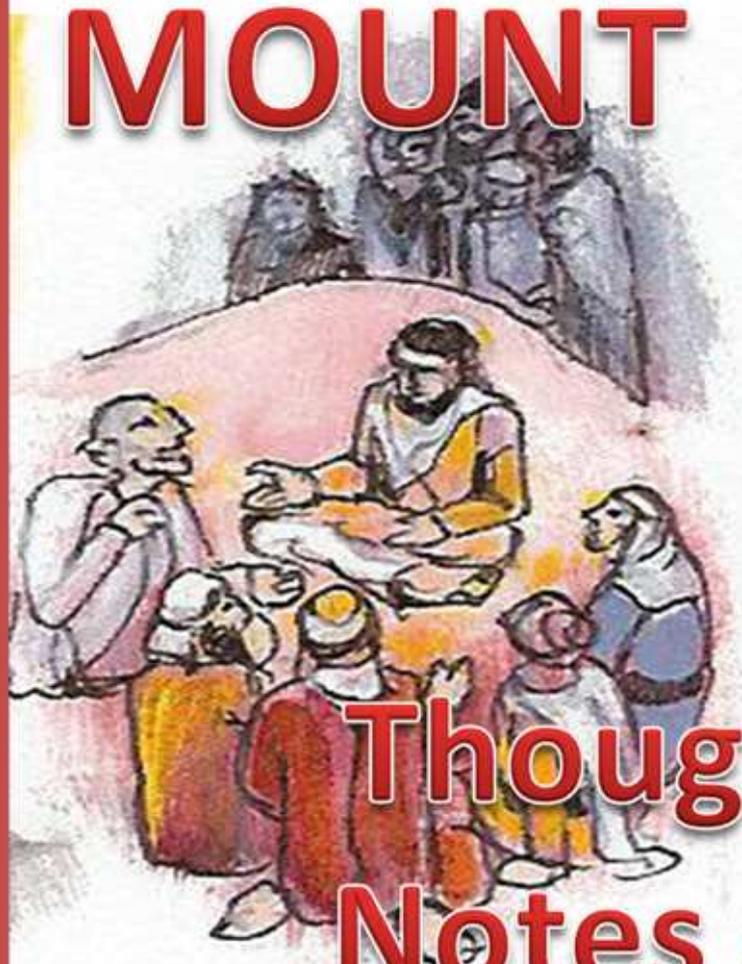


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THE  
SERMON  
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MOUNT



Thoughts,  
Notes and  
'Answers'

## **Matthew 5-7: THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT**

The great preacher-poet John Donne said of the Sermon on the Mount:

*“As nature hath given us certain elements, and all of our bodies are composed of them; and art hath given us a certain alphabet of letters, and all words are composed of them; so, our blessed Saviour, in these three chapters of this Gospel, hath give us a sermon of texts, of which, all our sermons may be composed. All the articles of our religion, all the canons of the Church, all the injunctions of our princes, all the homilies of our fathers, all the body of divinity, is in these three chapters, in this one sermon in the Mount.”\**

Ornate and very strong terms, perhaps a little over the top, but still evocative of this most important of New Testament texts.

In our series of studies on Matthew we now reach this first sermon. Up till now Jesus has said very little, he has been introduced and his ministry summed up, but now from this Mount, he presents, if you like, his Inauguration Address. Here at the start of his ministry he lays down the ground rules for what it means to be His disciple, to be part of the Kingdom of Heaven, to put yourself under the rule of the King in the Kingdom.

These 10 studies seek to help us see both the Sermon as a whole and its individual sections of teaching. They will certainly challenge and confront us, if we let the Word speak clearly to our hearts. But they will also strengthen and encourage as we all seek to follow Jesus more closely and to shine his light on the darkened world around us.

We should all pray that God will work in our lives and through us as we study his Word.

Greg Holmes - January 2017

\* Quoted in Hughes, Kent, R. *The Sermon on the Mount: The Message of the Kingdom* (Preaching the Word) (Wheaton, Crossway, 2001)

### **The Timetable**

Date	Study	Text	Topic	Page
Sun 5 Feb	1	Matthew 5-7	The LORD Speaks from the Mountain.	4
Sun 12 Feb	2	Matthew 5:1-16	“Blessed are you ...”	5
Sun 19 Feb	3	Matthew 5:17-32	... But to Fulfill Them’	6
Sun 26 Feb	4	Matthew 5:33-48	“Be Perfect ...”	7
Sun 5 Mar	5	Matthew 6:1-18	“And when you pray ...”	8
Sun 12 Mar	6	Matthew 6:19-34	“No one can serve two masters”	9
Sun 19 Mar	7	Matthew 7:1-12	“Do not Judge ...”	10
Sun 26 Mar	8	Matthew 7:13-23	“The Narrow Gate”	11
Sun 2 Apr	9	Matthew 7:24-8:1	“Yet it did not fall ...”	12
Sun 9 Apr	10	Matthew 5-7	The Peacemaker	13

### **Bibliography** (These are the most helpful general commentaries)

Stott, J. *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount: Christian Counter Culture* (Bible Speaks Today Series) (Leicester, InterVarsity Press, 1978). *The Classic*

Wilkins, Michael J. *Matthew* (NIV Application Commentary) (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2004). *Excellent exposition and application sections.*

France, R.T. *Matthew* (Tyndale New Testament Commentaries) (IVP, Leicester, 1985). *One of the standards.*

Hughes, Kent, R. *The Sermon on the Mount: The Message of the Kingdom* (Preaching the Word) (Wheaton, Crossway, 2001). *33 Expositions on the Sermon*

*In addition this is a more technical commentary but regarded as the best:*

Carson D.A. “Matthew” in *Expositors Bible Commentary* (Revised) (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2010)

## **PLEASE NOTE:**

It is probably worth my while explaining what I attempt to do in these 'notes'. My first work on them is to ensure that you can actually answer the questions. It is easy to ask questions that no-one is able to interpret. I then attempt to give some thoughts of my own on each question and then to bring to bear materials from my reading on the topic. Sometimes these are direct answers to the questions but, also sometimes, they are extra, I hope, relevant ideas.

I am very conscious as I prepare these notes of the very 'packed' nature of this wonderful Sermon, Kent Hughes book of expositions has 33 sections. There are lots of ideas, concepts, allusions, challenges, metaphors, and deep, deep meanings to be found in it.

It proves impossible in these studies to delve into all of them and I would encourage all people who lead or indeed do the studies to look more widely than the questions and allow Jesus' words to speak to our minds, hearts and lives.

## **THE SECTIONS OF THE STUDIES**

It is good to read the passage for the week at the start of each study. Each of these passages is relatively short so reading them aloud is worthwhile.

### **Background.**

This question in each study is to get the 'brain cells' working on at least one of the themes of the passage.

In a group it would be easy to spend too much time on this so be aware of that.

The following three sections are the study proper. As a leader, or in your own study, you may need to make some choices about which ones to do and how much time to spend on each.

### ***What does it SAY?***

These look at the basic ideas in the passage. I would recommend that each week you do these.

### ***What does it MEAN?***

As the heading suggests, these dig deeper into the themes of the passage or look more widely at Scripture. It is probably among these that you need to make some choices. Of course if you decide to have a go at them all I am sure it will be worthwhile.

### ***What should I DO?***

These Questions should be done each week or at least you should work hard each week to APPLY the lessons learnt to the daily, everyday, hard slog, living in our world.

*We need to make the rubber of the 'idea' hit the road of our lives, thoughts and actions. - One of the problems in writing 'application' type questions is not knowing where all the individuals in groups etc. are up to. If you can see a better application of the material - DO IT. - The important thing is to relevantly apply to our lives what we are reading and talking about.*

***Please note that my answers below are not the only 'correct' answers or what you are trying to get to in the study. I have set them out as a guide to my thinking only and an assistance to you.***

*These Notes are meant to be the start of the assistance I am willing to give in regard to the studies. If you need anything further DO NOT hesitate to contact me.*

*e-mail: gregholmes@bigpond.com      phone 0411 244 052*

## **A More Exhaustive Bibliography**

(Including works referred to in these notes.)

Blomberg, C. Matthew (The New American Commentary) (Nashville, B&H Publishing, 1992)

Bolt, P. (Ed) Listen To Him: Reading and Preaching Emmanuel in Matthew (London, The Latimer Trust, 2015)

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Wright, N.T. Matthew for Everyone: Part 1 Chapters 1-15 (London, SPCK, 2002)

# Study 1 ‘*The LORD speaks from the Mountain*’

## Background

*This study introduces us to the whole of the Sermon on the Mount and so is different to all the others*

The important thing in this ‘study’ is the reading of the Sermon as a Whole. The rest of these questions are just there to support this.

### **The Setting: Read Matthew 4:23-25**

#### **1. What is Jesus involved in doing? What is the result?**

Teaching, Preaching (the good news of the kingdom), Healing.  
Many people from all around followed him.

#### **2. What problems does this ‘fame’ present to Jesus in his task?**

Large crowds and heavy demands on Jesus.  
For another view see Mark 1:33,37,45.

### **Read Matthew 5:1-2**

#### **3. Where does Jesus go? What reason might he have?**

He goes up onto a mountainside.  
Perhaps to weed out the crowds a bit or at least to find a space where he can teach them all.

#### **4. Who are the people who follow? Why are they distinguished from the ‘crowds’?**

We have crowds and ‘disciples’.  
The disciples, including the fishermen called in chapter 4, seem to be an inner circle. This will later be seen a more than just the twelve who become the apostles.

The crowds are those who take an interest and want to learn more. There will be those among them with a variety of levels of commitment to Jesus.

#### **5. What does Jesus now do for his disciples?**

He teaches them – the inner circle – these words are particularly for them.  
However the crowds around are able to hear.

Carson on v2: *“The NIV masks the idiom “he opened his mouth and taught them,” found elsewhere in the NT (13:35; Ac 10:34; 18:14) and reflecting OT roots (Job 3:1; 33:2; Da 10:16). It is used in solemn or revelatory contexts. The verb “teach” (edidasken) is imperfect and inceptive: “He began to teach them.” ... One must not draw too sharp a distinction between preaching (keryssō, Mt 4:17) and teaching (didaskō). Teaching was not uncommonly done outdoors as well as in synagogues.”*

It is an interesting thought to apply the Parable of the Sower (Soils) Matthew 13:1-23. But perhaps there is not time to go into this.

### **Now read MATTHEW 5:3-7:27 – Yes all of it!**

This is the most important part of the study – Make sure you do this – It gives us an idea of what it was like for those first hearers.

*It should take about 20 minutes. You can use one of the many excellent audio versions around, or we do have a couple of videos of the whole sermon using just the words of the NIV.*

### **What does it Mean?**

#### **1. John Stott called the sermon “Christian Counter Culture”, having heard it right through, what do you think he means by that?**

Discuss.

John Stott, whose book was written in 1978, says in his opening remarks: *“The Sermon on the Mount is probably the best-known part of the teaching of Jesus, though arguably it is the least understood, and certainly it is the least obeyed. It is the nearest thing to a manifesto that he ever uttered, for it is his own*

*description of what he wanted his followers to be and to do. To my mind no two words sum up its intention better, or indicate more clearly its challenge to the modern world, than the expression 'Christian counter-culture'. ... For if today's young people are looking for the right things (meaning, peace, love, reality), they are looking for them in the wrong places. The first place to which they should be able to turn is the one place which they normally ignore, namely the church. For too often what they see in the church is not counter-culture but conformism, not a new society which embodies their ideals but another version of the old society which they have renounced, not life but death. ...*

*There is no single paragraph of the Sermon on the Mount in which this contrast between Christian and non-Christian standards is not drawn. It is the underlying and uniting theme of the Sermon; everything else is a variation of it.*

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

## **2. Is Jesus asking too much?**

Well .... Yes and No!

The truth is we cannot be obedient to all of this in our own strength – we can only do it through Jesus and his gift of the Holy Spirit.

The first thing the Sermon should do to us is to drive us to prayer. Prayer of confession and reliance on God

### **What should I Do?**

#### **1. What would you say to the person who says, “I live by the Sermon on the Mount”?**

‘Yeah’ (with raised eyebrows). Next you ask ‘Which bits?’

Usually the person who says this is one who is implying that they can live a morally acceptable life to God – taking Jesus precepts about a moral code and trying to live by them. Of course if taken and fully understood the precepts of the Sermon are to say the least very difficult to obey.

Blomberg: *“The sermon this forms the manifesto by which the new community Jesus is forming should live. But the church must try to permeate society with these ideals, albeit in a persuasive rather than coercive fashion.”*

#### **2. Which verse/section most impacted you? What will you do about it?**

For discussion.

### **What others have said:**

*“The Sermon on the Mount is Christ’s Biography. Every syllable He had already written down in deeds. The sermon merely translated His life into language.”*

*Thomas Wright (1810-1877) English Quaker Antiquary*

Worth reading through is Hendriksen's summary of the sermon:

*"First Jesus speaks about the citizens of the kingdom (5:2–16), describing their character and blessedness (verses 2–12) and their relation to the world (verses 13–16). They are the salt of the earth, the light of the world.*

*Secondly the Lord sets forth the righteousness of the kingdom, the high standard of life demanded by the King (5:17–7:12). We are shown that this righteousness is in full accord with the moral principles enunciated in the Old Testament (5:17–19), but is not in accord with the current and traditional (rabbinical) interpretation and application of God's holy law (verses 20–48). It exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees of Jesus' day as well as that of the ancient Jewish interpreters. This contrast is pointed out with respect to several of the Old Testament commandments.*

*The essence of the righteousness of the kingdom with respect to man's relation to God amounts to this: "Love God above all" (chap. 6). Secret (unostentatious) devotion to, and unlimited trust in, God is required. This secret and sincere devotion of the heart, rather than the merely outward deed to attract the attention of the people and to win their admiration, must reveal itself in such matters as giving, praying, and fasting (verses 1–18). And as to unlimited trust in God, it is incompatible with mammon worship and with worry, and is based on the assurance that upon those who seek God's kingdom and his righteousness all things necessary will be graciously bestowed (verses 19–34).*

*The essence of the righteousness of the kingdom with respect to man's relation to man is this: "Love your neighbor as yourself" (7:1–12). This implies absence of censoriousness, discrimination in judgment. Wisdom to judge aright, as well as whatever else one needs, is obtained by prayer. Verse 12 contains Christ's own version of "the golden rule."*

*Thirdly Jesus concludes his sermon with an earnest exhortation to enter the kingdom (verses 13–27). He pictures the beginning of the way (verses 13 and 14), progress upon the way (verses 15–20), and the end of the way: what happens in the end to those who are mere sayers, as contrasted with what happens to doers (verses 21–23); or, to mere hearers versus doers (verses 24–27). These last four verses contain the strikingly vivid parable of *The Two Builders*: the sensible man who built his house on rock, contrasted with the foolish man who built his house on sand.*

*The effect of the sermon upon the audience is portrayed in verses 28 and 29."*

# Matthew 5:1-16

## Study 2 “Blessed are you ...”

### Background

#### 1. What do you think it means to be blessed? Where does blessing come from?

These background questions are for discussion mainly. Just to get a feel for the theme or idea of the passage.

Wilkins: *“The Beatitudes serve as a sort of preamble to the Sermon on the Mount, but they are an even more memorable treasure for humanity. They give a succinct statement of the ethos of the kingdom of heaven that Jesus has announced and summarize the principles of kingdom life that he will articulate in the Sermon that follows. We find in them an abstract of Jesus’ history-altering intention for establishing the kingdom of heaven .... The Beatitudes are a radically bold statement of Jesus’ intent to establish the kingdom of heaven on earth, which will bring true peace and freedom for all who dare to follow him as his disciples. It is through those disciples that his kingdom will bring blessing to all of the peoples of the earth.”*

### What does it Say?

#### 1. Who are blessed? What does it mean to be these things?

First thing to say is that a whole study could be devoted to each of these. So our treatment is necessarily brief. (Anyone who wants a longer consideration of these could contact me and I could send something)

Possibly the best way to answer the next two questions is to make a list.

<u>Blessed are</u>	<u>Blessing</u>	<u>Comments</u>
Poor in Spirit	Kingdom of Heaven	Poor in Spirit means recognizing our spiritual bankruptcy.
Those who mourn	Comfort	Mourning is for the sinful state of ourselves and our world. The comfort is the salvation Jesus offers.
Meek	Inherit the earth	Meek is not being a doormat but recognizing our true status before God and therefore among other human beings. It has the sense of humble, gentle and not aggressive.
Hunger and Thirst for righteousness	Will be filled	Those who truly seek to live God’s way will have their desires met.
Merciful	Shown Mercy	Mercy is undeserved favour. It is part of the nature of God’s grace.*
Pure in heart	See God	We can only be pure in heart by God’s salvation in Jesus. That grants us access to the throne room of God.
Peacemakers	Called sons of God	Jesus comes to bring peace. Those who seek true peace are Jesus’ brothers.**
The persecuted for righteousness Those insulted and slandered	The kingdom of heaven Great reward is in heaven	The above characteristics are not greeted well by the world and they will react badly.

\* Blomberg: *‘Merciful’ embraces the characteristics of being generous, forgiving others, having compassion for the suffering, and providing healing*

of every kind. The link between our mercy and God's mercy anticipates 6:12, 14-15."

\*\* Blomberg: "Peacemakers' focus on interpersonal relationships. Those who work for 'shalom' (wholeness and harmony rather than strife and discord in all aspects of life) and who reconcile others to God and each other will 'be called sons of God.'"

**2. What are the blessings? When do the blessed get them?**

They are listed in my 'table' above.

I take it that the blessings are part of the now/not yet nature of the kingdom. We have some part of them now but the totality of them is in the future when Jesus returns.

Blomberg: "In the first and last Beatitudes, Jesus declares God's kingdom to be present for those who are blessed. In the intervening verses he refers to future consolation. Partial recompense may come in this age but complete fulfillment of Jesus' promises often requires waiting for the age to come."

**3. What are v11-12 saying about the faithful Christian life?**

That it is not meant to be easy – The response of the world to the characteristics listed will not always (or even often) be positive.

The true follower of Jesus can expect opposition of various kinds.

The faithful Christian will endure looking to Jesus.

**4. What are Jesus' disciples to be in the world (v13-16)?**

Simply put they are to be SALT and LIGHT.

More on this below.

**What does it Mean?**

**1. Can you see any connecting idea about those who will be blessed?**

The first thing I note is there is no element of self-interest in the characteristics. I don't think they are the things you will see in a self-help book about how to succeed in this world.

They are, to steal from John Stott again profoundly 'counter cultural'.

I think people of our world would say they have a place – in the right circumstances but that to be these things all the time would be 'suicide'.

**2. Why is the note of 'persecution' introduced at v11?**

Again this is 'counter cultural'.

The whole point is that the list will make us at odds with the world. And 'the world' does not like those who challenge it.

Thus persecution, slander, insult, and misrepresentation are to be the Christian's lot.

**3. What is meant by being 'salt and light'?**

Blomberg: "In the light of the countercultural perspectives enunciated in the Beatitudes, it would be easy to assume that Jesus was calling his followers to a separatistic or quasimonastic lifestyle. Here Jesus proclaims precisely the opposite. Christians must permeate society as agents of redemption."

In 1<sup>st</sup> Century Palestine:

Salt performed two major functions, first it was a preservative for meat etc (slowed down the rotting process), and second it gave flavor to food. It was also an expensive commodity.

Artificial light was also a valued commodity. It came from candles, and oil lamps of various sorts and other sorts of fire. We who live in a world flooded with artificial light have little concept of what it was like.

Jesus is saying display the characteristics in the Beatitudes and you will be of value in the world even if the world does not like it.

SALT

Be a source of flavor and preservative in the world by living as a citizen of the kingdom of heaven (plenty of examples in what follows in the sermon) and you will be an agent of God's influence in the world.

## LIGHT

Remember in 4:16 Jesus is the one bringing light into the world. The light we are to shine is the reflection of that light into the world around us.

Blomberg: *"Both metaphors of salt and light raise important questions about Christian involvement in society regarding all forms of separatism or withdrawal. We are not called to control secular power structures: neither are we promised that we can Christianize the legislation and values of the world. But we must remain active preservative agents, indeed irritants, in call the world to heed God's standards. We dare not for isolated Christian enclaves to which the world pays not attention."*

### **What should I Do?**

Wilkins: *"When approaching the Beatitudes we must avoid sliding into various extremes. (1) We must not conclude that Jesus is calling his listeners to a meritorious attempt at earning salvation by living out these character qualities in order to enter the kingdom. Jesus' Beatitudes are statements of grace, not law. (2) We must avoid making these into burdensome ethical demands on those who are members of the kingdom. There are no imperatives here, except to "rejoice" when one experiences the blessing of God in the middle of persecution (5:12). (3) We must not conclude that these are eschatological blessings that only will be realized at the end of the age. The kingdom blessings are found in both the present tense (5:3, 10) and the future tense (5:4–9)."*

#### **1. Which of the characteristics of the 'Blessed' do you need to work at?**

I suspect none of us can say we are completely all of these things.

Some discussion of what we need will be helpful – but people need to commit personally to working on one or two of them.

But remember: Wilkins: *"The individual characteristics of the Beatitudes are not self-produced, nor can we simply learn or emulate them in an attempt to bring them about in our lives. They are products of a life energized by the Spirit of God. They are, like the listing Paul gives in Galatians 5:22–23, the fruit of the Spirit. They are a wholistic view of what the Spirit will produce in the life of a disciple of Jesus who is walking in his ways and is being transformed into his image."*

#### **2. How can you be salt and light this week?**

Again for discussion.

### **What others have said:**

*"We are about to embark on reading the most morally exacting sermon ever given. Why do you think Jesus began such a sermon talking about poorness in spirit, mourning and meekness?"*

Shiner, R. Matthew 5-6 in The Daily Reading Bible, Volume 1 (Kingsford, St Matthias Press, 2004)

# Matthew 5:17-32

## Study 3 'But to fulfill them'

### Background

#### 1. How well do we know and how seriously do we take the Old Testament laws?

For discussion.

The other element is how much do they apply to us today?

If there is interest have a look at Leviticus 19 to see some examples of the vast range of laws there were.

### What does it Say?

#### 1. What has Jesus come to do about the 'Law and the Prophets' (v17-19)?

He has come to fulfill them.

More on this below.

#### 2. How 'righteous' are we supposed to be (v20)?

More righteous than the Pharisees and teachers of the law.

To Jesus hearers that is almost unimaginable. In any village or town the men who would be seen to be the 'good' men of the community, the upright, law abiding, righteous ones it would be the Pharisees.

Though, this is the possibly attainable one, in human terms. The real challenge is in 5v48.

Jesus goes on to give examples of what he means.

#### 3. How does Jesus redefine 'murder' (v21-26)?

Carson on these antitheses generally: *"Jesus is not criticizing the OT but the understanding of the OT many of his hearers adopted. This is especially true of vv. 22, 43, where part of what was "heard" certainly does not come from the OT. ... Rather, in every case, Jesus contrasts the people's misunderstanding of the law with the true direction in which the law points, according to his own authority as the law's "fulfiller" (in the sense established in v. 17). He makes no attempt to fence in the law but declares unambiguously the true direction to which it points."*

What Jesus does with all of these examples is internalize them – what is going on in your head, your mind matters.

Not just the externals that everyone can see.

Carson: *"But Jesus insists — the "I" is emphatic in each of the six antitheses — that the law really points to his own teaching: the root of murder is anger, and anger is murderous in principle (Mt 5:22). One has not conformed to the better righteousness of the kingdom simply by refraining from homicide."*

Blomberg: *"Like Moses, Jesus condemns murder, but he goes on to claim that harboring wrath in one's heart is also sinful and deserving of punishment (he doesn't say it is as bad!)."*

#### 4. How does Jesus redefine 'adultery' (v27-30)?

Again it is about what goes inside our head.

Here Jesus is not limiting his commandments of married people by speaking of sexual sin more broadly.

I have a friend who says this out of hand condemns every man.

This one seems to be a particular affront to our society where sexual activity is seen as mere recreation and the interpersonal and spiritual consequences are pushed to one side.

We need to keep to the forefront the Biblical ideal that sex is intended to be between a man and a woman in the context of heterosexual, lifelong, faithful marriage.

Carson: *"The OT command not to commit adultery (Ex 20:14; Dt 5:18) is often treated in Jewish sources not so much as a function of purity as of theft: it was to steal another's wife. Jesus insisted that the seventh commandment points in another direction — toward purity that refuses to lust (v. 28)."*

#### **5. What is Jesus saying about 'divorce' (v31-32)?**

Notice that this is linked with the material on adultery.

It must be said that this is not the unforgivable sin. Jesus is highlighting the importance of faithfulness in marriage.

Wilkins: *"Jesus also did not state that remarriage in the case of a legitimate divorce is invalid. Further, he did not state that illegitimate divorce and even illegitimate remarriage are unpardonable sins."*

Stott: *"the matter cannot be left there. For this reluctant permission of Jesus must still be seen for what it is, namely a continued accommodation to the hardness of human hearts. In addition, it must always be read both in its immediate context (Christ's emphatic endorsement of the permanence of marriage in God's purpose) and also in the wider context of the Sermon on the Mount and of the whole Bible which proclaim a gospel of reconciliation. Is it not of great significance that the Divine Lover was willing to woo back even his adulterous wife, Israel?"*

#### **What does it Mean?**

##### **1. What do you think 'fulfill them' means?**

Discuss.

Wilkins: *"This is an increasingly clear indication of the arrival of those new covenant promises. The prophet Ezekiel had prophesied:*

*I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. (Ezek. 36:25–27; cf. Jer. 31:31–34)*

*Jesus guides his disciples into the true intention of God's law, which focuses on inner righteousness as opposed to mere external righteousness. They gain entrance to the kingdom by repenting and confessing their sins (cf. 3:1–6; 4:17), which allows the Spirit to enter into their life to bring purification through applying Jesus' atoning righteousness to their heart. In this way, Jesus' disciples are more righteous than the scribes and the Pharisees, because they have received regeneration as they enter the kingdom."*

Carson: *"The best interpretation of these difficult verses says that Jesus fulfills the Law and the Prophets in that they point to him, and he is their fulfillment. The antithesis is not between "abolish" and "keep" but between "abolish" and "fulfill." "For Matthew, then, it is not the question of Jesus' relation to the law that is in doubt but rather its relation to him!"*

See also the note at the end of this study's notes.

##### **2. What is all this about eyes, and hands? Does Jesus really mean it?**

Yes he does mean it - but not literalistically – otherwise there would be a lot of one eyed, one handed, one footed (see Matthew 18:8 and Mark 9:43-47) Christians around.

What he is saying is that if certain things, places or actions cause you to sin (in the case the context is adultery – but it applies elsewhere) – Don't look! – Don't Go! – Don't touch!

Which is Stott's point: *"Let me elaborate and so interpret Jesus' teaching: 'If your eye causes you to sin because temptation comes to you through your*

eyes (objects you see), then pluck out your eyes. That is, don't look! Behave as if you had actually plucked out your eyes and flung them away, and were now blind and so could not see the objects which previously caused you to sin. Again, if your hand or foot causes you to sin, because temptation comes to you through your hands (things you do) or your feet (places you visit), then cut them off. That is: don't do it! Don't go! Behave as if you had actually cut off your hands and feet, and had flung them away, and were now crippled and so could not do the things or visit the places which previously caused you to sin.”

### 3. Is there are proper place for 'hate'?

Yes but we have to be very careful of hating people.

Hate the evil but love the person – not always easy to do.

Osborne: “Jesus wants to establish the basic principle that anger destroys community harmony. Moreover it is not just anger, but contempt and name-calling that do this, not only in the community proper but also in the home, which is the core of the community.”

Carson: “In the context of the balance of themes in Scripture, the handling of hatred is not exactly like the handling of, say, lust or greed. Lust and greed must be suppressed; better, we must triumph over them. But there is a certain sense in which righteous hatred is to be encouraged (cf. Ps 139), “an indignation wholly directed to wickedness and evil, purged of moodiness, petulance, inflamed irritability, unreasonable suspicion”. Merely to suppress all anger fails to recognize that Scripture also mandates, not least by the example of Jesus, righteous anger — and still love for our enemies. O'Donovan further comments:

*When I learn so to hate that I long for the justice of God, then I recognize that that same justice is precisely what my enemy needs. The injustice in the relation is to be put right not only for me, but for him too, because it is God's justice, which is like the sun which he makes to rise on the evil and the good, and the rain which he sends on the just and the unjust. So I begin to love my enemy as myself, by discovering that what I want for myself I want most profoundly for him too.”*

### What should I Do?

#### 1. How do you deal with Anger and Lust?

For discussion.

But maybe you eyes, hands and feet are a good place to start.

#### 2. What do you need to do for your righteousness to exceed the scribes and the Pharisees?

For Discussion

Turn to Jesus.

Note that 5:48 in the next study raises the bar even further.

Note Matthew 23:27-28.

Osborne: “It is not enough to claim to be a follower of Christ; one must live like it. Works do not save us but they are the necessary result of being saved.

Without works/fruit there is no evidence that one is a believer at all (see 7:23).”

And James 2:14-26).

Wilkins: “I am stunned by the brilliance of Jesus' teaching that transcends these centuries, because for all people that have ever lived, in every culture on the face of the earth, his solution to the problems of humanity are immediately germane. He didn't produce provincial religious practices that became antiquated after his place and time, but went to the heart of universal human dilemmas and provided timeless, supracultural guidance. The discipleship he advocates in these antitheses, and throughout the SM—indeed, in all of his teaching—is the same as discipleship today.

*Full books have been written on each of these antitheses, another indication of the continuing importance, but a few general comments will indicate their relevance for our developing discipleship.”*

**What others have said:**

*“No, replies Jesus. His disciples are called to a different kind and quality of righteousness, not an increased quantity.”*

NIVAC p231

**Note also these wise words from Wilkins (NIVAC)**

*“The issues surrounding the Christian’s relationship to the Old Testament Scripture (Law) are complex. Some contend that none of it applies to Jesus unless it is explicitly reaffirmed in the New Testament, while others say that all of the Old Testament applies unless it is explicitly revoked in the New Testament. Both of these extremes should be avoided in the light of Jesus’ statements in 5:17–20. While these issues are beyond what we can address here, some basic principles can be suggested.*

*(1) The law is a revelation of God’s will for humanity. It reveals a standard of God’s perfect righteousness. We trifle with God’s will if we set aside some aspects of his Word. For example, it may be commendable to oppose abortions, but when antiabortion activists resort to violence and murder, they have set aside God’s commands.*

*(2) We need to understand God’s purpose for giving his law if we are to rightly understand the law itself. The law had several purposes. It was designed to instruct God’s people in his will so that they might fulfill his purpose for them as “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Ex. 19:6). But they were not to rely on its requirements as the means of finding forgiveness (Ps. 51:14–17). The law was given to point out humanity’s sinfulness and need for God (Rom. 7:7) and to lead humanity to Christ, by whom they will be justified by faith (Gal. 3:24).*

*(3) When reading the Gospels in general and the antitheses in particular (Matt. 5:21–48), we must keep in mind that Jesus is here objecting to misinterpretations of the law, not the law itself. A tendency existed in Pharisaic Judaism to make their interpretations and traditions just as binding as the law itself. Jesus rejected their practices, not the law. He continued to uphold the law as the will of God.*

*(4) Jesus fulfilled the law and proved to be the perfect God-man, who is therefore able to become the means of our justification or right standing with God (Matt. 5:17–20; Rom. 5:18–21; Heb. 5:7–10). Therefore, we are not under the law as a means of gaining salvation.*

*(5) At the same time, Jesus is the interpreter of the law, showing what is binding principle and what is the temporary symbolic ritual (Matt. 12:1–8; Heb. 9:11–10:13). We should seek Christ’s mind for a proper interpretation and application of the law and understand the Old Testament in the light of the new covenant he inaugurates. He emphasized that ultimately the law was given to aid humans to live life the way God intended it to be lived, not to keep us under a binding set of religious rules (Matt. 12:3–5, 9–14). As Jesus gives his interpretation of the law, he reveals its intent and motive that were lost behind the external legalism of the scribes and Pharisees. He then demonstrates how principles of the law are valid guidelines to show God’s will for his people (5:21–48).*

*(6) Jesus demonstrates that the entire Old Testament hangs on love for God and neighbor (22:38–39), which truly brings to fulfillment all of the Law. The “law of love” becomes an important key to determine how the Christian is to live out the will of God (5:21, 27, 38, etc.).”*

# Matthew 5:33-48

## Study 4 'Be perfect ...'

### Background

#### 1. What does it mean when we say someone is 'perfect'?

Well, all you need to do is look at the front cover of many magazines.

Discuss our world's view of perfection.

Remember we are still looking at what it means that Jesus fulfills the law and that we are to be more righteous than the Pharisees.

### What does it Say?

#### 1. What do v33-37 say about the way we speak?

The plea, command, here is for plain honest speech.

Stott: *"This is not an accurate quotation of any one law of Moses. At the same time, it is a not inaccurate summary of several Old Testament precepts which require people who make vows to keep them. ... Moses often seems to have emphasized the evil of false swearing and the duty of performing to the Lord one's oaths. Here are a few examples:*

*'You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain' (Ex. 20:7, the third commandment).*

*'You shall not swear by my name falsely, and so profane the name of your God' (Lv 19:12).*

*'When a man vows a vow to the Lord, ... he shall not break his word' (Nu. 30:2).*

*'When you make a vow to the Lord your God, you shall not be slack to pay it' (Dt. 23:21)."*

That we as Christ's followers should be known for our truthful, plain speaking.

Osborne: *"The OT allowed oaths, and Judaism considered them essential; Jesus surprisingly says they are totally unnecessary. The message is clear: do not hide behind such 'witnesses,' for that keeps you from taking responsibility for what you say. Instead, live the truth of your words, and stand by everything you tell others."*

Wilkins: *"Once again, this is a test of the heart. What we speak with our lips comes from our inner being. A dependable heart will utter dependable words. A person with an honest heart will speak honestly. If we add to our "yes" or "no" anything, such as "Yes, I swear!" does it mean that when we don't add "I swear" we don't mean it as much? A simple "yes" should always be as binding as with any oath."*

#### 2. What place does revenge have in God's kingdom (v38-42)?

From us – none really.

Note Romans 12:19

#### 3. From v43-45, who are we to love and pray for?

Well we should pray for our neighbor.

BUT we should also pray for our enemies and love them.

How is that possible?

Note this quote from C.S.Lewis (Mere Christianity): *"Even while we kill and punish we must try to feel about the enemy as we feel about ourselves—to wish that he were not bad, to hope that he may, in this world or another, be cured: in fact, to wish his good. That is what is meant in the Bible by loving him: wishing his good, not feeling fond of him nor saying he is nice when he is not."*

#### 4. What is Jesus' 'simple' demand of us (v48)? Who is the example?

As Jesus sums up this section about the fulfillment of the law he makes one simple demand:

Be as Perfect as God is.

Of course you say this is impossible. Already failed “x” times today.

But it is possible – Look to Jesus.

In Christ we are presented perfect before God.

### **What does it Mean?**

#### **1. How are the demands in this passage counter cultural?**

Words: Extravagant claims. Core and non core promises, heated language, and worse litter our public discourse.

Simple plain honest speech seems so ‘quaint’ to our ears sometimes.

Revenge: Again the idea of ‘getting your own back’ or ‘do unto others before they do it to you’ is seemingly normal.

If turning the other cheek is mentioned then it is usually as a joke – but Jesus meant it.

Stott:” *The four mini-illustrations which follow all apply the principle of Christian non-retaliation, and indicate the lengths to which it must go. They are vivid little cameos drawn from different life-situations. Each introduces a person (in the context a person who in some sense is ‘evil’) who seeks to do us an injury, one by hitting us in the face, another by prosecuting us at law, a third by commandeering our service and a fourth by begging money from us*

*... remember that Jesus called his disciples to what Bonhoeffer termed a ‘visible participation in his cross’. This is how Peter put it: ‘Christ ... suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps ... When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he trusted to him who judges justly.’”*

Loving Enemies: What ???!!!!

Again Jesus meant it.

#### **2. Can ‘turn the other cheek’ really work?**

How can it work?

Osborne: *“Instead of demanding our rights and seeking justice over every wrong, perceived or otherwise, kingdom citizens expect little from this world and place their trust in God. We defer to others and seek at all times to give rather than take. This is a radical departure from Jewish teaching (and the common view of our world) and demands the type of new covenant outlook that is at the heart of Jesus’ teaching.”*

See Proverbs 15:1; 25:15

#### **3. How is it possible to love your enemy?**

Discussion.

The C.S. Lewis quote above should provide a starter and this one: *“The rule for all of us is perfectly simple. Do not waste your time bothering whether you ‘love’ your neighbor; act as if you did. As soon as we do this we find one of the great secrets. When you are behaving as if you loved someone, you will presently come to love him. If you injure someone you find yourself disliking him more. If you do him a good turn, you will find yourself disliking him less.”*  
(Mere Christianity)

## What should I Do?

1. **Simple truthful words, positive reactions, love for enemies. How can these things impact what we do this week?**

For discussion.

Osborne: *"The key is growth in love and service, in every area of our lives striving to more like God and Jesus."*

2. **What is the only way you can be perfect?**

Again for discussion.

Osborne: *"The key is 'as you heavenly father,' meaning that kingdom children are to emulate their Father in all they say and do. His perfection is the goal for our thoughts and actions, for our relationship inside and outside the community. .... We are to become like the Father, follow all that Jesus has said and relate to all around us (believer and unbeliever) with mercy and love."*

But it is only possible through the forgiveness offered by Jesus through the cross.

Kent Hughes: *"Everything comes from Christ. Jesus's sayings are hard – in fact impossible! I am so glad that the Sermon on the Mount is impossible because then we have to depend on Jesus. May the Lord Jesus work in us a surprising righteousness so that we do not hold on to our rights, so that we do not always insist on others being fair to us, so we are willing to be hurt, so we are willing to be vulnerable, because then, just as in the ancient world, people will notice and will come to Jesus."*

## What others have said:

*"This must not encourage us to conclude that Jesus teaches that unqualified perfection is already possible for his disciples. He teaches them to acknowledge spiritual bankruptcy (v. 3) and to pray "Forgive us our debts" (6:12). But the perfection of the Father, the true eschatological goal of the law, is what all disciples of Jesus pursue." CARSON*

# Matthew 6:1-18

## Study 5 'And when you pray ....'

Wilkins: "The kingdom transformation that produces inner "heart righteousness" (5:20) will also produce external "acts of righteousness" (6:1) as a disciple becomes more like the heavenly Father (5:48). So Jesus turns to teach his disciples how the righteousness of the kingdom of heaven works out in the details of three primary arenas of everyday life: public religious life (6:1–18), personal interior life (6:19–34), and interpersonal relational life (7:1–12)."

### Background

#### 1. Giving, Prayer, Fasting, (Forgiving). What part do these play in your life?

For discussion.

The last is the most 'controversial'.

Or if you like – did not think of this one before:

#### What is a hypocrite?

Something Christians are often accused of.

### What does it Say?

#### 1. What broad topic does this passage cover?

How to do 'acts of righteousness'.

The listeners have been told to be righteous, indeed perfect, now they are faced with how to go about certain of these acts of righteousness.

The thing to be avoided is Hypocrisy – Play acting.

Saying one thing, doing another. – Talking the talk but NOT walking the walk

Wilkins: "Congruency of inner life and external practice. Jesus expects us to practice "acts of righteousness." He does not advocate this in order to earn entrance to the kingdom of heaven or to achieve advanced standing with the Father, but these acts are intentional ways of conforming the external expression of our lives to the inner work of God in our hearts."

Wilkins: "Obedience is central to Jesus' form of discipleship, as it was to other forms of discipleship within Judaism, but Jesus calls his followers to adhere to the motive behind obedience to the Old Testament, not simply to carry out external compliance."

France: "The neat symmetry of the three illustrations (2-4, 5-6, 16-18) is broken by an extended discussion of prayer, which further explains the wrong way (7-8) and the right way (9-15). The Lord's Prayer thus appears not simply as a prescribed liturgical form but as a model of what true prayer should be like."

Carson: "This verse (v1) introduces the three chief acts of Jewish piety. In each act the logical structure is the same: (1) a warning not to do the act to be praised by men, (2) a guarantee that those who ignore this warning will get what they want but no more, (3) instruction on how to perform the act of piety secretly, and (4) the assurance that the Father who sees in secret will reward openly" ... "... ostentation, not merit theology, is the point here."

#### 2. How should we go about our giving (v2-4)?

Basically without a fuss.

Certainly not drawing attention to it

Do it as far as you can in secret.

We need to think about how we do this. It is NOT a recommendation for unplanned giving.

It is a warning about being self satisfied with our giving and wanting people to know how great we are.

Just by the way the processes of our church (KAC) are set up to, as far as possible, make the process confidential.

**3. How are we to pray (v5-15)?**

Basically without a fuss.

Certainly not drawing attention to it

Obviously this is the more drawn out section.

The whole process of public prayer in services needs to be thought through both from a logistics point of view and personally as we do it.

The secret is in the attitude – for whose glory is it?

**4. What should we do about fasting (v16-18)?**

Basically without a fuss.

Certainly not drawing attention to it

Perhaps try it.

Carson: *“Under Mosaic legislation, fasting was commanded only on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:29–31; 23:27–32; Nu 29:7) ...”*

Worth noting the stern warning at the each of these three about the consequences of giving and praying and fasting in order to draw attention to ourselves – That is ALL the attention we are going to get!

**What does it Mean?**

**1. What is the general principle behind these instructions about fasting, praying and giving?**

The principal is found in the phrases:

*“Be careful not to do your ‘acts of righteousness’ before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. v1*

*Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. vs 4,6,18.*

The point is our motivation – is it selfish – for people to know what we have done or is it truly for God’s service and in thankfulness to Him.

And of course these are only examples of things we can do in the Lords service and end up doing them for our own reward and not with the attitude of service to Jesus.

You may be able to think of other examples.

**2. Discuss the various ‘petitions’ of the Lord’s Prayer?**

This is a considerable task – but worthwhile.

A great deal of ink has been spilt on the wonderful words.

I will offer just a few comments.

*‘Our Father in heaven,*

*Through Jesus we have the inexpressible privilege of calling God ‘Daddy’.*

*Note also the comment below\**

*hallowed be your name,*

*Calls on God to be Holy as he is.*

*Basically calling on God to be faithful to who He is.*

*your kingdom come,*

*Asking for the presence of God’s rule.*

*your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*

*And the exercise of God’s rule.*

*Here and now as well as there and then.*

*Give us today our daily bread.*

*Prayer turns now to our needs.*

*First the necessities of life.*

*Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.*

Second the necessity of forgiveness.

*And lead us not into temptation,*

Third, protection from Sin and  
*but deliver us from the evil one.'*

Protection from the source of all evil.

\*If you only discuss the first two words then consider this from C.S. Lewis:  
*"If you are interested enough to have read thus far you are probably interested enough to make a shot at saying your prayers: and, whatever else you say, you will probably say the Lord's Prayer. Its very first words are Our Father. Do you now see what those words mean? They mean quite frankly, that you are putting yourself in the place of a son of God. To put it bluntly, you are dressing up as Christ. If you like, you are pretending. Because, of course, the moment you realize what the words mean, you realize that you are not a son of God. You are not being like The Son of God, whose will and interests are at one with those of the Father: you are a bundle of self-centred fears, hopes, greeds, jealousies, and self-conceit, all doomed to death. So that, in a way, this dressing up as Christ is a piece of outrageous cheek. But the odd thing is that He has ordered us to do it"*

### **3. Discuss what you learn about Prayer from this passage.**

Of course there is much here to think about.

First how we go about it – not as a show.

I think this is a challenge to us in our public prayer sessions in Church.

We need to think about our motivation in praying aloud.

Second, we need to think carefully of the words we use.

Prayer is to be neither pretensions or repetitious.

It is relationship not manipulation.

Third, we need to reflect on the things we pray for.

Do our concerns reflect the concerns of the example prayer Jesus gives.

There is more on prayer in Chapter 7

And then there is the challenge about forgiveness

#### **What should I Do?**

- 1. 'Making a request from someone requires two things. Firstly that they are able to do what you ask, and secondly, that they are willing to do what you ask'\*.** Spend some time meditating on (discussing) **God's ability and willingness to fulfill your requests. (see Matthew 7:7-11; Ephesians 3:20-21).**

Discuss.

- 2. Note v14-15. What sort of challenge is that to you?**

Discuss.

France: *"These verses might seem to suggest that forgiveness is earned by our forgiving others. See, however, 18:21-35, where the link between forgiving and being forgiven is more clearly set out. The word debts in v 12 reminds us of that parable."*

#### **What others have said:**

*"The right of the eschatological community to utter the Lord's Prayer depends, as does the efficacy of the prayer, upon communal reconciliation."*

Osborne quoting Davies and Allison

\*Shiner, R. Matthew 5-6 in The Daily Reading Bible, Volume 1 (Kingsford, St Matthias Press, 2004)

# Matthew 6:19-34

## Study 6 'No one can serve two masters'

Wilkins (NIVAC): "THE KEY SAYING of this section is Jesus' famous imperative, "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness" (6:33). It continues the overall priority and teaching of the SM. The preceding section (6:1–18) indicates the kind of religious life that Jesus' disciples will experience in the public realm under the influence of the kingdom of heaven. Their "acts of righteousness" (6:1) brings congruency between the initial gift of positional righteousness by which they gained entrance to the kingdom of heaven (5:20) and their experiential growth in righteousness as they pursue the ultimate goal of the perfection of their heavenly Father (5:48). This section continues the teaching on the pursuit of kingdom righteousness (6:33), but here the spotlight is on the kind of personal interior life that Jesus' disciples will experience in their everyday world."

### Background

#### 1. What is your biggest worry at this time?

For discussion and probably prayer for each other.

### What does it Say?

#### 1. In v19-21 what is the potential problem Jesus is addressing?

The assault of materialism – earthly treasure.

Wilkins: "The term behind the negative imperative "do not store up" is *thesaurizo*, which is related to the noun "treasure" (*thesauros*). The wordplay can be rendered woodenly, "Do not treasure up for yourselves treasure on earth.""

#### 2. Where should our eyes be focused (v22-23)?

On the light.

The focus should be on Jesus

Note 1 Peter 1:3-4

#### 3. Note v24. What is the challenge here?

The challenge is to 'single-mindedness'.

To make the right choice between God and 'mammon' (to use the old word – which I think broadens the concept,) (Green: "Money is literally 'Mammon', who seems to have been the Carthaginian god of wealth.")

Wilkins: "Greed and covetousness are favorite snares of the evil one, so commands and warnings against greed and covetousness are common in the Old Testament (e.g., Ex. 20:17; Deut. 5:21; Job 31:24–25; Ps. 49; Eccl. 2:1–11) and in the early church (Col. 3:5; 1 Tim. 6:10; 2 Peter 2:3). Ultimately, there is only one choice—service, love, and devotion to God or to Satan. Loving God is not merely a matter of the emotions but of serving and giving oneself to him completely—heart, soul, mind, and strength (see Matt. 19:16–22; 22:37)."

#### 4. What should we 'worry' about and what should we not worry about?

The issue of monetary resources leads on to the things we worry about.

Jesus says we are not to worry about:

Life / Food / Drink / Our bodies / Clothing / Tomorrow

He says we should 'worry' about 'his kingdom and his righteousness.' Which is of course 'worry' which is no worry at all because those things are assured because of the nature of God himself.

### What does it Mean?

#### 1. What should be our attitude to our treasures on earth?

Big long topic.

But the question here is priorities.

The good things of the earth which we have here and now must not be more important to us than the things of Heaven and the service of our Lord Jesus.

I think a good set of principles here is to be thankful and generous. Thankful to God for the blessings we enjoy and generous with our worldly goods to our 'neighbors'.

Wilkins: "Money, wealth, and possessions have at least three primary purposes in Scripture:

- (1) to give appropriate care for one's own family and prevent them from becoming a burden to others (1 Thess. 4:11–12; 2 Thess. 3:6–15; 1 Tim. 5:8);
- (2) to help those who are in need, especially the family of faith (Prov. 19:17; Acts 11:27–30; Rom. 15:25–27; 2 Cor 8:1–15; Gal. 6:7–10; Eph. 4:28; 1 Tim. 5:3–7); and
- (3) to encourage and support God's work in spreading the gospel of the kingdom both at home and around the world (1 Cor. 9:3–14; Phil. 4:14–19; 1 Tim. 5:17–18).

*If we put Jesus at the center of our lives to serve and love him with all that we are and have, we will use appropriately all the blessings of life and avoid the modern idolatry of materialism."*

Osborne has this helpful paragraph on Wealth: *"Let us consider a biblical philosophy of wealth. First, the creation principle says that God gave us this world as a gift to enjoy, so it is not wrong to enjoy financial blessings he has bestowed. Yet that is the lesser principle. Mainly, when God bestows the world's riches on any person, he is giving such people a ministry of helps. He wants them to use their largesse to life up the fallen, to alleviate the burdens of the downtrodden. There is no choice: God expects us to share with the needy, and the more we have the more we must share (Luke 16:9-13; Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-35; Romans 12:8,13; 2 Corinthians 9:5-13; Ephesians 4:28; 1 Timothy 6:17-19)."*

## **2. What point about worry are v25-34 making?**

Wilkins (NIVAC) heads this section: *"Choose Your Provider: God or Worry."*

Jesus here makes his point – Don't worry  
and then illustrates it with examples from nature.

The point is summed up in v32. – God knows and God provides.

There is nothing anyone can do to change that.

## **3. Treasures, eyes, masters and worrying. How are these related through the passage?**

Stott: *"Jesus now explains that behind the choice between two treasures (where we lay them up) and two visions (where we fix our eyes) there lies the still more basic choice between two masters (whom we are going to serve)."*

It is all about the Priorities you have.

## **What should I Do?**

### **1. What should you do with your worries?**

Seek 'his kingdom and his righteousness' v33.

Wilkins: *"The conjunction of righteousness and the kingdom maintains a special theme in the Sermon on the Mount (5:6, 10, 20; 6:1). It does not mean to pursue salvation, because the disciples' entrance to the kingdom secured them that kind of "imputed" righteousness (5:20). It means that they are to pursue their experiential growth of "imparted" righteousness, which is to pursue the increasing perfection of the Father (5:48) through their practice of "acts of righteousness" (6:1).*

It seems to me we can't escape worrying. It is the lengths to which we take it that provide the problem. Again it is about having right priorities.

Wilkins says: *"Anxiety: Not a Sin but a Burden That Can be Lifted."*

Note James 4:13-15

The first thing you should do about what is worrying you is pray. If that does not seem to work the next thing to do is pray. (see 6:8,32; 7:7-11)

Wilkins: *"Whether we are weak or strong, poor or rich, Jesus' teaching on wealth and worry is rooted firmly in what has done for us. He is our Master and Provider, the one who has given us kingdom life, kingdom priorities, and kingdom values, by which we can truly say, "Thank you."*

Osborne: *"The basic message of the section is obvious – earthly concerns must always be superseded by heavenly priorities. That is the only solution for anxiety. There are for stages: realize you have a heavenly Father who loves you; 'cast all you anxiety on him because he cares for you' (1 Peter 5:7); refuse to worry about material needs but leave them with him; put his concerns first in you life and live kingdom*

*priorities. These are all related yet separate issues – a loving Father, a solid trust in him, a deliberate refusal to worry, a life centered on him.”*

**2. How many ‘masters’ do you have? What do you need to do about that?**

Well ....?

For discussion.

Wilkins: *“The key thing for all disciples is to have no other god—whether it is money or success or self—before Jesus as our Master and Provider as we seek first his kingdom and his righteousness.”*

**What others have said:**

*“Do not be overawed when a man grows rich,  
when the splendor of his house increases;  
for he will take nothing with him when he dies,  
his splendor will not descend with him.  
Though while he lived he counted himself blessed—  
and men praise you when you prosper—  
he will join the generation of his fathers,  
who will never see the light of life.  
A man who has riches without understanding  
is like the beasts that perish. (Ps. 49:16–20).”*

# Matthew 7:1-12

## Study 7 'Do not judge ...'

Wilkins: "Jesus now shifts from warning his disciples about their own personal temptations concerning wealth and worry to temptations that can surface in their relationships with each other. This carries forward his theme about the nature of kingdom life for his disciples. After giving the interpretive principles of kingdom life that fulfills God's original intention in the Old Testament (5:17-48), Jesus turned to teach his disciples how they are to develop true kingdom life in the real world (6:1-7:12). The present section is the third of three sections that deal with this theme (see comments at the beginning of 6:1-18). Here he addresses the disciples' interpersonal kingdom spirituality in their community relationships (7:1-12)."

### Background

#### 1. What really 'gets up your nose' about some people?

I think this is relevant because it is that sort of thing that often causes us to be judgmental and thoughtless of people.

### What does it Say?

#### 1. What does 'do not judge' (v1-2) mean in everyday life? Note what is taught in v6).

In many ways I think what Jesus is saying is do not dish out the condemnation or punishment. He is condemning a judgmental attitude.

Wilkins: "Absolute judgment is a categorical pronouncement of the guilt of another person as though this is the final word on a matter. At fault is a person who makes himself and his way of doing things and his opinion the absolute standard. He or she has usurped the place of God because only God can judge in this way."

Osborne: "So what does this judgmental attitude connote? It means looking down on a person with a superior attitude, criticizing or condemning them without a live concern (the opposite of the second we petition on forgiveness. ... The key component is the absence of love."

Note 1 Corinthians 13:4-8

We do need to be discerning – but it is not our place to provide the sentence – our role is to love the person. (see v12).

Carson: "The disciple who takes it on himself to be the judge of what another does usurps the place of God (Ro 14:10) and therefore becomes answerable to him"

#### 2. What is all this about specks and planks?

This little parabolic saying of Jesus is extremely visual. It provokes the imagination.

The thought is of course over the top. But it provokes us to think about our own lives before we pass judgment and condemnation on others.

Morris: "Jesus is drawing attention to a curious feature of the human race in which a profound ignorance of oneself is so often combined with an arrogant presumption of knowledge about others, especially about their faults."

We are encouraged to always look to ourselves first and change ourselves before we put our standards on others.

Carson: "But when a brother in a meek and self-judging spirit (cf. 1Co 11:31; Gal 6:1) removes the log from his own eye, he still has the responsibility of helping his brother remove his speck (cf. 18:15-20)."

#### 3. How do v7-12 relate to 6v8-13?

Here Jesus again addresses the matter of prayer.

The emphasis here is on the generosity and love of the Father we come to in prayers.

Carson: *“What is fundamentally at stake is a person’s picture of God. God must not be thought of as a reluctant stranger who can be cajoled or bullied into bestowing his gifts (6:7–8), as a malicious tyrant who takes vicious glee in the tricks he plays (7:9–10), or even as an indulgent grandfather who provides everything requested of him. He is the heavenly Father, the God of the kingdom, who graciously and willingly bestows the good gifts of the kingdom in answer to prayer.”*

#### **4. I know we call it the Golden Rule. But does He really mean v12?**

Wilkins: *“The primary teaching of the Sermon on the Mount is drawing to a close, so Jesus takes the way of the kingdom to its zenith in one precept:”*

Yes, of course, he does – and he means it for all the time.

Carson: *“Above all, this verse is not to be understood as a utilitarian maxim such as “Honesty pays.” We are to do to others what we would have them do to us, not just because we expect the same in return, but because such conduct is the goal of the Law and the Prophets. The verb *estin* (NIV, “sums up”) might properly be translated “fulfill,” as in Acts 2:16. In the deepest sense, therefore, the rule is the Law and the Prophets in the same way the kingdom is the fulfillment of all that the Law and the Prophets foretold.”*

Wilkins: *“As a benchmark for human relations, this moral maxim has been expressed in other contexts throughout history in both positive and negative forms. The ancient Roman philosopher and statesman Seneca (4 B.C.–A.D. 65) expressed the principle positively: “Let us show our generosity in the same manner that we would wish to have it bestowed on us” (De beneficiis 2. 1.1), while the Chinese philosopher Confucius (551–479 B.C.) stated it negatively, “Do not do unto others what you would not want others to do unto you!” (Analects 15:23).”*

Blomberg quoting Mounce: *“In its negative form, the Golden Rule could be satisfied by doing nothing. The positive form moves us to action on behalf of others.”*

Interestingly: Wilkins: *“The maxim is commonly called the “Golden Rule,” with the Emperor Alexander Severus reputedly having it written on his wall in gold.”*

#### **What does it Mean?**

##### **1. I think there is something of a theme of ‘judging’ through these verses.**

##### **How does each of the sections deal with that theme?**

(Interestingly I can’t find a commentary that agrees with me)

V1-2: Introduces the theme

V3-5: Calls us to look to ourselves first before we condemn others

V6: Calls us to be discerning with the treasure we have (I take it the Gospel)

Note (for those worried about the family pet being maligned): Carson:

*“The “pigs” are not only unclean animals but wild and vicious, capable of savage action against a person. “Dogs” must not be thought of as household pets. In the Scriptures they are normally wild, associated with what is unclean, despised ... . The two animals serve together as a picture of what is vicious, unclean, and abominable (cf. 2Pe 2:22).”*

V7: Points us to Our Heavenly Father for what we need – including the wisdom we need in the areas of discernment.

V12: Provides the overall principle.

##### **2. Discuss what it means to be a hypocrite?**

For discussion.

The term comes from the idea of play-acting. Putting out there a face that does not reflect the true person we are.

For my two penny worth: I think it is impossible for us to deny that we are all hypocritical to some extent a large part of the time.

**3. What encouragement to prayer is there in this whole passage?**

Verses 7-11 of course provide the encouragement to take our request to our Father in Heaven about all our needs.

And one of our great needs is the wisdom and discernment to do the rest of the passage right.

Carson: *“One may be a truly industrious man, and yet poor in temporal things; but one cannot be a truly praying man, and yet poor in spiritual things” (Broadus). Far too often, Christians do not have the marks of richly textured discipleship because they do not ask, or they ask with selfish motives (Jas 4:2–3). But the best gifts, those advocated by the Sermon on the Mount, are available to “everyone” (v. 8) who persistently asks, seeks, and knocks.”*

**What should I Do?**

**1. What encouragement do you draw from v7-8(11)?**

For discussion

Discuss what the limits are – What shouldn't you ask God for?

**2. What do we need to do about our hypocrisy?**

For Discussion.

Keep working against it – look yourself honestly in mirror and ask God to make you more like Jesus.

He says he will give us good gifts and likeness to his Son in the best of them.

**What others have said:**

*“Jesus’ teaching in the Sermon on the Mount “fulfills” (pleroo) the Law and the Prophets (5:17), while his Golden Rule “sums up” the Law and the Prophets (7:12). So the Golden Rule summarizes the essence of God’s will for his people in the Old Testament, and now for Jesus’ disciples.”*

Wilkins (NIVAC)

# Matthew 7:13-23

## Study 8 'The narrow gate'

Carson: "The Sermon on the Mount ends with four warnings, each offering paired contrasts: two ways (vv. 13–14), two trees (vv. 15–20), two claims (vv. 21–23), and two builders (vv. 24–27). Such pairs reflect preaching in the Wisdom tradition. Here the pairs focus on eschatological judgment and so make it plain that the theme is still the kingdom of heaven. But if some will not enter it (vv. 13–14, 21–23), the sole basis for such a tragedy is present response to Jesus' words. At the close of the sermon, the messianic claim is implicit and only thinly veiled."

### Background

1. **How do you discern who is 'fair-dinkum' in the Christian Faith and who is not? And should you do it?**

Discuss this.

Remember 7:1

### What does it Say?

1. **What is said about the road we are on as Christians (v13-14)?**

It is narrow and entered through a small gate.

It leads to life.

By contrast the wide gate and broad road leads to destruction – but it gives you lots of companions.

Carson: "Democratic decisions do not determine truth and righteousness in the kingdom. That there are only two ways is the inevitable result of the fact that the one that leads to life is exclusively by revelation. But if truth in such matters must not be sought by appealing to majority opinion (Ex 23:2), neither can it be found by each person doing what is right in his own eyes (Pr 14:12; cf. Jdg 21:25). God must be true and every man a liar (Ro 3:4)."

Wilkins: "Jesus himself is the narrow gate through which people pass as they respond to his invitation to the kingdom of heaven. The way of discipleship then stretches throughout one's years on earth, ultimately leading to life eternal. The false prophets and religious opposition offer the people what is on the surface a more appealing invitation, for theirs is the easier way to fit into conventional wisdom. But those who choose to enter the gate to popular opinion by rejecting Jesus' invitation will find that it opens onto a road that leads to eternal destruction."

2. **What is the problem with false prophets (v15-20)? How can you recognize them?**

They are false.

Totally condemned in the Old Testament:

Jeremiah 6:13-15; 8:10-12; Ezekiel 22:27-29; Zephaniah 3:1-4

They bear bad fruit.

But note they may appear very 'sweet'

But the fruit is bitter

Carson: "Ultimately false prophets tear down faith (2Ti 2:18) and promote divisiveness, bitterness (e.g., 1Ti 6:4–5; 2Ti 2:23), and various kinds of ungodliness (2Ti 2:16). Meek discernment and understanding the dire consequences of the false prophets' teachings are needed. But at the same time, censoriousness over minutiae must be avoided."

3. **How do you discern a person's spiritual state?**

I think there are two methods here:

Their 'good' fruit. (v20)

They do the will of my Father who is in Heaven (v21).

Of course one issues in the other.

**4. Who gets into the kingdom of heaven (v21-23)?**

Those who are known by Jesus.

Who are those who produce good fruit by doing the will of the Father?

**What does it Mean?**

**1. Noting the two ways mentioned in v13-14 what examples of these choices has Jesus addressed so far in the Sermon? Discuss your experiences in choosing the right road.**

Look back at:

5:3-10 The Beatitudes call on us to chose to exhibit these Godly characteristics and not their opposites.

5:21-47 The antitheses challenge us to choose the hard road of internal righteousness instead of mere external, apparent, obedience.

6:1-18 Challenge us to choose the humble and 'secret' means of giving and praying and fasting.

6:19-24 Confronts us the with the choice between the material things of this world or the blessings of 'heavenly treasures.'

6:25-34 Presents us with choosing to trust God or continually 'trust' ourselves by worrying.

7:1-8 The choice between judgmental hypocrisy and honest appraisal.

Take the time to discuss the daily choices of road we face.

**2. What, in the Christian life are the fruit Jesus is talking about?**

We can look to the fruit of the spirit in Galatians 5:22-23 *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*

And at the fruit born of evangelizing people.

And the gifts of the spirit worked out in people's lives. Summed up in 1 Peter 4:7-11(see Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 12:8-10, 28-30; Eph. 4:11)

John the Baptist earlier in the Gospel speaks of fruit in keeping with repentance (3:8)

Note Philippians 1:11 and Colossians 1:10.

**3. Discuss the warning implied in v21-23?**

God looks not on the outward appearance but on the heart (1 Sam 16:7)

This is yet another warning against hypocrisy.

**What should I Do?**

**1. How do you produce good fruit?**

Discuss

**2. Discuss how to be spiritually discerning with out being judgmental (7:1)?**

Discuss.

Blomberg: *"It is worth emphasizing however, that one can never know with absolute certainty the spiritual state of any other individual."*

**What others have said:**

*"The disciple who takes it on himself to be the judge of what another does usurps the place of God (Ro 14:10) and therefore becomes answerable to him."* Carson

# **Matthew 7:24-8:1**

## **Study 9 'Yet it did not fall'**

### **Background**

- 1. How good are you at implementing advice and instructions you are given?**

For discussion.

### **What does it Say?**

- 1. Who is Jesus addressing at the start of this passage?**

All those who are listening to him.

It starts with the disciples at 5:1 but by this stage, as we see in v28 there are crowds listening.

It is interesting to look at the various 'passages' of the sermon and consider who they are aimed at – those who are already committed to Jesus: The Disciples or those who are showing some interest but little commitment: The Crowds.

I think that as the Sermon goes on and particularly in chapter 7 more and more the 'hangers on' of the crowd are being addressed and challenged to consider Jesus and his message.

But of course it is all relevant to both groups.

- 2. What is the gist of the parable he tells?**

It is not unfamiliar to us.

We could all sing the song together.

The wise man built his house on the rock – and it stood.

The foolish man built on the sand - and it fell.

But the point is deeper.

- 3. What is the result for the two builders? Why?**

For the 'Rock Builder' there is a safe and enduring shelter.

For the 'Sand Builder' there is a pile of sticks and presumably muddy sand.

(Does make you think of all those houses near beaches in Kiama which are firmly built on sand.)

We see so many practical examples of this sort of thing in the news when disaster strikes – well founded buildings tend to stand better than those with lesser foundations.

The message is basically build on the rock.

- 4. What is the reaction of the people around to Jesus' sermon (7:28-8:1)?**

They are amazed.

They see the difference to their other teachers

The crowds follow him.

### **What does it Mean?**

- 1. What is the 'rock' that we build on?**

The parable urges us to build on a solid foundation. And this is not construction advice (good though it may be in that area) it is lifestyle, spiritual advice – Build you live on the right foundation.

And that foundation is:

Hearing the words of Jesus – for example, here, the words of this sermon. – and putting them into practice.

Not one without the other, not either/or, but both/and.

We have that word, in its completeness, in our Bibles – it is ALL 'these words of mine' for it is all about Jesus.

Wilkins: *“The wise person shows that he or she has carefully viewed the shifting sands of life’s teachings and understands that Jesus is the only secure truth of life (cf. 1 Cor. 3:10–11). The wise person thinks ahead to when there will be storms and sacrifices and builds his or her life on the rock of Jesus’ words. The choice is no less stark in our own day. Wise men and women build their lives on Jesus, regardless of the cultural or religious weather.”*

## **2. Why are the people amazed at Jesus’ teaching?**

They perceive that Jesus words have authority.

The common practice of the Rabbi’s of the day was to quote the words of earlier Rabbis, the scriptures (The Law and the Prophets) and other authorities.

Blomberg: *“Strikingly, Jesus quotes scripture in his sermon only to reinterpret it, he cites no human authorities or tradition, and he speaks with directness and confidence that he himself is bringing God’s message for a new era in human history. Such preaching reflects either the height of presumption and heresy or the fact that he was a true spokes person for God, whom we dare not ignore.”*

Jesus words are fresh and challenging.

Wilkins: *“But Matthew’s conclusion is ironic. Amazement at Jesus’ teachings does not indicate acceptance. The term “amazed” is the passive form of ekplesso, which in Matthew is not a description of faith. It indicates a variety of emotional responses but not a commitment to Jesus’ messianic ministry. ... Amazement is not the same as a commitment of faith. Only when a person accepts Jesus’ invitation and enters the kingdom of heaven does he or she become a disciple.”*

## **3. What other passages in the sermon end with the same two ‘ends’ as Jesus’ parable?**

5:19 *Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.*

7:13-14 *“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.*

7:18-20 *A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.*

Of course the two ends are implied in the others where just the nature of the reward in the kingdom of heaven is mentioned or hinted at.

For example the eschatological nature of the rewards in the Beatitudes implies that those who exhibit the opposite characteristics are denied these blessings.

## **What should I Do?**

### **1. Where is your foundation?**

For discussion.

Wilkins: *“The popular pastor and expositor James Montgomery Boice suggests that there are two mistakes that a person can make with respect to this choice. One error is to say, as many young people might, that they need no foundation. The other error is to say, as many of an older generation may, that any foundation will do. The former we see in the postmodern skepticism about finding absolute truth. The latter we see in the politically correct pluralism of modern culture. But the solid rock that has provided true stability,*

*security, and hope throughout church history is none other than Jesus, and him alone, and the life of kingdom righteousness that he has announced in the SM. This is expressed so beautifully in the old, yet not so old, hymn, “My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less.”*

*My hope is built on nothing less  
Than Jesus’ blood and righteousness;  
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,  
But wholly lean on Jesus’ name.  
On Christ the solid Rock I stand;  
All other ground is sinking sand,  
All other ground is sinking sand.*

(William B. Bradbury, “My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less” (1863))

## **2. What will you do this week to put one of the demands, these words of Jesus, in this sermon into practice?**

For Discussion

Wilkins: *“But as Messiah, Jesus is also highlighted as the authoritative adjudicator of humanity’s destiny. In these four brief scenes that conclude the Sermon on the Mount, all of humanity stands before Jesus, and he asks each, “What will you do with me?”*

- *7:13–14: Will you enter the gate to life in the kingdom of heaven and embark on a life of following me? Or will you reject me for the popular road that leads to destruction?*
- *7:15–20: Will you find in me the inner source of transformation that will produce the good fruit of life? Or will you follow the prophetic voices of this world that hype a promise of life but will only take you into the fires of hell?*
- *7:21–23: Will you obey my Father’s will and come to me as your only Lord? Or will you chase after false manifestations of spirituality that result in eternal banishment?*
- *7:24–27: Will you build your life on me as your solid rock? Or will the pleasant ease of your life cause you to be unprepared for the storms that will come in this life and that will ultimately wash you away into the desolation of the afterlife?*

*These pictures of eternal punishment are not pretty, but they are urgently necessary for Jesus’ audience and for Matthew’s readers, including us. The years that we have been allotted on this earth have eternal significance. They may end sooner than we think, so we must be prepared at all times for what lies beyond. What’s more, the way we live these years is important, because what we sow here is what we reap there. This should cause us to live with an eternal perspective, which will influence our priorities in our work and play, in our relationships and commitments, and in our stewardship and service.”*

### **What others have said:**

*“Jesus alone provides the teaching that leads to eternal life. So the one who listens must choose between temporary satisfaction of worldly ways and the final reality of Christ. ... The emphasis is on obedience, not just adherence to Christ. ... We must put feet on our clams and live our beliefs remembering that those ‘who endure to the end will be saved’ (10:22; 24:13).”*

Osborne.

# Matthew 5:1-7:27

## Study 10 'Like one who had authority'

*This study again looks at the whole Sermon on the Mount this time with a view to seeing its place in the whole of Scripture and its impact on us personally*  
On one occasion, having been criticized for not caring much for the Sermon on the Mount, C.S. Lewis wrote:

*"As to 'caring for' the Sermon on the Mount, if 'caring for' here means 'liking' or enjoying, I suppose no one 'cares for' it. Who can like being knocked flat on his face by a sledge hammer? I can hardly imagine a more deadly spiritual condition than that of a man who can read that passage with tranquil pleasure."* (Rejoinder to Dr. Pittenger in 'God in the Dock')

### Background

1. Scan through the Sermon (Matthew 5-7) again and pick out one thought that has impacted you.

### What does it Say? Some 'startling' statements:

Read these brief statements (or at least some of them) in context and discuss their impact. How is this "Christian Counter Culture?"

I would suggest that you choose some to discuss, review from what we have done. My 'comments' are all from Michael Green's Bible Speaks Today commentary on Matthew.

- **Blessed are the meek ...' 5:5**

*The background to this verse is Psalm 37:11: 'The meek will inherit the land.' It is revolutionary stuff. It says that victory goes not to the wise or to the strong, but to those who are so small before God (which is what 'meek' means) that God can afford to exalt them without the danger of their getting proud.*

- **'Blessed are you when people insult you ...' 5:11**

*It is moving and significant that the suffering church in lands where it is oppressed does not want to be like the church in the West. It looks for our prayers, not that it may have an easy time, but that it may be faithful unto death, and know the joy of utter faithfulness to Jesus. There is no joy like that.*

- **'You are the light of the world ...' 5:14**

*We are meant to get involved and be a light and a preservative. We are not promised that we shall be able to Christianize the legislation and values of the world, but we are challenged to be an irritant, marching to a different drum and calling on society to heed God's standards.*

- **'... but to fulfill them ...' 5:17**

*But the moral law had not been abrogated. Indeed, Jesus goes on to intensify its demands. ... Jesus looks for the inner disposition as well as the outer action. The law is not the limit of obedience; it is to be seen rather as the springboard for a life of devotion to Jesus and his Father. It is the kerbstone along the road of love.*

- **'If your right eye cause you to stumble, gouge it out ...' 5:29**

*He is telling us that we must deal with sin as drastically and radically as necessary, and cut off avenues that we know to be unhelpful to cultivating that purity of heart which is part of the 'blessed' life (5:8).*

- **'Love you enemies ...' 5:44**

*Of course we cannot like our enemies. But we can love them, in this sense of agape love. We can desire and work for their highest good.*

*We can regard them as those for whom Christ came and died and who are therefore intensely valuable to him. At least, we can begin to move in that direction if we ourselves have been magnetized by the love of the God who treats us like that.*

- **‘Be perfect therefore ...’ 5:48**

*The Jews aimed to satisfy the law of God. The members of the kingdom aim to respond in wholehearted gratitude to the love of God. And that attitude knows no limits. It never cries, ‘Enough!’*

- **‘Then your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you ...’ 6:4**

*No, sincere obedience to God’s word is the key to an authentic devotional life. Not playing to the gallery, but humbly living in the light of the Father’s will. Such is the attitude he can reward.*

- **‘This then is how you should pray ...’ 6:9**

*The marvelous prayer that follows has depths we shall never plumb. ... Matthew’s account is primarily directed towards Jewish people who already pray, but need to know how to pray correctly, with the simplicity and directness that Jesus longs to see in his disciples.*

- **‘No one can serve two masters ...’ 6:24**

*You cannot have divided loyalties in this matter. God has to come first, and money a poor second. ... Wise people, the true children of the kingdom, put their treasure where they cannot lose it, where it will never wear out, and where it can never be eroded. Their treasure is in heaven. It is safe with the Father.*

- **‘Therefore do not worry about tomorrow ...’ 6:34**

*Worry is not a little weakness we all give way to from time to time. It is a sin that is strictly forbidden. R. H. Mounce says, ‘Worry is practical atheism and an affront to God’, and Jesus gives good reasons for the truth of this.*

- **‘Do not judge ...’ 7:1**

*No, instead of the critical spirit, disciples should be known for their humility, recognizing their own shortcomings. They should also be known for their helpful spirit, willing to alleviate the troubles of others by practical help rather than adding to them by carping criticism.*

- **‘do to others what you would have them do to you ...’ 7:12**

*That generous attitude of going out of your way to encourage the depressed, to forgive those who have wronged you, and to help the disadvantaged requires positive action, often self-sacrificial action. You don’t do that to fulfill some law. You do it only if the love of the kingdom burns in your heart. It is one thing to say, ‘I must not harm my fellows.’ It is quite another to say, ‘I must go out of my way to help them.’*

- **‘Enter through the narrow gate ...’ 7:13**

*That image (7:13–14) poses the question, ‘Have you gone through the gate? Are you on the road?’ You cannot get on to the road until you have gone through the turnstiles. And they are not roomy. No room for baggage, for pride, for irresolution. Enter! Notice how here, as so often in the teaching of Jesus, we are challenged to decide.*

- **‘because it had its foundation on the rock ...’ 7:25**

*Instead he says there are only two ways we can build. Not many ways, just two. We can either build on him and his teaching, which we will find is as solid as rock; or else we can build on any other religion or*

*philosophy in the world, and we will find that it is sand, and in the last day it will spell ruin.*

**What should I Do?**

- 1. Corporately, what do we need to change in our church to align ourselves more to Jesus' teaching in the Sermon?**
- 2. Individually, what do you need to work on to be more like the sort of disciple Jesus paints in the Sermon?**

**What others have said:**

*"What we shall find is that it is impossible to drive a wedge between the Jesus of the Sermon on the Mount and the Jesus of the rest of the New Testament. Instead, the preacher of the Sermon on the Mount is the same supernatural, dogmatic, divine Jesus who is to be found everywhere else. So the main question the Sermon forces upon us is not so much 'What do you make of this teaching?' as 'Who on earth is this teacher?'" Stott*