

## *Gospels Study and Discussion Questions*

### Lesson Two: Christ's Teaching Ministry: Sermon on the Mount – Matthew 5-7

#### Read Matthew 5:1-16.

- 1) The Beatitudes comprise the first part of Jesus' famous "Sermon on the Mount."
  - a) What qualities or states are blessed, according to Matthew 5:3-11 (use modern language to name them)? **Jesus said we are blessed if we possess these qualities or are in these states: humility, mourning, meekness, hunger for God and for His righteousness to be manifested in our lives, mercy, purity, peace, and persecution for Christ-like living.**
  - b) List qualities or states that are the opposite of these. **Self-reliance, absorption with the world's pleasures, narcissism, false humility or self-berating, disinterest in other's pain, inner turmoil due to ongoing sin, competitiveness and argumentativeness, worldliness or being lukewarm in our faith.**
- 2) How do the blessed qualities or states position you for increased spiritual growth and how do the opposite qualities or states hinder your spiritual growth? **The blessed qualities and states require us to trust God. The opposite qualities and states focus our attention on our own passions and pleasure. We are blessed when we choose to put our hope and focus on God and His character rather than on ourselves. Doing so postures us for spiritual growth.**
- 3) What two metaphors does Jesus use in Matthew 5:13-16 to explain the role of a Christian in the world? How has someone you know (or know of) inspired you to display one of these qualities more effectively by his or her example? **Salt and light. Personal sharing**

#### Read Matthew 5:17-48.

- 4) In Matthew 5:17, Jesus said He did not come to abolish but to fulfill the Law and the Prophets (the Old Testament books of Law and Prophets were the "Bible" of His day). Based on Jesus' teaching in Matthew 5:17-20 and the following passages, what relationship or attitude ought Christ-followers today have toward the Law and the Prophets: Psalm 119:81, 89, 116; 145:13b, 2 Timothy 3:16, Hebrews 10:23 and James 1:22-25? **In Matthew 5:18, Jesus exhorted His listeners that the word of God is completely reliable and every promise (prophecy) will be entirely fulfilled. Therefore, our attitude toward the prophetic books should be one of expectation and hope. In Matthew 5:19-20, Jesus taught that we must practice and teach the commands of the Law. Therefore, we ought to be eager to obey and to share its perfect ways. (The *GOD of the WORD Exodus* study addresses the Mosaic Law's relevance for us as New Testament believers. Some civil laws were given for Old Testament Jews, but the principles behind them still apply today. Many of the ceremonial laws were fulfilled by Christ and are applied by believers today in a spiritual sense.)**
- 5) Mark in your Bible (if you choose) the places in Matthew 5:21-48 where Jesus says, "You have heard it said" and "but I tell you." Write the verse numbers below and a phrase that explains how each of Jesus' commands went beyond the "letter of the law" (the literal interpretation) to address the "spirit of the law" (the true intent of the Scriptures, which includes inner thoughts and attitudes).
  - Matthew 5:21-22: Anger toward someone is as sinful as murder.**
  - Matthew 5:27-28: Entertaining lustful thoughts is as wrong as having sex with someone besides your own marriage partner.**
  - Matthew 5:31-32: We should consider divorce not only legislated (Deuteronomy 24:1-4) but banned (except for sexual immorality).**
  - Matthew 5:33-34: Being a person of overall integrity is as important as keeping specific pledges.**
  - Matthew 5:38-39: Showing mercy when insulted or treated unjustly is superior to exacting just retribution.**
  - Matthew 5:43-44: One must not only love their friends but also their enemies.**

- 6) In Matthew 5:48, Jesus exhorts, “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”
- How would you explain this verse in the context of Matthew 5:21-48 (what is Jesus asking of us)?  
God looks at the attitudes of the heart, not merely our outward expressions and the words we say. When Jesus calls for our “perfection,” He is requiring that we go beyond what the Law legislates and perfect our attitudes. Perfected *attitudes* will result in perfected actions.
  - Considering all you have learned in Questions 4, 5, and 6, in what area of your life do you need to raise your standard? **Personal sharing**

Read Matthew 6.

- 7) Jesus teaches on hypocrisy in 6:1-18:
- Which three verses contain the word “hypocrite” and what spiritual disciplines does Jesus address with regard to each? **Matthew 6:2 (giving), 6:5 (prayer), 6:16 (fasting)**
  - How does Jesus’ discussion of hypocrisy fit into the context of the earlier part of the “Sermon on the Mount” (as covered in Questions 1-6)? **Jesus calls His disciples to a higher (more perfect) standard. He requires that we live according to what we teach and that we adjust our attitudes so that our behavior is purely motivated. Then we will not be guilty of hypocrisy.**
- 8) Reread Matthew 6:1-4 and write out a plan to be secretly generous to someone this week. Once you have carried it out, note the ways your spiritual life was affected by your generosity. **Personal sharing**
- 9) How could you alter the way you pray publicly in order to avoid praying hypocritically? **Prayer that is clear, brief, simple, and humble follows Jesus’ model. Personal sharing**

Reread the Lord’s Prayer in Matthew 6:9-13.

- 10) From verse 10: Give a specific example of how God’s will being done on earth as it is in heaven relates to *your* personal life. **When we ask that God’s will be accomplished on earth as it always is in heaven, we are inviting His involvement in the circumstances of our daily lives and reminding ourselves that what He wants for us is better than what we want for ourselves. Personal sharing**
- 11) From verse 11: What kinds of ordinary (daily) things do you often forget to talk over with God? **Personal sharing**
- 12) From verse 13: What recurring temptation will you begin praying against in advance? **Personal sharing**

Read Matthew 6:19-7:29.

- 13) Matthew 6 and 7 covers various aspects of the life of any true disciple of Jesus. Inner qualities and attitudes were discussed in chapter 5. Up to this point in chapter 6, you have already read about the disciplines of secrecy in giving, prayer, and fasting. Make a list of the remaining subjects Jesus covered in Matthew 6:19-7:27 using a sentence or phrase to describe what Jesus expects of you as His true disciple.
- 6:19-24: **Care in what we prioritize/long for, so we keep our focus on heavenly treasure and serving Christ.**
- 6:25-34: **Living free of worry over temporal items so our focus remains on kingdom work.**
- 7:1-5: **Evaluating ourselves honestly, and others, graciously.**
- 7:6: **Being discriminating about those with whom we share the Gospel’s deeper truths.**
- 7:7-11: **Being quick to bring petitions to God, believing He is a generous father.**
- 7:12: **Treating others as we want to be treated.**
- 7:13-14: **Being prepared to do the harder thing.**
- 7:15-23: **Using discernment about who we trust to teach us.**
- 7:24-27: **Remaining firm in the faith (by regularly evaluating whether we are practicing what we have learned).**

- 14) In Matthew 7:17-23, Jesus says that true disciples will be known by their “fruit.” What kinds of “fruit” (evidence) do the following passages name: Matthew 5:3-10 with Galatians 5:22-23; Matthew 28:19-20 with Romans 1:13; Colossians 1:10, 2 Peter 3:11, and Hebrews 13:15? **The fruit Jesus refers to is the fruit of the Holy Spirit, as described in Matthew 5 and in Galatians 5 (inner qualities revealing Christ’s transforming work): Humility, meekness, mercy, purity of motives, peacemaking, love, joy, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, and self control. Other evidences include winning lost souls to Christ and discipling them, holy living, good works, and confessing and praising Him.**
- 15) Reread Matthew 5:19b with Matthew 7:24.
- a) According to Jesus’ illustration in Matthew 7:24-27, how does putting into practice what we are learning add value to our spiritual lives? Give an example of how this is true in your own life. **First, those who are building on Christ as their solid foundation will not meet destruction on Judgment Day. Second, practicing Christ’s commands enables us to establish new, spiritually healthy habits, replacing old sinful patterns of thought and behavior. Over time, habitual obedience builds a strong foundation in our souls that is not easily moved when tragedy strikes. For example, we can say we know God is all-powerful, but if we do not regularly practice putting our confidence in God’s omnipotence, doing what is right and trusting Him to take care of the results, then our knowledge has done nothing to make us stronger in the faith. On the other hand, the more we put this truth into practice in daily life, the more natural it will be to do so when great difficulties and challenges arise.**
  - b) Considering the importance of putting into practice what we learn, which of the many foundational principles in the “Sermon on the Mount” is the Lord impressing on you to practice more faithfully?  
**Personal sharing**