

DOWNSIDE UP
HOW
JESUS
CHANGES
EVERYTHING



DOWNSIDE UP HOW JESUS CHANGES EVERYTHING

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Enjoy your group and be enjoyed in your group

To benefit most from the time in your group, we have these suggestions:

Listen.

Lean in and hear what others are saying at your table. Ask questions. Silence your cell phone and even put it away unless you must be available to a child or an emergency call to receive. Be sure not to dominate the sharing time. Be aware of those who are quiet and invite their input.

Protect One Another.

We're a bit like Vegas in that what is shared at the table, stays at the table. Make this a safe place for everyone. Other than that, we're not like Vegas at all.

No Advice or Counseling.

Resist the urge to give advice—this can often be very hurtful. We're not here to *fix* one another but to support, care and point one another to the grace and truth of Jesus. Also resist the urge to tell someone in pain that "it will get better." Typically, in the midst of great pain, a person wants simply to be heard. Affirm that what they are experiencing must be hard and then just listen.

Pray. Pray. Pray.

Pray for your group throughout the week and invite others to pray for you as you participate.

Prepare.

Get the most out of this study by using this study guide. Please make every effort to do the homework and come prepared for discussion. This will bless everyone, including you! Feel free to divide each lesson into smaller segments that you do 2-3 times a week rather than trying to do it all in one sitting.

Join the Conversation.

Share your thoughts and see what others are thinking on Twitter: **#wbsdownsideup**.

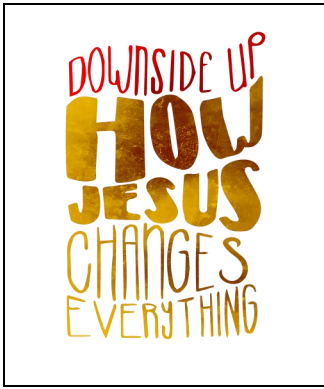
Hear the Messages.

Listen to the messages that accompany this study and find more resources on our App:

For Apple/iTunes: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/christian-assembly-women/id670451201?ls=1&mt=8>

For Google Play Android Market:

<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.subsplash.thechurchapp.christianassemblychurchwomen>



The Downside Up Kingdom Week One

Use this page to record notes from the opening talk. [To watch or listen to this talk go to iTunes and then to the podcast page and search for Women at Christian Assembly. For easy access of the audio of this talk upload the App at <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/christian-assembly-women/id670451201?ls=1&mt=8>].

Notes



Week One Group Discussion

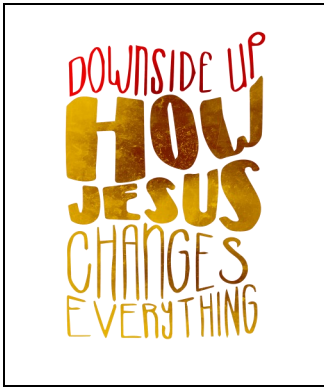
In your group discuss the message, but first take a moment to get to know one another. Use the following questions to help guide your time.

1. What do you hope to learn and receive from this session of Bible Study?

2. What three words best describe your current season of life?

3. After listening to the message, share one thing that most surprised you about The Sermon on the Mount.

4. After hearing and discussing the message what is one thing you want to thank God for today?



The Downside Up of Happiness Week Two

Before you go too far . . .

Before diving into this week's study on The Beatitudes try to read all the way through The Sermon on the Mount [this is optional but highly recommended]. You'll find the entire sermon on pages 38-42, with space to make observations. It is a crucial step of Bible Study to get the big picture and understand the passage in its context. After reading through the sermon, come back here and record your thoughts.

What most struck you about The Sermon on the Mount?



How Happy is Happy?

The word for "blessed" in The Beatitudes can also be translated "happy" or "fully satisfied."

How does our culture typically define happiness?

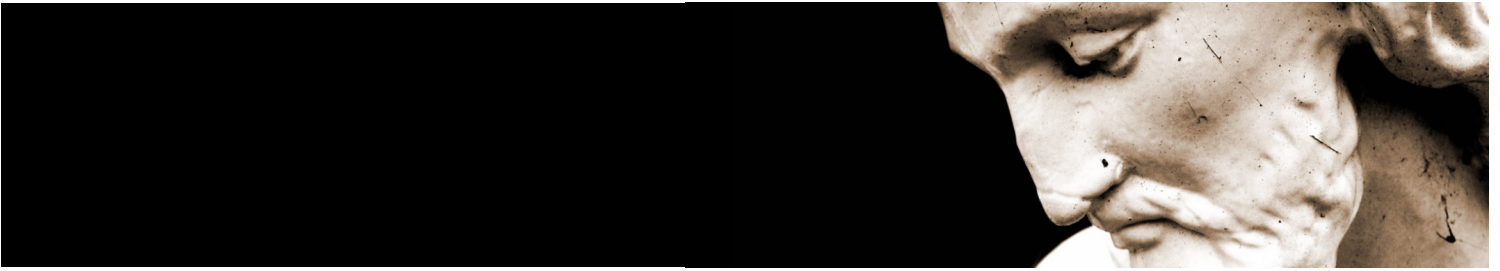
How do The Beatitudes differ from the typical definition for happiness?

How do The Beatitudes change the way you think about relating to your family, friends, work and circumstances?

The Beatitudes: Breaking it Down

Fill in the chart below by writing out each Beatitude, looking up definitions for key words and then record the promise given for each blessing. To find definitions look at dictionaries, commentaries (<http://www.studylight.org/com>), google, etc.

| Verse | Blessed are the . . . | Definitions of Key Words | The Promise (they will . . .) |
|---------|-----------------------|--|-------------------------------|
| 5:3 | | <p>Example: "Poor in Spirit" = "Poor in spirit means that you feel you have no moral riches and are in need. You feel you need 'spiritual' life. 'Poor' (πτωχός/tokos) used in this verse means 'reduced to being a beggar'."</p> | |
| 5:4 | | | |
| 5:5 | | | |
| 5:6 | | | |
| 5:7 | | | |
| 5:8 | | | |
| 5:9 | | | |
| 5:10 | | | |
| 5:11-12 | | | |



See Jesus

Record how you see Jesus exemplifying each of The Beatitudes. Don't limit yourself to the suggested passages. Feel free to reference other Scripture that comes to mind.

Jesus is poor in spirit ["Poor in spirit" here carries the idea of dependence. John 5:19-20; John 8:28-29]

Jesus mourns [John 11:35; Luke 19:37-44]

Jesus is meek [Meekness is restrained power, the original word meant a stallion held back. Philippians 2:5-11]

Jesus hungers and thirsts for righteousness [Hungering and thirsting for righteousness is the willingness to follow the way and the will of God. Matthew 26:36-46; John 4:32-34]

Jesus is merciful [John 8:9-11; 1 Peter 1:3;]

Jesus is pure in heart [2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:21-24]

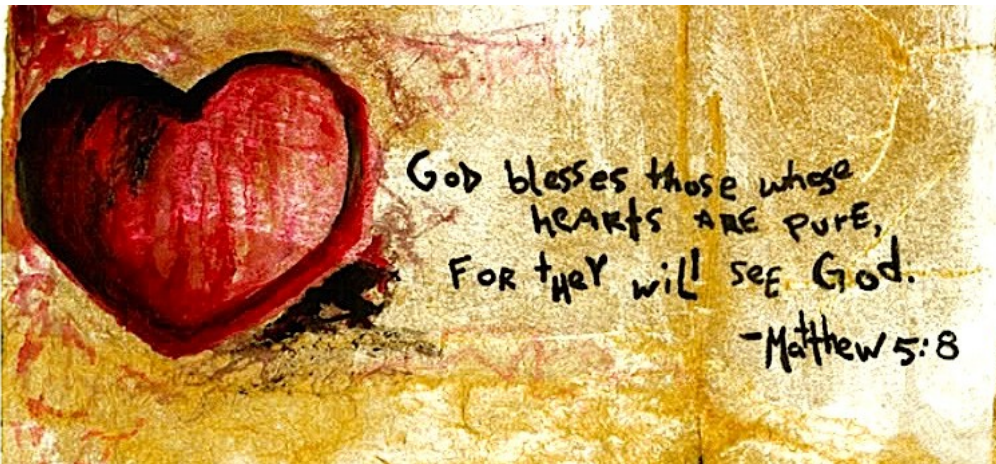
Jesus is the peacemaker [Isaiah 9:6-7; Ephesians 2:11-22]

Jesus is/was persecuted [John 5:16-18; Isaiah 53:3-9]

For My Group

What are the three most significant things you learned in your study of The Beatitudes?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



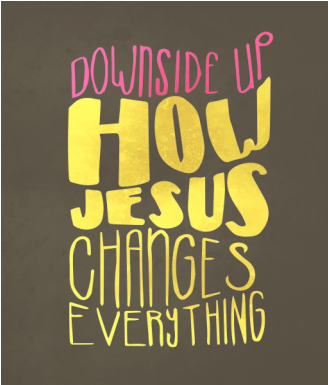
Going Deeper: The Pure in Heart will See God

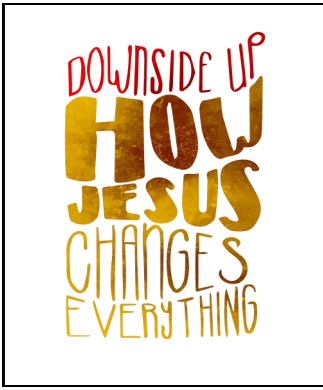
All of us want to see (experience) God. Jesus tells us that this happens out of the purity of our heart. Take some time to look at other places in Scripture that speak to purity. Go to www.biblegateway.com and do a word search on words like purity, pure, holiness, righteousness, heart. How does a "pure heart" help us see God? Record your findings here. [Note: The Going Deeper section is always optional].

Indeed, what would one search for when one has God before one's eyes?
Or what would satisfy one who would not be satisfied with God? Yes, we wish to see God.
Who does not have this desire? We strive to see God. We are on fire with the desire of seeing God.

Augustine

Notes: The Downside Up of Happiness





The Downside Up of Privacy Week Three

Many believe that faith is a private matter. They consider it something they should keep to themselves and only share with those who are like-minded. But, Jesus turns this concept of a private faith downside up.

In **Matthew 5:13-16** Jesus says, “this is who you are!” You are “the salt of the earth” and you are “the light of the world.” Our faith as a follower of Christ cannot be hidden. We are made to live outwardly. We are made for influence!

Read Matthew 5:13-16 [Remember The entire Sermon on the Mount is on pages 38-42].

Why do you think Jesus uses the picture of salt and light to describe his followers?

How does your community [friends, family, co-workers, neighbors] need you to be salt and light this week?

How do The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12) help us understand what it means to be salt and light?

What might cause a Christ-follower to lose their “saltiness”? How can you keep this from happening this week?

Salt and Light

What do these passages reveal to you about being salt and light in your world?

| Passage | Being Salt and Light |
|---|----------------------|
| <p>Mark 9:50 Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again? Have salt among yourselves, and be at peace with each other.”</p> | |
| <p>Proverbs 13:9 The light of the righteous shines brightly, but the lamp of the wicked is snuffed out.</p> | |
| <p>Isaiah 42:6-7 “I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles, to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness.</p> | |
| <p>1 John 2:9-10 Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates a brother or sister is still in the darkness. Anyone who loves their brother and sister lives in the light, and there is nothing in them to make them stumble.</p> | |
| <p>Ephesians 5:8-11, 15-18 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord. Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them . . . Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit,</p> | |
| <p>2 Corinthians 4:5-6 For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake. For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God’s glory displayed in the face of Christ.</p> | |



Take a moment to pause and just worship Jesus who is *the* light of the world.

Jesus said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

John 8:12

The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb who is Jesus is its lamp.

Revelation 21:23

... for the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory.

Isaiah 60:19

For My Group

What are the three most significant things you learned in your study of being Salt and Light?

1.

2.

3.

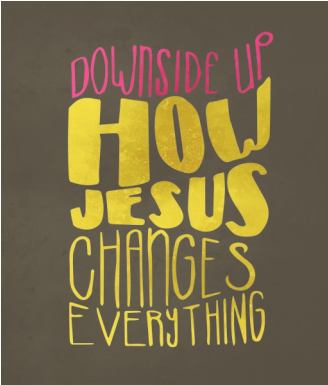
Going Deeper: The Downside Up of the Law

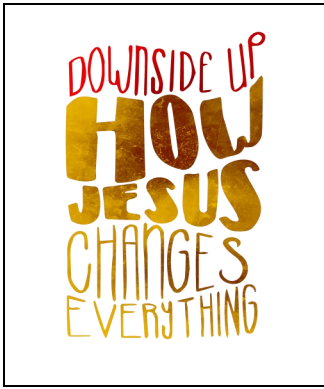
Unfortunately, in these eight weeks we don't have time to study the entire Sermon on the Mount in-depth. We have to skip some important sections, so we'll use the "going deeper" section as an opportunity to look at some of the passages we are jumping over. This week read **Matthew 5:17-20** as well as: **Hebrews 2:17-18**; **2 Corinthians 5:21**; **Romans 6:14-23**; and **Romans 8:1-4**.

How does Jesus turn your perception of the law and righteousness downside up?

How does Jesus fulfill the Law?

Notes: The Downside Up of Privacy





The Downside Up of Conflict Week Four

Let's take a look back before we move into our study today. The Sermon on the Mount begins with blessings, promises and a description of those who belong to Jesus. Then comes the reminder that the grace of Christ's coming is not that he abolishes the law but that he actually fulfills it! It is important to know that the law was never given as a way to gain God's approval. Even The Ten Commandments were given to a covenant people *already* approved by God to show them how to live as his beloved children. The imperatives in the Sermon on the Mount carry the same purpose because this is a message of how those already rescued by God's grace are to live in and through that grace.

How do most people respond when they are hurt or wounded by a friend, family member, co-worker or acquaintance?

Read Matthew 5:21-26, 38-48.

How does Jesus turn our concept of dealing with conflict downside up?

How does Jesus turn our concept of love downside up?

Reconciliation and the Radical Call to Love and Peace

Read the following passages and record what they reveal about reconciliation, love and peace.

| Passage | Reconciliation, Love and Peace |
|--|--------------------------------|
| <p>Ephesians 4:30-32 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.</p> | |
| <p>Matthew 18:15-16 “If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’</p> | |
| <p>Hebrews 12:14-15 Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.</p> | |
| <p>Colossians 3:12-14 Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.</p> | |
| <p>Proverbs 17:9 Love prospers when a fault is forgiven, but dwelling on it separates close friends.</p> | |
| <p>Matthew 5:9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.</p> | |

Slowly look back over these passages and your observations. Ask the Holy Spirit to speak to you through God’s word. What do you hear him speaking to you about your current relationships?

Is there something you need to start doing or stop doing in a current relationship?



See Jesus

Pause and just worship Jesus. He is the one who comes after you, reconciling you to God, giving you peace, making you his friend.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them . . . God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

2 Corinthians 5:17-19, 21

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly . . .

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!

For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation (we have been made friends with God!)

Romans 5:6, 8-10

I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business.

Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.

John 15:15

How blessed is God! And what a blessing he is! He's the Father of our Master, Jesus Christ, and takes us to the high places of blessing in him. Long before he laid down earth's foundations, he had us in mind, had settled on us as the focus of his love, to be made whole and holy by his love. Long, long ago he decided to adopt us into his family through Jesus Christ. (What pleasure he took in planning this!) He wanted us to enter into the celebration of his lavish gift-giving by the hand of his beloved Son. Because of the sacrifice of the Messiah, his blood poured out on the altar of the Cross, we're a free people—free of penalties and punishments chalked up by all our misdeeds. And not just barely free, either. Abundantly free!

He thought of everything, provided for everything we could possibly need, letting us in on the plans he took such delight in making. He set it all out before us in Christ, a long-range plan in which everything would be brought together and summed up in him, everything in deepest heaven, everything on planet earth.

It's in Christ that we find out who we are and what we are living for. Long before we first heard of Christ and got our hopes up, he had his eye on us, had designs on us for glorious living, part of the overall purpose he is working out in everything and everyone.

Ephesians 1:3-12

[The Message Translation]

"God's grace and forgiveness, while free to the recipient, are always costly for the giver . . . From the earliest parts of the Bible, it was understood that God could not forgive without sacrifice. No one who is seriously wronged can "just forgive" the perpetrator . . . But when you forgive, that means you absorb the loss and the debt. You bear it yourself.

All forgiveness, then, is costly.

Tim Keller

For My Group

What are the two most significant things you learned from this study?

1.

2.

Going Deeper: Loving Our Enemies

The gospel message is the story of a King who came to restore his enemies to favor, grace, true purpose, passion and value.

Romans 5:10 and **Colossians 1:21** say we were once enemies of God, the King. This is a disturbing thought! To be an enemy of anyone, especially God, is rarely a conclusion we'd come to on our own.

It's difficult for us to think that we have "enemies." That seems like an extreme word for defining those who have wounded us. But all of us experience people who are not easy to get along with. Perhaps it is these relationships we need to consider when we hear the words of Jesus calling us to love our "enemies."

Luke 6:27-36 is a parallel passage to Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount in **Matthew 5:43-48**

"But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also.

If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them. Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you.

"If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them.

And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that.

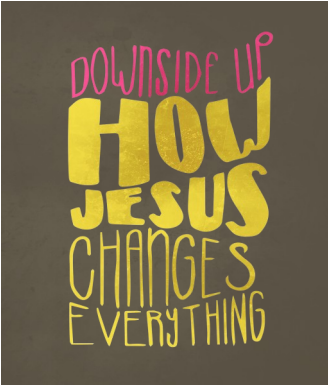
And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, expecting to be repaid in full. But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

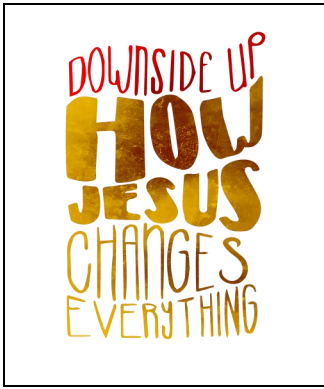
Luke 6:27-36

According to Jesus, what does it look like to "do good to those who hate you"?

What does this passage tell us about God?

Notes: The Downside Up of Conflict





The Downside Up of Desire Week Five

The Sermon on the Mount is a sermon for Kingdom-people — those who identify themselves with Jesus, the King. In this sermon Jesus is saying, ‘this is how Kingdom-people live.’ Much of what he says seems really reasonable — certainly it is right not to murder or hate — but suddenly Jesus steps over a boundary that most will see as unreasonable. He says we’re not supposed to lust! Is that even possible? And what’s all this about gouging out eyes and cutting off hands? This is the topic for this week. Enjoy!

Read Matthew 5:27-30.

What is your initial response to these words of Jesus?

What three questions do you want to ask Jesus after reading this passage?

1.

2.

3.

How does Jesus seem to be turning our view of sex and sexual desire downside up?

What?!

STOP! It's passages like this that cause people to conclude that Christianity is completely ridiculous, repressed and unrealistic about sex and sexuality. So, before we continue, we have to look at how the Bible speaks of the beauty and value of God's design for sex. **Read the following passages and record your observations.**

| Passage | Observations |
|---|--------------|
| <p>1 Corinthians 7:2-5</p> <p>... each man should have sexual relations with his own wife, and each woman with her own husband. The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body but yields it to her husband. In the same way, the husband does not have authority over his own body but yields it to his wife. Do not deprive each other except perhaps by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.</p> <p>[Note: Paul wrote this when a huge double-standard existed between men and women. It was normal at that time for men to have wives for societal reasons and to have mistresses for sexual pleasure. Of course, this standard was not acceptable to God who created sexual pleasure for marriage.]</p> | |
| <p>Deuteronomy 24:5</p> <p>If a man has recently married, he must not be sent to war or have any other duty laid on him. For one year he is to be free to stay at home and bring happiness to the wife he has married.</p> <p>[The Hebrew <i>וְשִׂמַח</i> /wessimach, "bring happiness," can also be translated "gratify" in the sense of giving the wife sexual pleasure.]</p> | |
| <p>Proverbs 5:18-20</p> <p>May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth. A loving doe, a graceful deer — may her breasts satisfy you always, may you ever be intoxicated with her love. Why, my son, be intoxicated with another man's wife? Why embrace the bosom of a wayward woman?</p> | |
| <p>Ephesians 5:31-32</p> <p>"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." This is a profound mystery —but I am talking about Christ and the church.</p> | |
| <p>Song of Solomon 1:12-17 [The Message Translation]</p> <p>When my King-Lover lay down beside me, my fragrance filled the room. His head resting between my breasts — the head of my lover was a sachet of sweet myrrh. My beloved is a bouquet of wildflowers picked just for me from the fields of Engedi. [The Man:] Oh, my dear friend! You're so beautiful! And your eyes so beautiful —like doves! [The Woman:] And you, my dear lover —you're so handsome! And the bed we share is like a forest glen. We enjoy a canopy of cedars enclosed by cypresses, fragrant and green.</p> <p>[Song of Solomon is a book unashamed to express the erotic love of a groom and his bride. Jewish boys were forbidden to read this book before they were thirteen. Unfortunately the translation from Hebrew to English loses some of the explicit sexual passion].</p> | |

Getting Personal about Lust

Jesus says that if anyone even looks at a person lustfully they have already committed adultery in their heart. There are many words Jesus could have used for “sexual desire” but the word he chose was a word used for idolatry (most often speaking of greed). Jesus is saying that it is wrong to look upon the opposite sex in an idolatrous/greedy manner. To do so is to look on that person as an object to be obtained rather than a treasure to adore. Tim Keller notes that when we are greedy we are given over to three things:

[1] **Selfishness** (it is about me, I need it for my own personal pleasure); [2] **Addiction** (I have to have it! If I don't have it, I will not be fulfilled, satisfied, or at peace); and [3] **Fantasy** (the expectation is beyond any true reality of actual delight, pleasure, fulfillment, truth). When we are greedy and idolatrous toward another sexually we demand that they satisfy our need for value and pleasure and joy in a manner that only God is capable of fulfilling.

How have you made sex and/or romantic love an idol in your life or marriage?

The Seriousness of Sin

Look back over God's design for sex and Jesus' admonition not to lust after another (in a greedy/idolatrous way). Now re-read **Matthew 5:29-30**. Note that the word for hell that Jesus uses here often refers to a place of unquenchable thirst and unfulfilled longing.

Why does Jesus makes such an extreme statement about dealing with sin?

So what do we do? Keep on sinning so God can keep on forgiving? I should hope not! If we've left the country where sin is sovereign, how can we still live in our old house there? Or didn't you realize we packed up and left there for good?

That is what happened in baptism. When we went under the water, we left the old country of sin behind; when we came up out of the water, we entered into the new country of grace—a new life in a new land! . . . When Jesus died, he took sin down with him, but alive he brings God down to us. From now on, think of it this way: Sin speaks a dead language that means nothing to you; God speaks your mother tongue, and you hang on every word. You are dead to sin and alive to God. That's what Jesus did. That means you must not give sin a vote in the way you conduct your lives. Don't give it the time of day.

Don't even run little errands that are connected with that old way of life. Throw yourselves wholeheartedly and full-time—remember, you've been raised from the dead!—into God's way of doing things. Sin can't tell you how to live. After all, you're not living under that old tyranny any longer. You're living in the freedom of God.

Romans 6:1-3, 10-14

[The Message Translation]

You can't keep the birds from flying over your head, but you can sure keep them from building a nest in your hair!

The Theologian Martin Luther on Sexual Temptation



Experiencing Jesus

Read the following passage and imagine yourself in this encounter with Jesus. Imagine that you are this woman.

But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, “Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?” They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him. But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, “Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. Jesus straightened up and asked her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” “No one, sir,” she said.

“Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin.”

John 8:1-11

As the woman, what are you feeling as you are brought before Jesus?

How does Jesus' response impact you? What does his grace feel like?

Who do you need to extend grace and forgiveness to today?

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Romans 8:1-4

For My Group

What are the three most significant things you learned from this study?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Going Deeper: Divorce and Remarriage

Matthew 5:31-32 is a very difficult passage. It is heavily debated among Christians. It is a passage that is best understood in the context of the whole Bible, the gospel and the multiple passages on divorce. Here are a few thoughts for consideration.

Cultural Issues— Divorce was strictly the privilege of men at the time. Women were rarely able to divorce. Some believe that the concept of a divorced woman becoming the victim of adultery is rooted in the idea that a divorced woman at the time may have had no means to support herself and might have resorted to prostitution.

Biblical Passages— **Matthew 5:31-32; Matthew 19:1-12** (this passage mentions the Old Testament provision for divorce); **Mark 10:1-12** (parallel to **Matthew 19**); **Luke 16:18**; and **1 Corinthians 7:10-16**. See www.biblegateway.com to do a full search of the word “divorce” in Scripture.

Marriage— Jesus argues strongly for marriage based on Genesis 1:27 and Genesis 2:20-25. Marriage was created with creation! It was a unique covenant relationship between a man and a woman. Covenants were meant to be kept and Jesus is appealing to this when he speaks against divorce.

The Four Positions on Divorce and Remarriage

Position 1: No Divorce - No Remarriage

Marriage is a covenant agreement, meant for life, therefore it must not be broken under any circumstance; remarriage further violates the covenant and therefore is not permissible.

Position 2: Divorce - But No Remarriage

Divorce, though not God's desire, is sometimes the only alternative when all else has failed. The divorced person must remain unmarried for life thereafter.

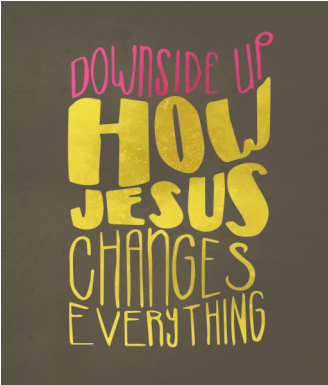
Position 3: Divorce - Remarriage is Permissible within Certain Parameters

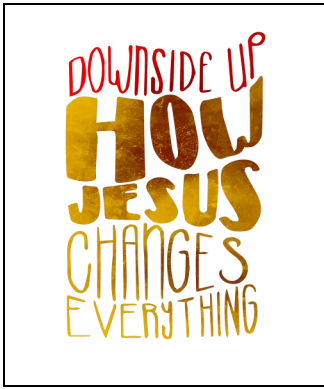
Only in certain situations. Divorce, though not God's desire, is sometimes unavoidable. If the grounds for the divorce are biblical, the divorced person can remarry, but only to a believer.

Position 4: Divorce is Not Unforgivable - Remarriage is always Permissible

Divorce, though not God's desire, is also not the unforgivable sin. Regardless of the circumstances, all divorced persons who have repented, should be forgiven and allowed to remarry.

Notes: The Downside Up of Desire





The Downside Up of Religion Week Six

Religion is a funny thing. What can seem so right is often in opposition to the Gospel of grace because it is merely frenetic activity in an attempt to please God. In **Matthew 6:1-24**, Jesus turns religious activity downside up and calls us to an authentic faith that practices certain disciplines for the purpose of greater intimacy with God rather than just religious performance. Note: Jesus doesn't tell us to stop the discipline he just calls us to a new motive. It is tempting to dismiss all spiritual discipline as "legalistic" but discipline is not legalism. Legalism is an attempt to earn God's approval. Discipline is remembering what you *really* want (i.e. I want to eat a bag of Cheetos, but I *really* want to be healthy). Spiritual discipline is cooperating with the Holy Spirit to grow in Christ-likeness and intimacy with God. As Dallas Willard said, "Grace is not opposed to effort, it is opposed to earning."

Read Matthew 6:1-24.

List the repeated words and phrases in this passage. Why are they significant?

What does this passage reveal about God?

How does Jesus desire us to give, pray and fast?

Why do you think God seems to love secrecy when practicing these activities?

Jesus calls for secrecy in this section but in 5:16 he says, "let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven." How are these two imperatives compatible?

The Reward

A repeated theme in this passage is that of reward. We are not to give or pray or fast to gain honor from others but rather to gain our reward from God. But this concept can be repulsive to Christ-followers. They find it self-serving and proclaim, "I am not doing any of these things for a reward!" But this theme of reward appears in many places in the Bible. Read the following passages and record what they reveal about seeking our reward from God alone.

| Scripture | Observations on Rewards |
|--|-------------------------|
| <p>Matthew 5:8, 10-12 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God . . . Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.</p> | |
| <p>Matthew 16:24-27 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done.</p> | |
| <p>Colossians 3:23-24 Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.</p> | |
| <p>Hebrews 11:6 And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.</p> | |
| <p>1 Corinthians 4:4-5 My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me. Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait until the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of the heart. At that time each will receive their praise from God.</p> | |
| <p>Galatians 1:10 Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.</p> | |
| <p>1 Thessalonians 2:3-4 For the appeal we make does not spring from error or impure motives, nor are we trying to trick you. On the contrary, we speak as those approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please people but God, who tests our hearts.</p> | |

How does the grace of God motivate you to please him and delight in his rewards?

If there lurks in most modern minds the notion that to desire our own good and earnestly to hope for the enjoyment of it is a bad thing, I submit that this notion has crept in from Kant and the Stoics and is no part of the Christian faith. Indeed, if we consider the unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised to us in the Gospels, it would seem that our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in the slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.

C. S. Lewis

[From the essay *The Weight of Glory*]

For My Group

What are the three most significant things you learned from this study?

1.

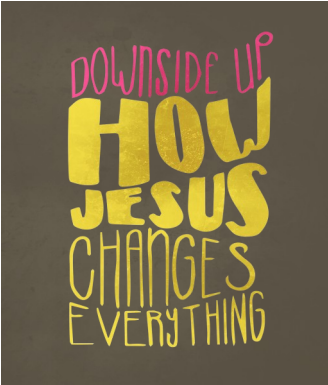
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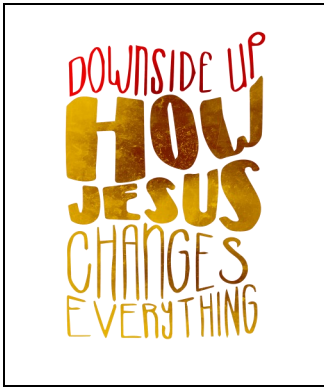
3.

Going Deeper: Prayer

Take a moment to reflect upon the Lord's Prayer in **Matthew 6:9-13**. Rewrite this prayer in your own words.

Notes: The Downside Up of Religion





The Downside Up of Security Week Seven

Jesus continues calling his disciples to a counter-cultural, downside up life. Theologian John Stott points out that in this Sermon Jesus is equally concerned with our private “religious” life (giving, praying and fasting) as he is with our outward public and “secular” life. For Jesus all things are spiritual, all things involve him, all things are a part of our worship — prayer and possessions, working and resting, fasting and celebrating, giving and receiving, eating and drinking. In the beginning of **Matthew 6**, Jesus calls us to avoid the hypocrisy of the religious and to reject the “materialism of the irreligious.” And then in **Matthew 6:19-34** we find some of his most beautiful and practical words. In this lesson we desire to hear the words of Christ spoken into our lives.

Before you dive into the Scripture, write out everything that is causing you anxiety and fear today.

Read Matthew 6:19-34 through at least three times.

First, read it quickly, just skimming over the words. Then, read it through slowly. Circle or highlight key words, underline profound phrases. Finally, pause before reading it a third time and thank Jesus for being present with you. Thank him that his words from long ago are so relevant today. Ask him to speak to you through his Holy Spirit as you read through the section one final time. This time, don't worry about getting through the whole thing. Stop and meditate on the parts that seem to jump from the page and leap into your heart with comfort and conviction and promise.

What do you hear Jesus speaking to you from this passage?

Make it personal. Perhaps re-write the passage as if it were a letter to you from God.



Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:4-7

Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs . . . Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

1 Timothy 6:9-10, 17-19

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich

2 Corinthians 8:9

Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."
So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?"

Hebrews 13:5-6

Cast all your anxiety on Jesus because he cares for you.

1 Peter 5:7

Write your own prayer of thanksgiving as you cast your anxieties upon Jesus and consider his great care for you.

For My Group

What are the three most significant things you learned from this study?

1.

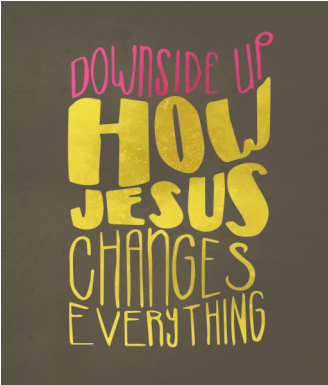
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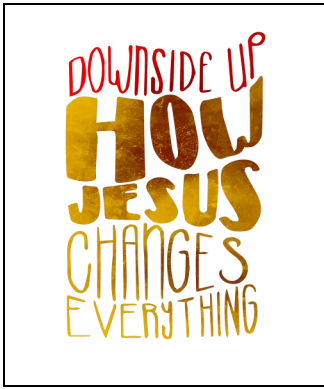
3.

Going Deeper: Worship

We long for Jesus to be our greatest treasure. Commit to spend ten minutes a day for five days in a row in the simple practice of worship. Just sit and listen to one or two worship songs (download Tommy Walker, Kim Walker-Smith, Jesus Culture, Bethel Live, Hillsong United or one of your favorite worship leaders). Just sit in the worship of Christ. Seek to remain focused on praise, adoration and thanksgiving rather than requests. Try using a Psalm to focus your attention on the wonder and worthiness of God. Keep it simple and focused on Jesus. [Some great Psalms to get you started: 16, 19, 23, 24, 27].

Notes: The Downside Up of Security





The Downside Up of Judgment Week Eight

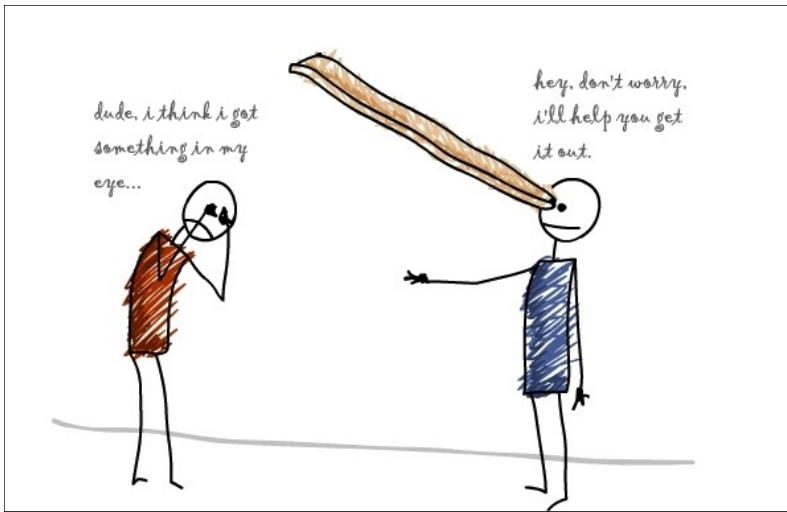
Wounded people seek to defend and protect themselves by crying out “don’t judge me!” Those fearful of making a decision ask “who am I to judge?” No one wants to be judged and in many cases we’d love to avoid making a judgment but Jesus isn’t calling us to completely abstain from critique. Jesus actually calls us to discern many things. In this sermon he encourages us to not throw “pearls to pigs” (7:6) or follow false prophets (7:15) — this requires a form of judgment. So, what is Jesus saying when he says, “do not judge”?

Read Matthew 7:1-12 and briefly summarize what Jesus is saying.

List what Jesus says “to do” and what he says “not to do” in this passage.

Toward whom, or to what, do you tend to be most critical?

Why is it sometimes easier to criticize than celebrate?



If we ever know the feeling of being rather pleased when we hear something unpleasant about another, that is the wrong spirit. If we are jealous, or envious, and then suddenly hear that the one of whom we are jealous and envious has made a mistake and find that there is an immediate sense of pleasure within us, that is it. That is the condition which leads to this spirit of judgment.

Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones

... the command to "judge not" is not a requirement to be blind, but rather a plea to be generous.

John Stott

What tends to be the "plank" you need to most-often remove from your "own eye"?

How does the gospel encourage us to live with a generous, forgiving, merciful, and celebratory spirit toward others? [See Romans 5:8; Ephesians 2:4-10; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 1:4-5; 1 John 4:7-12]

What does Jesus reveal about prayer and the character of God in Matthew 7:7-11?

Taking it all in: Summarizing the Sermon on the Mount

Go back through the whole sermon and then answer these questions.

| Chapter | Summarize: What is Jesus' main point? | Make it personal: What most stood out to you? |
|---------|---------------------------------------|---|
| 5 | | |
| 6 | | |
| 7 | | |

Briefly summarize The Sermon on the Mount.

What is the most important thing that the Sermon on the Mount reveals to you about God?

What is the most important thing the Sermon on the Mount reveals about you?

For My Group

What are the three most significant things you learned from this study?

1.

2.

3.

Going Deeper: The Final Words of The Sermon on the Mount

Read the final section of The Sermon on the Mount in **Matthew 7:13-29**. We've noted throughout this study that Jesus often speaks in this sermon of "two ways" to follow God. One is often the way of religious performance and the other is the way of the gospel of grace found in Christ.

What "two ways" are displayed in the following passages?

7:13-14

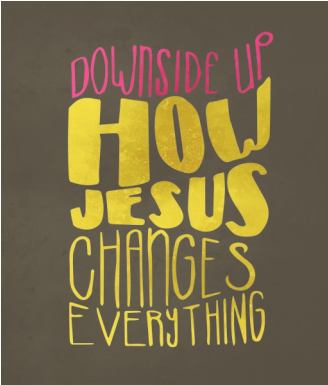
7:15-20

7:21-23

7:24-27

Matthew 7:28 tells us that the crowds were amazed at Jesus' teaching. What amazes you about The Sermon on the Mount?

Notes: The Downside Up of Judgment



The Sermon on the Mount

One of the most important things to do when studying Scripture is to read the passage through many, many times and to also read it in its context (what comes before and after the passage). Each week we will look at a section from The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) but first we need to read the whole thing in one sitting. Don't Panic: It's only three chapters. As you read this amazing sermon delivered by Jesus look for:

**Repeated words and phrases. What the passage tells you about God. Commands. Promises.
What the passage tells you about yourself.**

Sometimes it helps to use different colored highlighters or markings to put next to repeated words or ideas. You can also make lists in the margin. You will want to read the passage through at least three times. The first time, read quickly and just take it all in. The second and third time take it slowly and circle/highlight words and make your list! [iPad Users: Use the margin to write your notes or you may find it best to just print out the passage!]

Matthew 5

Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, ²and he began to teach them. He said:

³"Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁴Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.

⁵Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.

⁶Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.

⁷Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.

⁸Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.

⁹Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.

¹⁰Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.¹² Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

¹³"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. ¹⁴"You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

¹⁷"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. ¹⁸For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. ¹⁹Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly 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. ²⁰ For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

²¹ “You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ ²² But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell.

²³ “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, ²⁴ leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift. ²⁵ “Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still together on the way, or your adversary may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. ²⁶ Truly I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.

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

³¹ “It has been said, ‘Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.’ ³² But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, makes her the victim of adultery, and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

³³ “Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not break your oath, but fulfill to the Lord the vows you have made.’ ³⁴ But I tell you, do not swear an oath at all: either by heaven, for it is God’s throne; ³⁵ or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. ³⁶ And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. ³⁷ All you need to say is simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.

³⁸ “You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’ ³⁹ But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. ⁴⁰ And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. ⁴¹ If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles. ⁴² Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

⁴³ “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ ⁴⁴ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who

persecute you, ⁴⁵that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. ⁴⁶If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? ⁴⁷And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? ⁴⁸Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Matthew 6

¹“Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. ²“So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. ³But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

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

⁹“This, then, is how you should pray: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, ¹⁰your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. ¹¹Give us today our daily bread. ¹²And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. ¹³And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.’ ¹⁴For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

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

¹⁹“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. ²²“The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light. ²³But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the

light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

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

²⁵“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? ²⁶Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? ²⁷Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? ²⁸“And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. ²⁹Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. ³⁰If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? ³¹So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ³²For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. ³⁴Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Matthew 7

“Do not judge, or you too will be judged. ²For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

³“Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? ⁴How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? ⁵You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.

⁶“Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.

⁷“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ⁸For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

⁹“Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? ¹¹If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! ¹²So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

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

¹⁵“Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing,

but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. ¹⁶By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. ¹⁹Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

²¹“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²²Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ ²³Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’ ²⁴“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. ²⁶But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. ²⁷The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”

²⁸When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, ²⁹because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.

***See the questions on the next page to help capture an overview of this sermon.**

What three words would you use to describe the Sermon on the Mount?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

List the repeated words, phrases and themes in this sermon. Why do you think they are significant?

Context: Read the passages before Matthew 5 and the passage after Matthew 7. How does this context help you better understand the sermon?

List everything Matthew 5-7 reveals about the character of God.

People in my group and prayer requests
