

Introduction

The Sermon on the Mount is perhaps the greatest sermon of the greatest Teacher who has ever lived. There is nothing either inside the Bible or outside of it that is quite like it. Jesus takes the entire Old Law, boils it down to its essence, and uses that as the foundation for an eternal vision of what it means to serve God. We cannot be the Christians we need to be without it.

Jesus' words challenge us in every corner of our being: in what we do, in the way we think, and in how we understand our existence. He shows us what we ought to be and then highlights the differences with what we are. The application is in-our-face obvious. We need to change, to transform ourselves into what God wants us to become. This change is neither quick nor easy. It represents the whole of our struggle to become like Christ, and we will wrestle with it for our entire lives. The prize that Jesus holds up, though, demonstrates why the game is worth the candle. Only by hearing Him can we gain eternal life and come to understand God by being like Him.

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Lesson One: Matthew 5:1-6.....	3
Lesson Two: Matthew 5:7-12	5
Lesson Three: Matthew 5:13-20.....	7
Lesson Four: Matthew 5:21-30.....	9
Lesson Five: Matthew 5:31-37	11
Lesson Six: Matthew 5:38-48	13
Lesson Seven: Matthew 6:1-8.....	15
Lesson Eight: Matthew 6:9-18.....	17
Lesson Nine: Matthew 6:19-30.....	19
Lesson Ten: Matthew 6:31-7:6	21
Lesson Eleven: Matthew 7:7-20	23
Lesson Twelve: Matthew 7:21-29.....	25
Lesson Thirteen: Review.....	27



The *View* from the *Mountain*

Lesson One: Matthew 5:1-6



A Second Glance: Gentleness

The writers of the New Testament often use language from the Old Testament not merely for the meaning of the language itself, but to direct our minds to the entire context in which the language is found. When the gospel writers quote a verse from Isaiah 53 in connection with the Crucifixion, they don't just mean to draw attention to that single snippet. Instead, they want us to go back, read the entire chapter, and understand that it ALL applies to Jesus. It's like a text-based hyperlink.

Jesus Himself employs this strategy in Matthew 5:5. The Beatitude he formulates is a near-quote of Psalm 37:11, and Jesus intends for all of Psalm 37 to add meaning to his statement. The Psalm contrasts two groups of people, the wicked and the righteous, and what will happen to them. The wicked forsake the way of the Lord for short-term gain, while the righteous wait for the Lord's blessing. As a result, the wicked will be wiped out. By contrast, Psalm 37 tells us repeatedly that the righteous "will inherit the land." They will be preserved when all others are destroyed.

When Jesus blesses the gentle, He's talking about those who resist the temptation to "stand up for themselves" in unrighteous ways, who remain unprovoked because they trust in God. If we practice this gentleness, we aren't going to inherit a mere 40 acres of dirt in Palestine. Instead, we will receive the New Covenant's promise of permanence: a dwelling not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.



Questions: Matthew 5:1-4

1. Describe the context in which Jesus preaches the Sermon on the Mount.
2. What is the kingdom of heaven? Consider Luke 17:21 in your answer.
3. What does John 9:39-41 have to say about the idea of poverty of spirit? Is poverty of spirit a condition or an attitude?
4. Does Matthew 5:4 describe all kinds of mourning, or one specific kind? Use passages like Revelation 1:7 in your answer.

Lesson One: Matthew 5:1-6

5. What kind of mourning is this verse talking about, then? James 4:8-10 may offer some help.
6. What is the means through which the mourner is comforted? It may be useful to consider Psalm 32:3-5 in your answer.
7. What does 2 Corinthians 7:8-11 have to say about some results of this process?



Questions: Matthew 5:5-6

8. What do we learn about the nature of gentleness in the following four contexts?
 - a. Ephesians 4:1-3.
 - b. 2 Timothy 2:23-25.
 - c. 1 Peter 3:14-15.
9. How does Psalm 37 give us assurance that we will inherit the land we desire?
10. According to Luke 1:6, what is the Biblical definition of righteousness? What does this mean?
11. Biblically speaking, there are two ways we are supposed to hunger and thirst after righteousness. What does Philippians 3:8-9 say about the first?
12. According to Romans 6:12-14, what is the other way in which we are to hunger and thirst for righteousness?



The *View* from the *Mountain*

Lesson Two: Matthew 5:7-12



A Second Glance: Peace

When we speak of peace today, we generally mean “the absence of war between nations.” This is the kind of peace that inspired the long-haired inhabitants of Volkswagen vans back in the 1960’s, and it still animates the hope of the beauty-pageant contestant who smiles brightly at the judges and tells them that all she wants is “world peace.” On a more serious level, devout men from the Pope to Jimmy Carter travel the globe seeking this kind of peace because they think it’s what God wants.

Although the Father of mercies certainly takes no delight in human suffering, this kind of peace isn’t the peace that the Bible praises. As long as there is sin in the world, there will always be war. Attempts on our part to eradicate it will inevitably prove futile.

Biblical peace is something else entirely. Any war, no matter how destructive, cannot be the deadliest conflict we face. Instead, that conflict begins when we sin against God. No human treaty can contain the peace we truly need. We can only find that peace in a reconciliation through Christ with God. Isaiah 48:17-18 explains. When we obey the commandments of God, it causes us to abound not only in righteousness, but also in peace with Him. The great peacemakers of our time, then, are not the men who bring warring nations together, but those who call sinners to return to their God.



Questions: Matthew 5:7-8

1. What does Matthew 9:35-36 tell us about the nature of mercy?
2. What do we learn from Luke 6:36-38 about the reasons why we should be merciful?
3. According to Hebrews 4:15-16, what is the main way in which we receive mercy?
4. According to James 4:8, what is the opposite of purity of heart? What definition for purity of heart does this imply? How does this definition fit with our instinctive understanding?

Lesson Two: Matthew 5:7-12

5. What does Titus 2:11-14 tell us about the origin of purity of heart? In what way is this true?
6. What else causes purity of heart? Why? 1 John 3:2-3 provides an explanation.
7. What is at least one sense in which the pure of heart will see God? Psalm 24:3-4 may shed some light on the subject.



Questions: Matthew 5:9-12

8. How do we normally think of peace? How should Matthew 10:34-39 alter this definition?
9. How do Christ's words in John 14:27 help us understand the unique nature of Christian peace?
10. What does Ephesians 2:11-18 have to say about the work of Christ in making peace?
11. What other kind of peacemaking does James 3:17-18 describe? What leads us to that conclusion?
12. What is the difference between Matthew 5:10 and 5:11? Why did Jesus make His point in these two different ways?
13. According to 2 Timothy 3:12, how likely is it that someone who desires to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted? What does this tell us?
14. Why should persecution cause us to rejoice? Both Matthew 5:12 and Acts 5:40-41 provide possible answers.



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Lesson Three: Matthew 5:13-20



A Second Glance: Light

When Jesus tells His disciples that they are the light of the world, He means to say not one but two things. First, it means that we are supposed to let our good works shine so that they glorify God. Jesus' second meaning, though more obscure to us, would have been readily understood by His Jewish audience. By describing His disciples as light, Jesus claims to be the Messiah.

Light is one of the dominant metaphors of Isaiah, not just the light that God reveals to His people, but the light that God's people will one day show to everyone else. This light is one of the most important features of the coming New Covenant. Isaiah 60:1-3 illustrates this pattern. The Lord will rise like the sun over His people, and then their borrowed light will call everyone else.

God's people can only be this light if the Messiah has already come, and the Jews would have known this. Jesus thus tells them not only who they need to be, but also who He already is. This would have stunned the Jews, but it should be equally powerful in our lives. Even today, we cannot be a light to the world unless we are disciples of the Christ. Only if we devote ourselves wholly to Jesus, only if we reflect His glory, can we shine at all. But if we do, Isaiah's ancient prophecy will be fulfilled again in us. Nations will come to our light, and kings to the brightness of our rising.



Questions: Matthew 5:13-16

1. What does Jesus' description of His disciples as the salt of the earth in Matthew 5:13 tell us about the interaction that we are supposed to have with the world?
2. What does it mean for salt to become tasteless?
3. How does our salt become "tasteless" today? What precautions should we take to keep this from happening?
4. Matthew 5:14 tells us that we are supposed to be the light of the world. How do we do this?

Lesson Three: Matthew 5:13-20

5. Matthew 5:15 describes two possible locations for a lamp: under a basket and on a lampstand. When do we put our light under a basket? When do we put it on a lampstand? How do we do less of the former and more of the latter?
6. What does Jesus urge us to do in Matthew 5:16? How do we do it?
7. What results does Matthew 5:16 say will accompany a shining light? If we don't see those results, does that say anything about the quality of our light?



Questions: Matthew 5:17-20

8. What accusation does Matthew 5:17 imply the Pharisees have leveled against Jesus? What might have led them to bring this accusation? What's the relevance to us?
9. In what two senses did Jesus fulfill the Law, as He promised He would do in Matthew 5:17? Why is this important for us to recognize?
10. What "all" is Jesus talking about in Matthew 5:18 when He says that none of the Law will pass away until all is accomplished?
11. What is the message of Matthew 5:19? Even though we are not under the Law, is there a principle here that applies today? If so, what is it?
12. When Jesus says that a teacher who annuls the least commandment is least in the kingdom of heaven, does he mean that such a teacher is still in the kingdom? If not, what does He mean?
13. What charge does Jesus level against the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 5:20? How does this address their earlier accusation against Him? How does this battle play out throughout the rest of the gospels?
14. Matthew 5:20 is an important transition statement. What do we need to do to have a greater righteousness than the scribes and Pharisees?



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Lesson Four: Matthew 5:21-30



A Second Glance: Lust

If there is any sin that dominates the spiritual landscape of our time, it is lust. Sexual deviants whose actions have been viewed with disgust for millennia now demand that their particular sin be accepted as a legitimate “alternate lifestyle.” The licentiousness that destroys our young people appears in younger and younger ages every year. In such a climate, evils like the metastasis of pornography, the death of modesty, and the destruction of marriage are almost too insignificant to mention.

Though it may have attained special prominence in our day, God has always been aware of the power of sex to seduce His people. Consider the admonition of Moses in Deuteronomy 7:3-6. He warns the Israelites not to intermarry with foreign women. God knew that foreign wives would turn the heart of His people away from Him and cause the doom of Israel, not in some great battle, but imperceptibly, as God’s people slowly became indistinguishable from the world around them.

Lust has the same power today. If we welcome ungodly thoughts into our hearts, no matter how small the concession may seem, Satan will use the toehold we have given him to ruin us. Even if the world considers our standards old-fashioned, we must refuse to budge. Once we begin to compromise, we can only stop when we’ve taken the devil’s position on everything. Consider how much our nation’s moral standards have decayed since our grandparents’ era. If we allow the slide to continue, what battles will our grandchildren be fighting?



Questions: Matthew 5:21-26

1. What traditions of the ancients is Jesus talking about in Matthew 5:21 and throughout the rest of the chapter? How does this knowledge help us to understand what Jesus is saying?
2. What is the difference between the moral precept that the ancients offered in Matthew 5:21 and the moral precept that Jesus offered in Matthew 5:22? What is Jesus getting at?
3. Does Matthew 5:22 mean that whenever we call someone a fool or an empty-head, we are sinning? If not, what does it mean?
4. What is the “something against you” in Matthew 5:23? Why is this significant?

Lesson Four: Matthew 5:21-30

5. What course of action does Jesus prescribe in Matthew 5:24? Does this refer to any sort of conflict, or does it mean something more specific? What do we have to do in today's world to comply with this command?
6. Does Jesus' advice in Matthew 5:25 apply to us today when one of our neighbors sues us for having our porch light on all night, or is it talking about something else?
7. When Jesus says in Matthew 5:26 that we will be released from prison once we have paid every last cent, does this mean that we will get out of the prison He's talking about? If not, why not?



Questions: Matthew 5:27-30

8. Why does Jesus say "you have heard that it was said" in Matthew 5:27 when He's clearly quoting the Ten Commandments? What point is Jesus making?
9. What does Matthew 5:27 tell us about the way the Jews were distorting the Law?
10. What warning does Jesus give in Matthew 5:28? Does this warning add something to the Law, or does it merely restore the Law's original intent?
11. When Jesus describes lust as adultery in the heart, does this mean that lust is grounds for divorce? Why or why not?
12. Is it possible to take Matthew 5:28 and be every bit as legalistic with it as the Pharisees were with Matthew 5:27? Why? If so, how do we avoid falling into this trap?
13. Is Jesus talking about literal body parts in Matthew 5:29-30? How can we tell? If that's not His topic, what is He saying?
14. What are some "body parts" we may need to cut off to obey Jesus' teaching in this context?



The *View* from the *Mountain*

Lesson Five: Matthew 5:31-37



A Second Glance: Divorce

Divorce today is a hotly debated topic, both inside and outside the church. Those who are inclined to play fast and loose with the word find “Scriptural” cause for divorce and remarriage whenever one or both parties desire it. Others, more tightly tethered to the Bible, accept divorce and remarriage only for the cause of fornication. Still others claim that divorce for any reason whatsoever is unlawful.

Interestingly enough, the rabbinical scholars of Jesus’ day fought over the same battleground. Rabbi Shammai argued that the Old Law only permitted divorce in the instance of sexual immorality. Rabbi Hillel claimed that a man could divorce his wife whenever she displeased him, even for something as minor as burning his soup. Rabbi Akiba contended that if a man found a woman he thought was more attractive, that was sufficient grounds for divorce. All of these different opinions fascinated the Pharisees, who quoted teachers and weaseled with Scripture until they got the results they wanted.

God’s take on the issue, in Malachi 2:14-16, is strikingly different. God isn’t focused on divorce; He’s focused on marriage. God looks at a couple on the verge of splitting up, and He sees the covenant they have made before Him, the years they have spent together, the investment they have made in each other, and the children who will be devastated. It hardly comes as a surprise when God cries out, “I hate divorce!” We would all do well to follow God’s lead.



Questions: Matthew 5:31-32

1. What does Matthew 5:31 say? Is this a straight quote from Scripture, or is it the sort of garbled reworking that the Pharisees commonly used? Why is this important?
2. Deuteronomy 24:1-4 contains only one command. What is that command? Does the fact that divorce is a precondition to that command show that God approves of divorce? Consider Deuteronomy 25:7-10 before you answer.
3. What does Matthew 19:8 say about the reason why Moses permitted divorce? Does this mean that God winked at divorce under the Old Law? Compare 1 Samuel 8:4-9.
4. Matthew 5:32 gives one exception to the prohibition against divorce. What is it? Why would God be so restrictive?

Lesson Five: Matthew 5:31-37

5. According to Matthew 5:32, to what conduct does divorce lead the divorced spouse? How would you characterize this conduct?
6. Also according to Matthew 5:32, what consequence does divorce force upon the divorcing spouse? How would you characterize this consequence?
7. The Sermon on the Mount is a sermon about the heart. How does Jesus want His teaching on divorce to change our hearts?



Questions: Matthew 5:33-37

8. What topic does this context discuss? How does Numbers 30:2 compare to the statement in Matthew 5:33? What loophole does Numbers 30:2 appear to offer?
9. What tack did the Pharisees actually take on the swearing of oaths? Consider Matthew 23:16-22 before you answer.
10. Does Jesus appear to have a problem with the Scriptural text, or does He have a problem with the way the Pharisees were distorting the text? Why is this important?
11. What does Jesus' statement in Matthew 5:34-36 mean? Is it a prohibition against swearing any kind of oath at all? Think about passages like 2 Corinthians 1:23 before you respond.
12. What does Jesus tell us to do in Matthew 5:37? What does this mean?
13. Is the Sermon on the Mount a sermon that urges legalism or a godly heart? Having said that, does it make sense to read this context as urging us to make affirmations rather than swear oaths? Why or why not?
14. At the end of the day, what is the message of this passage to us?



The *View* from the *Mountain*

Lesson Six: Matthew 5:38-48



A Second Glance: Enemies

In Matthew 5:17, Jesus prefaces the six antitheses that make up the rest of the chapter by saying that He did not come to abolish the Law, but to fulfill it. Even though Jesus then proceeds to demolish several hundred years of Jewish religious tradition in just a few sentences, His statement is still accurate. Jesus' "new" ideas are nothing foreign to the Law; instead, they make explicit the way that God intended for the Law to be lived.

Jesus' teachings about enemies fall into this category. "Love your enemies," He tells the hate-filled Pharisees, but His words merely echo what Moses had already said. In Deuteronomy 22:1-3, the Law instructs the faithful to return his brother's livestock to him if he sees it straying. There is nothing unusual here; any of us would instinctively help a brother if we saw him in need. What is unusual is that the same instruction is given in Exodus 23:4 with respect to the livestock of an ENEMY. The point? Love requires us to treat both in the same way.

Jesus' words on this subject are revolutionary because they are reactionary. No human being, whether in Christ's day or in our day, naturally wants to love and help his enemies. Since the beginning of time, however, God's message to us has been that we must. The same God who made Jonah bring the Assyrians to repentance calls us to be loving and gracious to those who work against us. Only then can we be like Him.



Questions: Matthew 5:38-42

1. What does Jesus quote the Pharisees as saying in Matthew 5:38? Consider the context from which the Pharisees themselves are quoting, Exodus 21:22-24. Is this a personal context, or a judicial context? Why is this important?
2. What were the Pharisees apparently using Exodus 21:24 to justify? Does this present a problem under the Old Law? Leviticus 19:18 may prove useful to your answer.
3. What counter-instruction does Jesus give in Matthew 5:39? Does this instruction mean that Christians cannot work in jobs that require them to resist evil men, like the police and the military? Ponder Romans 13:1-7 before answering.
4. In Matthew 5:38-42, Jesus supplies us with four illustrations. What is the first illustration? What light does John 18:19-24 shed upon this?

Lesson Six: Matthew 5:38-48

5. What is the second illustration in this series? What does it mean? Read Acts 22:24-29 before answering.
6. What is the fourth illustration? Does 2 Thessalonians 3:10 modify it in any way? If so, how?
7. Taking all of these things into account, what is Jesus trying to get us to understand in this context?



Questions: Matthew 5:43-48

8. What quotation does Jesus ascribe to the Pharisees in Matthew 5:43? Where does this quotation appear to come from? How does the quotation in Matthew differ from the quotation in the Law? What does this tell us?
9. What course of conduct does Jesus urge upon us instead? How does the life of Jesus show us how we are supposed to do this? Consider Luke 23:34 and Romans 5:7-8 before replying.
10. What other example of love is given in Matthew 5:45? What evidence is given of this love?
11. Describe the character of the love of God, at least, as best you can in 100 words or less. Consider passages like Isaiah 49:14-15; Jeremiah 31:3; Ephesians 2:3-6 before answering.
12. Considering what we know of the love of God and the love of Christ, in what way ought we endeavor to love?
13. What do we learn about what the extent of this love needs to be from Matthew 5:46-47?
14. What is the message of Matthew 5:48? What does this mean? Consider both Luke 6:36 and 1 Peter 1:16 before answering.



The *View* from the *Mountain*

Lesson Seven: Matthew 6:1-8



A Second Glance: Hypocrisy

No sin is more loudly reviled, yet more widely practiced, than hypocrisy. Hypocrisy is religion that has forgotten its object, a search for the glory of God that has become a search for the glory of self. It leads its practitioners to profess a godliness with the lips that bears no resemblance to the worldliness of the heart, and though it may impress men, it never impresses God.

God's disgust with hypocrisy appears throughout the Old Law, but particularly in His dealings with the disobedient nation of Israel. Isaiah 65:2-7 tells the story of a people that has forgotten what holiness must be. In public, the Israelites oozed spiritual arrogance. They trumpeted their personal righteousness and cringed at the thought of being defiled even by the nearness of a sinner. In private, however, they gleefully pursued wickedness and reveled in sin that they thought no one saw. God regarded these hypocrites with unspeakable contempt.

If we are not careful, we may lead God to look on us in the same way. We too can develop a façade of godliness that we put on as easily as our Sunday best. We can attend services three times a week, sing passionately, nod thoughtfully when the preacher makes a good point, but still have evil seething in our soul like maggots in week-old road kill. It's not what we do when a hundred Christians are around that defines our true holiness. It's what we do when no one is around but God.



Questions: Matthew 6:1-4

1. What is the connection between the subject matter with which Jesus begins Matthew 6 and the subject matter with which He has concluded Matthew 5? Why do we need to understand this?
2. What does Jesus warn against in Matthew 6:1? Why?
3. What hypocritical behavior does Jesus describe in Matthew 6:2? What motive does he attribute to those who practice it? How can we fall prey to similar motives today?
4. What reward does Jesus say such hypocrites get? Why is this true?

Lesson Seven: Matthew 6:1-8

5. What does Jesus tell us to do in Matthew 6:3-4? How does this fit in with the words of Paul in 2 Corinthians 8:1-4?
6. Are the actions described in Matthew 5:16 and Matthew 6:2 essentially different? Are the motives different? What can we learn from this?
7. What “reward” (or rewards) is Jesus talking about in Matthew 6:4?



Questions: Matthew 6:5-8

8. How does Jesus describe the prayer of the hypocrites in Matthew 6:5? Once again, what is the motivation He ascribes to them? What lessons should we learn from this?
9. Did the hypocrites in Matthew 6:5 get what they wanted out of their prayers? What, then, was their real problem? What should this teach us today?
10. What did Jesus command His disciples to do in Matthew 6:6? When we consider such passages as Matthew 11:25-27, what are we to make of this?
11. What reward is Jesus talking about in Matthew 6:6? Is this a different reward than Jesus mentioned in Matthew 6:4? Explain your answer.
12. What other prayer practice does Jesus speak against in Matthew 6:7? How do we distinguish this practice from the prayers of Matthew 26:39-44? Basically, what’s the point?
13. How should Jesus’ instruction to us in this section change our prayer lives today?
14. What does Jesus tell us about the knowledge of God in Matthew 6:8? If this is true, why do we pray at all?



The *View* from the *Mountain*

Lesson Eight: Matthew 6:9-18



A Second Glance: The Kingdom

False doctrine is everywhere in today's religious world, and this poses a number of different dangers. Even once we recognize its falsity, it still can stunt our spiritual growth. Too often, when we encounter false doctrine, we are so aroused against it that we misread Scripture ourselves in an effort to fight it.

This tendency appears in our efforts to combat the false teachers that argue for a millennial kingdom of Jesus. Unlike them, we recognize that Jesus' death on the cross was not a failure, that the church is not a stopgap, and that the kingdom of God has already arisen. However, in an effort to further combat the falsehood we hate, we sometimes argue that the church itself is the kingdom in its entirety. According to this way of thinking, we should not pray for the kingdom to come because it has already.

Although the church and the kingdom are undeniably linked, it is not entirely accurate to assume that they are the same thing. In Scripture, the word kingdom carries with it the idea of dominion and control. When Jesus speaks of the kingdom coming, He actually refers to the process by which men give control of their lives to God. When we do that, God's kingdom comes to and increases in our hearts. Although this kingdom has come to many, God still waits for the submission of countless millions to His will. Indeed, we ought to pray, just as His disciples did in the first century, Father, Your kingdom come!



Questions: Matthew 6:9-15

1. In Matthew 6:9, Jesus prays that the name of God be hallowed. What does this mean? How do we do it?
2. What do we need to do to encourage the coming of the kingdom, as Jesus prays in Matthew 6:10?
3. What does Jesus ask for in the last part of Matthew 6:10? If we are going to pray for this, what do we need to do about it?
4. What does Jesus ask for in Matthew 6:11? If we pray for this and mean it, what must we understand about God's role in our life?

Lesson Eight: Matthew 6:9-18

5. What does Jesus ask God for in Matthew 6:12? What does Jesus make this blessing contingent on? What should we learn from this?
6. What request does Jesus make in Matthew 6:13? In light of passages like James 1:13, what does this actually mean?
7. What principle does Jesus establish in Matthew 6:14-15? What added meaning does Matthew 18:35 add to this? How do we do it?



Questions: Matthew 6:16-18

8. What topic is under discussion in Matthew 6:16-18? Was this something that was a part of the original Old Law, or was it a tradition that had arisen later? How does this make it different from the other things we've looked at in this section?
9. What light does Isaiah 58:1-8 shed upon this custom of fasting?
10. According to Matthew 6:16, how did the hypocrites fast? What purpose did they have in mind? What does this tell us about them?
11. What reward did the hypocrites get for all of their fasting? Why is this important?
12. In Matthew 6:17, how does Jesus instruct us to fast? What should our object be in fasting?
13. Is Mark 2:18-20 a command or a prophecy? What leads you to that conclusion? Why is this important?
14. Taking all of these things into consideration, how should we deal with fasting today? Are there times when fasting might be a good idea? Are there reasons why we shouldn't fast?



The *View* from the *Mountain*

Lesson Nine: Matthew 6:19-30



A Second Glance: Worry

In this context, we see the flip side of materialism: worry. No matter how highly we may think of ourselves, we are forced to admit that the world is a scary place. We can take every precaution imaginable, and a mutual-fund company can still embezzle our life savings. A tornado can still use our dream home to decorate a cornfield 20 miles away. If we refuse to abandon our materialism, fear of disaster will spur us to heap up even more riches, even while we know deep down that everything we can do might not be enough.

The answer to the uncertainty of life is not to play the game better. It's to recognize that the game cannot be won. We cannot protect ourselves by relying on ourselves. We are only safe if we trust in God. David reminds us of this in Psalm 37:23-26. God knows who His people are, and He will not forget them.

The only way we can ensure our material security is by seeking God, not riches, first. This doesn't mean that God is the sure road to luxury. God does not promise us that if we give \$1000 to Him, we'll get a check for ten times as much, nor does God look kindly on those who expect it. We can't look forward to wealth if we serve Him, but we can look forward to having enough, because having enough and having God are exactly the same thing.



Questions: Matthew 6:19-24

1. What does Jesus tell us not to do in Matthew 6:19? What are some ways in which men disobey this command? Why is this important?
2. Where does Jesus tell us to lay up our treasure in Matthew 6:20? Why should we do this? How can we do it?
3. What insight does Matthew 6:21 give us into why God is so concerned about where our treasure is? How can we use this insight as a spiritual barometer?
4. What does Matthew 6:22 tell us about the eye? In what sense is this true?

Lesson Nine: Matthew 6:19-30

5. According to Matthew 6:22, what is the result of having a clear eye? What does this mean?
6. What does Matthew 6:23 tell us about the result of having a bad eye? What does this mean?
7. What is the message of Matthew 6:24? How do we need to apply this message in our lives?



Questions: Matthew 6:25-30

8. Jesus begins Matthew 6:25 with the words “for this reason.” For what reason? How does this help us to understand the context?
9. What advice does Jesus offer in Matthew 6:25? How do we need to take this advice in our lives?
10. What does Jesus tell us about life and the body in Matthew 6:25? What does this mean?
11. What creatures does Jesus describe in Matthew 6:26? What do they not do? What happens to them for their failure to act? What’s the point?
12. What does Matthew 6:27 reveal to us about worry? What should this teach us?
13. What is the subject of Matthew 6:28-29? What does Jesus use it to illustrate? What’s the point for us?
14. According to Matthew 6:30, if we ignore the words of Jesus and worry anyway, what’s our problem? How can we work to solve this problem in our lives?



The *View* from the *Mountain*

Lesson Ten: Matthew 6:31-7:6



A Second Glance: Judging Others

The nation around us has enshrined tolerance. The free choice of the individual is now deemed a higher good than the welfare of the group or the holiness of God's law, and we need only follow our own moral compass, no matter how inaccurate it may be, to be accepted. Ironically, this acceptance does not extend to us if we speak against evil. Society will tolerate anything but intolerance.

The champions of tolerance will often cite Matthew 7:1 as justification for their position. Jesus Himself tells us not to judge, they say, so we don't have the right to tell anyone that they're sinning. Certainly, when we look at the verse in context, it does apply to us, but Jesus is actually only warning us not to speak against the flaws of others when we ourselves are in the midst of sin.

In a larger sense, however, our duty to the Lord requires us to speak, not to keep silent. God explains to the prophet Ezekiel in Ezekiel 33:1-9. He compares Ezekiel to a watchman guarding a town. If the watchman sees the enemy and warns the town, but no one listens, they are responsible for their own deaths. However, if the watchman says nothing, he is responsible. The same is true of us. We have a duty to spread the gospel. If we speak but no one listens, we have still done right. However, if we say nothing, the guilt becomes not just theirs but also ours.



Questions: Matthew 6:31-34

1. Compare Matthew 6:25 and Matthew 6:31. How are they alike? How are they different? What does Jesus want to show us by making His point in this way?
2. Matthew 6:32 describes a way in which the Gentiles behave. What is it that they are doing? Why? What should this teach us?
3. What does the second half of Matthew 6:32 say? What relevance does this have to the discussion?
4. What can we learn from passages like Psalm 50:10-12 and Isaiah 49:14-15 about the providence of God? Note: it may help you to understand Psalm 50:10 if you think of Texas.

Lesson Ten: Matthew 6:31-7:6

5. What Matthew 6:33 tell us we should seek instead? How should we seek it?
6. What will occur if we follow the Lord's instruction in Matthew 6:33? What does this mean?
7. What does Jesus instruct us to do in Matthew 6:34? What does this mean? How should we apply it?



Questions: Matthew 7:1-6

8. What does Jesus tell us not to do in Matthew 7:1? What does this mean?
9. What reason is given for this commandment in Matthew 7:2? What additional meaning does this give to the words of Jesus?
10. In Matthew 7:3-4, what criticism does Jesus level against those who were eager to judge? What does this mean? What does this tell us about the people to whom Jesus was speaking?
11. What solution does Jesus offer to the problem in Matthew 7:5? What does this mean for us?
12. Is this passage a warning not to attempt speck removal? If not, then what is it saying?
13. What does Jesus say in Matthew 7:6? What is He talking about?
14. What added meanings do Matthew 7:1-5 and Matthew 28:19 offer to this verse? When we put them all together, how do we make sense of them?



The *View* from the *Mountain*

Lesson Eleven: Matthew 7:7-20



A Second Glance: The Golden Rule

My first serious contact with the Golden Rule came in journalism school in college. In a notably godless setting, I was asked to write an ethics paper based on Matthew 7:12, as though the passage were just as useful to the unbelieving academic as the Christian. The reality is different. The Golden Rule only functions in the context of God.

Although the basic precept—treat others as you want to be treated—seems simple, its application is quite complex. It is more than merely giving the other what we want. Otherwise, I could conclude that because I don't care about getting flowers, I should buy none for my wife either. It must also be more than catering to the whims of the other. If not, I should supply the heroin addict with his next hit. The Golden Rule only functions with a higher standard than either my desires or the other's can provide.

We find that standard in Jesus' description of God in Matthew 7:7-11. We should treat others in the way that we SHOULD want to be treated, in the way that God does treat us. As God gives good gifts to us, so we should to others. We must suit the gifts we give to each individual, just as God does for us. We must also be willing to give gifts that are unpleasant but still good, just as God is willing. That's why the Golden Rule begins with "therefore." It only makes sense when we start with Him.



Questions: Matthew 7:7-14

1. What does Jesus tell us in Matthew 7:7? What does this mean?
2. What analogy does Jesus make in Matthew 7:9-11? How does this help us understand the topic under discussion?
3. What does Matthew 7:12 tell us to do? How do we apply this?
4. How does Jesus describe His statement in Matthew 7:12? How is this true? What does this tell us?

Lesson Eleven: Matthew 7:7-20

5. How is the road of Matthew 7:13 described? What does this mean? Why does it matter?
6. How is the road of Matthew 7:14 described? What is Jesus talking about here? Why is it important?
7. When we are offered a choice between these two roads, what does Jesus tell us to do in Matthew 7:13? In practical terms, what does this mean?



Questions: Matthew 7:15-20

8. What class of people does Jesus warn against in Matthew 7:15? What people in His day might He have been describing? Does the description apply to any in our time? If so, to whom?
9. What does Matthew 7:15 tell us about the problem that these people present? Why is this important to us today?
10. What means of detecting these people does Matthew 7:16 offer? How can we use this today?
11. What kind of fruit is under discussion in Matthew 7:16-20? Galatians 5:22-23 and Colossians 1:5-6 may prove helpful.
12. How do we reconcile this passage with all the “good” people around us of whose conduct we approve? Passages like Acts 18:24-28 might help you answer.
13. What group is described in Matthew 6:19? What happens to them? Why is this important?
14. Does Matthew 7:20 mean the same thing as Matthew 7:16, or is Jesus driving at another point? Consider 1 Timothy 5:24-25 in your answer.



The *View* from the *Mountain*

Lesson Twelve: Matthew 7:21-29



A Second Glance: "Lord, Lord"

Religious polls taken in the modern-day U.S. routinely reveal that millions upon millions of Americans profess belief in Jesus Christ. However, of this horde of people, only a handful practice Christianity as it is revealed in the Bible. The others may attend a variety of churches (sadly, some worship with churches of Christ), read religious books, and wear crucifix jewelry, but they do not obey the one they claim as Lord.

This is hardly a new problem. It was familiar both during Jesus' ministry and long before it. Consider the words of God in Isaiah 1:10-20. He describes a people that has mastered outward religion. They pray to Him often, they offer the appropriate sacrifices, they attend all the right religious assemblies, but morally, they have sunk to the level of Sodom. "Repent," God warns them, "or I will destroy you."

We need to remember this. A superficial commitment to godliness cannot save us or anyone else. We must obey, and not because God is a legalistic nit-picker looking for a chance to squash us. Above all, God wants us to know Him and to love Him, and the only way we can gain that knowledge is through experience. When we obey, we come to know God through what we think, feel, and do. When we die to ourselves, we become conformed to the death of Christ. Living like Jesus is the only way to know God, and unless we do, Jesus will rightly tell us that He has never known us.



Questions: Matthew 7:21-23

1. What is the connection between Matthew 7:15-20 and Matthew 7:21-23? How is this significant?
2. What two groups of people are contrasted in Matthew 7:21? What contemporaries of Jesus might He be talking about? What application can we make from this passage today?
3. What results does each group of people see? Why is this important?
4. When Jesus discusses entering the kingdom of heaven in Matthew 7:21, what is He talking about? What can we learn from this?

Lesson Twelve: Matthew 7:21-29

5. What does Jesus describe some as saying in Matthew 7:22? What does this tell us?
6. How does Jesus say He will respond in Matthew 7:23? What does this mean?
7. What is Jesus talking about when He says “lawlessness” in Matthew 7:23? What light does Psalm 6, especially 6:8, shed on this?



Questions: Matthew 7:24-29

8. Why does Jesus begin Matthew 7:24 with “therefore?” What overall point is He driving at?
9. What are the two components to righteousness that Jesus describes in Matthew 7:25? Why is this important?
10. Who are the people described in Matthew 7:24 like? How is this true?
11. What sort of testing did the house of Matthew 7:25 experience? What happened to the house? What application can we make from this?
12. What comparison is made in Matthew 7:26-27? How is this comparison accurate?
13. What does Matthew 7:28 tell us about the result of the teaching of Jesus? Why is this significant?
14. What contrast does Matthew 7:29 present? What caused the people to notice this contrast?



The *View* from the *Mountain*

Lesson Thirteen: Review



A Second Glance: Learning Is Doing

The Sermon on the Mount is not a warm and fuzzy sermon. It's a challenge, a challenge to be like Jesus. If we can read Matthew 5 through Matthew 7 and feel relaxed and complacent, we're missing something. The Sermon on the Mount should make us feel uneasy as we are forced to recognize the difference between our righteousness and God's righteousness.

It's a healthy thing for us to become uncomfortable when we are confronted with how much we need to change to please God, but if we stop with the discomfort, we've missed the point. Jesus Himself closes the sermon by describing the fate of both those who obey and those who do not. His brother, the apostle James, describes our decision point in James 1:22-25. God's word forces us to face the truth about ourselves, but it doesn't force us to do anything about it. We can choose either to abide by what we've seen, or we can choose to go away and forget everything about it.

If the Sermon on the Mount does not cause us to change our lives, we have wasted our time in studying it. Christ has shown us what we ought to be, but it's up to us to make that vision a reality. If we want to make the truths of Jesus our own, we must be willing to work and suffer and sacrifice. Could it be any other way? If we want to win the crown of Christ, we must be willing to carry the cross.



Questions: Review 1

For each of the contexts given below, describe both the main point/points of the context AND how you need to apply it in your life.

1. Matthew 5:3-12.
2. Matthew 5:13-16.
3. Matthew 5:12-20.
4. Matthew 5:21-30.

Lesson Thirteen: Review

5. Matthew 5:31-37.

6. Matthew 5:38-48.

7. Matthew 6:1-4.



Questions: Review 2

8. Matthew 6:5-18.

9. Matthew 6:19-24.

10. Matthew 6:25-34.

11. Matthew 7:1-6

12. Matthew 7:7-14

13. Matthew 7:15-23

14. Matthew 7:24-29.