensable". The concept of daily provision of bread fits perfectly with the Old Testament example of the daily provision of manna to the Israelites while they were wandering in the wilderness (Exodus 16:14-15). Similarly, the Believer in Jesus, takes a journey through the strange land that isn't our home, and God promises to provide for us our daily needs. We seek the Lords provision, spiritual and physical, for our daily needs. Remember, manna could only be used on the day it was given. Nothing remained for the next day. We cannot and should not rely on yesterday's supply to meet today's needs, so this prayer is the prayer of one who faithfully trusts God every day to feast on fresh provision.

Slowly read through the Lord's Prayer taking a moment to pray each section. If a section is particularly challenging or confusing, pray for the Holy Spirits illumination.

What does asking for "daily bread" mean for you, in this season of life?

How is the request for daily bread a faith builder?

When asking for daily bread, can you explain the significance of the request?

Week 11, Day 3 (July 6)

There may be no word that brings both relief and trepidation as the word FORGIVENESS. The phrase “God forgive us our debts” (vs. 12) refers to sins, which are our moral and spiritual debts to God’s righteousness and holiness. This is a request of the believer to seek forgiveness of sin. To be saved, you don’t have to necessarily name all of your sins, but you must confess that you are a sinner in desperate need of a Savior, that is Jesus Christ, our Lord. To continue to grow spiritually, the believer acknowledges their sins in particular as they recognize their sins impact on their relationship with God. Notice, that we seek forgiveness “as we have been forgiven”, not because we are forgiven. Our expression of forgiveness does not gain salvation for us. We are to seek forgiveness in the same manner as we forgive others. Forgiveness is the evidence of a regenerate heart.

Slowly read through the Model/Lord’s Prayer taking a moment to pray each section. If a section is particularly challenging or confusing, pray for the Holy Spirit’s illumination.

When you reflect on forgiveness of sins, what emotions does that conjure up for you? Is forgiveness something that causes fear in you? Is forgiveness freeing for you? Why and how?

Are you daily seeking forgiveness for your sins? Do you recognize your need for forgiveness?

Pray and be free: Forgiveness is available and God is offering it freely to those who seek.

Week 11, Day 4 (July 7)

“Do not lead us into temptation” (vs. 13) is a plea for the providential help of God in our daily confrontation with the temptation of sin. James 1:13-14 makes it clear that God does not tempt us to do evil, but rather that we are tempted by our own lusts and desires. However, God does test us in order to give us the opportunity to make our faith perfect and complete (James 1:1-5). Tests and trials are an opportunity to prove our faithfulness to Him. In both Hebrew and Greek, the word “tempt” is also the word for “test”. This is the same term used for Abraham asked by God to offer up his son, Isaac (Gen. 22:1). From God’s point of view, this was a test, to allow Abraham to obey and to be strengthened in the process. From Satan’s viewpoint, it was a temptation to cause Abraham to fail. It is never God’s desire to lead us into evil. Therefore, if we resist the devil, we are promised that he will flee from us (James 4:7).

Slowly read through the Model/Lord’s Prayer taking a moment to pray each section. If a section is particularly challenging or confusing, pray for the Holy Spirits illumination.

Are there areas of life in which temptation is holding sway over your life? Have you actively sought God’s assistance in facing temptation?

Do you see the testing of God as a way to perfect your faith? How has this worked for you to make you a better believer?

Pray – For God’s guidance in your temptation, and that you would withstand the goals of Satan for the Glory of God.

Week 11, Day 5 (July 8)

The Lord's Prayer closes with a doxology of praise. "For Thine is the Kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen." (Vs. 13). This could be a liturgical interpretation of 1 Chronicles 29:11 and is a fitting climactic affirmation of faith. In the first 3 petitions of the Lord's Prayer our soul rises directly to God. In the following 3 petitions, we face the hinderances of the world and discover the solutions to these difficulties. We as Children of God then humbly depend on divine mercy. We seek forgiveness and then we recognize that all that comes from God; all that happens in the world; and everything that we long to see accomplished is for the glory of God, the furthering of His Kingdom through His purposes, and in His power. To that we must say, AMEN.

Slowly read through the Model/Lord's Prayer taking a moment to pray each section. If a section is particularly challenging or confusing, pray for the Holy Spirits illumination.

How has daily reflection on the Lord's Prayer challenged you? How has it grown your faith? What benefit do you see in praying the Model Prayer daily?

How does the Lord's Prayer challenge believers in their faith journey? What is the evangelistic mandate found in the Lord's Prayer?

SERMON NOTES: (JULY 9-10)

Small Group Questions

WEEK 11 – Outline for Prayer

Read Matthew 6:9-15

How do you long to see God’s kingdom come? What are you doing to actively make the Lord’s name holy and His will be done?

How would praying the Lord’s/Model prayer intentionally and daily change your prayer life and perspective on life?

What does asking for “daily bread” mean for you, in this season of life?

When you reflect on forgiveness of sins, what emotions does that conjure up for you? Is forgiveness something that causes fear in you? Is forgiveness freeing for you? Why and how?

Are there areas of life in which temptation is holding sway over your life? Have you actively sought God’s assistance in facing temptation?

How does the Lord’s Prayer challenge believers in their faith journey? What is the evangelistic mandate found in the Lord’s Prayer?

WEEK 12

Sermon: July 16-17

Matthew 6:16-18

Suggested Memory Verse: (Matthew 6:16)

Whenever you fast, don't be sad-faced like the hypocrites. For they make their faces unattractive so their fasting is obvious to people.

Week 12, Day 1 (July 11)

Jesus contrasts the disciple's righteous behavior with that of the Jewish leaders whose fasting had become a performance of righteousness. Fasting is an interesting subject. This is a Jewish practice that is more traditional than biblical in the sense that fasting was not commanded but practiced. We read of people in Scripture fasting, but nowhere does it seem that it is commanded. Rabbinic tradition informs us that the stricter Jews fasted regularly on special days. Jesus does not use the term, "When you fast". So though not commanded, it is expected.

Have you ever practiced fasting? What was the purpose? What did your experience do to your faith?

What does fasting mean for you? What are some things you would withhold to spiritually fast?

Pray – For a proper heart and guidance in the spiritual discipline of fasting.

Week 12, Day 2 (July 12)

From what we learn in the Gospels, Jesus is neither proposing that disciples fast nor condemning the practice of fasting. He simply speaks out against hypocritical fasting, which has as its goal to be noticed. Some fasting Jews disfigured their faces, didn't keep their hair tidy, or smeared ashes on their faces, so that others would know that they were fasting. This was the practice that Jesus speaks out against. Anointing the head with oil and washing the face, as Jesus commands, has the opposite effect of the facial disfiguration or the smeared ashes.

What would be the modern day equivalence to the hypocritical fasters of Jesus' day?

How can you fast in a way that is a private act of spiritual worship and self-denial between you and the Lord?

Pray – Seek the Lord's will on fasting in your context. If led to fast, seek humility in the practice and a guarding of a haughty heart.

Week 12, Day 3 (July 13)

Though fasting is less in the forefront today, the principles Jesus gives are still relevant. If a follower of Jesus chooses to fast as an occasion of deep spiritual mourning or commitment, this is admirable and to be commended. However, it should be a private matter and not become a spectacle. Demanding others fast or indirectly communicating that fasting is a sign of one's spiritual superiority over another is an abuse of the practice.

How is the spiritual discipline of fasting also an opportunity to practice true humility?

As fasting is a rare practice, what are some areas that should move the believer's soul to obedience in fasting?

Pray – That God give you spiritual, cultural, relational, or personal reasons to practice fasting.

Week 12, Day 4 (July 14)

“Whenever you fast” (vs 16) is a reference both to fasting in connection to the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:29-30) but more-so to the voluntary fast of believers. Jesus assumed that disciples would fast. Fasting was emphasized for deep contrition and spiritual communion, especially emphasized as an effective means of dealing with temptation (Isaiah 58:6). These aren’t biblical commandments, but spiritual suggestions for piety, contrition, mourning, and faith formation. When practicing fasting we should make sure that the condition of our heart is proper, and that we are not putting on a display for others to see. Jesus makes it known that it is for the Lord who sees you in secret, knows your heart, and knows your motives (Psalm 139).

Read the Scriptural examples of spiritual fasting.

If fasting is a suggested way to grow spiritually, how could you implement it into your spiritual disciplines?

Pray – Pray for obedience and perseverance in fasting.

Week 12, Day 5 (July 15)

This passage is not to be taken as a command against fasting but rather against the misuse of the spiritual exercise of fasting. We can see a contrast between outward acts of worship and inward attitudes of devotion. Outward worship stresses giving while inward worship stresses surrender. Outward worship manifests pride, inward worship manifests trust. Outward worship is characterized by fasting; inward worship is characterized by confronting self and sin. The obvious contrasts are that a proper attitude toward fasting will arise from a proper inward attitude towards sacrifice. Prayer will resolve all worry, and fasting will resolve selfishness.

What is a modern contrast in outward acts of worship and inward attitudes of devotion?

In what ways are you prone to worship to be seen by others?
How can you combat that with inward acts of worship?

Pray – Pray for a heart geared towards inward worship. Pray for private opportunities to worship and be led to spiritual disciplines that are God honoring.

SERMON NOTES: (JULY 16-17)

Small Group Questions

WEEK 12 – Practice of Fasting

Read Matthew 6:16-18

Have you ever practiced fasting? What was the purpose? What did your experience do to your faith?

How can you fast in a way that is a private act of spiritual worship and self-denial between you and the Lord?

How is the spiritual discipline of fasting also an opportunity to practice true humility?

If fasting is a suggested way to grow spiritually, how could you implement it into your spiritual disciplines?

In what ways are you prone to worship to be seen by others?
How can you combat that with inward acts of worship?

WEEK 13

Sermon: July 23-24

Matthew 6:19-24

Suggested Memory Verse: (Matthew 6:11)

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Week 13, Day 1 (July 18)

Read Matthew 6:19-21.

WHAT does it mean to treasure something?

WHAT causes a person to “store up”? Does the act of treasuring start from the heart? Is it an emotional activity? Or does it start from the mind? Is it a mental activity? Or is it somehow both?

HOW do we know when we’ve crossed the line, from being practical and getting the stuff we need to live on this earth to storing up treasures on earth for ourselves?

Does this passage mean we can’t ever have anything fun or beautiful? No boats? No trips to Hobby Lobby or Home Depot or Target? No Amazon “buy with one click”?

What do you have a tendency to store up for yourself on this earth?

Week 13, Day 2 (July 19)

Read Job 1 and list the calamities which befall Job:

List a few of the calamities that have befallen people in our country in the last few years, regarding loss of personal possessions:

Read Matthew 6:19 and list the downside of having earthly treasures:

Describe some possessions in your own life that recently have worn out, rusted out, rotted, been chewed up by mice, or been stolen:

Describe a time when you bought something brand new and within the first few days of having it you saw it get destroyed or broken:

Things wear out or get stolen. Does that mean we never buy anything new? HOW and WHEN should Matthew 6:19 affect what we accumulate on this earth?

Week 13, Day 3 (July 20)

Read Matthew 6:20.

WHAT are “treasures in heaven”?

Read Matthew 25:31-46.

WHO will receive the inheritance of the kingdom? (List the specific details describing these people.)

HOW do these words of Jesus clarify what he means by “treasures in heaven”?

WHY isn't there a third group? The people who stored up stuff for themselves *and* did all of the things Jesus is expecting of those who will receive the kingdom?

WHAT is the personal cost on earth if you want to store up treasures in heaven?

Are you a sheep or a goat? Explain your answer.

Week 13, Day 4 (July 21)

Read Matthew 6:24. The word “devoted” means to keep oneself directly opposite to someone else, to hold to that person firmly, to pay heed to him.

Read John 13:1-17.

WHAT does it mean to be devoted to Jesus our Lord, according to this passage?

WHY does this lifestyle Jesus has modeled make it impossible for his devoted follower also to serve money as his lord?

This passage talks about the betrayer, Judas, who was also the keeper of the disciples’ finances. Read John 12:1-6 and describe the master to whom Judas was devoted:

Read Matthew 6:24 again. HOW are love and devotion connected, and is it possible to have one without the other?

If you want to be a “sheep” instead of a “goat,” as you read in yesterday’s Scripture, taking up the towel in service to others, WHAT practices can you develop, in order to grow your love and devotion to Christ?

Take time to consider your internet, TV, reading, and social media habits. Are these causing you to love and be devoted to earthly treasures or to heavenly treasures? How could you restructure these habits to promote love and devotion to Christ?

Week 13, Day 5 (July 22)

Read Matthew 6:22-23. The word for “bad” in this passage often refers to the Hebrew expression “evil eye,” which means stingy.

Read Deuteronomy 15:7-11. From this passage, list all of the commands given, divided into “do’s” and “don’t’s”:

DO

DON’T

Read Deuteronomy 15:9 again. In verse 9, the literal Hebrew translation of “show ill will” is “and your eye is hostile.” In the context of the passage, WHAT does it mean to have a hostile eye toward the needy brother?

According to Deuteronomy 15:9, WHAT causes a person to be guilty of sin?

How does Deuteronomy 15:9 compare to Matthew 6:24?

Now go back and read Deuteronomy 15:7-11 again. List everything you learn about the heart, as it pertains to stinginess or generosity:

Read Matthew 6:19-23. HOW does this passage compare to Deuteronomy 15:7-11?

Read John 10:10. Nitán, our ministry partner in India, says, “The abundant life is a generous life.” Consider this idea in comparison to Matthew 6:19-24 and Deuteronomy 15:7-11. How should the abundance we have in Christ affect our heart and eyes?

Does generosity always solve heart issues regarding money?
There are a lot of super generous people in this world who aren't serving God as their master.

Read Deuteronomy 15:7-11 again. This passage uses the imagery of being either openhanded or tightfisted. Which one describes you? When you see a brother in need, what kind of eye do you cast on him?

SERMON NOTES: (JULY 23-24)

Small Group Questions

WEEK 13 – An Eternal Investment Plan

Read Matthew 6:19-24.

DAY ONE:

What does Jesus' command about storing up treasures?

Where does storing up stuff begin? Heart? Mind? Both?

Is Jesus telling us we can't ever have anything fun or beautiful?

How do we know when getting practical necessities crosses over into accumulating treasures on earth?

What is the Lord saying to you about obeying these verses?

DAY TWO:

Recall the calamities that befell Job.

Describe ways that you've seen people's possessions ruined, destroyed, or stolen in our country and even in your own personal life.

How and when should Matthew 6:19 affect our accumulation of earthly possessions?

DAY THREE:

Someday Jesus will separate people into "sheep" or "goats." How does this passage about inheriting the kingdom define "treasures in heaven"?

What is the cost on earth if you want to receive the inheritance of the kingdom?

DAY FOUR:

What does it mean to be devoted to a master?

Recall Jesus' time around the Passover table with his disciples. Describe Judas' devotion.

Jesus washed his disciples' feet. What, then, does it mean to be devoted to Jesus as Lord?

How are devotion and love connected, and can you have one without the other?

What practical actions can you take, to grow your love and devotion to Christ?

Discuss your internet, TV, reading, and social media habits. How can these be structured to promote love and devotion to Christ instead of to money? What about advertisements?

DAY FIVE:

Recall together Deuteronomy 15:7-11.

What were the "do's" and "don't's" when it comes to the needy brother?

What does it mean to cast a "hostile eye" toward the needy brother?

How does this compare to what Jesus says about the eyes in Matthew 6:22-23?

How does generosity fit into Jesus' words about money in Matthew 6:19-24?

Where do you need to grow, in becoming a generous person who is openhanded toward the brother in need?

WEEK 14

Sermon: July 30-31

Matthew 6:25-34

Suggested Memory Verse: (Matthew 6:33)

But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you.

Week 14, Day 1 (July 25)

Read the following passages and write down a sentence about WHAT happens in each:

Genesis 1:2,11

2 Kings 4:1-7

Deuteronomy 29:5

Matthew 14:13-21

John 2:6-9

WHAT do all of the above stories have in common?

In asking Google, “Where does matter come from?” this is the first scientific answer that comes up:

In the first moments after the Big Bang, the universe was extremely hot and dense. As the universe cooled, conditions became just right to give rise to the building blocks of matter—the quarks and electrons of which we are all made.

From a biblical perspective, keeping in mind the above Scripture references, WHERE does matter come from?

Read Matthew 6:25-34. WHY is it essential to understand where matter is produced, in order to fully understand these words of Jesus?

What have you believed about the production of matter? Science or Scripture? What has influenced your beliefs?

Week 14, Day 2 (July 26)

Read the following Scriptures and write a sentence summarizing each:

Genesis 1:20-21

Genesis 1:26-27

Read Matthew 6:26. WHAT question does Jesus raise?

Read Psalm 8.

WHAT does David say is man's relationship to birds?

HOW does Psalm 8:6-8 compare to Genesis 1:26-27?

WHAT rhetorical question does David raise in this song, in verse 4?

Read Psalm 8:1-3 again. WHY do you think David's question rises after these verses?

David sings about man's value, in relation to the Genesis story. HOW does that compare to the messages about man's value in our culture?

Read Matthew 6:26, 28-30. How do these compare to God's view of his creation in Genesis?

WHY do you think Jesus needs to ask his Jewish listeners, who are well versed in the creation account in Genesis, if they aren't more valuable than birds and flowers?

WHAT does an understanding of one's value have to do with the question of worrying about food and clothing?

Week 14, Day 3 (July 27)

Describe worry and what it looks like in your life:

Read Matthew 6:27. WHAT question does Jesus raise?

If you're struggling to get food on the table and don't know how you'll get new shoes for the feet of your growing children, HOW does worry help?

In WHAT ways would you say worry is detrimental to a person's life?

If worry doesn't add anything of benefit to your life and, in fact, is detrimental, WHAT does add to your life when you are in need of necessities? WHAT is actually beneficial and helps solve the problem when you need food and clothes? (Use ONLY Matthew 6:25-34 to answer this question.)

What worry do you have in your life today? How can you take the biblical counsel you just listed above?

Week 14, Day 4 (July 28)

Read Matthew 6:30.

To WHOM is Jesus speaking? (See Matthew 5:1-2)

WHAT does he call them, in verse 30?

HOW is worry a question of faith?

When we're worrying about something, how do we justify our thinking as okay?

HOW is faith connected to what we believe about our own value in God's eyes?

Read Matthew 6:32.

HOW does Jesus refer to God in this verse?

WHAT does the Father know?

Read John 8:44.

Describe the other "father" to whom Jesus refers:

Read Psalm 23:1.

Do we lack food and clothes? (Don't breeze past this as an easy question.)

HOW does the father of lies try to create an illusion of lack in your life?

WHAT will the father of lies say about God?

WHAT will the father of lies say to you about your value?

HOW does the image of a shepherd compare with the image of caring for flowers that Jesus gives in Matthew 6?

Jesus calls his disciples people of little faith. What would a person of faith look like, when it comes to the need for food and clothes?

Is worry about necessities your norm? Are you a person of great faith or little faith? Explain your answer.

Write Psalm 95:3-7 on a notecard, put it in a visible place in your home or at work, and meditate on this verse the rest of the day.

(Recommended further reading: *Life without Lack*, by Dallas Willard)

Week 14, Day 5 (July 29)

Read Romans 12:2.

WHAT two commands are in this verse?

Compare Romans 12:2 to Matthew 6:32.

WHAT is the pattern of this world, when it comes to food and clothes? (WHAT do the pagans do?)

WHAT is a “pagan”?

Read Matthew 6:25.

WHAT command does Jesus give?

HOW does Jesus want the lives of his followers to be transformed?

WHAT question does Jesus raise in this verse?

In raising this question, is Jesus appealing to the mind or to the emotions?

HOW would a pagan answer Jesus’ question about life?

HOW would a follower of Jesus answer this question? (Use Scripture to answer.)

Keeping in mind Romans 12:2, are we victims of worry or is it something we can control?

Read 2 Corinthians 10:5. Jesus commands his followers not to worry. HOW do we obey this command, according to Paul's words to the Corinthians?

What worrisome thought do you need to take captive today, and how will you make your thought obedient to Christ?

SERMON NOTES: (JULY 30-31)

Small Group Questions

WEEK 14 – Don't Worry? Right!

Read Matthew 6:25-34.

DAY ONE:

What has science taught us about the production of matter?

Recall the Scriptures you read from day one. What do these teach us about the production of matter?

Why is it important to understand where matter comes from, in order to understand Jesus' words in Matthew 6:25-34?

DAY TWO:

What is man's value in God's eyes, according to Genesis and Psalm 8? How does this compare to the message about value in our culture?

Why do you think Jesus had to remind his listeners of their value, when they probably could have quoted Psalm 8 or Genesis 1?

Why is an understanding of our value imperative, in relation to worrying about food and clothing?

DAY THREE:

How is worry helpful when you have basic needs?

How is worry detrimental?

According to Jesus' words in Matthew 6:25-34, what is actually helpful?

DAY FOUR:

How is worry a question of faith?

How does the father of lies try to get us to worry and let go of faith?

Would Jesus call you out as a person of little faith or hold you up as an example of faith, when it comes to how you handle a need for food and clothes?

DAY FIVE:

How does pagan thinking about food and clothes and life in general compare to the way a follower of Christ sees these things?

Jesus commands his followers not to worry. Can you really tell someone, "Don't worry?" Explain your answer using the information you learned from Romans 12:2 and 2 Corinthians 10:5.

How is your own mental obedience when it comes to worrying about the necessities of life? Are you living in disobedience like a pagan or in faith like a follower of Christ? Now is our time to be honest with one another.

If a pagan you know is worrying about food and clothes, what does he most need to hear?

If you are a follower of Christ who has real concerns about food and clothing, what did you most need to hear from Jesus this week?

WEEK 15

Sermon: August 6-7

Matthew 7:1-6

Suggested Memory Verse: (Matthew 7:5)

Hypocrite! First take the log out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

Week 15, Day 1 (August 1)

Read Matthew 7:1-6.

Why is it easy to be judgmental?

What happens to those who are judgmental or critical?

In what way will we be judged?

What areas do you find yourself judging others?

Do you feel judged? In what way?

How does that help you to not be judgmental?

Week 15, Day 2 (August 2)

Read Matthew 7:1-6.

What kind of faults do we notice in others?

What kind of faults do we overlook in our life?

What causes us to overlook our faults?

How did Jesus illustrate the foolishness of the way we find fault with others?

Pray that God would reveal the “log in your own eye” to you.

Week 15, Day 3 (August 3)

Read Matthew 7:1-6.

What figure of speech did Jesus use to illustrate how blind we are to the shortcomings in our own lives?

What did Jesus call those who ignore their own imperfections and focus on the flaws of others? Why?

Think of someone you have critical of: Pray for them and consider how you can be gracious towards them and if necessary apologize.

Pray again that God would reveal the “log in your own eye” to you.

Week 15, Day 4 (August 4)

Read Matthew 7:1-6.

When is it good to confront others with their faults?

Why is it necessary to deal with one's own sins first?

What else should be done first before you confront others?

Is this easy or difficult for you?

Are you willing to find a mentor who can confront you or help you grow? Write a name of someone who you could reach out to.

Week 15, Day 5 (August 5)

Read Matthew 7:1-6.

What are we not to do with sacred things? Why?

How do we know when we should say something to others?

If someone is not ready to hear from you, what can you do?

What may happen if we disregard Jesus' warning?

SERMON NOTES: (AUGUST 6-7)

Small Group Questions

WEEK 15 – Do Not Judge! Remember the Log and the Speck

Read Matthew 7:1-6.

Why is it easy to be judgmental?

What areas do you find yourself judging others?

Do you feel judged? In what way?

What kind of faults do we notice in others?

What kind of faults do we overlook in our life?

What causes us to overlook our faults?

What did Jesus call those who ignore their own imperfections and focus on the flaws of others? Why?

When is it good to confront others with their faults?

Why is it necessary to deal with one's own sins first?

What else should be done first before you confront others?

Is this easy or difficult for you?

What may happen if we disregard Jesus' warning?

WEEK 16

Sermon: August 13-14

Matthew 7:7-12

Suggested Memory Verse: (Matthew 7:12)

Therefore, whatever you want others to do for you, do also the same for them – this is the Law and the Prophets.

Week 16, Day 1 (August 8)

Read Matthew 7:7-12.

What did Jesus say will happen if we bring our requests to Him?

What are things that you consistently asking for?

What things should we be asking for?

What happens when we seek in Christ's name?

What should you do if God hasn't answered yet?

Take some time to pray that God will help you evaluate your heart as you ask, seek and knock.

Week 16, Day 2 (August 9)

Read Matthew 7:7-12.

Do you always give your kids what they ask for? Why/Why not?

How do loving parents respond to a child's request for bread?

How do loving parents respond to a child's request for fish?

Do you always receive when you pray? Why/Why not?

How can you grow in your trust that your loving Father will provide for you?

Write down 3 things that God has blessed you with. Tell some other person of one of those things.

Week 16, Day 3 (August 10)

Read Matthew 7:7-12.

What is true about the character of even the best human parent?

How could being a parent help you understand God's care and love for you?

Read James 1:17 – How does this verse help your understanding of this week's passage.

What is the likelihood of God giving His praying children what they need?

Pray and thank God for His good gifts to you.

Week 16, Day 4 (August 11)

Read Matthew 7:7-12.

How are we to treat others?

What are ways that you want others to treat you?

What do you need to focus on to treat others that same way?

In what specific situations are we to follow the Golden Rule?

Pray that God would remind you of this verse throughout the day.

Week 16, Day 5 (August 12)

Read Matthew 7:7-12.

Why is the command to treat others as you want to be treated so significant?

Why does Jesus describe the golden rule as “The Law and the Prophets?”

How does selfishness keep you from following this command?

Write out the golden rule on a piece of paper and put it somewhere you will see it frequently to remind you to follow this command.

SERMON NOTES: (AUGUST 13-14)

Small Group Questions

WEEK 16 – The “Ask, Seek, Knock” Principle!

Read Matthew 7:7-12.

What did Jesus say will happen if we bring our requests to Him?

What happens when we seek in Christ’s name?

What should you do if God hasn’t answered yet?

Do you always give your kids what they ask for? Why/Why not?

How could being a parent help you understand God’s care and love for you?

Share something good that God has blessed you with.

How can you grow in your trust that your loving Father will provide for you?

Read James 1:17 – How does this verse help your understanding of this week’s passage.

How are we to treat others?

What are ways that you want others to treat you?

What do you need to focus on to treat others that same way?

Why does Jesus describe the golden rule as “The Law and the Prophets?”

WEEK 17

Sermon: August 20-21

Matthew 7:13-23

Suggested Memory Verse: (Matthew 7:13)

Enter through the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the road is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who go through it.

Week 17, Day 1 (August 15)

Read Matthew 7:13-23.

How did Jesus describe the gate to the kingdom of God? Why?

How does the world think about the gate to the kingdom of God?

Who do you know who thinks there are “many ways to heaven”?

Take some time to pray that God would give you the courage and opportunity to talk to them about the narrow gate and His loving provision for eternal life.

The small gate is attached to what kind of road?

Why would Jesus describe the road this way?

Where does the narrow road lead?

How many people find and follow the narrow road? Why?

Week 17, Day 2 (August 16)

Read Matthew 7:13-23.

In what way did Jesus describe the gate that leads to destruction?

What was said about the road that leads to destruction?

How many people are said to travel the path to destruction?

Write down the names of people you know that are on the path to destruction.

Pray for these people.

Take some time to pray today for the gospel to be preached in our community and around the world to reach those who are on the path to destruction.

Week 17, Day 3 (August 17)

Read Matthew 7:13-23.

What do false prophets look like on the outside?

What are false prophets like inwardly?

What are ways that you can recognize a false prophet

How can we “beware” of false prophets?

Pray that God would give you wisdom and discernment as you follow Jesus.

Week 17, Day 4 (August 18)

Read Matthew 7:13-23.

What does nature reveal about a tree and its fruit?

What kind of fruit do good trees bear? Why?

What type of produce grows on bad trees? Why?

What happens to trees that fail to produce good fruit?

What kind of fruit do you see in your own life?

Pray that God would bring good fruit out of your life.

Week 17, Day 5 (August 19)

Read Matthew 7:13-23.

Read James 1:19-27.

Both of these passages emphasize the truth that fruit/good deeds follow from authentic faith.

Read Ephesians 2:8-9.

It is important to remember that works follow authentic faith. Our works don't bring salvation but result from the Holy Spirit at work in our life after salvation.

How will some people try to talk their way into heaven?

What credentials or accomplishments will some people claim?

How will Jesus respond to these impostors?

What is necessary for entry into heaven?

SERMON NOTES: (AUGUST 20-21)

Small Group Questions

WEEK 17 – A Choice Between Narrow and Wide

Read Matthew 7:13-23.

How did Jesus describe the gate to the kingdom of God? Why?

How does the world think about the gate to the kingdom of God?

How many people find and follow the narrow road? Why?

In what way did Jesus describe the gate that leads to destruction?

How many people are said to travel the path to destruction?

What do false prophets look like on the outside/ inwardly?

What are ways that you can recognize a false prophet

How can we “beware” of false prophets?

What does nature reveal about a tree and its fruit?

Read James 1:19-27 and Ephesians 2:8-9

How do these verses work together? (These passages emphasize the truth that fruit/good deeds don't save us but follow from authentic faith). It is important to remember that works follow authentic faith. Our works don't bring salvation but result from the Holy Spirit at work in our life after salvation.

What brings salvation? (God's gift by faith)

How will some people try to talk their way into heaven? (By inauthentic faith)

WEEK 18

Sermon: August 27-28

Matthew 7:24-29

Suggested Memory Verse: (Matthew 7:24)

Therefore, everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them will be like a sensible man who built his house on the rock.

Week 18, Day 1 (August 22)

Read Matthew 7:24-29.

Who did Jesus say is wise?

Jesus compared wise living to building a house on what kind of foundation? What makes that wise?

What kind of foundation are you building your life on? Think about your calendar, bank accounts and what you are enthusiastic about

Pray that God would reveal to you those things in your life that aren't a good foundation.

Week 18, Day 2 (August 23)

Read Matthew 7:24-29.

What sets fools apart from wise people? (7:24, 26)

What kind of “sandy” foundations do you sometimes build your life on?

What storms have you seen in your life lately?

How can storms be used by God to evaluate our foundation?

Pray that God would use the storms of your life to strengthen your faith and foundation.

Week 18, Day 3 (August 24)

Read Matthew 7:24-29.

What was the effect of the wind and rain on the house?

Why wasn't the house part of a "disaster area"?

According to Jesus, foolish living is like building a house on what kind of foundation?

In Jesus' analogy, what happened when the wind and water crashed against the fool's house?

Take time to think about someone whose life has collapsed. Pray for them and ask God to bring you opportunity to love them and help guide them to a solid foundation

Week 18, Day 4 (August 25)

Read Matthew 7:24-29.

Take time and review all of the sermon on the mount. (Matthew 5-7). Write down 5 of the 18 passages that stand out to you.

Pray that God would work in your heart to continue to learn from His teachings.

Week 18, Day 5 (August 26)

Read Matthew 7:24-29.

How did the crowd respond to Jesus' teaching?

Why did the crowd react with amazement to Jesus' teaching?

After studying the sermon on the mount for 18 weeks. How have you responded to Jesus teaching?

What are three things that you have learned that have impacted you?

SERMON NOTES: (AUGUST 27-28)

Small Group Questions

WEEK 18 – A Tale of Two Foundations: Rock or Sand!

Read Matthew 7:24-29.

As Jesus wraps up the sermon on the mount, what is he trying to emphasize to his followers.

Someone recount the simile Jesus uses in this passage for the group.

Why does Jesus use the concept of a house's foundation for listening and acting on His words?

How can we evaluate the foundation of our lives?

Who do you know that seems to have a great foundation? What stands out about their life to you?

Let's reflect back on the past 18 weeks. Which passages have made an impact on the way you think and live?