



# SERMON ON THE MOUNT

STUDY GUIDE PT. 3

# WELCOME

This guide is designed to help you to get the most out of our time together studying and applying the Sermon on the Mount. It is intended to be used with a small group but can also be done individually. The guide contains space for you to take notes on the sermon each week and then has 5 days of devotional content that will be on the same passage as the sermon. Each of these days includes questions for you to meditate on as you consider how to apply God's Word to your life.

The guide also includes Small Group Questions so that you can discuss the things that you are learning with other believers. We are praying that these times in your small groups deepen your relationships with other followers of Jesus and spur you on to walk closer to God!

We want this study to be helpful for your journey following Jesus, so we compiled some tips that will help you.

- Start your times with God in prayer each day!
- Always read the Scripture for the day first. If you only have time for one thing, it should be God's Word! Then read through the devotional and reflect on the challenges at the end.
- Apply God's Word with specific action steps.
- Rejoice when God gives you the strength to meet your goal!
- Share your goal with your group so they can help you and encourage you!



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# **SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS**

## **Matthew 6:25-34**

- 1. What stuck out to you from the sermon this week?**
- 2. What are things in your life that bring on stress and anxiety?**
- 3. Do you believe that God loves you and wants to provide for you?**
- 4. How do you trust God in the midst of anxiety?**
- 5. How can your life be more focused on the Kingdom of God instead of the temporary kingdom of this world?**
- 6. What is one specific step you can take this week to apply God's Word to your life?**

# SERMON NOTES

## *Need for Food*

### **Day 1**

#### **Read Matt 6:25-34**

Worry, anxiety, and stress, are all epidemics in our society. These topics are not new for many of us; we have grown used to our minds being in turmoil. We have 1000 thoughts in the back of our heads at all times that we struggle over. The worst-case scenario is the one that tends to stick with us, and we fixate on that. The issues that are all around us are made worse because we cannot stop thinking about what bad things could happen next. Jesus speaks to us in this passage from the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus' message may seem unattainable at points, but make sure to read day 5 if you feel like you are in the midst of the struggle.

Jesus just finished talking about serving money as a master and saying that instead we need to serve God. He builds this idea as He talks about anxiety. In Jesus' day, many in His audience were closer to poverty than riches. There were legitimate concerns for how they would get their food and clothing. Physical provision was not assumed by all of Jesus' followers. But, Jesus is taking these most basic needs and saying that we should not worry about them. Jesus first points out that life is more than food and clothing.

Humans are important to God, He has designed us in the womb as image bearers (Ps 139:13-14, Gen 1:27). God loves deeply His special creation. God's care for us was clearly expressed when He sent His Son to die for our sin, taking our penalty (Rom 5:8). Jesus' answer for fighting anxiety all goes back to belief in God. The first thing that we need to believe about God as we wrestle with worry is that He loves us.

Jesus continues this point by telling the disciples to look at the birds and how they are provided food by God (Matt 6:26). Then He once again points to the special place that humanity has in God's Kingdom. "Are you not of more value than [birds]?" Jesus wants us to feel the care that God has for birds in providing for them and then realize how much more God cares about us. He wants us to realize the depth of God's love for us and then trust Him instead of being anxious.

## **Meditation:**

What are some of the anxieties, stresses, or worries that you tend to deal with?

Do you believe that God loves you?

How do you prove to yourself that God loves you? What has He done?  
What verses in Scripture do you go to?



## *Uselessness of Anxiety*

### **Day 2**

**Read Matt 6:25-34; Phil 4:6-7**

The weight of anxiety is given Jesus' full attention in this part of the sermon where Jesus confronts our human tendency toward worry instead of trust and reliance on our Creator. Jesus wants us to see the uselessness of anxiety so, He asks, can it add time to your life (Matt 6:27)? The obvious answer to the question is no. Being anxious does not magically give you more time to complete the project, save your kids from making bad choices, or give you the ability to change what people think about you.

Anxiety will bring no positive impact to your life. In fact, the impact of anxiety on your autonomic nervous system can cause you to experience headaches, nausea, or stomach pain. Anxiety starts in our minds but very quickly affects our bodies. God has made us as humans with many different systems that work together in our physical bodies. When one of these systems is off then it throws off the rest. When our mind is not healthy, it will impact our whole body and spirit.

This means we need to have a plan to fight against our natural tendency toward worry and anxiety. Paul shares that plan with us when he tells believers to go to God in prayer over the things that bring worry and remember to also thank God (Phil 4:6-7). This promise in God's word that He will give an unexplainable peace to us is exactly what we need to fight against anxiety. God's promise of peace is what we need to cling to everyday of our worry filled world.

The power of anxiety can be defeated in the more powerful practice of prayer. In prayer, we are going before God, the Creator of the universe, and we are encouraged to bring our struggles and stresses before Him (Phil 4:6,7; Lk 11:9-13). We go before the most magnificent and strong being in the universe and we have the opportunity to ask Him for whatever we need. The source of our might is the Almighty who we serve. His strength, power, might, majesty, and omnipotence are what we rely on to bring us through. When we center our mind on how big God is then our anxieties and stresses begin to shrink in their size because they do no compare to God Himself.

## **Meditation:**

What is your plan to deal with anxiety and stress when they begin to come up in your life?

Do you ever think that being anxious about something will help you?

How can remembering who you are praying to and His power help you in moments of anxiety?

## *Called to be Different*

### **Day 3**

#### **Read Matt 6:25-34**

Jesus continues the teaching on anxiety by comparing the attitudes of the Jews with the attitudes of those who do not follow God. He says that worrying about food and clothing is what the world does, what unbelievers do, what pagans do. Jews at that time, and Christians today do not need to have these worries because we have a relationship with the good and loving God who provides for the grass, the birds, and will also provide for us (Matt 6:31-32). Jesus does not want His followers to be caught up in the same things that consume everyone else. He wants His followers to see God and trust Him.

God knows what we need. He is aware of our need for food and clothing. When we look to God as our Father who wants to bless us, then we can take more confidence in our needs being met. This is how children in a healthy family feel. They believe that their parents will provide for them. They aren't supposed to worry about having enough food or enough money to buy clothing. We are children of God and so our confidence should be unwavering that our God will provide for us (Jn 1:12, Rom 8:16-17).

This confidence in God is something that has to be built over time. Our relationship with God is not a magical one where we can just instantly feel something. Instead, it is a relationship that requires the energy, work, and time that all our relationships require. As we talk and listen to God, we begin to trust Him more. As we trust Him, then our belief grows that He will meet our needs, that He will protect us. This growth will lead us into the lifestyle of peace and joy that Jesus wants for us. We are God's children, and He wants to bless us and care for us.

### **Meditation:**

What impacts your confidence in God taking care of you?

How are you building your relationship with God to grow your trust in Him?

Do you believe that God wants to provide for you?

## *Seek First the Kingdom*

### **Day 4**

**Read Matt 6:25-34, Col 3:1-4**

Not only did Jesus call His followers to not worry, but He wanted them to live with an entirely different focus than the world. He said we are to “seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness” (Matt 6:33). This change in perspective is Jesus’ prescription for battling worry, taking our eyes off our own desires and needs then looking to God’s purposes, plan, and kingdom. Our focus shifting makes it harder to worry. We are no longer concerned with what God will provide for us; instead, we are sold out making sure we are living for Him and then we experience His provision along the way.

Paul echoes this language in his letter to the church of Colossae where he says to set our thoughts on things above. He says we should be focused on the heavenly reality instead of getting caught up in the temporal things of this world (Col 3:1-4). This is very unnatural for all of us since the physical world is all around us and constantly battling for our attention. But as followers of Jesus, we must diligently and relentlessly keep our focus on what God calls us to in the unseen spiritual kingdom of God.

How do we do this? We must reorient our lives to the pursuit of things that matter to God. This will likely be a painful process because our lives are so intermingled with worldly pursuits. Our time, money, and resources are supposed to be poured into things that honor God and will build His Kingdom. So, we must evaluate our lives and where our resources are going. Is our time being wasted on building our kingdom or glory? Does God care about the things that we care about? Does the way that we care for our families honor God? Are we taking the time to make disciples like Jesus called us to (Matt 28:18-20)?

### **Meditation:**

How does seeking first the Kingdom of God battle anxiety?

Are you seeking first the kingdom of God? Where? Where do you struggle with this?

How can you make evaluating your priorities a weekly part of your rhythm?

## *The Heavy Weight We Experience*

### **Day 5**

### **Read Psalm 88**

Anxiety is experienced by so many today, and it feels like there is no way out. The weight of worry on the mind comes at the worst moment, and it is crippling. For some, this leads to panic attacks, and for others, it can lead to depression. Our minds need to be retrained to fight against these things. This is what our devos this week have been all about, retraining our minds to believe in God so that our minds do not go down the road of worry.

It needs to be said that in order for some to retrain their minds, there will need to be medicine used to restore the physical health of their brain which has been unhealthy for too long. Everyone who struggles with anxiety would also benefit from meeting with a trained biblical counselor who will listen and give insight on how to be healthy.

But more than a path forward, today's Scripture showed that God is aware of the depth of our feelings, and He is comfortable with us expressing them, even when they do not have a happy ending. This Psalm is recorded in Scripture so that we can see that God hears our prayers when we are in our darkest moments. So, if right now you need to just cry out to God, then do it. If you need to find someone who will listen to you and help you, do it. If you want to begin retraining your mind away from anxiety and toward belief in God's provision, THEN DO IT. Ask God to be with you as you take your next step.

**Meditation:**

Ask God to reveal what your next step should be after studying and reflecting on the devos this week.

Write a prayer asking God to be with you as you take your next step.

# **SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS**

## **Matthew 7:1-6**

- 1. What stuck out to you from the sermon this week?**
- 2. What area in your life do you have the hardest time not judging people?**
- 3. Do you spend time with God examining yourself so that you are removing the log from your own eye?**
- 4. How do you avoid giving your wisdom to those who will only trample on it?**
- 5. How will you rebel against a spirit of judgment when it begins to well up inside of you?**
- 6. What is one specific step you can take this week to apply God's Word to your life?**

# SERMON NOTES



## Judge Not

### Day 6

#### Read Matt 7:1-6

This passage of Scripture is one of the world's *favorite* passages. Even Christians love to throw it around. "JUDGE NOT that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

What does it mean? The translation of the world usually is "You can't judge me." But the fact is, this is only part of what is being said. Let's go through this and look ahead.

Skipping past the "judge not" – let's look at "For with the judgement you pronounce, you will be judged." It is very easy to look at other people and see them against a measure that is not how we measure ourselves. If we are wronged, we tend to see all of their petty indiscretions and little slip-ups and magnify them into huge transgressions. While sin has no size in God's eyes, we are quick to rank others' wrongdoings as far, far worse than our own. We judge other people's actions, but we look at our good motives.

When you are looking at what others have done, remember that the standard you use to judge them, will eventually be the standard that you are held to. Can you live up to it? Can you pass muster?

Jesus says, "Why do you see the speck in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, "Let me take the speck out of your eye when there is a log in your own eye!" In other words, how can you expect someone to live up to something that you fall so short of?

## **Meditation:**

We will examine the three different aspects of judgement and then put them all together. Before we talk about anything else, there must be a time of self-evaluation.

What do you have to change as you look at the lives of those around you? What are you holding them accountable for that you aren't holding yourself responsible for?

Write a pray of confession and repentance. Ask God to reveal areas where you are judging others that you aren't meeting the standard. If someone comes to mind, seek forgiveness.

## Judge?

### Day 7

**Read: Matthew 7:1-6, John 7:24, I Corinthians 5:12**

Believe it or not, judge not does not mean don't judge. Wait. That's not what God said. Yes, it is. Start in verse 5 of the passage. "You hypocrite! First take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye."

When Jesus was telling His followers not to judge, He was telling them not to judge hypocritically. Let's look at this in the sense of a courtroom. An accused stands before a judge. That judge is to be a fair and honest person who knows and upholds the law of the land. But what if that judge *isn't* a fair and honest person? What if the judge is corrupt – even more guilty of crimes than the people who appear before the court? The point is that such a judge cannot pass judgement on those people when he is more than guilty.

This is the same idea of the Scripture here. "Then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye." The speck removal is still supposed to happen. Throughout Scripture, God tells believers to judge others. In John 7:24, Jesus tells those around him "Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment." In 1 Corinthians 5:12, "For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge?"

When Jesus tells us to judge not, He is saying to not judge by the wrong standard. That standard can come back to bite you in the end.

### **Meditation:**

Do you have a brother that needs help with some spiritual discipline? Are you willing to help them?

# *Speck Removal*

## **Day 8**

### **Read Matt 7:1-6**

Have you ever gotten something small and pesky in your eye? It's really annoying, right? It makes it hard to see so we rub and rub at it. Finally, we turn to someone and say, "Can you please see what's in my eye?" Usually from the outside, it's easier to see what the speck is and to remove it. It is much less painful for us.

This is the idea of speck removal spoken of across Scripture. The idea of looking at the behavior of a brother is to aid them. In I Thessalonians 5:12, Paul speaks to this when he says, "admonish the idle." In Jude 22-23, "And have mercy on those who doubt; save others by snatching them out of the fire; to other show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by flesh."

Paul again talks about judging others in Galatians 6:1 when he says, "Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgressions, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spiritual of gentleness."

What do we take from all of this? First, when we judge, we do it gently and in love. We know from I Corinthians 13 that love doesn't rejoice in wrongdoing. It believes the best. So, we first look at our brothers in love and believe the best of them. Paul says that "you who are spiritual". That means that the only one who can pass judgment is close to God, walking with Him.

We need to help our brothers walk with Christ in the best way possible. If they can not see clearly, then they can't do that. When we see a speck in our brother's eye, we need to lovingly and gently help them see the speck and remove it so that nothing stands in the way of their walking with God in close fellowship.

### **Meditation:**

Are you afraid of doing speck removal? Why?

If you know someone who is struggling with some sin, can you help them? How?

## *Let's Review*

### **Day 9**

**Read Matthew 7:1-6, Jude 22-23, Galatians 6:1, John 7:24**

Frankly, this passage is one of the most counter-cultural that you are going to encounter even though it doesn't seem like it at first glance. It is worth reviewing what we have discussed altogether so that this very important issue is clear.

1. Jesus says don't judge others if you can't live up to the standard that you are using.
2. Judging others is less judgment and more aiding your brother to see something in their lives that is pulling them away from the abundant life of following Jesus.
3. Any judging that is done needs to be done in such a way that is loving, gentle and restorative. Anything else is outside the realm of Scripture.

We must walk away with one very important idea. Any judging that is done – we will be held to that standard. Jesus reminds His followers twice to take the log out of their own eye. If someone comes to you and asks for help, how is that possible when you aren't walking in such a way to know what is right and what is wrong? And that is the key. When Paul tells the Galatians to help their brothers, it is commanded to those who are spiritual, those who understand and know what it is to walk in the way that is right.

### **Meditation:**

How does this passage change your ideas about judging?

When you consider your life, do you feel qualified to help a fellow believer or do you know some specific area that you need to work on?

## *Pigs and Pearls and Dogs and What?*

### **Day 10**

**Read: Matthew 7:6**

“Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you.”

Keyboard Commandos. Internet Ninjas. Trolls. We've all run into them. They love nothing more than to engage in arguments, to inflame the audience, to set civil discussions aflame with chaos. Have you ever taken on someone who loves to argue just because? The fact is, you aren't going to change their minds. They have already got it all figured out.

These are the dogs and pigs that Jesus is talking about. The Jewish crowd is an interesting place to talk about pigs. They were unclean and certainly never an animal that a Jew would try to domesticate. This is the point that Jesus was making. The truths of Scripture are beautiful pearls, holy and pure. The whole world needs to hear the message of mercy and grace.

But there will be people that you will come across who are incapable of hearing the truth without arguing. They will instantly respond with inflammatory speech and arguments that are circular and barely logical. If you try to speak truth to them, they will twist it and turn it so many different ways that you don't know if you're coming or going. Meet the dogs and pigs. Engaging them will get you nowhere but frustrated. Let them be.

Be mindful of when and how you engage with others. Don't put yourself in the way of malicious trolls who are not in the mindspace of hearing the truth. Engage wisely.

### **Meditation:**

Do you find yourself engaging in arguments on the internet or with others? Why? Do you ever have a good outcome?

# **SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS**

## **Matthew 7:7-12**

- 1. What stuck out to you from the sermon this week?**
- 2. What do you struggle to ask God for?**
- 3. What would it look like if you asked God for everything you wanted or needed as if you were a little child?**
- 4. How can you enjoy prayer more than you do now?**
- 5. Have you ever tried to pray according to ACTS or PRAY?**
- 6. What is one specific step you can take this week to apply God's Word to your life?**

# SERMON NOTES



## *Invitation to Pray*

### **Day 11**

### **Matthew 7:7-12**

Prayer is an important spiritual discipline that too often we forget or don't focus on as we navigate the journey. However, prayer is so important to the Christian walk that Jesus brings it up twice. The first time, He taught His followers *how* to pray. Now, He comes back to the subject of praying because He wants us to know that prayer comes with great promises.

“Ask and it will be given unto you. Seek, and you will find. Knock, and it will be opened to you.” (vs 7)

Ask – Jesus tells us that we need to ask for what we need. We need to bring our requests before Him. In James 1:5, James tells his readers “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach...” Wisdom is literally available whenever we ask.

Seek -- Seeking implies looking for something that you want to find. Earlier in the sermon, Jesus told His followers that they are to seek after the Kingdom of God (Matthew 6:33)

Knock – How do you get into some place? You knock and are granted entrance. The imagery here is the idea of knocking at the door of Heaven and having a quiet time with the Savior who wants to meet with you.

It is incredibly important to realize that prayer is a foundation in Christianity and walking with God.

## **Meditation**

How is your prayer life? Is it something that you struggle with or does it come easily to you?

This week, every day, write down a prayer, talking to God about your day. See if putting the words down on paper helps you progress in your prayer life.

## *The Promise of Prayer*

### **Day 12**

#### **Matthew 7:7-12**

Too easily in this world, we are invited TO something with promises of wealth or success. Those promises lure in the masses, but very often, they prove to be empty words. When Jesus spoke to His followers on the Mount, He promised that time spent in prayer would come with fulfilled promises.

He told His followers to ask because what they are asking for will be given to them. When He tells them to seek, He promises that what they are looking for will be found. When He instructs them to knock, it is with the understanding that the door that they are knocking on will be opened. Prayer isn't just a recitation to God – a list of woes and wants. Prayer is time spent with God. It shapes your walk with Christ. As you place your life before Him, sharing all aspects, you will see that things begin to change.

The thing is that we often miss is that God promise that He will give and find and answer. Because we have a certain outcome already pre-programmed as the correct outcome, we don't necessarily believe that any different answer is actually from God. But we have read the Scripture – ask and you will receive what God wants you to have. Seek and you will find exactly what you need. Knock and the doors that you are supposed to walk through will open.

Prayer is the promise of God to supply all your needs according to His riches.

## **Meditation**

Think of one promise in advertising or around you that you believed that did not turn out to be true.

Think of one promise of Scripture that has not been proven true in your life (Hint: This won't happen).

## *Persistence in Prayer*

### **Day 13**

**Read Matthew 7:7-12; Luke 18:1-8**

Have you ever had to be persistent for something you wanted? Maybe you wanted to lose weight, so you had to persistently workout and watch what you eat. Maybe you wanted to win an award or some sort of sporting event. Someone who half-heartedly practices or does it for a few weeks and then stops doesn't stand a chance. Only persistent workouts and intense practices will allow you to reach the desired goal.

Prayer is much the same way. Praying every so often is nice, but that isn't the way one gets to know the Heavenly Father. It isn't the way that we are changed by prayer. In Luke 18, we read the parable of the persistent widow. The widow went to an unrighteous judge, who had no inclination to do good, and asked over and over for justice against her adversary. The judge got SO tired of her constant requests that he gave her justice.

It should be noted that the woman was asking for the right thing – justice. She wasn't asking for anything wrong, but what was good for her. But because she asked so much, the judge gave her the good thing that she wanted. Luke says in verse 1 that Jesus told them that this parable so that “they ought always to pray and never lose heart.”

Prayer doesn't always have to be in a private closet, although prayer like that is certainly necessary and effective. Prayer should happen all the time. When you drive somewhere, turn off your music or talk radio and spend time in prayer (eyes open, please). When you are going about the daily tasks that can be mundane and mindless, spend that time seeking the wisdom of God, or simply enjoy His presence. Slowly it will become the habit of your heart to turn to prayer in your quiet moments.

## **Meditation**

List 3-5 times during the day that you are not actively thinking that you could turn in to times of prayer

This week, pick 2 of those times and work on praying. Add more times each week.

In one week, think back. How did praying during those times affect your walk?

## *The Goodness of God*

### **Day 14**

#### **Read Matt 7:7-12**

There is a popular Christian song, “Good, Good Father.” In that song, the author speaks about seeking God for answers that only He can provide. Because He is a good Father, He is waiting to give those answers.

The truth is – if we were praying to a god that wasn’t good, chances are we wouldn’t like the response. But Jesus talks about this further down in the passage. If you are blessed to be in the stage of life of a parent, you will know that as much as you can with your human frailty, you want what is good for your child. You do everything you can to give good things to your offspring, even though you have a limited human understanding.

Jesus reminds His followers that if imperfect human parents are capable of giving their children good things, that a perfect Heavenly Father is that much more capable. If your child came to you and asked you for food, you aren’t going to hit him or her with the taser. God created us. When we make something and work hard on it, we tend to take care of it, giving it things that will nurture it and make it stronger or healthier or better.

In Romans, Paul told Christians that God is working out everything for our good. In Matthew 6:8, He says “Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.” In all fairness, what we think we need and what we actually need might not be the same thing. But God will always give us what is good for us because He is always good.

### **Meditation:**

Make a list of the blessings you have in your life.

Write a prayer of thanksgiving to God about all of those things.

## *Out of the Abundance*

### **Day 15**

#### **Read Matt 7:7-12**

What follows in verse 12 is often called “the Golden Rule.” “SO whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.”

“So” is a word like therefore. We have to look back and see what came before. What came before is the description of the goodness of God and His desire to give to His children good things that are good for us. What does that have to do with this standard of behavior?

As Christians, we have been infinitely blessed whether we have many, many things or very little at all. We have been rescued from eternal hell. We have been given the ability to walk with the heavenly Father and have Him lead us and guide us. Did we deserve it? Absolutely not. We are the lowest of the low. We are evil and despicable.

Because we are so gifted when we so don’t deserve, we need to turn that around and treat others that way. We can’t expect people to understand the grace that we have been given if we never extend it. We can’t proclaim any truth of grace and mercy when we aren’t showing any grace and mercy. If you want to see the grace of God mirrored in those you interact with, then it is your job to treat them that way

The simple fact is – only in the goodness of God do natural consequences not exist. If you aren’t kind to people, they have no reason to be kind to you. But, if you consider all that God has done for you, you will want to spill that out and share that with everyone around you. Considering all that you are given, how can you NOT turn around and treat others with the same grace?

### **Meditation:**

Pick five people today that you can specifically treat more kindly than normal. How do they react?



# **SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS**

## **Matthew 7:13-23**

- 1. What stuck out to you from the sermon this week?**
- 2. What area do you struggle walk on the narrow path?**
- 3. What fruits do you look for when you evaluate the people that you are following?**
- 4. Do you struggle with Jesus' statement in Matt 7:21-23?**
- 5. How can be confident in your standing with Jesus?**
- 6. What is one specific step you can take this week to apply God's Word to your life?**

# SERMON NOTES

## *The Narrow Way*

### **Day 16**

**Read Matthew 7:13-27, 16:24-27**

Jesus is beginning to bring the Sermon on the Mount to a close and He wants the importance of following His teaching to be abundantly clear. He says that really, in life, after hearing all of His Words, there are two options -- the narrow gate or the wide gate (Matt 7:13-14). These gates are ahead of each of us now that we have heard Jesus' words. The level of obedience, commitment, and dedication that Jesus has set before us is hard.

He has taken so many commandments to the core of our hearts and that makes it impossible for us to fake an image of obedience. That is no longer good enough.

Jesus says that we have a choice. He urges us to enter by the narrow gate. But He knows that the other way is much easier. The other road is wide and easy and there are so many people going that way.

The path of anger, revenge, and bitterness is easy.

The path of lust, sexual sin, and pornography is easy.

The path of performance based religion is easy.

The path of building an earthly kingdom is easy

The path of anxiety and judgment is easy.

The path is easy, but it leads to destruction. Narrow is the way and hard is the path that leads to life. Few walk on it. Living the way that Jesus calls us to means taking the hard way. There is a cost to following Jesus. It will cost us everything, but we will gain it all. The other side promises to give us whatever we want, but we will lose everything (Matt 16:24-27)

## **Meditation**

Do you believe the path of following Jesus leads to life? Why or why not?

Where in your life are you following the narrow path?

Where in your life are you drawn to the path of destruction?

Write a prayer asking God to help you see the life ahead on the narrow path and the destruction that is on the other side.

## *Following Jesus*

### **Day 17**

#### **Read Matthew 7:13-23**

Jesus wants what is best for you. This is why in His teaching He points you to life (Jn 10:10). He designed you and created you; so He knows exactly what is best for you. He knows that going down the path that everyone else goes down leads to hurt, trauma, and brokenness. Jesus wants something better for you. But He says that pursuing better is hard.

Jesus calls each of us to follow Him and the path that He laid out for us. This is why in the early church Jesus followers weren't known as Christians. They were followers of "The Way" (Acts 19:9,23; 24:14,22). There is a path as a follower of Jesus that we are supposed to follow. Christian is not supposed to be a label of religion on a form. Follower of Jesus should be the identity which helps us to make every choice in our lives.

Every choice should be made with the desire to walk the narrow path. This means how we that how we use our time, spend our money, use our phones, work our jobs, treat those around us, care for the poor, talk to God and everything in between should be honoring to God. We should not just accept how we have always done things. We may be living the easy way and smiling as we head toward destruction. We must choose the harder path and examine our lives to find the spots where our lifestyle doesn't match the teaching of Jesus.

Some of the hard things that should be part of our daily and weekly expressions of faith are prayer, fasting, and giving. These are three things that Jesus talked about in Matthew 6:1-18.

### **Meditation**

How are you practicing prayer, giving, and fasting?

Which one do you want to grow?

What hard thing are you not that you feel called to do?

# WARNING

## Day 18

Read Matthew 7:15-23; Acts 20:27-31

Jesus warns His followers to be on guard for those who will appear innocent but all the while will lead others astray (Mt 7:15-20). He describes these people as dressing themselves to look innocent like sheep but actually being dangerous like wolves. Wolves are out to kill the sheep. This again is a life-or-death thing; we must stay vigilant in protecting ourselves from these false prophets.

The process that Jesus describes for discerning the false teachers is to look at the fruit of their lives. He says that we should be looking for good fruit which can only come from a healthy tree. But then, Jesus throws a curveball. He says that prophesying, casting out demons, and doing mighty works are not the fruit that we are to look for. Jesus says that people who do these things may still have not known Him (Mt 7:21-23). This means that the external works of power are not supposed to be the fruit that identifies followers of Jesus.

The fruit then, must be the application of the rest of the sermon -- the lifestyle that follows the narrow way. The fruit we look for is people who have their inner lives as a priority. They are not consumed with only externally following God, but their attitudes show they have the real desire to love God and love people. In our culture today, it can be easy for people to have a public persona that is different from their private life. This dichotomy is exactly what leads to leaders in the spotlight falling into ministry shattering sin.

## Meditation

How do you discern the leaders and teachers that you listen to?

What fruit do you value highly as you evaluate leaders?

Write out a prayer asking God to show you where you may be looking for the wrong fruit and that He would give you discernment in who you follow.

## *A Serious Check*

### **Day 19**

#### **Read Matthew 7:21-23**

For followers of Jesus, these verses are some of the most sobering. We read what Jesus says and have this sinking feeling that we really hope He is not describing us. We don't want to get to heaven and be turned away. This passage should force us to really examine our lives and what they are really pursuing.

Saying "Lord, Lord" means to act like you lived your life in submission to Jesus. Our words are not going to be enough to get into heaven. Calling ourselves a Christian and saying Jesus is King is not the bar for salvation. The flip side to this Jesus says is doing the will of His Father. Our actions need to back up that we have been changed by God and are now living for His glory instead of our own.

There are also people who Jesus says will do mighty works that He will say, I never knew you. External works and impact of ministry is not the measurement of a true follower of Jesus. This blows our minds if we really think about it. Jesus says that people who looked like they were doing productive work in Jesus' name never knew Jesus. What hope does this give to us?

Our salvation comes from FAITH in Jesus and ACTIONS that show we are His followers. When we disconnect faith from action, we are headed into legalism instead of relationship with Jesus (Gal 3:1-9). When we disconnect action from faith then we won't have done the will of the Father (James 2:18-26). Jesus is challenging those who claim to be His followers in this passage to make sure that their beliefs are matching up with their actions. Jesus did not want people to just believe in Him, He wants us to follow His ways in obedience (Matt 28:18-20).

## **Meditation**

How do you feel when you read Matthew 7:21-23?

Where do your actions not match up with what you say that you believe?

Write a prayer asking Jesus to grow your faith and your passion to serve God's Kingdom.



## *Wrong Goals*

### **Day 20**

**Read Matthew 7:21-23; John 17:20-26**

This teaching of Jesus forces us to come face to face with the realization that we often value the wrong things in ministry. Here, Jesus says that he never knew people who were prophesying, performing exorcisms, and doing miracles. These signs and wonders seem like the sign of someone who has God powerfully at work in them. Someone who can do these things seems like they are for sure in the family of God and will be welcomed into heaven. But that's not what Jesus said. He said miracles don't define relationship. He never knew these people. They had no relationship with Him.

We, as those who claim to follow Jesus, must examine our lives and make sure that we are not looking at external works as the thing that will define our relationship with God. Some of the wrong things that we value might be the ability to talk eloquently about Jesus, the number of hours we have spent serving at church, or the number of years that we have gone to the same place on a Sunday morning. These things have value, but they do not define our relationship with God. Our relationship with Jesus is built on time with Him; it's based in enjoyment of His companionship every day.

Jesus prayed this for all of His disciples, that they would be with Him (Jn 17:20-26). This was what He asked His Father for in His prayer before He was arrested in the garden. He wants relationship with us. This relationship will lead us into doing God's will and having fruitful ministry (Jn 15:1-8). It all starts with true and deep relationship with Jesus. Our deepest desire should be knowing Jesus and walking with Him. This is what Jesus called His disciples to when He said, "Follow me." We now have the same invitation to follow Jesus, this is how we will be welcomed into the kingdom of heaven.

## **Meditation**

What outward identifiers do you use to prove you are following Jesus? Are these healthy signs of relationship or are they empty outward expressions?

How are you growing closer to Jesus?

Write a prayer asking God to show you how to draw near to Him today.

# **SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS**

## **Matthew 7:24-27**

- 1. What stuck out to you from the sermon this week?**

**Read Matthew 5-7 Out loud**

- 2. What has been your favorite part of the Sermon on the Mount?**
- 3. Is your life currently built on rock or sand?**
- 4. What part of the Sermon on the Mount do you struggle to apply?**
- 5. How would your life look different if you were fully applying the Sermon on the Mount?**
- 6. What is one specific step you can take this week to apply God's Word to your life?**

# SERMON NOTES

## *Hears these Words*

### **Day 21**

**Read Matthew 7:24-27**

Jesus is finishing His sermon by making sure people understand this was not just an eloquent speech but a brand new lifestyle that He was calling people to follow. He says there will be two types of people that will walk away from this message. Those who follow His teachings and those who do not. Everyone who was there heard it. Everyone who's read it has heard. Now, what will you do?

Israel was given the same question when Moses finished giving them the law (Lev 26:1-46; Deut 28, 30:15-20). They were told they could either obey God's command and receive wonderful blessing, or they could disobey, and God would punish them. Israel as a nation was given the choice to follow God in a path of obedience or turn away, following the idolatry of the nations around them. Jesus' calling at the end of the Sermon on the Mount is the same thing. He gives the choice to listen and obey or to disregard in rebellion.

We have heard the words of Jesus over the last 3 months. What will we do? Many of the days in the devotions we have tried to begin obeying Jesus' words. Are you going to continue? Joshua was the leader who came after Moses and he said it this way, "choose this day whom you will serve" (Jo 24:15). Joshua then made the point that choosing to follow the one true God meant putting away all the other gods of the nations. This is the same calling for us. As we hear Jesus, the call to obedience will mean following Him and rejecting the old ways that we used to follow. Will you do it?

## **Meditation**

What steps have you taken to follow Jesus since we started this series at the beginning of September?

Where have you struggled to follow Jesus in the last few months?

Write a prayer asking God to give you the discernment this week to see where you need to build on the foundation of Jesus instead of the shifting sand of everything else.

## *Building on the Rock*

### **Day 22**

**Read Matthew 7:24-27; Lk 6:46-49**

The words of Jesus are so easy to hear but much harder to do. Jesus compares the intentional following of His teaching with the wisdom of building a house on a solid foundation. This type of building takes work. It takes energy to examine Jesus' words, meditate on them, and then apply them to life. This is a daily grind. It's not a Sunday only thing. Each day we should be hearing and doing (Jas 1:22-25). Our lives should be built on following Jesus.

The process Jesus describes is hear, apply, and stand firm. The middle piece of the chain is where many disciples of Jesus struggle. We are good at being at church to hear the word, and some are even good at reading their Bibles throughout the week. But practicing God's Word and what we are hearing is much more challenging. It requires sacrifice from the normal ways of our culture. Jesus calls for us to live in a way that focuses on God's Kingdom instead of trying to build our own. He calls us into a pattern of life that will make us stand out as foreigners who do not belong here (1 Pet 2:11-12).

This building of a counter cultural lifestyle feels impossible. The weight of going with the flow of culture and pursuing all the worldly things that everyone else chases after intensifies with each day we walk on this earth. Society wants us to conform. But as Jesus followers we are called to be the light and salt (Mt 5:13-16). The process of application begins with understanding what the Scriptures are saying. This part of the process has happened over the past 3 months as our Pastors have taught on Matthew 5-7. Then you take their explanation and hold it up to your life and determine if you are in step with the passage.

This process should happen daily as you are personally reading the Bible (Ps 1, Jos 1:8-9). Then you should be specific about how you can apply it. Do not just say, "I want to read the Bible." Instead, choose a book or chapter of Scripture and determine how often you will read it and when. Read Matthew 5-7 every morning before work this week. Then ask a friend to encourage you to stick with it. Developing this patterns and rhythm of pursuing God builds our lives on the rock.

## **Meditation**

What current rhythms in your life are focused on building your life on God?

How would it look for you to apply Scripture more intentionally to your life?

Write a prayer asking God to give you an unquenchable desire to live out His commands.



## *Does Not Fall*

### **Day 23**

#### **Read Matthew 7:24-27**

The life built on the rock does not fall. This is the encouragement that we long for. We want our lives to be safe and secure. Jesus tells us that when they are built by obedience on His Word then we can be confident that we will make it through the storm. This life is filled with many storms and hardships that come upon us. Jesus' words can be used to bring confidence in these moments but even more His words refer to the storm of eternal judgment when we will be standing firm in Him. We do not have to be afraid of the judgment ahead of us when we are building our lives on Jesus.

This confidence extends beyond final judgment and also applies to how we experience every trial of this life. Jesus went through the most difficult and broken situation as He, the perfect God-man, was convicted and sentenced to die a criminal's death on the cross. He went through this with His trust and reliance on God unshaken. He went through it for the joy that was ahead of Him (Heb 12:1-2). The Apostle Paul also experienced much suffering and got to the point that he viewed Jesus as worth all suffering (Phil 1:21, 2 Cor 12:10).

We can face trials the way that Jesus and Paul did. As we build our lives more and more on Jesus, we will become stronger and more mature (Heb 5:14). Our strength will come from Holy Spirit who is in us and giving us the power we need to stand in the midst of the storms. Let us go forward relying on God with confidence as we continue to growing to be more like Jesus.

### **Meditation**

What happens to you when you go through a difficult season of your life? What do you run to?

How does Jesus' example encourage you to walk through trials?

Write a prayer asking God to help you grow in maturity and strength to face storms.

## *Heard but did not Practice*

### **Day 24**

**Read Matthew 7:24-27, 27:3-10**

There was someone who heard the whole Sermon on the Mount in person and heard many of the teachings of Jesus, but he did not practice what he heard. In fact, even after hearing about building heavenly treasure, he decided that 30 pieces of silver was worth enough to sell out his Rabbi. He heard but he missed it. Then when the storm hit, he committed suicide. This is the story of Judas. His story is a warning light for all of us after hearing the Sermon on the Mount for months.

Think about this, Judas was with Jesus. He was there for the resurrection of Lazarus. He was there for the feeding of the 5,000. He heard Jesus tell the sea to be still. After seeing all the wonders of Jesus and walking with him for years, Judas still sold him out. His heart was never changed by the work of Jesus.

Do not follow in his footsteps. The words of Jesus are life altering words. He does not want us to continue living the same way after hearing His message. The way that we treat people should be different, He said love our enemies. The way we pray should be different, He said talk to God like He's your father. The way we invest should be different, He said the kingdom of heaven comes first. The things we let our minds dwell on should be different, He said do not be anxious. Following Jesus means living different and it will take intentionally making decisions that are at war with what the masses are doing.

### **Meditation**

How does thinking about Judas challenge you?

How is your life looking different because of following Jesus' teachings?

Write a prayer thanking God for His Word and for giving you a heart to respond to it.

## *Reason for the Season*

### **Day 25**

### **Read Matthew 5-7**

This closing of the Sermon on the Mount carries a warning and a challenge for us as we seek to deepen our walk with Jesus. The entire sermon has been Jesus pushing on the norms that we live with and not letting us off in the areas where we practice half-hearted obedience. His words on not judging, anxiety, and money are high callings that feel like they can never be achieved in our own power. That is the joy of following Jesus, He is not asking us to do any of this in our own strength. We have Holy Spirit in us working and giving us the strength to follow Jesus (Jn 16:5-16)!

So, as we go into the season of celebrating Jesus' birth, our hearts can be full knowing God is in working and moving. We can ask Him to give us victory over lust, anger, and anxiety. The challenge is continually remembering the foundation that we have and our God given purpose. Do not let the materialism and the busyness of December give you amnesia over what we have learned from Jesus. As we prepare to celebrate His coming, let us do it in a way that is honoring to Him.

Spend time over the month continuing to develop your prayer life. Try different types of prayer. Try reading a Psalm and praying through it.

Spend time over the month committing to giving more than receiving. Use your resources to bless those who have needs in our city. Give to the coat drives and toy drives so much that their's a few less presents under your tree. God will bless this sacrificial generosity.

Spend Christmas Eve fasting from food as you wait to celebrate. While you fast, think about the years of waiting for a Savior that Israel had. The pain they experienced as they waited for God to come. Thank God that your birth was after Jesus had come!

## **Meditation**

What is your favorite part of the Sermon on the Mount?

What do you want to do to keep your focus on Jesus this Christmas season?

Write a prayer thanking Jesus for preaching the Sermon on the Mount.