



Northwestern Ohio Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

The Sermon on the Mount

A CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP



IMAGE FROM: KINGDOM FILMS

STUDENT'S GUIDE

Bishop Daniel G. Beaudoin
2019: The Year of Scripture



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Welcome Letter



Dear friends in Christ,

Welcome to **2019: The Year of Scripture**. Our focus this year will be on God's gift of Sacred Scripture. The Old and New Testaments are the written Word of God. Inspired by the Holy Spirit speaking through their authors, they record and announce God's revelation centering in Jesus Christ. Through them the Holy Spirit creates and sustains Christian faith, life, and fellowship for service in the world.

During this Year of Scripture, we will aspire to grow as Christian disciples through three distinct practices:

1. **Bible Reading** to form us through daily discipline and habit;
2. **Bible Reflection** to help us to become fluent in the language of sacred scripture;
3. **Bible Study** to lead us to know who God is and what God does.

One of the best-known Bible verses related to the Word of God is **Psalm 119:105**, and this will serve as our **2019 Year of Scripture** memory verse. "**Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path**" (**Psalm 119:105**). This powerful verse affirms that sacred scripture will serve as a trusted guide along life's journey.

What follows is a 6-session Bible study on the **Sermon on the Mount**. Open your Bible, gather with a group of friends, get outside the four walls of the congregation, and learn what God desires to teach you. But, be careful. Be very, very careful, because God's Word has the power to transform people and communities from who we are into the people and communities that God longs for us to be.

Let us pray: **Blessed Lord God, you have caused the holy scriptures to be written for the nourishment of your people. Grant that we may hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that, comforted by your promises, we may embrace and forever hold fast to the hope of eternal life, which you have given us in Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.** (Evangelical Lutheran Worship pg. 72)

Blessings,
Bishop Daniel G. Beaudoin
November 23, 2018



Tips for Group Members



**"You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid"
(Matthew 5:14)**

Jesus calls His followers to be the "light of the world". Jesus calls us to model Christian discipleship through intentional faith practices such as prayer, worship, witness, service, and Bible reading. Thank you for your willingness to attend this Bible study. If this is something new for you, no need to worry, for the encouraging light of Jesus will shine upon you.

Now, you don't need to be a Bible scholar to attend a Bible study. You simply need to be open. Open to experiencing new thoughts, great discussion, and the potential for real growth. Think of a coffee shop conversation rather than a classroom lecture. These studies can be experienced in a variety of settings, though I would encourage you to follow the pattern of the original apostles and share these studies out in the "market place" (outside the four walls of the church building). You never know who might be watching, listening, and wondering. Each study is intended to last around 60 minutes.

Below are some suggestions to assist you.*

Before the Study

1. Pray. Pray that God would guide you to lead faithfully. Pray for your Bible study leader and the participants who will gather for conversation and discussion. Ask God to open your hearts and minds to hear God's Word that it may motivate you to a new way of thinking and being
2. Come to the study prepared. Read and then slowly re-read the assigned Bible passage. Write down particular and peculiar words and phrases you have questions about. Bring those questions to the group gathering.
3. Carefully work through the lessons. Take time to meditate and reflect on each question. Write your responses in the space provided. Please set aside 60-90 minutes for prep time each week.
4. Consider ways to apply the assigned Bible passage to your life.



Tips for Group Members



During the Study

1. Bring the necessary materials to your study: Bible, student guide, pen, or pencil.
2. Some tips for participating in discussion:
 - a. Be willing to participate. The leader will not be lecturing, but leading a conversation. Join the conversation.
 - b. Stick to the topic being discussed. Try to avoid drifting off on tangents.
 - c. Be attentive to other participants. Listen to what they are sharing. You may be surprised by their insights. Also, be affirming. This will encourage some of the more hesitant participants to share.
 - d. Be careful not to dominate the discussion. Do participate, but allow others to also participate.
 - e. Fully expect that God will teach you something through this study and through the other members in your group. Pray that you may apply God's teaching to your daily life.
3. Some general guidelines:
 - a. We will consider all conversation within our group to be confidential. We will not share confidential conversation without specific permission.
 - b. We will make space for each participant to share and speak as they are comfortable doing so.
 - c. We will listen attentively to one another.
 - d. We will be very cautious about fixing people and giving advice.
 - e. We will practice Martin Luther's explanation of the 8th Commandment:
"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor".
"We are to fear and love God so that we do not tell lies about our neighbors, betray or slander them, or destroy their reputations. Instead we are to come to their defense, speak well of them, and interpret everything they do in the best possible light".

**adapted from Bible Studies for Everyone by N.T. Wright*

Study Bibles: pairs Scripture with notes and resources

Lutheran Study Bible - NRSV (2009) Published by Augsburg Fortress

Harper Collins Study Bible - NRSV (2006) Published by Harper One

NIV Zondervan Study Bible - NIV (2015) Published by Zondervan

ESV Study Bible - ESV (2008) Published by Crossway

Bible Dictionary: defines biblical words and concepts

Harper Collins Bible Dictionary (2011) Published by Harper One

Halley's Bible Handbook (2014) Published by Zondervan

Bible Atlases: describes biblical geography

The Student Bible Atlas (2005) Published by Augsburg Fortress

Zondervan Atlas of the Bible (2010) Published by Zondervan

Commentaries: puts Bible passages into context

Jesus' Plan for a New World: The Sermon on the Mount by Richard Rohr and John Feister
(1996) Published by Franciscan Media

Sermon on the Mount by Scott McKnight (2013) Published by Zondervan

The Sermon on the Mount by Hans Deiter Betz (1995) Published by Fortress Press

The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing by Jonathan T. Pennington
(2017) Published by Baker Academic

Other

The Cost of Discipleship by Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1995) Published by Touchstone

Rose Book of Bible Charts, Maps, and Timelines (2015) Published by Rose

A Compact Guide to the Whole Bible: Learning to Read Scripture's Story edited by
Robert W. Wall and David R. Nienhuis (2015) Published by Baker Academic



Sermon on the Mount



A Brief Introduction

During my days as a seminary student and new pastor, there were 3 readings that had a profound effect on my call to follow Jesus. The first was *The Cost of Discipleship* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Pastor Bonhoeffer caused me to think about Christ's call to discipleship in a way that I had not previously considered. The second was Dallas Willard's book, *The Great Omission*. Here Professor Willard teaches that the modern church has failed to live out Jesus' Great Commission by treating discipleship as "optional"; hence, the "Great Omission". The third reading was the *Sermon on the Mount* preached by Jesus and recorded in the *Gospel of Matthew*. This is a passage of Scripture that I have turned to again and again to lead God's people and to prayerfully ponder what it means to truly follow Jesus.

The *Sermon on the Mount* is the longest teaching of Jesus in the New Testament. It covers three full chapters (Matthew 5-7) and 111 verses. Luke's version, the *Sermon on the Plain* (Luke 6:20-49), is recorded in thirty verses. In the Gospel of Matthew, the *Sermon on the Mount* is the first of five great teachings (discourses), that Jesus shares with His disciples to prepare them for ministry and mission. You can read the other four great teachings (discourses) of Jesus in Matthew, 10:5-42; 13:1-53; 18:1-35; and 24:1-25:46.

The *Sermon on the Mount* is filled with many well-known passages, including the Beatitudes (5:3-12); the Lord's Prayer (6:9-13); and the Golden Rule (7:12).

Matthew begins his Gospel by identifying Jesus as the Messiah (1:1). At his baptism, Jesus is identified as the Son of God (3:17). When Jesus delivers the *Sermon on the Mount* we already know who he is. Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God.

In the *Sermon on the Mount*, the teachings of Jesus flow directly from His earlier announcement, "*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near*" (4:17). In Jesus, God's future breaks into the present, which calls those who follow Jesus to live with single minded devotion in the "here and now". The teaching of Jesus in the *Sermon on the Mount* is intricately connected to the in-breaking kingdom.

Finally, we consider those who first heard the *Sermon on the Mount*. In Matthew 5:2, we read that Jesus teaches his disciples. This sermon is intended for disciples... for followers of Jesus. Here is our call to live a full life of Christian discipleship.

Putting it all together, we can say that **Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of God, shares the Sermon on the Mount with his disciples, calling them to live with single minded devotion, in light of the in-breaking kingdom of heaven.** And still today, the *Sermon on the Mount* calls us to be the people God longs for us to be... disciples of the crucified and risen Jesus.



Sermon on the Mount

An Outline



The Opening Scene: (5:1-2)

The Introduction to the Sermon (5:3-16)

The Beatitudes
(5:3-12)

Disciples Are...
The Salt of the Earth (5:13)
The Light of the World (5:14-16)

The Body of the Sermon: Three Teachings on Discipleship
(5:17-7:12)

First Teaching:
Disciples Reflect on
Scripture

Fulfilling the Law and Prophets
(5:17-20)

Murder (5:21-26)
Adultery (5:27-30)
Divorce (5:31-32)
Oaths (5:33-37)
Retaliation (5:38-42)
Love for Enemies (5:43-48)

Second Teaching:
Disciples Praise
God Through...

Almsgiving (6:1-4)
Prayer (6:5-15)
Fasting (6:16-18)

Third Teaching:
Single Minded
Disciples...

Store Up Treasure in Heaven (6:19-21)
Have a Sound Eye (6:22-23)
Serve One Master (6:24)
Live Without Worry (6:25-34)
Do Not Judge Others (7:1-5)
Protect What is Holy (7:6)
Pray with Confidence (7:7-11)
Live By the Golden Rule (7:12)

The Conclusion of the Sermon: Disciples Do the Will of God (7:13-27)

Two Kinds of Paths
(7:13-14)

Two Kinds of Prophets
(7:15-23)

Two Kinds of Builders
(7:24-27)

The Closing Scene (7:28-29)



Sermon on the Mount



Memory Verses/Passage

Study 1

"In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven" Matthew 5:16

Extra Challenge Passage
Matthew 5:3-12 **"The Beatitudes"**

Study 2

"Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect"
Matthew 5:48

Extra Challenge Passage
Matthew 5:38-42 **"On Retaliation"**

Study 3

"But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing" Matthew 6:3

Extra Challenge Passage
Matthew 6:9-13 **"The Lord's Prayer"**

Study 4

"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also". Matthew 6:21

Extra Challenge Passage
Matthew 6:25-34 **"Do Not Worry"**

Study 5

"In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets". Matthew 7:12

Extra Challenge Passage
Matthew 7:7-8 **"Ask, Search, Knock"**

Study 6

"Thus you will know them by their fruits".
Matthew 7:20

Extra Challenge Passage
Matthew 7:24-27 **"Two Builders"**





Sermon on the Mount



Student Study #1: To Be Like Jesus. To Shine Like Jesus.

1. Read the opening Scripture Passage: Matthew 5:1-6
2. Prayer Requests and Opening Prayer
3. Welcome and Introductions
4. Announcements
5. Introduction to the Study

In *Sermon on the Mount: A Brief Introduction* (page 6), we learned that **Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of God, shares the Sermon on the Mount with his disciples, calling them to live with single minded devotion, in light of the in-breaking kingdom of heaven.** The *Sermon on the Mount* challenges us to be single minded in our devotion to God. The *Sermon on the Mount* guides us to follow Jesus in the way of discipleship. The *Sermon on the Mount* calls us to be the people God longs for us to be... disciples of the crucified and risen Jesus.

In Matthew 4:17-25, Jesus announces the in-breaking of the kingdom of heaven and gathers his first disciples. Jesus takes to the road, teaching, preaching, and healing. Soon, crowds of people begin to follow Jesus from every direction. In Matthew 5:1-2, Jesus sees the swelling crowds, so he ascends a mountain, sits down, and begins to teach. But who is Jesus teaching? Jesus is teaching his newly called disciples among the crowds. The disciples are the primary audience for the *Sermon on the Mount*. This sermon will be a defining moment in their lives, as Jesus defines what it means to live as a disciple. These are the words of **Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of God**. These are not words to ponder and analyze, but words to live and obey.

After sitting down on the mountain, Jesus says, "Blessed are..." Jesus begins the *Sermon on the Mount* with a series of short declarations of blessing upon folks who do not appear to be blessed (the poor in spirit, the meek, the merciful, the peacemakers, etc.). These nine short declarations are called *The Beatitudes* (Matthew 5:3-12), and they are a radical revisioning of the people of God. With the in-breaking of the kingdom of heaven, things will not be as they appear to be, nor will things be as they once were. In Jesus, everyone and everything will be made new (see Revelation 21:5).

In Matthew 5:13-16, Jesus singles out his followers as "salt" and "light". "You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world". Salt is important. It purifies. It flavors. It preserves. Salt impacts whatever it encounters. Have you ever tried salt free potato chips? Light is also important. It guides. It shines. It travels. It dispels darkness. Light illuminates the world. No one wants to live in a dark and bland world. Jesus says, "You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world".



Sermon on the Mount



Student Study #1: To Be Like Jesus. To Shine Like Jesus.

6. Opening Reflection Questions

A. How have the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12) challenged you to think or act differently?

B. Tell about a person whom God used as a light in your life.
What did that person say or do to guide and help you?

7. Study and Conversation

A. The Opening Scene (Read Matthew 5:1-2)

1. Who is present for the Sermon on the Mount?

2. Where does the Sermon on the Mount take place?

3. Are there other significant events involving Jesus and mountains?

Matthew 14:22-23: _____

Matthew 15:29-31: _____

Matthew 17:1-9: _____

Matthew 28:16-20: _____

4. Have you ever been on a mountain? Share what you experienced.



Sermon on the Mount



Student Study #1: To Be Like Jesus. To Shine Like Jesus.

B. The Beatitudes (Read Matthew 5:3-12)

1. Each of the Beatitudes comes in two parts. In the first part Jesus pronounces a blessing on certain people. This part begins, "Blessed are....".

Separate the nine Beatitudes into their first parts.

- 5:3 "Blessed are** _____
- 5:4 "Blessed are** _____
- 5:5 "Blessed are** _____
- 5:6 "Blessed are** _____
- 5:7 "Blessed are** _____
- 5:8 "Blessed are** _____
- 5:9 "Blessed are** _____
- 5:10 "Blessed are** _____
- 5:11 "Blessed are** _____

2. Each of the Beatitudes comes in two parts. In the second part, Jesus provides the reason for the blessing. This part begins, "for they/theirs...". Separate the nine Beatitudes into their second parts.

- 5:3 "...for theirs** _____
- 5:4 "... for they** _____
- 5:5 "...for they** _____
- 5:6 "...for they** _____
- 5:7 "...for they** _____
- 5:8 "...for they** _____
- 5:9 "...for they** _____
- 5:10 "...for theirs** _____
- 5:11 "...for** _____

3. Some of the Beatitudes make sense and seem to fit into our worldview. Identify one of the Beatitudes that makes sense to you. Share why this particular Beatitude makes sense to you.



Sermon on the Mount



Student #1: To Be Like Jesus. To Shine Like Jesus.

4. Some of the Beatitudes defy logic and reason, and do not fit into our worldview. Identify one of the Beatitudes that does not make sense to you. Share why this particular Beatitude challenges you.

5. Matthew 5:9 can be a challenging verse. It is hard to be a peacemaker during a time of war, during a work conflict, during a church fight, or during a season of family strife. What are some things we can do as followers of Jesus to help bring peace to one of the following situations?

Family Strife

Church Fights

Work Conflicts

Places of War



Sermon on the Mount



Student #1: To Be Like Jesus. To Shine Like Jesus.

C. Salt and Light (Read Matthew 5:13-16)

1. Salt is a necessity of life. What does the Bible say about salt?

Exodus 30:35: _____

Leviticus 2:13: _____

Job 6:6: _____

Then there is this strange story in Genesis 19:1-26 _____

2. Salt impacts whatever it encounters. Is there someone in your home, school, place of work, or church who could use a little flavor in their life?

What is one way you might serve as "salt" for this person?

3. What are the 3 different images Jesus uses to illustrate light impacting darkness?

5:14: _____

5:15: _____

5:16: _____

4. Earlier, Jesus talked about light as it relates to mission. Read Matthew 4:14-16. Preachers often remind us that we are to share the light of Jesus with the world. Jesus tells us that we are to be the light of the world. What's the difference between sharing and being?

8. Closing Question: What is your one take away from today's study?
Whom might you share this "take away" with this week?



Sermon on the Mount



Leader Study #1: To Be Like Jesus. To Shine Like Jesus.

9. Homework

- ☐ Read Matthew 5:17-48
- ☐ Memory Verse: Matthew 5:16
- ☐ Challenge Memory Passage: Matthew 5:3-12 "The Beatitudes"
- ☐ Work through Study #2

10. Closing Prayer: The Light of Christ from the Columban Fathers.

Father in Heaven, you made me your child and called me to walk in the light of Christ. Free me from darkness and keep me in the light of your truth. The light of Jesus has scattered the darkness of hatred and sin. Called to that light, I ask for your guidance. Form my life in your truth, my heart in your love. Through the Holy Eucharist, give me the power of your grace that I may walk in the light of Jesus and serve him faithfully. Amen





Sermon on the Mount



Student Study #2: Disciples Reflect on Scripture

1. Opening Scripture Passage: Matthew 5:48
2. Prayer Requests and Opening Prayer
3. Welcome
4. Announcements
5. Review
6. Memory Verse/Passage Recitation **Matthew 5:16** and/or **Matthew 5:3-12**
7. Introduction to the Study

We now turn to the Body of the *Sermon on the Mount* (Matthew 5:17-7:12), where Jesus shares three teachings on discipleship. The First Teaching: Disciples Reflect on Scripture (Matthew 5:17-48). The Second Teaching: Disciples Praise God through Spiritual Practices (Matthew 6:1-18). The Third Teaching: Disciples Are Single Minded in Their Devotion to God (Matthew 6:19-7:12).

So how do Jesus' disciples read Scripture? How do you read Scripture? Some folks read the Bible **devotionally**; they read to grow deeper in their relationship with God through spiritual formation. Some folks read the Bible **historically**, longing to know the Biblical languages, the context, and the original intent of the writers. Some folks read the Bible as a **literary work**, and focus on characters, settings, and plots. Still others read the Bible **theologically**; Lutheran Christians in particular read the Bible through the theological lens of Law and Gospel and through the central lens of the crucified and risen Christ. But how did Jesus and the first disciples read the Bible?

Jesus begins his first teaching on discipleship by turning to the sacred scripture of his day: The Law and the Prophets. The Law is the Torah, the first 5 books of the Jewish Scriptures (*Genesis - Deuteronomy*). The Prophets refers to the rest of the Jewish Scriptures (*Joshua - Malachi*). Someone must have accused Jesus of being "soft" on Scripture, so he opens his first teaching by stating, "*Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have not come to abolish, but to fulfill*" (Matthew 5:17). Such an audacious claim! That the promise of the Jewish Scriptures is fulfilled in Jesus, through his life, death, resurrection, and sacred teachings. The story of God's promise to Israel is fulfilled in the crucified and risen Jesus, and his clarion call to love God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind; and to love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:36-40).

The Great Commandment (Matthew 22:36-40), and the promise of the Coming Kingdom (Matthew 4:17), have the transforming power to make all things new, including our understanding of scripture.





Sermon on the Mount



Student Study #2: Disciples Reflect on Scripture

8. Opening Reflection Questions

A. What are the first five words that come to mind when you think of the Bible? List them quickly. Now ponder each word. Why did you write each particular word?

9. Study and Conversation

A. Jesus Fulfills the Law and the Prophets (Read Matthew 5:17-20)

1. Why do you think Jesus' first "teaching" begins with Scripture?

2. Jesus refers to the Law, the first five books of the Jewish Scriptures. Can you name them in order?

3. Jesus refers to the Prophets, the rest of the Jewish Scriptures. How many of these "books" can your study group list? (Hint: there are 61 of them!)

4. What do you think Jesus means when he says that he came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets? What does fulfill mean? How might fulfill relate to these Bible verses:

a. Acts 7:17 _____

b. Galatians 5:14 _____

c. James 2:23 _____

5. Jesus offers strong affirmation and strong condemnation of teachers (Matthew 5:19). Does Jesus hold teachers to a higher standard? Is this fair? Why or why not?





Sermon on the Mount



Student Study #2: Disciples Reflect on Scripture

6. Tell about a teacher you still remember who invested in you and brought out the best in you. What are the characteristics of a great teacher?

B. Six Interpretations (Read Matthew 5:21-48)

1. Beginning with Matthew 5:21, Jesus highlights six well-known Old Testament teachings, and then reinterprets them. Draw a line to connect the teachings of Jesus with the six Old Testament teachings.

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|
| a. Murder (5:21-26) | 1. Deuteronomy 24:1 |
| b. Adultery (5:27-30) | 2. Leviticus 24:19-20 |
| c. Divorce (5:31-32) | 3. Exodus 20:13 |
| d. Oaths (5:33-37) | 4. Leviticus 19:18 |
| e. Retaliation (5:38-42) | 5. Leviticus 19:12 |
| f. Love for Enemies (5:43-48) | 6. Exodus 20:14 |

2. Rabbis would often quote Scripture, tradition, or other rabbis to make their theological points. Jesus doesn't do this. What authority does Jesus use to get his point across in these six teachings?

C. Oaths (Read Matthew 5:33-37)

1. Back in Jesus' day what were some of the things people used to swear by? What are some things people swear by today?

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____



Sermon on the Mount



Student Study #2: Disciples Reflect on Scripture

2. Although some folks consider broken promises and commitments to be small and insignificant, what will eventually happen when a person regularly fails to tell the truth and keep his or her word? Why is it important for a disciple of Jesus to be honest?

3. Jesus says, "Let your 'Yes be Yes' and your 'No be No'". Disciples of Jesus are called to be people of honesty and integrity. What are 2-3 practical steps you might take to become a consistent truth teller?

4. If you have broken a promise or a commitment you have made to another person, what are some steps you can take to restore this relationship and seek out a new beginning? Why don't you try 1 or 2 steps before the next group study?

10. Closing Question: What is your one take away from today's study?
Whom might you share this "take away" with this week?

11. Homework

- ☐ Read Matthew 6:1-18
- ☐ Memory Verse: Matthew 5:48
- ☐ Challenge Memory Verse: Matthew 5:38-42 "On Retaliation"
- ☐ Work through Study #3
- ☐ Discipleship Project: Develop a 90-day (3 month) Bible Reading Plan.
Write it out on a piece of paper. Share your plan with a family member/friend.

12. Closing Prayer

Let us pray... Lord of integrity and truth, we thank you for this time together and for another opportunity to share our hearts with you and with one another. Lead us to grow in our love of sacred scripture and help us to be tellers of truth, that when the world hears our words, they may be drawn to your Word. This we pray in the name of the Word made flesh, Jesus the crucified and risen Lord. Amen





Sermon on the Mount



Student Study #3: Disciples Praise God through Spiritual Practices

1. Opening Scripture Passage: Matthew 6:3
2. Prayer Requests and Opening Prayer
3. Welcome
4. Announcements
5. Review
6. Memory Verse: **Matthew 5:48** and/or **Matthew 5:38-42**
7. Introduction to the Study

In the Body of the *Sermon on the Mount* (Matthew 5:17-7:12), Jesus shares three teachings on discipleship. Last week, we focused on the First Teaching: Disciples Reflect on Scripture (Matthew 5:17-48). This week, we turn to the Second Teaching: Disciples Praise God through Spiritual Practices (Matthew 6:1-18). In this section, Jesus focuses on three spiritual practices: giving alms to the poor (6:1-4), praying (6:5-15), and fasting (6:16-18).

Matthew 6:1 provides an introductory statement about practicing our faith with the right motivation and intention. Disciples do not practice “spiritual practices” to be seen and praised by others. The prayer, praise, and thanksgiving we practice is to praise God. It simply cannot be about us.

Jesus then provides three examples (almsgiving, praying, and fasting), to illustrate the proper and improper way of putting our faith into practice. Here Jesus contrasts the way of the “hypocrites” with the way of the disciples. The Greek word for hypocrite refers to a stage actor, who “pretends” to be someone else. While this is precisely what an actor is supposed to do, this is not what followers of Jesus are supposed to do. With disciples what you see is what you get. What we do on the outside and in public should correspond with integrity to the life that Jesus calls us to live.

Our motivation and our intention matter. We give alms to help the poor, not to be seen and praised by others. We pray to offer thanks and praise to God, not to be seen and praised by others. We fast to free up more time for prayer and other spiritual practices, not to be seen and praised by others.

In Matthew 6:1-18, Jesus reminds His followers that motivation and intention matter. Becoming the people God longs for us to be takes discipline and devotion.



Sermon on the Mount



Student Study #3: Disciples Praise God through Spiritual Practices

8.. Opening Reflection Questions

A. Why do you think poor people are poor?

B. When did you first learn the Lord's Prayer by heart? Who taught you the Lord's Prayer? Why do you think it remains such an important prayer?

9. Study and Conversation

A. Disciples Help the Poor (Read Matthew 6:1-4)

1. What does the Old Testament say about caring for the poor?

a. Exodus 23:11 _____

b. Leviticus 19:9-10 _____

c. Amos 8:4-6 _____

2. What does Jesus say about almsgiving?

a. Luke 11:37-41 _____

b. Luke 12:33 _____

3. According to Jesus what are the proper spirit and approach to giving to the poor?

4. I give to my church every Sunday and I know that some of my offering goes to help the poor. Is this enough? When Jesus talks about giving alms to the poor, does he mean directly helping the poor? What do you think? What are the drawbacks and the benefits of directly helping the poor?



Sermon on the Mount



Student Study #3: Disciples Praise God through Spiritual Practices

5. In the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, Ignatius shares an example of a saintly couple who divides their resources into three equal parts. The first they give directly to the poor. The second they donate to the ministry and services of the Church. The third they use for the support of themselves and their household. Discuss what your life might be like if you pursued a similar course of action?

B. Disciples Pray (Read Matthew 6:5-15)

1. Read Luke 18:9-14. Connect what Jesus teaches about prayer in this passage (Luke 18:9-14) to what Jesus teaches about prayer in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6:5-15).

2. Jesus teaches us that we should not pray to be seen by others. Are there other ways our prayer life can get off track?

3. Re-read 6:6b "...go into your room and shut the door and pray..." Where is your private place of prayer? What is it about that space that makes it safe and sacred?

4. In the Small Catechism, Martin Luther divided the Lord's Prayer into an introduction followed by seven petitions and a doxology. Pick one of the petitions that strikes you. How might this petition become the focus of your daily prayers this week?

- a. **Introduction:** Our Father who art in heaven.
- b. **The First Petition:** Hallowed by thy name.
- c. **The Second Petition:** Thy kingdom come.
- d. **The Third Petition:** Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
- e. **The Fourth Petition:** Give us this day our daily bread.
- f. **The Fifth Petition:** And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.
- g. **The Sixth Petition:** And lead us not into temptation.
- h. **The Seventh Petition:** But deliver us from evil.
- i. **The Doxology:** For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.



Sermon on the Mount

Student Study #3: Disciples Praise God through Spiritual Practices

C. Disciples Fast (Read Matthew 6:16-18)

1. In the Bible, fasting involves refraining from food or water, or both, for a set period of time in response to a sacred or grievous moment. In Jesus' day, fasting was a bi-weekly act of piety for many observant Jews and later Christians. According to Jesus what is the proper and improper way to fast?

2. Read Matthew 4:1-11 Was there a purpose to Jesus' fasting? Why do you think these 40 days of fasting and prayer come at this particular time in Mathew's Gospel? _____

3. Is there a pressing concern or decision before you that might call for a season of fasting and prayer? Share as you are comfortable.

10. Closing Question: What is your one take away from today's study?
Whom might you share this "take away" with this week?

11. Homework

- ☐ Read Matthew 6:19-34
- ☐ Memory Verse: Matthew 6:3
- ☐ Challenge Memory Passage: Matthew 6:9-13 "The Lord's Prayer"
- ☐ Work through Study #4
- ☐ **Discipleship Challenge Project:** Investigate your community.
Make a list of five organizations that help the poor.
Contact those five organizations and find a way that you might directly serve the poor.
Commit yourself to this **direct service** for the next 60 days.

12. Closing Prayer (A Prayer for the Poor by Mother Theresa):

Let us pray... Make us worthy, Lord, to serve those people throughout the world who live and die in poverty and hunger. Give them through our hands, this day, their daily bread, and by our understanding love, give them peace and joy. Amen



Sermon on the Mount



Student Study #4: Disciples are Single Minded in Their Devotion to God (#1)

1. Opening Scripture Passage: Matthew 6:21
2. Prayer Requests and Opening Prayer
3. Welcome
4. Announcements
5. Review
6. Memory Verse: **Matthew 6:3** and/or **Matthew 6:9-13**
7. Introduction to the Study

In the Body of the *Sermon on the Mount* (Matthew 5:17-7:12), Jesus shares three teachings on discipleship. First, Disciples Reflect on Scripture (Matthew 5:17-48). Second, Disciples Praise God through Spiritual Practices (Matthew 6:1-18). This week, we focus on Jesus' third teaching, Disciples Are Single Minded in Their Devotion to God (Matthew 6:19-7:12).

As we close out Matthew chapter 6, Jesus' teaching hearkens us back to the Shema from Deuteronomy 6:4-5, "*Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD alone. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might*". The ancient Israelites were called to love God with everything they had. In this third teaching (Matthew 6:19-7:12), Jesus expands on the Greatest Commandment (Matthew 22:34-38), to develop the theme of "single-mindedness". Single minded disciples store up treasure in heaven (6:19-21); have a sound eye (6:22-23); serve one master (6:24); and live without worry (6:25-34). Jesus will continue this theme of "single-mindedness" into Matthew chapter 7:1-12, which we will consider in next week's lesson.

In Matthew 6:19-24, we have a series of three short utterances from Jesus that appear to be disconnected. What does treasure in heaven have to do with a sound eye and serving one master? In Luke's Gospel, these three sayings are found in three separate locations (Luke 12:33-34; 11:34-35; 16:13). Matthew arranges these three sayings together to emphasize the call for disciples of Jesus to be "single-minded". Seeking earthly treasures, having an unsound eye, and trying to serve two masters push and pull us in many directions. The only way to navigate our way through these all-consuming demands is to be "single-minded" in our devotion to God.

In the final section of Matthew 6, Jesus encourages his disciples to live without worry. The word "*therefore*" (6:25), that begins this section, indicates that what Jesus now says about worry (6:25-34) is a continuation of his theme to be "single-minded". As we read in Matthew 6:33, "*But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well*".





Sermon on the Mount



Student Study #4: Disciples are Single Minded in Their Devotion to God (#1)

8.. Opening Reflection Questions

A. In what ways do materialism and consumerism draw us away from God?

B. Tell about a person you know who is non-anxious and lives without excessive worry. What would you say leads someone to live this way?

9. Study and Conversation

A. Single Minded Disciples Store Up Treasure in Heaven (Read Matthew 6:19-21)

1. What is the most valuable thing you own? What's the story behind it? What makes it so valuable to you?

2. Consumption can consume us. What does the Bible teach about excessive accumulation?

a. Ecclesiastes 2:1-11 _____

b. Luke 12:13-21 _____

3. Jesus uses three images to warn us about the temporary nature of earthly treasures. What are the three images and how do they help us see the futility of storing up treasures on earth?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

4. Dream together about what your life might look like if you gave away 50% of your possessions? How about 75%? 90%? Does this exercise give you a sense of foreboding or a sense of freedom?



Sermon on the Mount



Student Study #4: Disciples are Single Minded in Their Devotion to God (#1)

B. Single Minded Disciples Live Without Worry (Read Matthew 6:25-34)

1. Talk about this statement: An abundance of possessions can cause us anxiety, just as their absence can create anxiety too.

2. In this passage, Jesus uses a number of real-life illustrations to encourage us not to worry. Can your group come up with three of these illustrations?

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____

3. Come up with three life situations that cause people to be anxious and worried. How might the words of Jesus speak to these three life situations?

4. Re-read Matthew 6:27. What are some of the negative results of being anxious and worried?

5. Is there a particular area in your life in which you tend to worry?

As you are comfortable, share this with your study group.

How might your study group pray for you this week?

6. As you reflect back on this passage (Matthew 6:25-34), share what you have learned about God's character and God's love for you.



Sermon on the Mount



Student Study #4: Disciples are Single Minded in Their Devotion to God (#1)

10. Closing Question: What is your one take away from today's study?
Whom might you share this "take away" with this week?

11. Homework

- ☐ Read Matthew 7:1-12
- ☐ Memory Verse: Matthew 6:21
- ☐ Challenge Memory Passage: Matthew 6:25-34 "Do Not Worry"
- ☐ Work through Study #5
- ☐ **Discipleship Challenge Project:** Take 6 days to pray and take a complete inventory of all your possessions. Make your way through every room. Include the basement, attic, garage, and shed. Don't forget the storage unit that you rent. Take a complete inventory. Now develop a plan to give away a percentage of it. You get to decide the percentage. Share your challenge with your study group this coming week. Try to envision how you might feel 1 year after completing this challenge.

12. Closing Prayer (Richard Foster's Prayer of Relinquishment): Let us pray...

O Lord, how do I let go when I am so unsure of things? I'm unsure of your will, and I'm unsure of myself.... That really isn't the problem at all, is it? The truth of the matter is I hate the very idea of letting go. I really want to be in control. No, I need to be in control. That's it, isn't it? I'm afraid to give up control, afraid of what might happen. Heal my fear, O Lord. How good of you to reveal my blind spots even in the midst of my stumbling attempts to pray. Thank you! But now what do I do? How do I give up control? Jesus, please, teach me your way of relinquishment. Amen





Sermon on the Mount



Leader Study #5: Disciples are Singles Minded in Their Devotion to God (#2)

1. Opening Scripture Passage: Matthew 7:12
2. Prayer Requests and Opening Prayer
3. Welcome
4. Announcements
5. Review
6. Memory Verse: **Matthew 6:21** and/or **Matthew 6:25-34**
7. Introduction to the Study

As we shared in lessons two – four, the Body of the *Sermon on the Mount* (Matthew 5:17-7:12), contains three of Jesus' teachings on discipleship. Today's study will focus on the final part of Jesus' teaching: Disciples Are Single Minded in Their Devotion to God (Matthew 7:1-7:12). Under the theme of "single-mindedness", four sub-themes emerge in Matthew 7:1-12. Single minded disciples do not judge others (7:1-5), but protect what is holy (7:6), pray with confidence (7:7-11), and live by the "Golden Rule" (7:12).

In Matthew 7:1-5, we learn that single minded disciples do not judge others. Here we are called to distinguish between condemnation and discernment. Only God knows the heart, hence only God can judge justly. Quite often, those who love and serve God need to be reminded that we are not God, nor are we in any way "superior" to others. As Jesus reminds us, my neighbor may have an "eye speck", but before I am tempted to remove that speck, I first need to see beyond the log that is clouding my own vision... and judgment (7:3-5). Though there are also times when followers of Jesus are called to analyze situations and offer prayerful and loving correction when others err.

In Matthew 7:6, Jesus teaches that single-minded disciples protect what is holy. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is sacred and holy. As we share the promise of the Gospel with others we do it with a profound respect that honors God and a deep humility that reflects the gentle love of Jesus.

In Matthew 7:7-11, we read that single-minded disciples pray with confidence. Jesus begins this teaching with three present imperatives: ask, search, and knock (7:7). Present imperatives imply a confident, continuous action. We are to be persistent in our prayer as we keep on asking, keep on searching, and keep on knocking.

Finally, in Matthew 7:12, we learn that single minded disciples live by the "Golden Rule". Jesus teaches his followers that "*You are to do to others as you would have them do to you*". As stated previously, Jesus often reduced the Hebrew Scriptures to two basic points: loving God and loving others. To keep the Law and the Prophets through love is to do all that the Law and the Prophets command and more. With the "Golden Rule" (7:12), Jesus sums up the entire Body of the *Sermon on the Mount* (5:17-7:12).



Sermon on the Mount



Student Study #5: Disciples are Single Minded in Their Devotion to God (#2)

8. Opening Reflection Questions

A. Judges are called to serve a difficult and noble task in our society. What are some of the characteristics of a good and honest judge?

B. Tell about a time when you were judged wrongly or falsely accused and how you felt when that occurred.

9. Study and Conversation

A. Single Minded Disciples Do Not Judge Others (Read Matthew 7:1-5)

1. What specific guidelines does Jesus give us when we are going to judge another person?

2. Respond to one or two of these statements:

a. We tend to be most judgemental toward folks who are most like us.

b. It is much easier to see the sins in others that we ourselves struggle to overcome.

c. If you struggle, or have struggled with a certain sin, you have no right to point that sin out to another person.

d. If you truly love someone you will look the other way and not point out their faltering and failures.



Sermon on the Mount



Student Study #5: Disciples are Single Minded in Their Devotion to God (#2)

B. Single Minded Disciples Pray with Confidence (Read Matthew 7:7-11)

1. In Matthew 7:7-8, what are the three examples Jesus uses to help us see that God is approachable and loving?

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

2. What are the three promises contained in Matthew 7:7-8?

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

3. Jesus assures us that God is an accessible and loving Father, yet sometimes we avoid Him. What are some of the things that keep us from praying to God with confidence that our prayers will be heard and received with love?

4. What is one area in your life where you have stopped asking, seeking, and knocking? Why do you think you have stopped praying and growing in this area? Please share with your study group as you are comfortable. How might your study group encourage and support you as you pray and grow in this area?

B. Single Minded Disciples Live by the Golden Rule (Read Matthew 7:12)

1. Many ancient rabbis taught their disciples that, "What is hateful to you, do not do to others." Confucius taught, "Do not do to others what you would not wish done to you" How does the Golden Rule of Jesus push beyond these two teachings? _____



Sermon on the Mount



Student Study #5: Disciples are Single Minded in Their Devotion to God (#2)

10. Closing Question: What is your one take away from today's study?

Whom might you share this "take away" with this week?

11. Homework

☐ Read Matthew 7:13-29

☐ Memory Verse: Matthew 7:12

☐ Challenge Memory Passage: Matthew 7:7-8 "Ask, Search, Knock"

☐ Work through Study #6

☐ **Discipleship Challenge Project:** One of the toughest things to do is to admit when we are wrong. We have all had moments when we have wrongly judged others (Matthew 7:1-5) or failed "to do to others as we would have them do to us" (Matthew 7:12). Thank God for the grace and forgiveness of Jesus. But what about our need to extend forgiveness to others or to receive the grace of others? Take some time this week to prayerfully reflect back on the past year (2018). Is there someone you mis-judged? Is there someone whom you failed to "Golden Rule"? You did not do to them as you would like them to do to you. When (not if) that someone comes to mind, I want you to call that person or write them a note (hand written), apologizing and asking for forgiveness. This is hard work, but it is also sacred and holy work. Pick up the phone. Get out the stationery. Share your experience with your study group as you are comfortable.

12. Closing Prayer:

Let us pray... Lord Jesus, help us to be mindful of your call to do to others as we would have them do to us. And when we fail to live by your Golden Rule, forgive us and lead us to try again, and to be the people you long for us to be. In the name of Jesus. Amen.





Sermon on the Mount



Student Study #6: Disciples Do the Will of God

1. Opening Scripture Passage: Matthew 7:20
2. Prayer Requests and Opening Prayer
3. Welcome
4. Announcements
5. Review
6. Memory Verse: **Matthew 7:12** and/or **Matthew 7:7-8**
7. Introduction to the Study

Jesus concludes the *Sermon on the Mount* (7:13-27), by reminding his hearers that there are only two ways to respond to his message: the right way and the wrong way. He then uses three examples to confirm the truth of two ways, which include Two Kinds of Paths (7:13-14); Two Kinds of Prophets (7:15-23); and Two Kinds of Builders (7:24-27).

First, Jesus points out that there are Two Kinds of Paths. An easy path with a wide gate that leads to destruction and the hard path with a narrow gate that leads to life. Disciples who do the will of God enter the narrow gate to walk the hard path. To follow Jesus takes discipline and commitment.

Second, Jesus warns that there are Two Kinds of Prophets. He exhorts his listeners to be wary of false prophets who seek to deceive God's people. He also warns about false prophets who deceive themselves into thinking that they are kingdom people, when clearly, they are not. Disciples who do the will of God will recognize the deceivers by the "fruits" of their behavior. And unlike the deceivers who deceive themselves, according to Jesus, disciples who do the will of God will enter the kingdom of heaven (7:21).

Finally, Jesus teaches about Two Kinds of Builders. One builder wisely built his house on rock. This wise builder is like those who hear the words of Jesus and put them into practice. The other builder foolishly built his house on sand. This foolish builder is like those who hear the words of Jesus and fail to put them into practice. Disciples who do the will of God are those who hear and do the words of Jesus.

In the closing scene of the *Sermon on the Mount* (7:28-29), Matthew records the response of the crowds. They are amazed by the authenticity and authority of Jesus' teaching. Unlike the religious teachers of the day, Jesus teaches from the depths of an intimate relationship with God.

In the end, we are reminded that **Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of God, shares the Sermon on the Mount with his disciples, calling them to live with single minded devotion, in light of the in-breaking kingdom of heaven.** And still today, the Sermon on the Mount calls us to be the people God longs for us to be... disciples of the crucified and risen Jesus.



Sermon on the Mount



Leader Study #6: Disciples Do the Will of God

8.. Opening Reflection Questions

A. What is your favorite fruit? Write a paragraph describing your favorite fruit (the look, smell, taste, and feel of it). Find a recipe that includes your favorite fruit. Make it. Bring your “favorite fruit creation” to this final session to share with your study group.

B. Describe your dream home. Where is it located? What size is it? Out of what materials is it made? Draw a sketch of it. Share this sketch with your study group.

9. Study and Conversation

A. Two Kinds of Paths (Read Matthew 7:13-14)

- 1. How are the two gates and the two roads described?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____

2. What might the narrow gate and the hard road represent?

3. What if the word “narrow” is not about restriction but focus? St. Hedwig wrote, “All is narrow for me, I feel so vast.” What if narrowing is funneling ourselves to what is central? Maybe our choice is not to focus on the narrow, but to narrow our focus. The gate that leads to life is not about restriction; it’s about an entry into the expansive and eternal. How do these words invite you to think about the narrow gate differently? _____



Sermon on the Mount



Student Study #6: Disciples Do the Will of God

B. Two Kinds of Prophets (Read Matthew 7:15-23)

1. List three ways people deceive others. List three ways people deceive themselves.

a.
b.
c.

a.
b.
c.

2. In today's reading Jesus says, "...every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit... Thus you will know them by their fruits" (7:17 & 20). What does Jesus mean by fruits? Check out Galatians 5:22-23a.

3. There are times when I am called into a parish where there is conflict. On occasion, I see church folks behaving badly. I often turn to Galatians 5:22-23a to help me focus my prayers and pointed conversation. How might the words of Jesus in Matthew 7:15-20 and Paul in Galatians 5:22-23a help you sort through a conflicted situation?

C. Two Kinds of Builders (Read Matthew 7:24-27)

1. Describe the two houses. How are they similar? How are they different?

2. Describe the two builders. How are they similar? How are they different?





Sermon on the Mount



Student Study #6: Disciples Do the Will of God

3. Jesus mentions "these words of mine". What "words" is Jesus referring to here? How does Jesus want us to respond to these words?

- a. _____
- b. _____

4. No one is saved by doing works. We are saved by the grace of God, through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus doesn't sound like a very good Lutheran here. How do you reconcile that Jesus seems to be saying that the aim of the Sermon on the Mount is "doing"? How do we keep this from becoming a "New Law"?

D. The Closing Scene (Read Matthew 7:28-29)

1. How do the crowds respond to the Sermon on the Mount?

2. As you look back on this six-week study, use one or two words that best describe your response to the Sermon on the Mount.

- a. _____
- b. _____

10. Closing Question: What is your one take away from today's study? Whom might you share this "take away" with this week?

11. Homework

- ☐ Memory Verse: Matthew 7:20
- ☐ Challenge Memory Passage: Matthew 7:24-27 "Two Builders"
- ☐ Schedule a time to celebrate the completion of this six-session study (coffee, tea, dessert, meal, field trip).
- ☐ Encourage the group to remain together for future studies.

12. Compose and Lead a Closing Prayer (please pray for each student by name).

