

THE WAY
OF
JESUS



The Sermon on the Mount
by Sue LeBoutillier

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✧ The Way of Jesus ✧ *The Sermon on the Mount*

The book of Proverbs speaks of many possible *paths* a person might take in life. These paths are called *ways* — *the way of evil* — *the way of the wise* — *the way of folly* — *the way of the sluggard* — *the way of the righteous* — *the way of death* — *the way of life*. In fact, these *ways* are mentioned 50+ times in Proverbs. They always refer to a person's *course of life*, which is based on cumulative decisions.

I've often said that a person's entire course of life is not cast, based on one or two decisions. But, over time, our accumulated decisions, habits and mode of operation *do* determine our course of life.

Through Jesus' words in **Matthew 5-7** (that we refer to as the **Sermon on the Mount**), He gave instruction about a *way of life* that would bring blessing to the follower on earth and glory to God in Heaven.

Following the *Way of Jesus* would not replace Scriptures like the Ten Commandments, which were familiar to His audience; rather the *Way of Jesus* would breathe fresh life into that ancient path, and bring new perspective to Godly principles that may have grown cold and stale.

If a person followed the *Way of Jesus*, they would be different...

... than the religious people like the Scribes or Pharisees.

... than the pagans who had no understanding of the true God.

Following the ***Way of Jesus*** would give purpose to their lives on earth, and please their Father in Heaven!

These three chapters from the Gospel of Matthew can have the same effect on us that they did on the original hearers. Whenever we sense that our spiritual path has become a little cold, or a little black-and-white; it's time to dwell in the red-letter words of the Bible and dive straight into what Jesus said. THAT is what the Sermon on the Mount is all about — the heart of the matter!

Take a look at our topics for the next 8 weeks:

Week 1	Introduction	The Way of Jesus
Week 2	Matthew 5:1-16	The Way of Blessing
Week 3	Matthew 5:17-32	The Way of Righteousness
Week 4	Matthew 5:33-48	The Way of Humility
Week 5	Matthew 6:1-18	The Way of Prayer
Week 6	Matthew 6:19-34	The Way of Peace
Week 7	Matthew 7:1-20	The Way of Seeking
Week 8	Matthew 7:21-29	The Way of Wisdom

This will be a verse-by-verse Bible study in a four-day-a-week format. As a bonus, over the course of these eight weeks, you'll write out the entire **Sermon on the Mount** in your own hand. So, pick up a notebook or pretty journal for writing your verses each day.

Your first step will be to watch the **Week 1 Introduction video** with your Study Guide open to p.4-5. There are discussion questions on p.6 that follow that first video. After you've done that, the remainder of this study guide is intended to be completed independently **before** you attend a group or watch/listen to the teachings for subsequent weeks. If you're meeting with a friend or small group, the ideal method would be to study the Scriptures on your own first (including writing in your journal), then watch/listen to the teaching (privately or in your group), then discuss the week's lesson and pray together about applying the passages to your life.

May the Lord richly bless you as you study His Word!

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To watch the video teachings for this Bible Study go to:

ccontario.com/womens-studies

or

[YouTube.com/calvarychapelontario](https://www.youtube.com/calvarychapelontario)

The best translation of the Bible to use is the one you understand best, and using more than one translation can be a useful aid in your study! This study guide was created using the ESV (English Standard Version).



Week One — Introduction

Use these pages as you listen to the Week One teaching video.
(www.ccontario.com/wow-sermon-on-the-mount)

If you are studying in a group, the questions on page 6 may provide some good discussion starters following the video.

- ☞ The *Way of Jesus* conveys the same content as the Law given to Israel through Moses. But that Law was external and challenging to follow. God promised in **Jeremiah 31:31** that something new would be coming — the New Covenant. This would be different from the Old Covenant in that He would put His law _____ and write it on their _____.
- ☞ St. Augustine said the *Sermon on the Mount* was probably the: best _____ least _____ and the least _____.
- ☞ Among the first *red-letter* words of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew, two that we should take note of are: _____ and _____.
- ☞ **Matthew 5:3-11** are called **The Beatitudes** from the Latin word _____, which means _____.
- ☞ The first beatitude is ***Blessed are the _____ in _____.***

Thus says the LORD: "Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls."

Jeremiah 6:16

Notes for Introduction

Questions for Thought & Discussion

1. What is it about the Sermon on the Mount that makes it so interesting for people to study and so difficult to obey?
2. How did you respond to rules when you were a child? Have those responses created habits toward either legalism or rebellion that hinder you from applying the *Way of Jesus* now?
3. Jesus' public ministry began with the invitation to ***Repent*** (**Matthew 4:17**). Why do you think some may find this unnecessary, or even offensive?
4. You probably know what it is to be *poor in bank account*; but how would you describe someone who is *poor in spirit*?
5. Read **1 Peter 5:5-6** and explain why being poor in spirit is essential to be included in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Blessed: *More than a temporary or circumstantial feeling of happiness, this is a state of well-being in relationship to God that belongs to those who respond to Jesus' ministry. The poor in spirit are those who recognize they are in need of God's help. Theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*¹

—ESV Study Bible

The Beatitudes



Before you even begin your first lesson on the next page, set aside about twenty minutes to read through all three chapters in one sitting: As you read the text, ignore the verse and chapter separations and consider this as a message straight from Jesus. Picture yourself sitting on the hillside, and concentrating on every word Jesus was sharing, just like a disciple on a retreat with Jesus.

Any disciple, who would repent and follow Jesus and take to heart the message He was conveying, would have a roadmap for the way in which they were to live — The Way of Jesus.

Week Two — The Way of Blessing

Do you ever wonder if you're on the right track in your spiritual life? I mean, you believe Jesus is God's Son — you've asked Him to forgive your sins — you're trying to make good decisions in life, but there is a nagging little voice that still questions whether you're missing something because you don't always feel super *blessed*. And, Christians are supposed to be blessed people.

Maybe you don't overthink life that much; but it's not necessarily a bad thing to ask yourself, "*Am I truly following the Way of Jesus and am I happy about it — am I blessed?*"

Remember, the phrase *blessed* also means *happy or fortunate*. So YOU, my friend, are one fortunate girl, simply because you are following the *Way of Jesus*! I know it's not all that simple, and I know our feelings get in the way, and we have difficulties and disappointments, but this first lesson should help us to remember how blessed we truly are, as we dwell on all of the wonderful benefits of following Christ.

Day 1: _____

✞ READ and WRITE **Matthew 5:1-6** in your journal.

In His opening words, which we call *the beatitudes*, Jesus defined some *characteristics* followed by some *benefits* that would be true of His followers. There are nine of these unique statements and each one begins with "*Blessed are.*"

In your journal:

- Underline each *characteristic* (i.e., *poor in spirit*) and print it on the left most portion of the stair steps on p.7.
- Circle the conjunction '*for*' in each of the sentences which helps you distinguish the *characteristic* phrase from the *benefit* phrase.
- Underline each *benefit* (*possess the kingdom of heaven*) and print it on the right most portion of the corresponding step on page 7.

We worked through verse three in our introduction, so this week we'll pick up the text from there.

(v.4) It seems a bit ridiculous to say, '*Happy are those who mourn*', but essentially, that's what Jesus said, '*Happy are the unhappy*'. But the crucial question is, *What are we unhappy about?* In the context of this message, and noting the first characteristic, '*poor in spirit*', what type of mourning is Jesus talking about? What is being mourned over? (Read **2 Corinthians 7:10** for insights.)

(v.4) What blessing does God offer for those who mourn in this way?

- How can this positively affect your life?

(v.5) Using a dictionary, define *meek* or *meekness*.

- Think of ways in which Jesus demonstrated meekness while on this earth:

(v.5) What blessing are *the meek* to receive? (Read **Matthew 19:28-30** for insights.)

(v.6) A sincere hunger/thirst for righteousness might be understood from a couple of different aspects. Let's consider some of them:

- First, when a person comes to the end of themselves, (often through difficulties), it's common for them to develop a sudden hunger for God in their life. Read **Psalm 107:5-9** and summarize this example of hungering in this way, followed by satisfaction.

- Second, when we walk with Jesus, we have a longing to be right with God. Read **Romans 3:21-24** and explain how our hunger to be righteous in God's eyes is satisfied:

- Lastly, we also find that we develop a greater desire (hunger and thirst) to be in right standing with people. Read **Ephesians 4:21-29** and list a few of areas, where we might be convicted to deal more righteously with people.

Our appetite for all of the above may ebb and flow, but God is faithful in our lives. He will gently convict us, help us grow our appetites and then work in our lives to satisfy our hunger and thirst for what is right.

Day 2:

- ✞ READ and WRITE **Matthew 5:7-10** in your journal.
(Follow the same instructions as yesterday for marking in your journal, and filling in the chart on page 7.)

Let's dig into the next four *Beatitudes* today...

(v.7) This is the only beatitude that promises reaping what has been sown!

- Define *mercy*:

- Explain why you would want to receive it:

(v.8) What is the blessing promised for the *pure in heart*?

- It makes a person wonder how you get a *pure heart*. Read **Psalm 32:1-5**. What did the Psalmist do that enabled his heart to be made pure again?
- How does clearing your heart of things that stand between you and God, help you to *see God, or hear God*?

(v.9) There is a blessing promised to *peacemakers*.

- It is true that Christians can play a role in *keeping* peace between people. Read **James 3:17-18**, and bullet point the characteristics that promote peace between people:

- But there is another aspect of being a *peacemaker*, and that is helping people make *peace with God* — helping people to *know God*. Read **Daniel 12:3**. What are people, who *turn many to righteousness*, likened to in this passage?

As we arrive at the eighth beatitude, there is a sharp change in tone, from the more gentle Christian attributes like mercy, purity, and peace, to *persecution*. Anyone who follows Jesus **will be** persecuted—it is part of the Kingdom!

(v.10) We can be rightly or wrongly persecuted in life. But, in this passage, why will the followers of Jesus be persecuted?

Read **John 15:18-20**. From this passage, and the 8th beatitude, what type of persecution should we expect if we walk in the *Way of Jesus*? Why?

Day 3:

✞ READ and WRITE Matthew 5:11-13 in your journal.

(Mark the final beatitude following the same instructions as previous days. Circle the phrase, *salt of the earth*, in orange.)

In this world, there are natural forces like gravity that silently hold our universe together. These forces take place in the background of our lives without our notice. There is also a spiritual force at work in the background, as common as gravity, and as infrequently noticed. It could be described as the tension between the *supporters of the Kingdom of God* and the *supporters of the kingdom of this world*.

(v.11) Explain the spiritual tension we should be expecting:

(v.12) With what ancient group of people do we share our experience of persecution?

Jesus said to be happy when we're persecuted for our faith, because: 1) it takes our eyes off earthly rewards, 2) it strips away superficial belief, 3) it strengthens the faith of those who endure, and 4) our attitude through it serves as an example for others. We can be comforted knowing that God's greatest prophets (Elijah, Jeremiah, Daniel) were persecuted. —Life Application Study Bible²

Now, we transition into the first of two metaphors, which helps us understand our privilege to influence people along our path.

(v.13) In the days of Jesus, before refrigeration, salt was used as a preserving agent to keep meat from rotting. What other positive qualities of salt can you think of?

(v.13) With the benefits of salt in mind, explain why salt is a great analogy of a believer's role in society.

- List one or two practical and specific ways you can act as salt, where you spend most of your time (work, school, family):

(v.13) One concern, which is expressed in this verse, is that of salt losing its taste or saltiness.

- What might cause this to happen in a believer's life?

- What steps can you personally take to guard against this?

Day 4: _____

 **READ** and **WRITE Matthew 5:14-16** in your journal.
(Circle the phrase, *light of the world*, in orange.)

Today's verses are very popular! Children's songs, devotion books and album titles have all been inspired by the idea of Jesus' followers becoming the *light of the world*.

Read **John 8:12** — Who is the *light of the world*?

Read **Matthew 5:14** — Who is the *light of the world*?

(v.14) How can we be actively spreading the light of truth in the world? List specific ways:

Walking in the light and *letting your light shine* are common sayings, but becoming a light-bearer isn't always fun and games, as the final beatitude about persecution teaches us.

Read **John 3:19-21** Salt is to the prevention of decay.
as Light is to _____.

- Why would allowing the light of Christ to shine in our lives tend to draw persecution?

(v.16) What is the ultimate goal of allowing our light to shine?

When we consider all these verses this week, and all the ways we are blessed in our walk with Jesus, it seems like a very small thing to give in return to make sure our lives are both *salty* and *bright*, so that others may give glory to God the Father!

Questions for Thought & Discussion

1. Can you honestly say that you have an appetite for the things related to God's Kingdom? Or, do you more often crave things pertaining to the kingdom of this world?
2. If you don't *hunger and thirst for righteousness*, what might you be filling up on, which dulls your appetite?
3. Read **Colossians 3:1-2**. What simple truth contained in these verses might set your appetite on the right track?
4. Salt causes people to crave water. Give an example of how the *salty* life of a Christian may cause someone to crave *Living Water*.
5. What situations may tempt you to *put your lamp under a basket*?
6. Ask the Lord for specific direction on how to be *salt and light* in your corner of the world, and share your plans with your group.

Week Three — The Way of Righteousness

Those listening to Jesus were likely familiar with Hebrew Scriptures. When Jesus said they were to be the *salt of the earth* or the *light of the world*, that did NOT sound familiar. They may have wondered if Jesus was bringing an entirely *new* teaching or even a *new* religion.

As if He could read their minds, Jesus began to fortify His message with familiar Scriptures to clear up any confusion. He assured them He was *not* bringing a new teaching that abolished the Law, but He would rather *fulfill* the Law. By following the *Way of Jesus*, they could experience an even deeper and stronger righteousness than what they learned from the religious people around them — the Scribes and Pharisees.

The *Way of Jesus* would eventually allow their righteousness to bubble up from the life of the Spirit, who would be within them, rather than from the laws that had been forced upon them. It was the same righteousness but from a different source.

Day 1:

✞ READ and WRITE **Matthew 5:17-20** in your journal.

- Mark any words related to the **Law** or **commandments** with a green underline.
- Put a square around the contrasting words *abolish* and *fulfill*.

These verses lay a meaningful foundation for all the passages that begin: *'you have heard that it was said'* (referencing what was written in the Law and Prophets). As each new topic was mentioned, Jesus elaborated on the heart of the matter and how to live it through the Spirit, rather than through the letter.

There are two distinct parts to these four verses:

- **V.17-18** speaks of Jesus' relationship to the Law.
- **V.19-20** explains our relationship to the Law.

(v.17-18) Jesus did not come to abolish the Law but to _____. He did not intend for His life and message to be a replacement for the Law, but rather a completion by demonstrating God's Holy character.

Read **Galatians 3:23-26**:

- What was the role of the Law?
- What event changed the role of the Law in people's lives?
- How would you say Jesus fulfilled the Law?

(v.19-20): If we only possessed these two verses to understand God's plan, we would be in trouble. Praise God, we have the whole Bible! We know that Jesus is the *fulfillment of the Law*, not its killer. Our response should be similar — rather than thinking the Law of God is old and outdated, we realize it still represents the holiness of God.

Read **Matthew 23:25-26**:

- Explain the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees. Where was their focus?
- How would it be possible for a follower of Christ to exceed that righteousness? Explain the necessary shift in focus.

Day 2:

✞ READ and WRITE **Matthew 5:21-26** in your journal.

- Mark the phrase, *you have heard it was said*, in green underline.
- Mark the phrase, *but I say to you*, in red underline.
- Put a box around the words *murder, angry, insults* and connect the boxes with a line to show their relationship.

Today, we study the first of six fairly familiar topics from the Hebrew Scriptures. Each new subject in this chapter begins, “*you have heard that it was said.*” Remember, Jesus wasn’t destroying the Law, but rather deepening our understanding of it, so that we could appreciate how perfectly it described the character of God.

What is the key topic of this passage? _____

Read **Exodus 20:1-17**. Which commandment was being referenced?

(v.22) Jesus likened *murder* to _____. Explain what those two have in common:

Anger, insults, and name-calling are considered bad manners by just about everyone. Parents correct their children for such behavior; but the punishment given for insults or name-calling isn’t anything like the punishment that would be given for murder! So it might be challenging to connect anger to murder.

The reason for this difficulty is that we tend to categorize sins in our own way. We think *anger* is kind of bad, but not *really* bad. In other words, if we indulge in a little verbal meltdown — no harm, no foul — we just tell ourself to be more careful next time.

But what Jesus expressed here was that *anger contains the seeds of murder, and under the proper conditions, may germinate and spout.*

- What are the *proper conditions* that may cause *you* to become angry and flare up against others?

This can be a sensitive topic for some women, who have struggled to submit their thoughts and their tongue to the rulership of Christ. Many of us have suffered bruised or broken relationships that may have been initially damaged in *anger*. Not every strained relationship is the result of *anger*; but *anger* will make every relationship strained.

(v.23-24) What types of people in strained relationship are these verses referring to?

(v.23-24) Describe a modern parallel for this type of situation:

Read **1 Corinthians 11:17-22**. Combined with **Matthew 5**, explain God's perspective on Christians participating in worship or even communion (described as *offerings* in v.23), when they aren't even on speaking terms with a brother/sister?

Now for the difficult application:

- *Is there someone who has something against me?*
- *Do I owe someone an apology?*
- *Have I damaged a relationship with my tongue?*

Today is the day to take steps to repair and reconcile!

(v.25-26) Between what types of people is this strife described?

(v.25-26) How does this situation differ from that in v.23-24?

V.26 leads us to believe the accused may actually be guilty. Have you known people who simply cannot say, 'I was wrong' or 'I'm sorry I messed that up'? Admitting fault or culpability is a rung on the ladder of humility that we cannot skip.

- *Have you recently done something wrong, either intentionally or unintentionally, and need to admit your fault to someone?*
- *Do you owe someone an apology for your error?*
- *Is there a situation where you just need to be humble?*

Today is the day to take steps to repair and reconcile!

Day 3:

✎ READ and WRITE Matthew 5:27-30 in your journal.

- Mark the phrase, *you have heard it was said*, in green underline.
- Mark the phrase, *but I say to you*, in red underline.
- Put a box around the words *adultery*, *lust*, and *sin*, and connect the boxes with a line to show their relationship.

What is the key topic of this passage? _____

Read Exodus 20:1-17. Which commandment is being referenced?

Look up a definition of both **adultery** and **lust**. Explain the similarities and differences:

In the same way that *anger* contains the seeds of *murder*, could we say that *lust* contains the seeds of *adultery*? How do those seeds germinate and sprout? (Read James 1:14-15 for more insights.)

(v.29-30) What is the literal remedy given by Jesus for the body parts that lean toward this sin?

Obviously, cutting off a body part is not the answer here. Explain the types of actions Jesus meant by His illustration. Be specific so you can discuss in your group.

Read these verses and make note of anything that gives you further insight or inspiration:

Psalm 101:2-3 —

Romans 13:11-14 —

Titus 2:11-13 —

We can appreciate the potential for our *eye to cause us to sin*; but honestly, as women, we know that the *visual* arena is probably not as big of a temptation for us as *mental* areas. We know that our thought life is primarily where the seeds of adultery might find good soil.

Making the application:

- *Is there anything that I indulge in that could lead me to lust?*
- *Is there anything I say or wear or do that could lead men to lust?*
- *Do I entertain vain imaginations that I need to cut out of my life?*

Today is the day to take important steps toward inner righteousness!

Day 4:

✂ READ and WRITE Matthew 5:31-32 in your journal.

- Mark the phrase, *it was also said*, in green underline.
- Mark the phrase, *but I say to you*, in red underline.
- Put a box around the words *divorce* and *adultery*, and connect the boxes with a line to show their relationship.

What is the key topic of this passage? _____

Some situations in our lives have the tendency to germinate in the heart and quickly outgrow the boundaries of the heart. They spill out and affect people around us — most often with tragic results.

That is the case with today's topic — *divorce*! Hardly anyone's life has escaped the sorrow of marital conflict, infidelity, or divorce — either personally or through family members. For this reason, we proceed with tenderness and sensitivity, so as not to inflict pain upon pain.

(v.31-32) Which marriage partner was Jesus talking to?

Read **Matthew 19:3-9**. The Jewish men of Jesus' day were introduced to various methods, popularized in religious circles, that allowed them to do what they wanted AND look as though they were still honoring God. No doubt this *certificate of divorce* had been suggested as the means for a man to put away his wife, while maintaining a good standing with God.

- According to v.8, why did Moses allow divorce?
- According to v.9, what was Jesus' concession regarding divorce?

Read **Deuteronomy 24:1-4** to understand what Jesus may have been referring to with His words, *'it was also said.'* If those were the only verses in the Bible concerning marriage and divorce, what sort of misuse might have sprung from them?

Rather than **Deuteronomy 24** giving permission for divorce, perhaps it could be paraphrased this way: *"Husbands, if you are so heartless as to put your wife away, at least give her a legal certificate so she can remarry and not become a destitute woman. Oh, and by the way, if you make that decision—it's for good! You can't say, 'I don't want her' one day and 'maybe I'll take her back' on the next day."*

Read **Genesis 2:21-25**. What are the instructions for the husband in that passage, and by implication, for both partners?

It's obvious that many men had justified their behavior and perhaps even misused the Jewish Scriptures to support their actions. Relationship responsibilities aren't always easy to uphold. Both men and women often act on the whisperings of their sinful hearts, rather than digging deeper for the power of the Holy Spirit. Just like the Jews of Jesus' day, we want to make our actions appear as though all was *done properly* on the exterior.

The entire *Sermon on the Mount* was intended to cause us to take inventory of the motives of our heart. A marriage relationship is a bond between a man and woman that should reflect Christ and the Church. Jesus (our groom) will never cast us aside. We may willingly walk away — but He will not divorce us from His family. As a follower of Christ, our lives should represent the same attitude.

Questions for Thought & Discussion

1. Read **Romans 8:2-4**. Explain how this passage helps us understand how we fulfill the righteous requirements of the Law.
2. What are some subtle ways we might actually encourage each other to bend or break God's Law, therefore dishonoring Him?
3. We know that being angry with someone leads us down a dangerous path. But what about those innocuous *insults* that can seem more like complaining. Discuss the danger of speaking casually of another in such a manner. How does this desensitize us toward those *seeds of murder*?
4. Explain the effect it would have on a Christian's spiritual life to conform to our culture's broad definition of sexual purity and narrow definition of sexual sin.
5. How would you answer a Christian friend, who promotes sexual fantasies as healthy because they may prevent physical affairs?
6. Discuss some ways you might encourage a Christian friend, who has been on the receiving end of an unwanted divorce.

Week Four — The Way of Humility

In this lesson, Jesus advanced three more topics: oaths, retaliation, and treatment of enemies. Just as we would expect, the *Way of Jesus* exalts the heart of the matter above the requirements of the Law.

Day 1: -----

✞ READ and WRITE **Matthew 5:33-37** in your journal.

- Mark the phrase, *you have heard is was said*, in green underline
- Mark the phrase, *but I say to you*, in red underline
- Put a box around the words *swear/sworn, oath* and *say*

What is the key topic of this passage? _____

This is the fourth topic that reaches back into the Hebrew Laws. It's not a direct reference to a commandment; however, there are two Old Testament Scriptures that are worth reading at this point:

Leviticus 19:12

Numbers 30:2

It's clear that God never intended for His people to go around making promises and then not follow through. An accurate summary might be: *"if you promise it — do it!"* Here in Matthew, Jesus challenged the extravagant oath-making that had become fashionable — swearing by Heaven, or by God's Throne, or by His Footstool, etc.

Read **Matthew 23:16-22**. Write a sentence or two about the games that the Scribes and Pharisees were playing with their promises:

Oath taking is really a pathetic confession of our own dishonesty. Why do we find it necessary to introduce our promises by some tremendous formula...unless we know our simple word is not likely to be trusted.
—John R. W. Stott⁴

What connection do you see between taking oaths or making vows, and the previous subject of marriage/divorce?

Jesus always goes right to the heart of the matter — setting aside the games, the technicalities, the escape clauses.

Read **James 5:12** and complete this sentence:

“let your _____ be _____ and your _____ be _____.”

Give that a try this week — no lengthy explanations — no promises — no exclamation for believability — just answer with a simple *yes* or *no*, and then follow through, doing what you said you would do.

Day 2:

✞ **READ** and **WRITE Matthew 5:38-42** in your journal.

- Mark the phrase, *you have heard is was said*, in green underline.
- Mark the phrase, *but I say to you*, in red underline.

This fifth subject can't be described quite as neatly as previous ones, but consider one or two words that might represent the subject matter well:

Read **Leviticus 24:17-20**. Jesus referenced this **Levitical Law** but then shifted the attention to a heart **attitude**, which would eclipse the Law — *a willingness to suffer personal loss rather than cause another to suffer*.

The purpose of the Levitical Law was to serve justice and limit compensation for victims to realistic proportions — if someone broke your arm, the limit of punishment would be their broken arm — but honestly, what would that accomplish anyway? Over time, people began to use this principle as justification for revenge.

Retribution doesn't usually bring out the best in people. Those who believe themselves to be victims, rarely act with sound judgment.

Read **Romans 12:14-21**. Now, read the important phrase earlier in the same chapter (v.2), ***Do not conform to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind.***

The transformation of our mind is the first step to following the *Way of Jesus!* We so desperately need the mind of Christ to lead us in deciding how to treat those who have mistreated us — or even just annoyed us (like one who begs or one who asks to borrow).

- To reflect God's character, how should we treat our enemies?

- How should we respond to our enemy's needs?

- When is it okay to avenge ourselves?

- What is the danger (v.21) if we do not follow these precepts?

(v.39-42) Reread the examples given by Jesus and write two modern-day equivalents:

Day 3: _____

✞ READ and WRITE Matthew 5:43-45 in your journal.

- Mark the phrase, *you have heard it was said*, in green underline.
- Mark the phrase, *but I say to you*, in red underline.
- Put a box around the phrases that represent difficult people: *one who begs/borrows; enemy* and *those who persecute*.

With each new topic, we've looked to the Old Testament to get a glimpse into Jewish thinking. This time you might ask, '*Where in the world does it say to love your neighbor and hate your enemy—is that really in the Old Testament?*' The answer is NO. But, once again, human nature has a tendency to hear what it wants.

Read **Psalm 139:19-22**. If you wanted to build a case for hating someone, do you think you could find a way to twist a Psalm like this?

- Whose enemies are really spoken of in this Psalm?

- Now go on to read **v.23-24** of that same Psalm. What was the Psalmist really expressing through the entire text?

- Speaking of the Law—read **Exodus 23:4-5** and summarize what the Law DID command for people, who live in community with others:

Back in **Matthew 5:44**, what two things did Jesus command regarding our enemies?

...so that you may be _____ (v.45)

How is God leading you to act on this passage? Perhaps an act of kindness toward a difficult person? Maybe an *olive-leaf* to begin restoration of a broken relationship? Note what God is showing you:

Day 4:

✞ READ and WRITE **Matthew 5:46-48** in your journal.

- Put a heart over the words *love* in v.43-46.

Even though there isn't technically an Old Testament Law that says, '*love your enemies*', it is the heart of God to love and show mercy to all people — to *cause the sun to rise and send rain* on the just as well as the unjust. In fact, the idea of loving your neighbor (whether friend or foe) is foundational to the *Way of Jesus*.

Read **Matthew 22:36-40**. Why do you think Jesus said that all of the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commandments?

(v.46-47) Jesus described a certain group of people—those who are easy to love and easy to get along with. Name a few of these types of people in your life:

You probably have another group of people in your life — irregular people — difficult to be in the same room with, much less love. As you reflect on these two groups, ask yourself:

- *In what way have I treated people in these categories differently?*

- *What adjustments does God want me to make, as I walk more in the Way of Jesus?*

We may get the mistaken notion that acting like Jesus should come naturally to Christians. After all, we have the Spirit of Jesus living in us — shouldn't we ***be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect?***

When our relationships suffer, we wonder what's wrong with us and we may even begin to worry that we're just not cut out for the Christian life.

Read **Titus 2:11-12**. That verse reminds us there is ***training*** involved. Training is intentional — it doesn't just come about on its own. List two areas of relationship, where you think God wants you to ***train in godliness***, and note how you intend to do that training.

1)

2)

Questions for Thought & Discussion

1. Do you have a reputation of doing what you say you will do? If not, in what area(s) do you desire to improve your dependability?
2. Read **Philippians 2:3-8**, which might be described as the *Way of the Cross*, rather than the *way of revenge*. Share a situation where you have been clearly wronged and God has shown you how to respond with humility.
3. As a Christian, how does one balance protection of home and family with Jesus' words in **v.39**, "*Do not resist the one who is evil*"?
4. What encouragement would you give to a friend who said, "*I simply cannot even be kind to my enemy, much less love them*"?
5. The character of God is such that *He sends rain on the just and on the unjust*. What hinders us from doing the same, and how can we begin to overcome those hinderances?
6. Explain how the simple act of *praying* for your enemy may enable you to love them.

Week Five — The Way of Prayer

We've arrived at the most familiar, and maybe the most misused, verses of the Sermon on the Mount — The Lord's Prayer. The same chapter that contains the familiar, *Our Father who art in Heaven*, also contains a warning against reciting empty phrases!

Day 1:

✞ READ and WRITE **Matthew 6:1-4** in your journal.

- Mark the phrase, *when you give*, in green underline (circle *give*)
- Mark each word *secret* with a green circle
- Mark each word *reward* or *no reward* with a red circle
- Put an "H" over the word *hypocrite*
- Mark the last 10 words of **v.4** with a squiggly underline

Any honest Christian can admit they sometimes have a propensity to be more concerned about how spiritual they appear to others than how intentionally they live to please God. We just naturally love to receive attention and admiration from other people.

(v.1) Warnings in life are useful, so it's fitting this chapter begins with the word: _____. According to this verse, and from personal experience, what are some bad motives for doing good things?

(v.1) What is the result of doing good things with bad motives?

Reread **Matthew 5:16**. At first glance, it could seem like a stark contradiction to our current verse, but let's think a little...

- What is the heart of the exhortation in **Matthew 5:16**?

- What might that mean in your day-to-day life?
- What is the heart of the exhortation in **Matthew 6:1**?
- What might that mean in your day-to-day life?

Verse 1 is a thesis statement for a trio of devotional practices. Read the verses indicated, and write each topic on this chart:

Christian Practices

Matt. 6:3-4	
Matt. 6:5-6	
Matt. 6:16-18	

Write the last ten identical words in *each* of those passages:

As Jesus shared on those aspects of devotion, He didn't suggest that His disciples *begin* to give or pray or fast; He seemed to assume they were *already* doing those things. The point was *how* they would do them. As always, Jesus went right to the heart of the matter.

(v.2) Write a handful of words/phrases that described how the hypocrites would give: (for example "loudly")

(v.2) In what ways have we adopted any similar methods in our culture?

(v.3) What did Jesus mean when He said, 'When you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing'?

Jesus used the word *hypocrite* in each of the passages on giving, praying and fasting. Write a dictionary definition:

Day 2:

✞ READ and WRITE Matthew 6:5-8 in your journal.

- Mark the phrases, *when you pray*, in green underline (circle *pray*)
- Mark each word *secret* with a green circle.
- Mark each word *reward* with a red circle.
- Put an "H" over the word *hypocrite*.
- Mark the last 10 words of v.6 with a squiggly underline.

The second topic of this section is **prayer**. Assuming we already pray, the focus here is on *how* we pray.

(v.5) Describe how the hypocrites prayed:

(v.5) What seemed to be their main concern?

(v.7) Describe how the Gentiles (pagans) prayed:

(v.8) Since Jesus' directive was, '*Do not be like them*', how should a true disciple of Jesus be different in the matter of prayer?

(v.6) Jesus' followers should be driven by different motives, and should walk in a different way. List as many single words as you can that would describe praying with a heart of true devotion:

(v.6) Each time Jesus commented on the actions of the hypocrites, He also mentioned their reward. Contrast the reward of the hypocrite with that of the true disciple of Jesus:

Day 3:

🔗 READ and WRITE Matthew 6:9-15 in your journal.

If you had never heard the phrase, *The Lord's Prayer*, you would assume it was the prayer that *The Lord* prayed. That would be a good guess — but actually, the prayer our Lord prayed was recorded by John in his Gospel, as Jesus was praying to His Father in Heaven before He was betrayed.

This prayer in our lesson is more like a blueprint, giving *us* an outline of how we *should* pray, after the contrast of how we *shouldn't* pray (note the Pharisees and Gentiles in v.5-7). Let's study this prayer as a pattern—not a recitation:

(v.9) *“Our Father in heaven, hallowed by your name”* Explain how our prayers should be directed and why. With what type of attitude, relationship or approach should we begin?

(v.10) *“Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven”* After worship, whose *cause* should we be interested in? To whose *will* are we to surrender our day, our ambitions, and our life?

(v.11) Jesus encouraged His followers to bring their petitions to the Throne of God. Beside being a basic need, what does *daily bread* imply to you?

Read **Exodus 16** (the account of God giving *daily bread* to His people in the wilderness). With this in mind, what was Jesus teaching about our frequency in prayer?

What aspects of our daily lives/daily needs do these verses address?

v.11 _____

v.12 _____

v.13 _____

In the same way that we need daily supplies for **physical** life (v.11 food, shelter), we also need daily supplies for **relational** life (v.12 wisdom, patience, forgiveness); AND, we need daily supplies for **spiritual** life (v.13 to overcome temptation)!

I love how Jesus makes everything simple and genuine. Prayer is honoring our Father in Heaven; seeking HIS will as part of HIS Kingdom, and asking that our physical, relational and spiritual needs be met with HIS grace. Prayer is not mindless babbling like the heathen, as if to impress God; or a drama meant to impress people. It's just authentic, daily communication with our Father.

(v.14-15) We only have one sentence left for today. As we attempt to figure out what a passage means, it can sometimes be helpful to eliminate what it does NOT mean.

- 1) We know this is not a formula for salvation because we know our salvation is a free gift based on God's grace. It is NOT based on our choice to either forgive or not forgive other people in our life. (Read **Romans 10:9, Ephesians 2:4-6**)
- 2) We also know that this sentence does not mean that God refuses to forgive individual sins we've committed until we perfectly forgive others around us. (Read **1 John 1:9**)

So, what DOES it say? Let's ask another question — what happens between two people when there is a *trespass* (a careless word for example)? What is that relationship like? What is fellowship like?

Once that *trespass* is confronted, resolved, and forgiven, how does the relationship improve?

If I am not in fellowship with God, I cannot pray effectively. But fellowship with my brother helps to determine my fellowship with God; hence, forgiveness is important to prayer. —Warren Wiersbe⁵

Day 4:

🔗 READ and WRITE Matthew 6:16-18 in your journal.

- Mark the phrases, *when you fast*, in green underline (circle *fast*).
- Mark each word *secret* with a green circle.
- Mark each word *reward* with a red circle.
- Put an “H” over the word *hypocrite*.
- Mark the last 10 words of v.18 with a squiggly underline.

The final topic is **fasting**, with the same consistent pattern:

- How the hypocrite conducts himself in Christian practice
 - The hypocrite's reward
- How someone following the *Way of Jesus* is different
 - The follower's reward.

(v.16) Write a handful of words/phrases that describe how the hypocrites fasted: (for example “*sad face*”)

(v.16) What was this person's motive?

(v.17) What do you think Jesus really meant when He said, ‘*Anoint your head and wash your face*’?

Of these three Christian practices in this week's lesson...

a) Which is the easiest or most common for you to participate in?

b) The least common—most difficult?

Questions for Thought & Discussion

1. Why do you think it's so tempting to make sure other people know about our giving and think well of us for it?
2. **V.8** says, '*Your Father knows what you need before you ask*'. Logic would return the question, *then why ask*? What are some compelling reasons that it's good to talk things over with God?
3. Certainly praying aloud with others is a good practice. What is the balance between *corporate* prayer and *secret* prayer?
4. Can you describe a time or situation when you were impressed by someone's prayer? Do you think it was their intention to impress you or did you just want to learn to pray like them?
5. Is it always a wrong motivation to pray simply because it's the prearranged time to pray?
6. What are some practical advantages that come from keeping our spiritual disciplines secret?

Week Six — The Way of Peace

The first half of chapter six highlighted the *Way of Jesus* in the areas of prayer, giving, and fasting. The second half continues with more practical matters near to our heart like money, possessions, and ambitions. The way we handle these aspects of our lives determine whether we walk in the *way of peace* or in the *way of anxiety*.

Day 1:

✞ READ and WRITE **Matthew 6:19-21** in your journal.

- Mark the phrases, *treasures on earth/in heaven*, in green underline
- Mark each word *treasure* and *heart* with a circle and draw a line to demonstrate their connection.

(v.19-20) What are the two possible domains for us to invest in?

(v.19-20) Explain the durability of treasures laid up on earth:

The practical wisdom of laying things aside for future use is obvious to us. It was even more obvious for an agriculturally-based society. In farming, there is a time for planting and a time for harvesting, and the harvest needs to be stored in order to last until the next one.

With Jesus' words in mind, read the following passages and note what the Bible does and doesn't teach, regarding laying up treasures on earth:

Proverbs 6:6-11

Proverbs 21:20

1 Timothy 5:8

(v.21) Why do you think there is such a strong bond between our hearts and our treasure?

Worldly ambition has a strong fascination for us and the spell of materialism is hard to break. Jesus helps us to choose well...surely we may say that to lay up treasure in heaven is to do anything on earth whose effects last for eternity. —John R. W. Stott⁷

Day 2:

 **READ** and **WRITE Matthew 6:22-24** in your journal.

- Circle the word *eye* and the phrases, *eye is healthy*, *eye is bad*.
- Mark the contrasting words *darkness* and *light* with a box.
- Mark the phrase, *two masters*, with a green underline, and the words *God* and *money* with a box.

Jesus already explained that our hearts become attached to our treasures. If we treasure things here on earth, our heart becomes trained toward those things; but if we treasure those things related to God's Kingdom, our heart will follow us there as well.

(v.22) After focusing on the *heart*, Jesus turned the attention to what other body part?

(v.22) What role does your *eye* play in your normal life?

It can be said, *without light, there is no sight*. If a person's eye is not healthy enough to let *light* into the body, what would be the result?

(v.23) Now consider the spiritual analogy: *If your eye is healthy — if it actually lets the light in — your whole body will be full of light*. List some practical ways we can proactively have healthy spiritual eyes that will *let the light in* for our whole body to be spiritually healthy.

Read **1 John 2:15-16**. Here is a warning against allowing the influence of the world to dominate the *desires of the eyes*. What result would you expect if that influence were allowed to continue unchecked?

(v.24) What are the two opposing masters we all encounter in life?

The Bible actually speaks of money and riches quite a bit. I think God knows our vulnerabilities. He's not impatient or harsh with us, but as we study His Word, we see our temptations more clearly. Read these passages and note any wisdom you find for your own way of life:

Psalm 119:36

Luke 16:10-14

1 Timothy 6:6-10

James 2:2-4

Day 3:

✎ READ and WRITE Matthew 6:25-29 in your journal.

- Mark the phrase, *do not be anxious*, with a green underline
- Mark each *anxious* with an “A” above it.

Don't worry! Don't be anxious! Have you ever felt those exhortations were useless because the habit of worry was already deeply rooted in your life? Nonetheless, you obediently wrote the words, *do not be anxious*, in our journal. But note of the first word you wrote — THEREFORE! You know the saying, ‘What is *therefore* — THERE FOR?’

Think of it this way — if I said, “*I already put your clothes in the dryer, therefore, they are dry,*” you would have dry clothes **because** of what happened previously — they were put in the dryer for you. Jesus was explaining that their *anxiety* could be done away with **because** the previous questions were settled:

- Where is your **heart** and **treasure**? Heaven (not earth)
- What is the desire of your **eyes**? God's Kingdom (not pleasures)
- Who is your **master**? God (not money)

Do you see the great importance of establishing the location of your treasure and deciding who is your master?

- **If** we are able to set our **heart** on Heavenly treasure, fix our **eyes** on the Kingdom, and make God our **master**...
- **Then** (*therefore*), we don't need to worry or have anxiety about our life.

Circle the number that best represents your level of worry or anxiety in recent days:

(least amount) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (most amount)

(v.25) What areas of worry have you indulged in, before you realized this truth expressed by the *Way of Jesus*?

Read these passages, and note anything additional they teach about worry, trust, faith, health, lifespan?

Proverbs 3:5-8

Proverbs 14:30

1 Peter 5:6-7

Day 4: _____

✞ READ and WRITE Matthew 6:30-34 in your journal.

- Mark the phrase, *do not be anxious*, with a green underline
- Mark each word *anxious* with an "A" above it.
- In verses 26, 30, 32, double underline *heavenly Father* or *God* and circle the verb that directly follows it.

Let's make that into a chart:

<u>Verse</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>God's Attention</u>
26	birds	Heavenly Father _____
30	lilies/grass	God _____
32	you/me	Heavenly Father _____

It may be tempting to think of this passage as a charming little piece of poetry. We all think our terribly important lives are much more complex than birds or flowers. Even when Jesus tells us, ***Our Heavenly Father knows what we need***, that promise can bounce right off our worry-filled heart and we keep right on worrying.

(v.32-33) By nature, all humans are seekers, but we seek differently...

- The people of the world (Gentiles) seek _____

- Followers of Jesus seek _____

If we are chronically anxious, which of the above do we resemble?

It's like choosing sports teams, you're either on team A or B, but not both. In our seeking, we'll either resemble the people of the world or we'll demonstrate the nature of a child of the Kingdom.

- How might seeing yourself as God's child inspire you to *stop being anxious*?
- What do you think Jesus meant in saying, *Seek first His kingdom*?
- Specifically, is there some aspect of worldly seeking and worrying that God is encouraging you to leave behind to seek Kingdom things?

Notes from Teaching on Week 6 —

Questions for Thought & Discussion

1. How would you answer someone who asked you how, specifically, they could *store up treasures in heaven*?
2. What do you think about when you are free to think about anything you want to?
3. How does chronic worry demonstrate a lack of faith in God?
4. What effect does a lifestyle of anxiety have on a person both emotionally and physically?
5. Verse 34 speaks to our concerns for the future. What is the difference between *planning for the future* and *worrying about the future*?
6. In what areas has the Holy Spirit nudged you to place your trust firmly in God's Hands and not worry about the outcome?
7. It's common to hear someone describe the power that anxiety has in their life. In what practical ways can a Christian exalt the power of God over anxiety?

Week Seven — The Way of Seeking

Seeking good for ourselves, seeking good for others, and even seeking out the sin, the problems and the complications in our own lives in order to remove them, are all part of walking in the *Way of Jesus*.

This last chapter begins with an often-quoted and rarely-understood phrase about *judging*. Even those who don't read their Bible seem to know this verse — and seem to have an opinion about what it means!

Day 1:

✞ READ and WRITE **Matthew 7:1-5** in your journal.

- Mark the words *judge/judgement/measure* with a blue underline.
- Mark the contrasting words *speck/log* with an orange underline.
- Mark an “H” over hypocrite.

Living in community with people is tricky! People have a tendency to be complicated, and even misbehave from time to time. The *Way of Jesus* shows us how we are to behave toward people who misbehave.

(v.2) What two words seem to be used as synonyms in this verse?

Slivers can sometimes be tough to find because they are usually tiny. In our house, we've been known to get out the magnifying glass so our tweezers can find those nasty little stinkers that really *get under our skin* (so to speak). I imagine **specks** are fairly difficult to locate as well, and you have to be really looking to find them!

(v.3) What somewhat humorous problem does the person have who is making judgements?

(v.5) What did Jesus say should be the remedy?

(v.1-2) What reason did Jesus give for refraining from judging others?

Jesus used the word *hypocrite* again, which we previously learned meant a *play actor*—someone acting a part that is not genuine. The use of this word helps us realize that the *judgments* we're to refrain from, cannot mean the mere distinguishing from right and wrong. It also cannot mean discernment between good and bad. If that were the case, we would HAVE to be play-acting since we would need to pretend we didn't notice someone who was obviously sinning—we would HAVE to be a hypocrite.

Let's use other Scriptures to help us understand more about making a proper judgment, or having proper discernment:

John 7:24

Romans 2:1-3

1 Corinthians 6:1-3

Philippians 1:9-10

James 4:11-12

What commonalities do you find between today's verses and **Matthew 5:7**?

Write a short summary about what judgement looks like for the one who is following the *Way of Jesus*:

The command to judge not is not a requirement to be blind, but rather a plea to be generous. —John R. W. Stott⁷

Day 2:

✞ READ and WRITE **Matthew 7:6** in your journal.

Yesterday's passage contained one of the most frequently quoted sentences from the Bible and today's verse is one of the strangest. It's a bit startling to hear Jesus refer to people as *dogs* and *pigs*. Let's try to discover what it *does* mean, by eliminating what it *doesn't* mean.

(v.7) Based on what you might have already learned about clean and unclean animals in the Jewish diet, who might the people be who were referred to as *dogs* or *pigs*?

(v.7) What do you think pearls might be a symbol of?

Read **Matthew 28:19-20** and summarize the command given:

This could lead some to think that *all* evangelism is *good* evangelism, whereas Jesus' words here help us understand there comes a time for discernment to be applied to sharing the valuable message of hope. Even Jesus Himself was silent on some occasions, and told His disciples to turn and symbolically *shake the dust* from their feet, if met with an unreasonably hard heart. (**Mark 6:11**)

Read **Acts 18:5-6**. Explain how the Apostle Paul used this principle with the Jews in Corinth:

Read **Colossians 4:5-6**. Explain how you might put the Apostle Paul's exhortation into practice in your life:

Day 3:

🔗 READ and WRITE Matthew 7:7-11 in your journal.

- Double underline the phrase, *Father who is in heaven*.

Our daily interaction with people requires a big dose of discernment. There is no better place to receive what we need, than to head straight to our Heavenly Father.

The *Way of Jesus* means that we are invited to...

(v.7) _____ and it will be given, _____ and you will find _____ and it will be opened to you. (v.8) For everyone who asks _____, the one who seeks _____, and to the one who knocks it will be _____.

As we follow the *Way of Jesus*, we find that we're presented with both an invitation and a responsibility to lean into God's benevolence and His resources for everything we need for our daily lives and interactions. And, God will not disappoint us!

The *Way of Jesus* should open up the path for us to think of God as our *Father in Heaven* — not just our Creator, not just a higher power, not just the Law-giver — but someone with whom we have a parent/child relationship — someone we run to for advice and insights, as we're navigating the twists and turns of our relationships and our needs.

From v.9-11, summarize the analogy between human parents and their children, and God and His children:

(v.9-11) Explain why Jesus was certain we could rely on our *Father in Heaven* to provide what we need in life:

Read the following verses, and note additional insights on seeking God, as well as wisdom and discernment:

I Kings 3:9-12

Proverbs 28:5

James 1:5

List three requests that you can be sure God will always answer:

-
-
-

Day 4:

✞ READ and WRITE **Matthew 7:12-14** in your journal.

- Mark contrasting words you find in orange (*narrow/wide, etc.*).

Today's passage begins with another well-known verse. We often call it the **Golden Rule**. There are many variations of the Golden Rule — even Confucius is credited with having said, "*Do not do to others what you would not wish done to yourself.*" But Jesus put this rule into a positive tone. Why is that significant? Because it becomes active — proactive!

If I said, *Don't do harm to anyone today*, it might be fairly easy for you to keep to yourself and just do nothing. (After all, we've all learned how to quarantine.) But, if I said, *Do good to someone today*, you would have to proactively live in such a way as to bless someone else.

I think this is the heart of that command — walk in the *Way of Jesus* and leave a blessing behind you!

(v.12) Do you have a relationship that is strained or broken? How can you apply this simple directive this week to begin a repair?

(v.13-14) List all of the opposites or contrasting words that you see in these two verses:

Questions for Thought & Discussion

1. Share an everyday example of one profitable judgement, and one hypocritical judgment:
2. In what ways could *throwing our pearls before swine* actually damage our own faith?
3. **V.7** says, "**Ask and it will be given to you.**" Is that a universal promise? Why or why not? Use at least one other Scripture in your explanation.
4. Have you had an answer to prayer after a long season of asking, seeking, and knocking? Explain:
5. Think of a time you have been the **recipient** of the *rule of love* and share with your discussion group how it impacted you.
6. We've all heard variations of the statement, '*There are many ways to God*'. Why do you think people bristle at the idea of there being only one gate to life that is relatively narrow and hard, and few find it?

Week Eight — The Way of Wisdom

Life is full of decisions. Remember the 35,000 choices we make each day? Well, it seems that Jesus wrapped up His sermon highlighting the importance of those decisions and the role that spiritual wisdom plays in following Christ.

It began with the choice between the *broad road* and the *narrow road*. Now, in these final days of study, we'll consider more choices:

- Whether to be influenced by *true* teachers or *false*.
- Discerning between *good* fruit and *bad*.
- Becoming a *talker only* or one who *does the works* of God.
- Building your foundation on the *solid rock* or on *shifting sand*!

Day 1:

✞ READ and WRITE Matthew 7:15-20 in your journal.

- Mark every occurrence of *fruit*, *good fruit*, *bad fruit* in red.

False prophets and disingenuous people are nothing new. They've been among us since Jesus' day and even long before. They will continue to be around until Jesus returns. So, we should understand how to recognize them in order to avoid their influence.

(v.15) Explain how it is that false teachers/prophets can present themselves so deceptively:

(v.16) How are we to recognize a false teacher or prophet?

(v.17-18) How can the quality of fruit give us insight into the health of a tree?

It's interesting that this warning about false teachers follows closely behind the choices in gates (narrow or wide). A good teacher should point us to the narrow gate, right?

- Have you ever found yourself captivated by a ministry/teaching that seemed compelling, but you realized it was actually a false teacher promoting the *wide gate*? Explain.

Obviously, we need to use *judgment* to determine whether the fruit of a prophet/teacher is good or bad.

(v.16-20) How would you explain, in your own words, the proper use of judgment (discernment) in this matter, compared to what we previously studied in **Matthew 7:1**?

Day 2:

🔗 READ and WRITE **Matthew 7:21-23** in your journal.

- Mark the words *says* and *does* with a box.

Each day we choose whether we will merely **say** we are Christian, and lean on all the Churchy things we do to reinforce that idea; or whether we will actually **do the will of God**. Doing good things, positive things, Christian things isn't bad or empty; but Jesus made the distinction here between merely **doing** Christian things and **doing** the will of God.

(v.21) Note the contrast in Jesus' description, as He separates people into two categories:

- First category — says to me, 'Lord, Lord'.
- Second category — does the will of my Father.

(v.22) Circle the word that describes the amount of people in the first category and write it here: _____.

(v.22) During their lifetime, how do you think these normal church-goers felt about their activities (done on God's behalf)?

- What are some modern activities that could be substituted for the phrases, "*prophesy and cast out demons*", that people might engage in to please God from the flesh?

(v.23) Jesus explained that something was clearly missing from their lives — knowing God and being known by Him. After all, what could be more terrifying than Jesus saying, *Depart from me, I never knew you*?

The *Way of Jesus* is a *way of wisdom*. We're not naturally born with wisdom, we need to seek it along the way, and then do something with it. From the Scriptures given below, identify the two words that become very useful in our Christian life, as we seek to please God:

Romans 10:17 — *Faith comes by _____ the Word.*

James 1:22 — *Be _____ of the Word.*

Read the following passages and note anything relevant to truly knowing God and honoring Him with your life, your words, and your actions:

John 10:27-30

Ephesians 3:17-21

1 John 4:16-19

Day 3:

✎ READ and WRITE Matthew 7:24-27 in your journal.

These last red-letter words of Jesus present our final challenge in wisdom — will we become *listeners* of Godly instruction without putting it into practice, or will we *apply* the truth and make it our foundation for life as we follow the *Way of Jesus*?

(v.24-26) Identify the actions of each person in this parable:

- Wise man:

- Foolish man:

- Describe the difference in time/effort there may be in building on top of sand, as opposed to digging down to rock:

- Describe the elements of nature that came against each house:
- How did the storm reveal the true difference in construction, while normal observation made them appear very similar?
- How does this analogy play out in our lives with the type of foundations we have chosen? (Don't just write a Sunday School answer, but really consider what this means for your life. In what area do you need to take the time to dig a deeper foundation?)

Day 4:

— — — — —
✪ READ and WRITE Matthew 7:28-29 in your journal.

Well, you have now officially written out the entire *Sermon on the Mount* in your own hand. All that is left is a brief afterword, describing how people reacted to all the things Jesus had taught.

- What *was* their response?

- What characteristics did you notice in this teaching that made Jesus seem like someone who had authority?
- What do you think the responses of the religious people (*the Scribes*) were?

We certainly want to be counted among the people who respected Jesus' authority. None of us wants to be in the same category as merely religious people, who only pay attention to outward, tedious rules and don't understand the matters of the heart!

The *Way of Jesus* should change us and mold our character to resemble Jesus — to act more like Jesus and serve more like Jesus. There was a popular song recorded years ago by the Imperials:

*You're the only Jesus that some will ever see,
You're the only words of life, some will ever read
So let them see in you, the One in whom, is all they'll ever need!*⁸

How inspiring! We all understand our weaknesses and sin but rather than allowing ourselves to be identified by our sinful nature—let's run daily to the ONE who has power to change us into HIS likeness.

Jesus called us to be light of the world...

...someone might see God's light shining through us.

Jesus called us to be salt of the earth...

...someone could be rescued from the decay of the world by us.

Jesus called us to be a city on a hill...

...someone may see God's glory shine through our deeds.

Jesus called us to do unto others as we would have them do unto us!

...someone may need the softening of our gracious response

Thank you for joining us as we yield ourselves more to walk in
The Way of Jesus!

Questions for Thought & Discussion

1. Why do you think broad gates and false prophets may be so appealing to people today?
2. Online Bible studies are readily available in today's culture. Do you think most women take the time to investigate the author/teacher to inspect their fruit before sitting under their ministry?
3. Have you come across more *false teachers* who seemed like wolves, or more who seemed at first to be like sheep?
4. Why is it so easy for Christians to mistake Church activity or ministry activity for actually doing the will of the Father?
5. What type of storms have you endured in your life that have revealed areas, where you had hastily built upon sand? Explain the way in which God revealed this to you:
6. Share one area of renewed wisdom or discernment in your life as a result of studying these chapters.

REFERENCES

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NIV Bible verses... Scripture taken from the Holy Bible, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

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- 8— **The Imperials**, *Legacy*, Word Distribution 2004

Women of the Word Bible Studies

The following WOW Bible Studies written by Sue LeBoutillier are available through the **Calvary Chapel Ontario bookstore**, and through our online store at www.ccontario.com.

- **Genesis** —Divine Design, From Eden to Egypt
- **Exodus**—Divine Deliverance, From Egypt to Sinai
- **Numbers**—The Wilderness Way, From Sinai to the Jordan
- **Joshua** —The Path of Promise, From the Jordan into Canaan
- **Judges** — A Time of Turning
- **Ruth**—Walking with My Redeemer
- **1 Samuel** — The Coming King
- **2 Samuel** — The Reigning King
- **1&2 Kings (Part One)**— Solomon and the House of the Lord
- **1&2 Kings (Part Two)**— Learning from Leaders
- **Esther** — When God Works in the Shadows
- **Jonah**—The Call of Compassion
- **The Way of Jesus**—The Sermon on the Mount from Matthew
- **Simply Jesus**—The “I AMs” of Christ in the Gospel of John
- **Acts**—Walking in the Spirit, The First Days of the Last Days
- **Galatians**—Finding Grace in a Demanding World
- **Ephesians**— Finding Purpose in a Confusing World
- **Philippians**—Finding Joy in a Disjointed World
- **Colossians**—Finding Stability in a Changing World
- **Titus**—While We Wait
- **James**—Real Faith for Daily Life
- **1 & 2 Peter**—Hope, Holiness and Humility in a Hostile World
- **1,2,3 John**—Light, Love and Logic, Lessons from the Apostle John