

MONTE VISTA ADULT BIBLE CLASS

The **Sermon** on the **Mount**

"But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." — Matthew 6:33



Monte Vista
church of Christ

Shawn Jeffries

The Sermon on the Mount

Lesson 1

Intro to the Sermon on the Mount

Lesson 2

The Beatitudes – Part 1

Lesson 3

The Beatitudes – Part 2

Lesson 4

The Beatitudes – Part 3

Lesson 5

Salt and Light

Lesson 6

Righteousness That Surpasses the Scribes and Pharisees – Part 1

Lesson 7

Righteousness That Surpasses the Scribes and Pharisees – Part 2

Lesson 8

Righteousness That Surpasses the Scribes and Pharisees – Part 3

Lesson 9

Righteousness That Surpasses the Scribes and Pharisees – Part 4

Lesson 10

Righteousness That Surpasses the Scribes and Pharisees – Part 5

Lesson 11

Righteousness That Surpasses the Scribes and Pharisees – Part 6

Lesson 12

Righteousness That Surpasses the Scribes and Pharisees – Part 7

Lesson 13

Jesus Teaches Disciples to Pray

Lesson 14

Spiritual Focus

Lesson 15

“Do Not Worry”

Lesson 16

“Do Not Judge”

Lesson 17

The Two Paths

Lesson 18

Warnings

Lesson 1

Intro to the Sermon on the Mount

Key Scripture Readings: Matthew 5-7

Summary

- The “Sermon on the Mount” is the greatest sermon ever preached by the world’s greatest preacher. It is a sermon that reveals what following Jesus looks like in the disciple’s daily life. It specifically challenges the heart of the follower of Jesus. Throughout the sermon, Jesus urges the hearers to develop hearts for God. The person with a righteous heart will perform righteous acts!
- In this famous sermon, the Lord talks about the things that bring about true happiness and peace. He speaks about how He came to fulfill the Old Testament. He corrects many of the wrong concepts that the Jews held. He even provides powerful teaching on the subjects of love, giving, praying, and fasting.
- By the time of Matthew’s account of this famous sermon, Jesus is extremely popular in Galilee. Large crowds are following Him due to His ability to heal miraculously (Matthew 4:24-25).
- The purpose of Jesus’ miracles was to provide supernatural evidence to back up His claim to be the Messiah (John 20:30-31). The miracles also verified that His teaching about the kingdom of God was the truth (Matthew 4:23).
- Throughout much of Galilee, Jesus taught in the synagogues. Eventually, the synagogues were not large enough to hold the massive crowds who wanted to hear the Lord. Jesus, therefore, began seeking more opportunities to preach out in the open air. Another example of this can be seen when Jesus preached to a crowd in Capernaum, using Simon Peter’s boat as a pulpit (Luke 5:3).
- We should not envision this sermon being preached from the top of a mountain. Instead, we should see it as being proclaimed from a mountainous or hilly area with a flat place where multitudes of people could sit and listen to the Lord’s teaching (Luke 6:17).
- It is interesting how the text says that Jesus sat down to teach His disciples (Matthew 5:1). This was the position typically taken by rabbis in the synagogue. By teaching in this way, the Lord establishes Himself to be the Master Teacher in every place!
- The first part of the sermon is often called the “beatitudes.” It announces blessings on those who develop proper spiritual character (Matthew 5:3-12).
- In Luke 6:17-49, we find a parallel account of the same (or similar) sermon. It is very likely that Jesus took this sermon on the road and re-preached it often.

Study Questions

1. What do you expect to get out of a study of the "Sermon on the Mount?" In what ways do you want to be challenged by this sermon?
2. What parts of this sermon do you already find difficult to understand or implement in your life?
3. What is the kingdom of God (Matthew 6:33)? In what ways will this sermon help us understand God's kingdom better?
4. What is a disciple (Matthew 5:1)? Is "disciple" or "Christian" used more to describe God's people?
5. Where is a similar sermon recorded in the gospel? Is it the same occasion? Explain.
6. Describe how Jesus begins the sermon. Why do you think He would begin in this way?
7. List one verse that you think is critical to understanding the "Sermon on the Mount."

Lesson 2

The Beatitudes - Part 1

Key Scripture Readings: Matthew 5:1-5

Summary

- In Matthew 5:3-11, Jesus announces nine blessings on those who develop certain godly qualities in their hearts. The word “blessed” means to be extremely happy. It refers to the inexpressible joy attached to having a spiritually rich relationship with God.
- “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:3). The first blessing Jesus announces must have stunned the audience. Jews in the times of Jesus attached both physical and spiritual consequences to poverty. Earthly wealth was often viewed as a sign of favor from God. Jesus challenges their thinking by announcing how the “poor in spirit” enjoy spiritual riches in the kingdom of God. These are the people who understand that they would be eternally lost without the love, grace, and mercy of God. They come to God humble and spiritually broken.
 - “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him” (Romans 5:8).
 - “But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)” (Ephesians 2:4-5).
 - “But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven but beating his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, the sinner!’ I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted” (Luke 18:13-14).
- “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted” (Matthew 5:4). While many things cause us to mourn in this life, Jesus is specifically referencing spiritual mourning here. Once someone recognizes their spiritual poverty before God, he should feel a profound sense of guilt over his sins. He should mourn over his sins because of their negative impact on God (Psalm 51:1-5; Isaiah 53:5; 59:1-2).
- “Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth” (Matthew 5:5). The gentle are those who are calm and considerate. They are careful in their interactions with others, even when angered or provoked. Jesus describes Himself in this way in Matthew 11:28-30. He never sought to injure or get revenge against those who persecuted Him (Luke 23:34). When one humbly submits themselves to God and understands their feebleness before Him, like Jesus, they too will treat people with kindness and meekness.

Study Questions

1. What is your initial reaction to the poverty of spirit Jesus speaks of in this sermon?
2. What often hinders us from being poor in spirit? How do we overcome these obstacles?
3. What is your initial reaction to the mourning Jesus speaks of in this sermon?
4. What often hinders us when mourning? How do we overcome these obstacles?
5. What is your initial reaction to the gentleness Jesus speaks of in this sermon?
6. What often hinders us from living a gentle life? How can we overcome these obstacles?
7. What will the poor in spirit, mourners, and the gentle receive from God? Give the meaning of these blessings.

Lesson 3

The Beatitudes - Part 2

Key Scripture Readings: Matthew 5:6-8

Summary

- “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied” (Matthew 5:6). When we think of hunger, we typically attach it to food. We wake up hungry and eat breakfast. We get hungry on the job and eat lunch. We get off from work hungry and eat supper. Due to being fully human (as well as fully God), Jesus became hungry after fasting for forty days and nights (Matthew 4:4). While every person experiences physical hunger, only those who seek to please God hunger and thirst for righteousness.
 - He hungers to know God and be in a relationship with Him. “As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul longs after you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God” (Psalm 42:1-2).
 - He hungers to be made righteous through the word of God. “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16). Those who were “pricked” by Peter’s sermon on Pentecost had a hunger to submit to God’s word (Acts 2:36-37).
- “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy” (Matthew 5:7). Mercy involves compassion towards the suffering of others and a willingness to relieve that suffering. It requires trying to ease another person’s hurt, even if they do not deserve it.
 - God demonstrated mercy towards us when we were lost in our sins. “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).
 - After seeing a Jewish traveler beaten by robbers and left to die on the road, Jesus says, “But a Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion, and came to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them; and he put him on his own beast, and brought him to the inn and took care of him” (Luke 10:33-34). The Samaritan felt compassion for someone suffering and took action!
- “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8). While Christians need to strive for moral purity, this verse probably refers to being a sincere and genuine disciple. J.B. Philips translates the passage, “Blessed are the utterly sincere.”
 - Unlike many Jewish religious leaders of Jesus’ day, disciples must strive for consistency between their hearts and lives (Matthew 23:25-29). They are not hypocrites! Their love for the Lord must be evident before God and men.

Study Questions

1. What is your initial reaction to the hungering and thirsting for righteousness that Jesus speaks of in this sermon?
2. What often hinders us from hungering and thirsting for righteousness? How do we overcome these obstacles?
3. What is your initial reaction to the merciful that Jesus speaks of in this sermon?
4. What often hinders us from being merciful? How do we overcome these obstacles?
5. What is your initial reaction to the purity of heart that Jesus speaks of in this sermon?
6. What often hinders us from being pure in heart? How do we overcome these obstacles?
7. What will the starving for righteousness, merciful, and pure in heart receive from God? Give the meaning of these blessings.

Lesson 4

The Beatitudes - Part 3

Key Scripture Readings: Matthew 5:9-12

Summary

- “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God” (Matthew 5:9). The peace that Jesus speaks of here is not world peace. It is not peace from wars and battles between the kingdoms of men. Instead, it is a peace that comes to someone in fellowship with God.
 - Jesus was prophesied to be the “Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6). Through His sacrifice on the cross, all people are provided an avenue to be at peace with God. Paul said, “Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him” (Romans 5:9).
 - After one receives peace with God, he can receive peace with other disciples (Romans 14:19). The death of Jesus broke down the racial and religious divisions that existed between the Jews and Gentiles. “For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall” (Ephesians 2:14).
 - The disciple also seeks to live in peace with the world. While he doesn’t compromise the gospel, he is not always seeking to fight and cause strife with others (Romans 12:18).
- “Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:10). This is a radical and shocking blessing offered by Jesus! It seems to deviate from the pattern in the list. It doesn’t describe the disciple’s character, but how those in the world often respond to that character.
 - Instead of being appreciated and praised for godly character, the disciple will be persecuted! He will suffer at the hands of those who oppose Jesus. Peter offers a similar warning in 1 Peter 4:12-16.
- “Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (Matthew 5:11-12).
 - These words are a continuation of the previous thought. After announcing that disciples will suffer for possessing righteous character, He specifies what the persecution will involve. Followers of Jesus will be mocked, insulted, and slandered. They will experience similar persecution as the prophets in the Old Testament.
 - They will suffer like the Master who suffered for them. Jesus further promised this when He said, “A slave is not greater than His master. If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you” (John 15:20a).

Study Questions

1. What is your initial reaction to the peacemakers that Jesus speaks of in this sermon?
2. What often hinders us from being peacemakers? How do we overcome these obstacles?
3. What is your initial reaction to those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness?
4. What often hinders us from being willing to suffer for the cause of Christ? How do we overcome these obstacles?
5. How did Jesus establish the example of enduring for the sake of righteousness? In what ways can His example help us endure today?
6. What kinds of persecution do we endure today? In what ways can persecution help us grow as disciples?
7. What will the peacemakers and persecuted for the cause of Christ receive from God? Give the meaning of these blessings.

Lesson 5

Salt and Light

Key Scripture Readings: Matthew 5:13-16

Summary

- Jesus also taught His disciples about their place in the world. He told them that when they possess the godly qualities of the “Beatitudes” they become salt and light (Matthew 5:13-16).
- In the time of the first century, salt’s primary function was to be a preservative. It helped keep things (mainly food) from corrupting, rotting, and decaying. This metaphor means that disciples must seek to preserve a spiritually rotting world! This is done mainly through their godly influence!
- Salt also easily stimulates thirst. Through righteous and holy living, followers of Christ should make people thirsty for God's spiritual blessings. The more people are around us, the more they should long to learn the gospel so they can develop a relationship with God.
- Light helps someone navigate their way through the darkness. It shines and exposes the things that are hidden. Disciples are to shine like light and be noticeable. When the world observes their lives, they should see people devoted to the Lord's words. They should see people who are committed to a higher and nobler way of living. They should see righteous behavior that convicts sin and helps them find their way to God.
- By being “salt” and “light,” Jesus is calling disciples to impact people’s lives. He doesn’t want His followers to be hermits and isolate themselves from the world. He does not want them to quietly lurk in the background of culture or be afraid to show people who they are and what standard they follow. Instead, the Lord desires His people to be out in their communities showing people by their conduct that He has something better to offer them.
- There are some dangers that disciples must avoid if they are to be “salt” and “light.” The first danger is contamination (Matthew 5:13). While salt is a stable compound, it can be contaminated with other substances and lose its ability to season and preserve. When Christians start thinking and accept the same values as the world, they are no longer the salt of the earth!
- The second danger is covering up (Matthew 5:14-15). This occurs when disciples want to keep quiet about following Jesus. They want to camouflage themselves and refuse to take public stands against wicked behavior.
- When salt is contaminated, and light is covered up, God’s purposes for us, His people, are not accomplished. Our influence does not make an impact, and the lost don’t become curious about the gospel.

Study Questions

1. Provide some practical examples of how we can be salt in a rotting world.
2. What obstacles often get in the way of disciples being salt? What are the consequences for disciples not being salt?
3. Provide some practical examples of how we can be lights in a dark world?
4. What obstacles often get in the way of disciples being lights? What are the consequences for disciples not being lights?
5. In what way was Jesus different from the world and from what the religious world expected and wanted?
6. What are some concepts in this sermon that you already know will make you different from the world? How will they make you different?

Lesson 6

Righteousness That Surpasses the Scribes and Pharisees - Part 1

Key Scripture Readings: Matthew 5:17-20

Summary

- A key section of this sermon has to do with the Law and the Prophets. Some people might have thought that Jesus had come to teach against the Old Testament Law. That was not the case! Jesus came to fulfill the Law and the prophets. He was always obedient to the Law that God had given through His servant Moses (1 Peter 2:22).
- Whatever the Law of Moses taught, Jesus intended to keep (fulfill). The same was also true of the writings of the prophets. There are hundreds of Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah. Men like Micah, Daniel, Isaiah, David, and others foretold things about the Messiah's birth, ministry, sufferings, death, burial, and resurrection. Jesus came to fulfill every one of their prophecies. He promised that not even the smallest part of the Law would pass away until all these things were fulfilled.
- The foundation of the sermon is found in Matthew 5:19-20. Due to the corrupt religious leaders of the day, the Jewish people had many wrong ideas about God, the Law, and matters of salvation. Like people today, many Jews thought that some of God's Law could be relaxed. Jesus taught and cleared up that erroneous thinking. He taught that no commandment of God is to be taken lightly (Matthew 5:19)! Jesus repeatedly emphasized this in the sermon (Matthew 7:13-14, 21-29).
- In Matthew 5:20, Jesus said, "Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven." This statement had to be extremely radical to the original audience. In the minds of most Jews in the first century, the scribes and Pharisees were great examples of holy men of God. These men studied, discussed, and taught the word of God. If their righteousness was not good enough, then whose was?
- Jesus revealed that the scribes and the Pharisees were religious hypocrites (Matthew 23:13-29). Religious hypocrites behave one way before men and another way in private. In addition to practicing hypocrisy, the scribes and Pharisees often changed things in God's law to suit themselves and their traditions. This kind of "righteousness" does not lead to favor with God.
- Beginning in Matthew 5:21, Jesus will contrast the corruptness of the scribes and Pharisees with the lives of truly righteous people. He will emphasize how a life that truly pleases God starts with the development of a righteous heart. Righteous hearts lead to righteous actions!
- Imagine being a scribe or Pharisee and sitting in the audience listening to Jesus preach this sermon! When we challenge ourselves to see Jesus' entire sermon as a shot at these corrupt men, it makes more sense to read about them later orchestrating a plan to kill Him.

Study Questions

1. What did Jesus come to do with the Law and the Prophets? What does this mean?
2. How did Jesus describe the “righteousness” of the scribes and Pharisees? Why would this have been a radical description to first-century Jews?
3. What does Jesus have to say to those who are loose with God’s law? List some ways in which people are guilty of doing this today?
4. How did Jesus treat the Old Law? How should His example impact us?
5. How might the scribes and Pharisees have reacted to this section of Jesus’ sermon? Why?
6. How was Jesus able to know the truth about the “righteousness” of the scribes and Pharisees? How should this impact us?

Lesson 7

Righteousness That Surpasses the Scribes and Pharisees - Part 2

Key Scripture Readings: Matthew 5:21-26

Summary

- Jesus offers specifics on how to develop a righteousness that exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees. He exposes their “righteousness” as lacking integrity. The Lord addresses several different areas where this was evident before God (Matthew 5:21-48).
- Jesus will begin by exposing the leaders' interpretation of what the Law taught about anger. The repetitive statement of “You have heard” that Jesus uses is not an attack on the importance of the Old Law. Instead, it is an attack on the leaders' interpretations of the Old Law and their traditions.
- The scribes and Pharisees condemned the act of murder (Matthew 5:21) but saw nothing wrong with being hostile and angry with a brother. Jesus corrected that idea by teaching that in addition to murder; insults, hostility, and anger with a brother is also not pleasing to God.
- Anger is often manifested with insulting language. The word “Raca” that Jesus uses in Matthew 5:22 (KJV) is sometimes translated as “insults” (ESV) or “you good for nothing” (NASB). It is a word that refers to someone as an empty-headed, worthless imbecile.
- The word “fool” (Matthew 5:22b) is another derogatory term people in the first century used to express anger with someone. Jews viewed “fools” as morally corrupt heathens (Psalm 14:1). They lived with no boundaries and awareness of the judgment of God.
- Jesus teaches that, unlike the scribes and Pharisees, His people avoid physical harm to others by cutting off the source. They avoid having anger boil up in their hearts. They avoid ugly, crude, and demeaning words towards others. They avoid letting Satan use bitterness to separate them from their brethren.
- Instead of being angry with a brother, Jesus demands making things right with their brother (Matthew 5:23-26). Before going to worship God, a disciple must initiate reconciliation. A failure to do this will lead to vain worship and the judgment of God (Matthew 5:22b, 25).
- Discipleship requires a constant examination of the heart. When we find anger in our hearts, it will lead to angry words and actions if we allow it to grow and fester. This can be avoided by going to those that we feel have hurt us and making things right.
- While anger is an emotion that we all experience, it can cost us our souls if not managed properly (Ephesians 4:26-27).

Study Questions

1. Why does Jesus describe anger in such a negative way?
2. List some ways in which we often try to justify being angry with brethren.
3. In addition to murder, what are some other sins that can be the result of anger?
4. People who resort to name-calling are in danger of what?
5. How can anger negatively impact our worship? What solution does Jesus offer to overcome anger?
6. Harmonize what Paul says about anger in Ephesians 4:26-27 with what Jesus is teaching here.
7. What often stands in the way of us seeking reconciliation with others? How do we overcome these obstacles?

Lesson 8

Righteousness That Surpasses the Scribes and Pharisees - Part 3

Key Scripture Readings: Matthew 5:27-32

Summary

- After dealing with the subject of anger, the Lord challenges us to be careful with our eyes (Matthew 5:27-28). In addition to condemning the physical act of adultery, Jesus also condemns lust and coveting.
- While lusting after another doesn't involve the physical act of adultery (Matthew 19:9), it is adultery of the heart.
- David's immoral relationship with Bathsheba began with an inappropriate desire for her (2 Samuel 11:1-4). What started with lust eventually led to adultery and murder!
- Conquering the sin of lust often requires radical action. The Lord uses strong figurative language in Matthew 5:29-30 to emphasize the seriousness of sin and how we should be willing to do whatever it takes to get it out of our lives. It is better to make the sacrifices necessary to please God than "to be thrown into hell" (Matthew 5:29b).
- Jesus also addresses the false ideas that the scribes and Pharisees promoted about marriage and divorce. Like in our current society, in Jesus' time, marriage had become a disposable commodity. Divorces were taking place for reasons God never intended.
- The citation found in Matthew 5:31 is from Deuteronomy 24:1. It was a provision made in the law to make divorces official and final. With the appropriate paperwork, a man could not divorce his wife and then change his mind later and demand her return to his home (Deuteronomy 24:2-4). The Pharisees will allude to this concept again in Matthew 19:7.
- By Jesus' day, the religious leaders had developed all sorts of loopholes to put wives away. Some of these things include disfavor with cooking, poor posture, and even thinning hair!
- Jesus rebukes their faulty teaching by revealing the true will of God. He says, "But I say to you, that everyone who divorces his wife, except for the reason of unchastity, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery" (Matthew 5:32).
- Instead of looking for loopholes for divorce, Jesus wants us to understand that from the beginning, God's will for married people is for them to be faithful and stay together for a lifetime (Matthew 19:4-6). He wants them to honor their commitment to one another!
- What Jesus teaches in Matthew 5:31-32 is consistent throughout the New Testament (Matthew 19:1-9; Mark 10:11-12; Luke 16:18; Romans 7:1-3; 1 Corinthians 7:10-11).

Study Questions

1. What excuses do people often use to justify having no control over their eyes? How does Jesus challenge those excuses?
2. Why is it so important to Jesus that we guard our eyes?
3. Is Jesus talking about the same kind of adultery in Matthew 5:27 as He is in Matthew 19:9? Explain.
4. What are some "eyes" and "hands" that we might need to cut off to be the people of integrity that Jesus demands? Why is it often hard to make these amputations?
5. What was the original intent of the citation from Deuteronomy 24:1? What caused the passage to become controversial in the time of Jesus?
6. What can result from someone putting their spouse away for unlawful reasons? What is Jesus' solution to avoiding this mess?
7. List some ways in which Satan has used divorce to hurt God's people today? How should we respond to these challenges?

Lesson 9

Righteousness That Surpasses the Scribes and Pharisees - Part 4

Key Scripture Readings: Matthew 5:33-37

Summary

- Jesus also addressed His standard for oath making and keeping. The corrupt scribes and Pharisees had formulated loopholes to get out of keeping vows and commitments (Matthew 5:33-37).
- Avoiding misusing and abusing God's name was a serious matter to the Jews. They would often avoid saying God's name in fear of mispronouncing it.
- Euphemisms for God's name were eventually formed. Swearing by these was considered not as severe as swearing by God's true name. This would be similar to how people in our time make promises but feel they don't have to keep them if their fingers are crossed behind their backs.
- The scribes and Pharisees taught that one was not bound to keep a vow if he swore by Jerusalem (the city of God), or the earth (God's creation), or by heaven (God's throne). They were only bound if they swore by the name of God.
- Jesus condemns all of their nonsense! He is not condemning making oaths. Instead, He is condemning those who make oaths and fail to keep them! His standards require disciples always to seek to keep their commitments and promises. In Matthew 5:37, the Lord says, "But let your statement be, 'yes, yes' or 'no, no'; anything beyond these is of evil."
- Solomon offers a similar thought. "When you make a vow to God, do not be late in paying it; for He takes no delight in fools. Pay what you vow! It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay" (Ecclesiastes 5:4-5).
- James also offers a similar thought. "But above all, my brethren, do not swear; either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath; but your yes is to be yes, and your no, no, so that you may not fall under judgment" (James 5:12).
- Numerous passages demand followers of Jesus be honest in all their dealing. "Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each of you with his neighbor, for you are members of one another" (Ephesians 4:25). "Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices" (Colossians 4:9). "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but those who deal faithfully are His delight" (Proverbs 12:22).
- God is faithful to all of the promises He makes (Hebrews 10:23). He expects nothing less from His children!

Study Questions

1. Describe the “loopholes” the scribes and Pharisees created to get out of vow keeping? List some ways that people attempt to create the same kind of “loopholes” today.
2. What often causes people to lie?
3. What does Jesus teach about making vows and vow keeping? List some practical ways in which this teaching should impact our daily lives.
4. List some promises made by God that He was determined to keep. How should God’s faithfulness impact us?
5. What are the natural consequences of a dishonest life?
6. What are the natural consequences of an honest life?
7. Who is called the “father of lies” in the Bible? Why is he called this? Who does Jesus say follows in his wicked footsteps? See John 8:44-45.

Lesson 10

Righteousness That Surpasses the Scribes and Pharisees - Part 5

Key Scripture Readings: Matthew 5:38-42

Summary

- The statement, “An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth,” predates the Sermon on the Mount. It is found in the Code of Hammurabi. This rule (sometimes called *lex talionis*) provided for even-handed justice. Justice must fit the crime, and it must be extended to every person equally.
- “An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth” is also found in the Law of Moses (Exodus 21:24; Leviticus 24:19-20; Deuteronomy 19:21). God wanted His people to avoid seeking personal revenge against evildoers (Leviticus 19:18). The execution of justice was to be reserved for those in positions of civil authority. The scribes and Pharisees had corrupted this portion of God’s law. What had been originally intended to deter Israel from seeking personal revenge had been turned into a license to that very thing.
- Jesus exposed this abuse of God’s Law. He taught that disciples had been called to live by a higher standard. They avoid retaliation and settling scores.
- If a disciple is slapped with someone’s backhand (hit on the right cheek), he doesn’t respond by slapping the person back (Matthew 5:39).
- In the New Testament times, most people were very poor. The average person would owe two tunics (inner and outer). If a disciple is being abused in the court system (being sued for the things he possessed to keep him warm in the winter), he is not to cause a ruckus (Matthew 5:40). He should avoid allowing possessions to hinder him from making peace.
- Personal vengeance should not even be taken against the corrupt Roman government (Matthew 5:41). Roman officials could force into service any person for the distance of one mile. This was commonly called “The Roman Mile.” Simon of Cyrene was forced to help Jesus bear His cross to Golgotha (Matthew 27:32). The disciple is willing to go above and beyond for His enemy. Like Jesus, he is ready to give his adversary grace and mercy even though he may not deserve it.
- Begging was a common practice in the first-century world. Instead of being selfish and greedy, the disciple gives (Matthew 5:42). While he doesn’t enable the lazy (2 Thessalonians 3:10), he is willing to be generous.
- In this entire section, Jesus urges His followers not to be concerned about themselves. While the world seeks revenge against those who harm and insult them, followers of Christ are always concerned about the well-being of others.

Study Questions

1. What was God's original intent for the language "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth" found in the Law of Moses? How had the scribes and Pharisees corrupted that intent?
2. Why is it hard not to retaliate and seek personal vengeance when someone does us harm? How do we overcome that desire?
3. List an occasion when Jesus could have retaliated and sought personal vengeance? What did He choose to do instead?
4. Are all of Jesus' words in this section to be taken literal? Or, could He be using some exaggerated language to emphasize a point? If so, list some examples.
5. List some real-life situations where applying the Lord's teaching will be necessary.
6. Which of the four examples in Matthew 5:39-42 do you think is the hardest to apply the Lord's teaching? Why?
7. Is Jesus teaching here that it is wrong to defend yourself with lawful means? Explain.

Lesson 11

Righteousness That Surpasses the Scribes and Pharisees - Part 6

Key Scripture Readings: Matthew 5:43-48

Summary

- This section may contain the most challenging teaching of Jesus. In addition to loving their neighbors, disciples are also to love their enemies. They are to love and show concern for those who despise and hate them.
- Most Jews of Jesus' time did not want to love their enemies. Some were so determined not to do this that they tried to bend and twist the Scriptures (Matthew 5:43). "Thou shall love your neighbor" is found in Leviticus 19:18, but "hate your enemy" is found nowhere in the Old Testament Law. The corrupt religious leaders invented the statement!
- The Lord's standard is higher than that of the scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 5:44). He calls His followers to love all! Disciples are to love like God. God demonstrated love for all by giving His perfect Son to pay the penalty for sin (Romans 5:8-10; John 3:16; 1 John 4:19).
- Jesus prayed for and demonstrated a heart for His enemies while they were mocking Him on the cross (Luke 23:34).
- Loving every person causes disciples to be imitators of God. It causes them to love like God and become "sons" of God. God continues to bless the wicked by causing the sun to rise and the rain to fall (Matthew 5:45).
- There is no virtue in loving only those who love you back (Matthew 5:46-47). Godless heathens do the same! When a Christian follows the standard of the scribes and Pharisees, they don't live by the higher standard of Jesus.
- The "perfect" Jesus uses in Matthew 5:48 intimidates many people. Some feel that the word refers to "sinless perfection." To be saved, one must be faultless and perfectly holy. If this is what the passage is talking about (and it is not), then no person could be saved (Romans 3:9, 23).
- The New Testament often uses "perfect" to talk about completeness and maturity (Matthew 5:48). Paul says, "Not that I have already obtained it or have become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:12).
- Jesus uses the word "perfect" in this context to emphasize the blessings that come to Christians when they love their enemies. Those who love their enemies will have a perfect, full, complete, and fully mature love like their heavenly Father (Ephesians 5:1-2).

Study Questions

1. Where did the saying "hate your enemies" likely originate among the Jews? What was the Lord's standard?
2. Who are people who are easy to love? Why? Be specific in your answer.
3. Who are people who are hard to love? Why? Be specific in your answer.
4. Define an enemy. What makes someone your enemy? What makes someone God's enemy?
5. How did Jesus treat His enemies? List some passages to prove the point.
6. What blessings come to those who choose to love even their enemies?
7. Make a list of the qualities of love Paul speaks about in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. Which of these are especially difficult to exhibit towards enemies? How do we overcome these challenges?

Lesson 12

Righteousness That Surpasses the Scribes and Pharisees - Part 7

Key Scripture Readings: Matthew 6:1-7, 16-18

Summary

- Practicing their “righteousness” before others was another ungodly practice in which the scribes and Pharisees were guilty. The core to this problem was found in the hearts of these wicked men. There are times when people must engage in religious practices and good works before others, but these men did them with evil intent. They were more concerned with impressing men than the Lord (Matthew 6:1).
- Some scholars believe that the elite Jews of the first century would often literally “sound a trumpet” when giving to the poor (Matthew 6:2). They would do this to call the poor to them so that others could witness their giving and praise them. By saying, “But when you give to the poor, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,” Jesus is using a figure of speech to teach disciples not to give to impress others (Matthew 6:3-4). Followers of Christ should give to bless others and please God. They should not give to impress and show off before others!
- In the first century, the Jews would offer certain prayers at prescribed times each day. This meant that if one timed things correctly, they could be in a public place when praying. They could be in the marketplaces or on the street corners showing how religious and devoted to God they were (Matthew 6:5a). Jews would even engage in this practice in the temple. Jesus speaks of a tax-collector who wanted others in the temple to see him pray and honor him for being so “righteous” (Luke 18:9-12). Praying to impress others does not please God (Matthew 6:5b). Prayer is something that a person must do to pour their heart out to God and draw closer to Him. It is to focus on God, not on promoting our piety before others (Matthew 6:6).
- In addition to the scribes and Pharisees, the Gentiles also had wrong prayer ideas (Matthew 6:7). They felt that if they prayed enough to their gods, they would eventually be given whatever they desired. Jesus condemned their concept of mindless prayers. Prayer is not something His people do to trick God into giving them whatever they want.
- Fasting was a big part of Jewish life in the first century (Matthew 4:2; 6:16; Mark 2:18). While the Old Testament Law only commanded one day of fasting (Leviticus 16:29-31), in the time of Jesus, the scribes and Pharisees were fasting twice a week (Mondays and Thursdays). Fasting was supposed to be something done to help someone give extra focus and attention to God. Sadly, the corrupt leaders were parading their fasting and using it to promote their “righteousness.” Jesus condemned their behavior (Matthew 6:16-18).

Study Questions

1. Why can seeking praise and honor from men be tempting? How can we avoid caving to the temptation?
2. List some practical ways in which we can be guilty of “sounding a trumpet” when giving to the less fortunate. What does Jesus say about this kind of behavior?
3. List some practical ways in which we can be guilty of praying to receive praise from men. What does Jesus say about this kind of behavior?
4. List some practical ways in which we can be guilty of praying like the gentiles of Jesus’ day. What does Jesus say about this kind of behavior?
5. What did fasting often involve in Bible times? Is fasting commanded under the New Covenant? What are some benefits of fasting? What warning does Jesus give about fasting?
6. In this section, is Jesus teaching that it is wrong to engage in religious practices publicly? If not, what is the main thing that He is teaching?
7. What kind of reward will God give the disciple who focuses on Him first? Why is it easy to lose sight of this reward? How do we stay focused on receiving it?

Lesson 13

Jesus Teaches Disciples to Pray

Key Scripture Readings: Matthew 6:8-15

Summary

- After exposing the problems with the “righteousness” of the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus begins discussing what it takes to be truly righteous. Instead of praying vainly to be seen of men, the disciple uses prayer to talk to and draw closer to God. The disciple understands that prayer is a privilege and glorifies the heavenly Father.
- In Matthew 6:9-15, Jesus offers a model prayer. He does not intend this prayer be mindlessly recited. Instead, through it, Jesus teaches us what prayer should involve.
- Prayer is first and foremost about the Father (Matthew 6:9). The scribes and Pharisees used prayer as a tool to get people to focus on and exalt them (Matthew 6:5). Disciples use prayer to focus on and exalt God!
- It is interesting that when praying, Christians can call God “Father” (Matthew 6:9). The word “Father” refers to a tender and close relationship between God and His people. While God is certainly the King and Lord, He is also a Father.
- The meaning of names was extremely significant in Bible times. When praying, disciples are to acknowledge the sacredness of God’s name. The Father’s name is “hallowed” (Matthew 6:9). It is something that announces His holiness and power.
- Sometimes the “kingdom” and “church” are often portrayed as being synonymous (Colossians 1:13-18; Acts 2:47). Other times, the word “kingdom” is used to refer to the rule and reign of God in the hearts of men (Matthew 6:33). This is something that God’s people need to continue to pray for (Matthew 6:10). Kingdom citizens need to pray that everyone on earth will eventually be touched by the gospel and surrender to the rule and will of the King!
- Disciples have physical needs as they live on God’s earth (Matthew 6:11). By praying for the Lord to continue providing “daily bread,” God’s people acknowledge Him as the ultimate source of their physical blessings.
- Disciples also have spiritual needs. There is a need for God to help them overcome temptations and forgive them of sins (Matthew 6:12-15). Receiving God’s forgiveness has conditions. One must first be willing to forgive others (Matthew 18:21-35; Ephesians 4:32).
- It is worthy to note that while the second half of Matthew 6:13 is beautiful and true, it is not found in the better New Testament manuscripts.

Study Questions

1. What are some of the biggest hindrances to a healthy prayer life? How can these hindrances be overcome?
2. In what ways does the Lord's prayer challenge us to be more thoughtful when we pray?
3. In what ways does the Lord's prayer challenge us to be more thankful when we pray?
4. In what ways does the Lord's prayer challenge us to be more spiritually focused when we pray?
5. In what ways does the Lord's prayer challenge us to pray more often?
6. List one aspect of this prayer that you need to include more in your prayers. How do you plan on including it more?
7. List another prayer of Jesus that can help disciples pray better. In what ways can this prayer help us?

Lesson 14

Spiritual Focus

Key Scripture Readings: Matthew 6:19-24

Summary

- Jesus gives many teachings about the dangers of earthly riches in the gospel. While it is not sinful to possess earthly riches, one can easily turn them into idols.
- The rich young ruler decided not to give his possessions to follow Jesus. The Lord told him to sell all he possessed, give to the poor, and receive treasure in heaven (Mark 10:21). These instructions grieved the young man. Mark 10:21 says, "he went away grieving, for he was one who owned much property." He foolishly put his stuff before his Lord!
- The key to obtaining great physical blessings and being saved is trusting God (Mark 10:27). No amount of money can buy a person entrance into heaven. Salvation is a gift that one must obtain through trust and obedience to God (Ephesians 2:8-9).
- Jesus addresses this issue further in Matthew 6:19-21. He warns disciples of being focused on accumulating earthly possessions. Earthly possessions get old, lose their luster, break down, and can be stolen. By contrast, spiritual riches are eternal. They are protected from corruption, decay, and thievery.
- Jesus often teaches about the need to pursue spiritual riches first by talking about the value of the kingdom of heaven. He compares it to treasure hidden in a field (Matthew 13:44), an expensive pearl that one sells everything they own to buy (Matthew 13:45-46), and a great inheritance from the Father (Matthew 19:29). The treasures that one absorbs himself in obtaining are where his heart can be found (Matthew 6:21). It is where he has put his trust and complete focus.
- In Matthew 6:22-23, the Lord continues this theme by using the example of the human eye. The human eye is a metaphor for the heart. Jesus uses the term "eye" for the same purpose in the parable of the workers (Matthew 20:15). The workers who had worked the longest had an envious "eye" because others who worked less got paid the same as them.
- When disciples have good eyes (hearts), they will be generous, good stewards, and use their possessions to bring glory to God. But, when they have bad eyes (hearts), they will be greedy, selfish, and use their possessions only to benefit themselves. The rich man of Luke 16:19-31 was someone who refused to use his earthly wealth to help someone in need. This ultimately cost him his soul!
- Every person must decide who will be their master (Matthew 6:24). Will their master be God or money? Will a person be possessed by their possessions or completely devoted to God? Will their righteousness exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees (Luke 16:13-14)?

Study Questions

1. List some ways someone can fall into the trap of storing up treasures on earth? Why is this a trap so easy to fall into?
2. List some ways to store up treasures in heaven? Why are storing up these treasures so often neglected?
3. In what way is the eye a lamp to the body? Find other examples in the Bible where the metaphor of the "eye" addresses a similar point.
4. What often gets in the way of our "eyes" being clear? List some practical things that can be done to avoid this problem.
5. Provide some practical examples of ways in which people try to serve "two masters." Why does Jesus say this is foolish?
6. What is the outcome of living a life focused on pursuing earthly treasures? What is the outcome of living a life focused on pursuing spiritual treasures?
7. Why would Jesus include this topic in the Sermon on the Mount? How does this topic fit into the overall message of the sermon?

Lesson 15

“Do Not Worry”

Key Scripture Readings: Matthew 6:25-34

Summary

- Worry and anxiety are other critical issues Jesus addresses in this sermon. The Lord says to disciples, “Do not be worried about your life” (Matthew 6:25). Jesus is not condemning and demonizing those who have struggled with clinical depression. Neither is He suggesting that His people are to be lazy and unconcerned about the future.
- It is appropriate for disciples to have various concerns in life. Solomon urges one to be wise with their blessings, save, and be concerned about the future (Proverbs 6:6-8). Paul was concerned about the spiritual welfare of his brethren (2 Corinthians 11:28-29).
- In Matthew 6:25, Jesus is warning disciples against being overconcerned about the problems of this life. He is condemning worry and anxiety that leads someone to be unfruitful in the kingdom of God and absorbed in things beyond their control (Matthew 13:22).
- Instead of worrying about things that don’t matter, God’s people are to trust Him. They should consider how if He takes care of the birds, grass, and flowers, then He will certainly take care of them (Matthew 6:26-30). The Lord’s children are certainly more valuable to Him than the things of nature!
- Worry doesn’t add anything to a person’s life (Matthew 6:27). No one worries their way to a better and more productive life.
- The “Gentiles” mentioned in Matthew 6:32 is a reference to pagans (idol-worshippers). Since these people don’t believe in God, they don’t trust God. Their priorities and concerns are not in line with God’s will. Christians have a relationship with God, and this should instill in them confidence that God will always take care of them (Matthew 6:31). They know that God is always mindful of them and will provide them with the essential things they need (Matthew 6:32b).
- Instead of spending each day worried and anxious, disciples need to “seek first His kingdom and His righteousness” (Matthew 6:33). The “kingdom” here is a reference to the rule and reign of God. Placing God’s rule firmly in someone’s heart will help produce a life of peace and contentment. “Righteousness” likely refers to the means that God has ordained to make someone righteous (2 Timothy 3:16).
- Jesus urges His followers to take life one day at a time (Matthew 6:34). There is plenty to do in a day. Tomorrow isn’t guaranteed to anyone (James 4:13-17). Worrying is not going to change or solve the problems of the future.

Study Questions

1. What things often cause disciples to become full of worry and anxiety? What problems can these worries lead to?
2. Why is living a life of worry pointless? Why is understanding this usually easier said than done?
3. List some examples where Satan used worry to cripple servants of God. How did these servants overcome Satan's assault?
4. List some specific ways in which God has taken care of you in your life. How can remembering these things help you conquer worry?
5. List some ways in which you can seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness? How can doing these things help you conquer worry?
6. List some of the things that you do in a typical day. How can reflecting on this list help you avoid worrying about the future?
7. List some occasions when worrying solved your problems and made your life better? How can this answer help you in the battle against worry?

Lesson 16

“Do Not Judge”

Key Scripture Readings: Matthew 7:1-6

Summary

- Matthew 7:1 is misused a lot in our current culture. Many use it to suggest that followers of Christ should never make any moral judgments. They should never call out certain practices as wrong and sinful. That is not what the Lord is teaching when He says, “Do not judge so that you will not be judged.”
- The judging Jesus condemns in Matthew 7:1 is hypocritical judging. This point is made clear in the following verse. In Matthew 7:2, Jesus says, “For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you.”
- God demands that His people make moral judgments. In John 7:24, the Lord says, “Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.” In Matthew 7:6, He says, “Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.” The disciples must make a judgment of someone’s behavior to obey that commandment!
- In Matthew 7:3-5, Jesus uses some humor and illustrations of an exaggeration to condemn hypocritical judging. Think of how ridiculous it would be for someone with a log (a beam that would be the size of a battering ram) stuck in their eye to try to help someone with a speck (a small object) in their eyes. Before trying to help someone with their speck, the person with the log needs to deal with their problem first! Once he takes care of his log, then he can see how to help someone else.
- The person being described here is a constant faultfinder. This is a destructive person who is always looking to find spiritual issues in the lives of others. The scribes and Pharisees demonstrated this kind of character constantly towards Jesus!
- In Matthew 7:6, Jesus urges disciples to make wise judgments with unbelievers. Dogs were not often viewed as cute and cuddling animals in first-century Jewish society. Instead, they were considered as frightening, disgusting animals who wandered the streets and carried diseases. Pigs were also viewed as disgusting animals. Jews would not eat or even want to be near them. The “pearls” mentioned are a reference to the word of God.
- The point of Matthew 7:6 is disciples should never waste much time on unbelievers who don’t want God’s word. They must recognize when people are genuinely interested in the gospel and when they are not. Followers of Christ need to use good judgment when casting their pearls. This principle is also taught in Matthew 10:14.

Study Questions

1. List some ways in which you have heard people misuse Matthew 7:1. Why do you think this verse is misused so much?
2. What principle of Bible study needs to be applied to get the correct understanding of Matthew 7:1? List other passages where this principle is often neglected?
3. List some practical examples of ways in which someone can be guilty of hypocritical judging. Why is Jesus so against this kind of judging?
4. List some examples where Jesus made moral judgments. Also, list some examples where disciples also made moral judgments.
5. Why is it sometimes easy for us to become faultfinders instead of people who are always self-evaluating?
6. Why is it sometimes difficult to obey what Jesus says in Matthew 7:6? What negative consequences can result from a failure to heed His instructions?

Lesson 17

The Two Paths

Key Scripture Readings: Matthew 7:7-14

Summary

- Prayer was a big part of Jesus' life. The gospel contains several instances where Jesus devotes Himself to prayer (Mark 1:35; Luke 5:15-16, 6:12; Matthew 26:36-46; John 17:1-26).
- Jesus also taught His disciples how to pray (Luke 11:1-4). Amazingly, feeble human beings have the privilege to talk to God at any time, and they can trust that He will hear them.
- In Matthew 7:7-10, Jesus urges disciples to use prayer as a mechanism to seek, ask and knock. These verses do not teach that God will give disciples anything that they want when they pray. God is not a genie in a bottle! Prayer is not a blank check that God gives His children. God did not even give Jesus everything He asked for when He prayed (Matthew 26:39).
- Matthew 7:11 is the key verse of this section. Jesus wants His followers to understand that prayer is about trusting in the goodness of God. Just like a good earthly father will always act in His children's best interest, the heavenly Father will as well.
- What father would give his child a rock when he is hungry (Matthew 7:9)? What father would give his child a snake instead of a fish to eat (Matthew 7:10)? Good earthly fathers always give their children what they need. Likewise, the heavenly Father always gives His children what they need.
- Matthew 7:12 may be the most well-known verse in the Sermon on the Mount. It is not enough for disciples to avoid harming others. Jesus wants His people also to be doers. He wants them to be actively serving and helping others. The requirement to do good to others is at the core of God's law (Matthew 22:34-40).
- In Matthew 7:13-14, the Lord describes two spiritual paths. Every person is traveling on one of these two paths. The broad path leads to eternal destruction and separation from God. Sadly, most people are traveling on this path. The narrow path leads to eternal life in heaven with God. Only a few are traveling on this path. This is a reality that is revealed throughout the Bible. Only eight were saved in the days of Noah (1 Peter 3:20). Only three were saved from Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:24-38). Only a small remnant returned to Jerusalem following the Babylonian captivity.
- God allows every person to choose their spiritual path (Joshua 24:15; Psalm 1:1-6). The ability to do this is part of being made in God's image. No one is predestined to be lost or saved. Everyone can choose to serve God and receive eternal life or reject Him and be eternally lost.

Study Questions

1. Why is it wrong to believe that God will give us anything we want when we pray? What harm would earthly parents do to their children if they gave them everything they requested?
2. What should we expect when we pray? Why should we expect this?
3. What kind of things should we pray for? What often stands in the way of us praying for the right kinds of things?
4. What things can hinder us from obeying the command of Matthew 7:12? How do we overcome these hindrances?
5. Why are people more inclined to take the broad path that leads to destruction? Why do only a few find the narrow path that leads to life?
6. If God wants all men to be saved, why does He allow them to choose their spiritual path? Why doesn't God make it so that every person is put on the right path?

Lesson 18

Warnings

Key Scripture Readings: Matthew 7:15-29

Summary

- In the final section of the sermon, Jesus warns disciples about false teachers, self-deception, and building upon the wrong spiritual foundation.
- Jesus describes false prophets as being like wolves in sheep's clothing. A prophet is a spokesman for God. He preaches information that God reveals. A false prophet only claims to be inspired. He deceives people into believing that the message he is preaching is God's will when it is not. Jesus tells disciples that they can recognize false prophets by their fruits (Matthew 7:16a). Their fruits include their teaching and conduct. Is their teaching in harmony with God's complete and perfect inspired word (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:3; Jude 3)? Is their conduct that of a faithful servant of God, or full of hypocrisy like the scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 23:1-3)? There are numerous warnings against false teachers and prophets in the gospel. Jesus predicted that many would precede His judgment on Jerusalem (Matthew 24:11). Paul warned the Ephesian elders that many false teachers would arise from among them (Acts 20:28-30). Paul also warned about a time of apostasy in the church (1 Timothy 4:1-2). Both Peter and John give warnings about false prophets (2 Peter 2:1-4; 1 John 4:1). These workers of Satan seemed to have infiltrated several of the local churches in Asia (Revelation 2:14, 20).
- Spiritual self-deception is another thing that can trip up disciples. So often, people deceive themselves into believing that being a "good person" or religious is enough to be saved. On Judgment Day, many religious people are going to be condemned (Matthew 7:21-22). They will be eternally lost because they did not fully submit to the Lord's will (Matthew 7:23). It is not enough to merely believe in Jesus and do some religious things. Jesus also wants complete obedience.
- In Matthew 7:24-27, Jesus speaks of two builders. The first builds a home on a solid foundation. When the storms come, the house stands firm because it is founded on a rock. The second builds a home on a weak foundation. When the storms come, it falls because it is founded on sand. Both illustrations are used to describe the consequences of a person choosing to follow Jesus. The person who hears and obeys Jesus' words will withstand the trials of life and be saved. But the person who merely hears the words of the Lord will spiritually fall and be lost.
- After concluding this powerful sermon, the crowds who heard it were changed forever. Matthew 7:27-28 says, "When Jesus had finished these words, the crowds were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as their scribes." May we also be as awed and impacted by this sermon!

Study Questions

1. List some examples of false prophets today. How are you able to know with certainty that these people are false prophets?
2. What is God going to do with false prophets and those who blindly follow them? What kind of impact should this reality have on us?
3. Describe the people Jesus mentions in Matthew 7:21-22. Why are these people lost? What key lessons can we learn from their fate?
4. Why is it easy for someone to fall into the trap of spiritual self-deception? How do we avoid this trap?
5. What obstacles can stand in the way of us building our house on the rock? How do we overcome these obstacles?
6. Why do you think this sermon has impacted people like no other in the history of the world? Which part of it has impacted you the most?