

The Great Teachings of Jesus

Sermon on the Mount

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The Great Teachings of Jesus

Lesson 1 – Following the King

Opening Questions

1. If you follow anyone on social media, why do you follow that person?
2. When did you leave home to be on your own for the first time?

Introduction

What does it mean to follow someone? On many social media apps, we can follow someone with a simple click. People follow artists, singers, teachers, athletes, or others who are popular. We can also unfollow them with a simple click. We do not make a commitment to follow them until the end of our lives or to love them with all our hearts more than anyone else in our lives. Besides, popular people do not generally ask for that kind of commitment from their fans or *followers*.

The Bible tells us that there is a Creator God, who has created this universe, including us. This Creator God is a living and perfect God who loves his creation. He wants us to learn about him, his character, his will, and his work. He wants us to truly follow him and to daily love him with all our hearts more than anyone else in our lives. He wants us to follow and have a personal, loving relationship with him that will never end. He wants to be in our lives, and he wants us to be in his life forever. He offers us love, care, help, and joy. He truly wants to give us a joyful life when we truly follow him with all our hearts.



To think about:

Who is Jesus Christ? Why do people follow him? Is Jesus simply a good moral and religious teacher? C.S. Lewis, a Christian author, argued that Jesus is either a liar, a lunatic (mentally ill person), or Lord (Master of all people; God). Either Jesus is the Son of God as he has claimed to be or else a madman. If Jesus were not Lord, he would be a liar or a lunatic. But if he was not a liar or a lunatic, then he must be Lord. Present day people still question who Jesus truly is. Jesus says, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me" (John 10:27). Who are Jesus' sheep? Why does he say that his sheep will hear his voice and follow him? How will they hear him?

From the Bible



Matthew 4:18-22

¹⁸ While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. ¹⁹ And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." ²⁰ Immediately they left their nets and followed him.

²¹ And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. ²² Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

Discussion Questions

1. What were Simon and Andrew doing when Jesus saw them (v.18)?
2. Simon and Andrew have met Jesus before. They had thought that Jesus was the Promised Savior whom God sent to save his people. What did Jesus ask of them, and what would he make them to be (v.19)? How did they respond (v.20)?
3. Whom else did Jesus call to follow him, and how did they respond (v.21-22)? What do you think their occupation was?



Notes

Sea of Galilee:

located in northern Israel.

Zebedee: a

fisherman who had hired workers (Mark 1:20) and his own business. His family had already been familiar with Jesus' ministry, and he fully approved his sons to leave home and to follow and be disciples of Jesus. He could continue his business with the help of his hired workers.

The Promised

Savior: or *the Messiah*; is one whom God would send to save his people from the consequence of their sins (thoughts, words, or actions that are dishonoring or disobedient to God), this sinful world, and evil forces.

Matthew 4:23-25

²³ And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people. ²⁴ So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, those having seizures, and paralytics, and he healed them. ²⁵ And great crowds followed him from Galilee and the Decapolis, and from Jerusalem and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.

Discussion Questions

1. Why did Jesus go to Galilee in northern Israel (v.23)?
What do you think of Jesus' work bringing
(a) *spiritual healing* through teaching the gospel of the kingdom of God and
(b) *physical healing* to those who needed it (v.23)?
2. What happened afterwards (v.24)?
How do you think Jesus handled so many people who came to him? What do you think of his compassion for them? How about his power over diseases, pains, and demons?
3. What happened afterwards as Jesus continued to travel (v.25)?
4. Besides Jews, there were foreigners from the Decapolis in a neighboring country who came to Jesus to hear his great teachings—which we will discuss beginning next lesson. Why do people follow or want to listen to a great teacher?
5. People who followed Jesus had different opinions about who he is. Some thought he was a great teacher. Some considered him as a prophet (messenger) of God. One of Jesus' unique statements about himself is, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12).
(a) What does Jesus say about himself? What do you think it means?
(b) What will happen to those who become his followers? What do you think it means?



Closing Points

1. Many people, Jews and people from neighboring countries, followed Jesus to hear his teachings. Most of them thought that Jesus was a great teacher. Some of them would eventually realize that he is more than a great teacher. He is *the Teacher*, whose knowledge and wisdom was not learned, for he did not need to learn it because he is the source of knowledge, wisdom, love, and life. When Jesus teaches, he teaches not as one who has learned, but as one who is the source. His knowledge and wisdom is beyond what any human could possibly attain.
2. Jesus' primary purpose in his work is to teach and proclaim the message of the gospel (good news) of the kingdom of God—to bring *spiritual healing* to us. His primary work is accompanied by works of mercy and service, bringing *physical healing* and serving people. He cares about our physical pain and suffering in this world, and he promises us to end our physical pain and suffering in a renewed world when he returns. He cares about our spiritual condition and wants to heal our spiritual brokenness first. We are lost and separated from God. He came to bring the gospel of the kingdom of God, and for those who follow, believe, and trust their lives to him, he will bring them to his kingdom.
3. Jesus' power over diseases, pains, and demons, proves who he is. He says, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12). Jesus came to save us from darkness. His teachings will show us more about the darkness of this world, and how he, as *the Light of the World*, gives his light to us when we follow him. He is the King who can bring us to God's (his) kingdom.

Notes

The gospel: the good news about God saving us from sin and evil through Jesus Christ.

The gospel of the kingdom: the good news of the kingdom of God—how God invites and brings us into his kingdom through faith in Jesus Christ.

Syria: a country bordering with Israel in the north.

Demon: an evil spirit; a fallen and rebellious angel.

Galilee: a region in the north of Israel.

Decapolis: a group of cities in a foreign country, east of the Sea of Galilee. It is in present-day Jordan.

Jerusalem: the capital city of Israel.

Judea: (or Judah) was a region in the south of Israel.

Jordan: the Jordan River flows from north to south of Israel, a boundary and a crossing point.

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Lesson 2 – True Happiness in God’s Kingdom

Opening Questions

1. What makes you happy? Give some examples of short-term and long-term happiness.
2. Why do we make a resume when we look for a job? What do we put in our resume?

Introduction

Imagine that you wanted to get into a very well-known university. You tried very hard to achieve good grades and meet other requirements, but your achievements failed to meet the standard to enter the university. However, the university let you in on these two conditions: (1) that you humbly admit that you don’t deserve this grace, and (2) what you will learn and receive from the university, you will use it to bless other people for their good and not for your personal gains. What would be your reaction?

Matthew 5:2-12 is known as “The Beatitudes,” in which Jesus teaches about those who are in the kingdom of God because they are blessed simply by God’s grace. There are eight beatitudes; each begins with the word “blessed.” The Greek word for “blessed” is “makarios,” which means being spiritually happy and well because of God’s presence in the person’s life. It fundamentally means *the joy of the soul* and includes a happier future destiny given by God. Each of these virtues is fulfilled by Jesus Christ because none of us is able to do so, yet what Jesus has fulfilled is credited to us when we believe in him, follow him, and trust our lives to him.



To think about:

Imagine that each of us is a cup. God wants us to come to him as an empty cup, so that he can fill us with his love and true happiness. But so often we come as a cup full of our own achievements to show off to God, and God says, “All your achievements are full of pride. I want you to come to me empty and humbly.” Would we be able to do that?

From the Bible



Matthew 5:1-7

- ¹ Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. ² And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:
- ³ “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- ⁴ “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.
- ⁵ “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.
- ⁶ “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.
- ⁷ “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.



Discussion Questions

1. Why did Jesus go up on the mountain, and who came to him (v.1-2)?
2. Who do you think are *those who are poor in spirit*? Why are they blessed and happy (v.3)? Who are *not* poor in spirit, and why don’t they belong to God’s kingdom?
3. Why are *those who mourn* blessed and happy (v.4)?
What do you think they mourn for?
4. Why are *those who are meek* blessed and happy (v.5)?
5. How do you think God will satisfy *those who hunger and thirst for righteousness* (v.6)?
6. How do you think *those who are merciful* to others will receive mercy from God (v.7)?

Notes

Grace: undeserved favor or blessing given by God with no consideration of our merit (quality of good or worth).

Beatitude: supreme happiness.

The earth: points to the renewed earth that Jesus will make when he returns; the kingdom of God.

Matthew 5:8-12

⁸ “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

⁹ “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

¹⁰ “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹ “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Discussion Questions

1. Why are *those who are pure in heart* blessed and happy (v.8)?
What does being pure in heart mean?
Is there anyone perfectly pure in heart in this world?
What are the things that contaminate or corrupt our minds and hearts?
2. Why are *the peacemakers* blessed and happy (v.9)?
Is it easier to be a peacemaker or a troublemaker? Why?
3. Why are *those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake* blessed and happy (v.10)?
Why are *those who are persecuted for Jesus' sake* blessed and happy (v.11-12)?
For what reasons are followers of Jesus Christ persecuted currently?



Closing Points

1. All these qualities of the beatitudes describe those who are in God's kingdom. Each person in God's kingdom possesses all these qualities because all of them are connected. One cannot develop one of these qualities without developing the others. Each person in God's kingdom is a son or a child of God and therefore resembles God himself, who is the source of these qualities.
2. None of us possess any of these qualities. Jesus, the Son of God, came from heaven to this world to fulfill and model all these qualities in his life. He did not do this for his sake but for ours.
3. When we realize that we possess none of these qualities, we can come to God humbly as those who are poor in spirit—as *an empty cup*. When we do so, God will pour out all these qualities into us and fill us up. Jesus' perfect accomplishment—fulfilling and modeling all these qualities in his life—is credited to us when we believe in him and trust our lives to him. That is how we are filled and blessed and receive true happiness from God. True happiness is not achieved by our own effort, but we can receive it from God by his grace.
4. Jesus, the Son of God, came from heaven to this world so that he can bring us up to God's kingdom and make each of us a son and a child of God, making us righteous people of God by crediting his righteousness to us.
5. Once we believe in Jesus and trust our lives to him, God works in our lives to make us more and more like Jesus day by day from the inside out, demonstrating these qualities in our lives. That is the proof that we have been made as children of God and citizens of his kingdom.

Notes

Prophet: a messenger of God proclaiming the will of God.

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Lesson 3 – God’s People’s Identity and Life in This World

Opening Questions

1. If you have a spouse, do you want your spouse to give you a birthday gift out of love or out of duty? Why? What is the difference?
2. Should children obey their parents out of love or out of duty?

Introduction

In Matthew 5:1-12, Jesus describes who God’s people or citizens of his kingdom are. They are those who are *poor in spirit*, who understand their own sins and pride, and who know that they have nothing good that they can offer to God. They are humble and desire a right relationship with God. They believe in Jesus and have trusted their lives to him. God makes them to be his people and to be part of to his kingdom family by his grace alone and not by their own achievements. For the rest of Matthew 5-7, Jesus teaches how God’s people should live in this world, bringing a good influence to the people around them and helping others to understand God’s love for them. Knowing who they are—their identity as God’s people—Jesus wants them to obey and do what God wants them to do out of love for him.



To think about:

Where does evil come from? Why do we sometimes behave selfishly, just caring about ourselves and not others? Why do some people want to hurt others? How do we make this broken world a better world? How can we be a good influence in our societies? Where is the source of our strength? For what purpose do we bring good influence to others? Is there a higher purpose?

From the Bible



Matthew 5:13-16

¹³ “You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.

¹⁴ “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

Discussion Questions

1. What do you think Jesus means by saying that his followers are *the salt of the earth*? What is salt for? What do you do with salt that has lost its taste (v.13)?
2. Jesus first declares the identity of his followers as *the salt of the earth*, then teaches how they should live their lives accordingly—who they are, and therefore what they should do. It is not who they should be. If we try to be what we are not, then we are *fake stuff* and cannot function genuinely as the *real stuff*. How is this important in this context? How should followers of Jesus live their lives as *the salt of the earth* or *influence-makers* of God’s kingdom in their societies?
3. What do you think Jesus means by saying that his followers are *the light of the world*? What is light for? What are two illustrations that Jesus used to teach this (v.14-15)?
4. For what purpose should Jesus’ followers shine their light before other people (v.16)?



Notes

Sin: thought, word, or action that is dishonoring or disobedient to God.

Grace: undeserved favor or blessing given by God with no consideration of our merit (quality of good or worth). God provides us what we cannot provide ourselves.

A city on a hill: the light of the city can be seen from far away, especially in the dark night. Followers of Jesus, as the light of the world, are like a city on a hill giving light to the surroundings.

Matthew 5:17-20

¹⁷ “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. ¹⁸ For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. ¹⁹ Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

²⁰ For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Discussion Questions



1. The Law and the Prophets represent the books in the Old Testament Bible. They contain God’s laws and commands for his people. Some of the community’s religious leaders accused Jesus of neglecting God’s laws and commands. What did Jesus say about his purpose of coming to this world (v.17)?
2. All books of the Bible are about Jesus Christ. Jesus fulfilled God’s laws and commands through his life—his teachings, perfect obedience, and sacrifice. Jesus says—using his unique statement “I say to you”—that everything in God’s law will be accomplished. It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for God’s law not to be accomplished (v.18). What does this explanation tell us about the written word of God (the Bible)?
3. What does Jesus say about those who treat God’s laws and commands lightly compared to those who treat them seriously (v.19)?
4. Scribes and Pharisees were Jewish religious leaders who emphasized on external behaviors rather than the internal motive of the heart for obeying God’s laws. For them, being seen and praised by other people for showing good religious actions are more important than being seen and praised by God for loving him from the heart. Jesus wants his followers to love God and his laws from their heart. What does Jesus say about how their righteousness (right behavior before God) should be (v.20)? What do you think about this?

Closing Points

1. Jesus fulfills the qualities described in the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12). He is the poor in spirit, who mourns for sin, who is meek, who hungers and thirsts for righteousness, who is merciful, who is pure in heart, who is the peacemaker between God and us, and who was persecuted and died for us. He is also the only true *salt of the earth* and *light of the world*.
2. Jesus wants his followers to be like him—to be the salt and light of this broken world. He wants us to be good influence-makers of God’s kingdom in this world out of love for him. He also gives us strength as we try to do our best. He is *the source* of our strength. Through daily prayer and reading God’s word (the Bible), he spiritually feeds and nourishes us with his word and love.
3. A loving relationship with God, our heavenly Father, strengthens our identity as his children (people). We know who we are and what matters most in our lives because of our loving relationship with God. The more we understand God’s love for us, the deeper our love for him grows and the more we make God the center of our lives and not ourselves. Consequently, we become better as God’s salt and light (influence-makers) of God’s kingdom in this world.

Notes

The Law and the Prophets: refers to the whole Old Testament Bible.

I say to you: Jesus’ unique statement showing his authority in teaching and in interpreting God’s word. He is God himself. God’s word is his word.

Scribe: an expert who transcribed and taught the Jewish laws.

Pharisee: a member of a Jewish religious group; a self-righteous person.

The Great Teachings of Jesus

Lesson 4 – Loving God with our Thoughts, Words, and Actions

Opening Questions

1. Why is it sometimes hard to have a good relationship with another person?
2. Why do people need a tour guide or a guidebook when traveling?

Introduction

Most universities have a guidebook that provides information to help people understand about the universities. In general, a guidebook provides information or instructions to help us understand something. Without a guidebook, we have a lack of information or can get lost. The Bible is God's given guidebook for our lives to live in this world. It provides information about God, this world, and us—who we are and why God created us. The Bible is the word of God. It provides information and instruction about God's will for our lives. It shows God's love and care for us as his people. It teaches us a safe path to live in this broken world, and it trains us in how to be *the light of the world* to the people around us.



To think about:

If the Bible is the word of God and a guidebook for our lives, how should we treat it? Consider what God's people have said about it—quotations from Psalm 119: 97, 105, 160, and 175. "Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day." "Your word is a lamp to my feet and light to my path." "... your word is truth, and every one of your righteous rules endures forever." "Let my soul live and praise you, and let your rules help me."

From the Bible



Matthew 5:21-26

²¹ "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' ²² But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire.

²³ So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴ leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

²⁵ Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison.

²⁶ Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.

Discussion Questions

1. What traditional teaching had the Jewish people received from their religious leaders in the time before Jesus came (v.21)?
2. What does Jesus teach us not to do? What words did Jesus use (his unique statement) to show his authority in teaching and in interpreting God's command (v.22)?
3. God's law prohibits murder. The Jewish religious leaders interpreted it for actual murder. Jesus explains that God's law not only prohibits the act of murder but also the thoughts and the words that can destroy someone's life. We sin against God not only in our actions, but also in our thoughts and words because God judges our hearts. Jesus teaches us that right relationships with other people are important, and they're part of God's command not to murder. What is Jesus' first illustration to teach this (v.23-24)?
4. What is Jesus' second illustration to teach this (v.25-26)?



Notes

Old: refers to the time before Jesus came.

You shall not murder: God has given a command not to murder. The Jewish religious leaders interpreted this command for actual murder.

I say to you: Jesus' unique statement showing his authority in teaching and in interpreting God's word. He is God himself. God's word is his word.

Matthew 5:27-30

²⁷ “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ ²⁸ But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

²⁹ If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell.

³⁰ And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.

Discussion Questions

1. What traditional teaching had the Jewish people received from their religious leaders (v.27)?
2. What does Jesus teach us not to do? What words did Jesus use (his unique statement) to show his authority in teaching and in interpreting God’s command (v.28)?
3. How does Jesus expand God’s law to include *heart adultery* and not only *physical adultery*? How does Jesus teach that God wants purity in our hearts and thoughts?
4. How does adultery or a marital affair destroy a good relationship with others?
5. What does Jesus say about our eyes and hands that cause us to sin against God (v.29-30)? What do you think it means?
6. Jesus speaks figuratively about “throwing away our sinful eyes” and “cutting of our sinful hands” to emphasize that what we actually need is *spiritual heart surgery*. Without God renewing our hearts, our inclination is always to rebel against his laws and to sin against him. How is Jesus’ teaching to his followers about having right relationships with God and other people in line with his desires for his followers to be *the salt* and *the light* of this world?



Closing Points

1. God’s rules and commands are good for our lives, providing us a safe path to live in this broken world. God’s word (the Bible) shows God’s love and care for us. God’s word is sweet to our souls. When we read and study it, it changes us from the inside out and spiritually nourishes us, giving us strength and wisdom.
2. Jesus is *the true Teacher* of God’s word. He teaches and interprets God’s laws with authority, because he is God himself who has given those laws.
3. Jesus wants us to have right relationships with God and other people. He wants us to love God with all our hearts—loving and honoring him with all our thoughts, words, and actions. When we have a right and good relationship with God, our relationship with other people will be right and good as well.
4. Jesus teaches that our hearts are the sources of our sinful actions. The root of murder is an angry heart, and the root of adultery is a lustful heart. We must guard our hearts. However, it will not be easy because the devil uses this world and our weaknesses to give us temptations, deceive us, make us sin against God, and hurt others. He does not like us having good and loving relationships with God and others. Therefore, we need to be diligent and intentional in developing a right and loving relationship with God, because only God can help us to overcome the devil’s deceptions.

Notes

Adultery: sexual relationship outside of marriage.

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Lesson 5 – Loving and Forgiving Others with God’s Help

Opening Questions

1. Why is keeping promises important? Have you ever broken a promise?
2. Why is forgiving someone who has done something bad to us hard?

Introduction

Biblical marriage is a covenant relationship. In the Bible, a covenant is a binding agreement that cannot be broken. In a covenant relationship, each party says to the other, “I will be loyal and faithful to you regardless of any situations.” In marriage, a man and a woman make a covenant promise, “I will love you with all my heart. I will meet your needs even though you don’t meet my needs.” When a couple does their best to keep their covenant promise, they will have a beautiful marriage—not a perfect one, but a beautiful one.



To think about:

True love requires commitment and sacrifice. Forgiveness is hard because when we forgive someone, we need to take the anger and pain on ourselves. Forgiveness requires sacrifice too. Isn’t it wonderful that our God, who loves us, is willing to forgive our sins and rebelliousness against him and to bear the anger and pain himself. This is what God in Jesus Christ has done for us.

From the Bible



Matthew 5:31-37

³¹ “It was also said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’

³² But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery. ³³ “Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.’ ³⁴ But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, ³⁵ or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. ³⁶ And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. ³⁷ Let what you say be simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything more than this comes from evil.

Discussion Questions

1. What traditional teaching had the Jewish people received about divorce from their religious leaders (v.31)?
2. The Jewish community religious leaders made divorce and remarriage easy. However, this is not what God has intended when he instituted marriage. In God’s eyes, marriage is a life-time covenant relationship between a man and a woman. What does Jesus teach us about divorce (v.32)? What words did Jesus use (his unique statement) to show his authority in teaching and in interpreting God’s command?
3. What traditional teaching had the Jewish people received about swearing or taking an oath from their religious leaders (v.33)?
4. What does Jesus teach about this (v.34-36)? What words did Jesus use (his unique statement) to show his authority in teaching and in interpreting God’s command?
5. The Jews used different phrases to make oaths in casual conversations. They believed an oath made by “the heaven” was considered more binding than an oath made by “the earth.” Jesus explains that an oath is an oath, and all oaths are equally binding before God. What does Jesus teach us about how our words should be (v.37)?



Notes

Covenant: a binding agreement with promise of faithfulness.

Sin: thought, word, or action that is dishonoring or disobedient to God.

Christ: a title of Jesus which means “the chosen one” or the promised Savior.

Adultery: sexual relationship outside of marriage.

Oath: a solemn declaration that is binding.

Jerusalem: was the capital city of Israel.

Evil: there are evil forces and evil spirits (demons) in this world. The devil (Satan) is the leader of all evil spirits (rebellious angels). They use this world and our weaknesses to deceive and make us sin against God.

Matthew 5:38-42

³⁸ “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ ³⁹ But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. ⁴⁰ And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. ⁴¹ And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. ⁴² Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.

Discussion Questions

1. What traditional teaching had the Jewish people received about legal justice for a crime from their religious leaders (v.38)?
2. This law was given for a court to administer justice, make the punishment fit with the crime, and limit the punishment. It was not for a personal vengeance, but some people used it that way. What does Jesus teach about this? What words did Jesus use (his unique statement) to show his authority in teaching and in interpreting God’s command? What is his first figurative illustration to teach about this (v.39)?
3. What are Jesus’ second and third figurative illustrations to teach about this (v.40-41)?
4. What does Jesus want his followers to do so that they can be his lights in this broken world (v.42)? Do you think this is easy to do? Why?



Closing Points

1. God has instituted marriage as a life-time covenant relationship between a man and a woman. Jesus says, “So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate” (Matthew 19:6). God does not like broken relationships and divorce. God does not want us to experience a broken heart and pain because he loves us. He wants us to have good and right relationships with one another. We can only have this if we first have a good relationship with God.
2. Jesus wants us to be honest people in our words and hearts. “Let what you say be simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No.’” God knows every thought in our mind and every word we speak.
3. When people hurt us or do something bad to us, our natural inclination is to get revenge. As God’s people, Jesus wants his followers to love and forgive others. We should not make our rights (what we deserve to get) become the basis of our relationships with others. As God’s people, we can do supernatural actions to love and forgive others because God will give us the supernatural strength to do so by his grace.
4. Remember that what we deserve from God for all our sins is a death punishment, but God chooses to forgive and love us. Jesus sacrificed himself to die for all our sins as our substitute. He took our punishment so we can have a new life in him when we believe and trust our lives to him. This is the grace of God for us. Jesus wants us to do the same to others and to be his lights in this broken world.

Notes

Tunic: an interior coat or an undergarment.

Cloak: a loose outer or exterior garment, used not only as a jacket or overcoat during the day but also as a covering to sleep under at night.

Grace: undeserved favor; an act of mercy and kindness to someone who does not deserve it. God’s grace for us is without consideration of our quality of good or worth.

The Great Teachings of Jesus

Lesson 6 – Growing a Loving and Righteous Heart

Opening Questions

1. What are some reasons that we sometimes want others to praise our good actions?
2. Why is loving those who have done something wrong to us difficult?

Introduction

As we grow up and live, we are influenced by the cultures and teachings in our societies. The most common idea in all countries of this world is that we need to hate our enemies. If we have a war with another nation, we are taught to hate the people of that nation. If we have a war with another tribe or group of people in our own country, we are taught to hate the people of that tribe or group. Naturally speaking, it is easier for us to hate than to love others. Once we believe and trust our lives to Jesus, God adopts us as his children and makes us become citizens of his kingdom. As his children, God raises us to be like him in all our thoughts, words, and actions as we learn and obey. To be like God is to be different from the people of this world. This is why loving our enemies is difficult for us to do. We need to keep learning from God through his word (the Bible) over and over, as well as to protect ourselves from being influenced by the teachings in our corrupted societies.



To think about:

When God created us, he created us in his image (Genesis 1:26) because he wants us to be like him. Because of our sins and rebellions against him, sin has corrupted our nature. Our natural tendency is to be selfish and self-centered rather than God-centered. However, God does not give up on us. Jesus Christ came from heaven to this world to save us from our sins so that we can have a new life in him and become God's sons and daughters.

From the Bible



Matthew 5:43-48

⁴³ "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'
⁴⁴ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. ⁴⁶ For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷ And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? ⁴⁸ You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Discussion Questions

1. What traditional teaching had the Jewish people received about loving and hating others from their religious leaders (v.43)?
2. What does Jesus teach about this? What words did Jesus use (his unique statement) to show his authority in teaching and in interpreting God's command (v.44)?
3. Why does Jesus want his people to do so? What is his reason for saying that his followers, as God's people, should be different than others (v.45-48)?
4. It is impossible to be perfect like God in equality because we have weaknesses. Jesus wants us to imitate God in loving all people (good and bad, friends and enemies). If we love only our friends and not our enemies, then our love is not perfect. But if we can love our enemies, then our love is like God's love; perfect (v.48).
Is loving all people possible for us to do?
5. Is there a significance in Jesus' emphasis that God is "your heavenly Father" (v.45, 48)?



Notes

Tax collectors:

Jewish people who worked for the Roman government to collect taxes from other Jews. They often cheated and took more money to keep for themselves. They were hated and regarded as bad people by the Jewish community.

Brothers: here refers to blood relations (families and relatives) or close connections and friends.

Gentile: a non-Jewish person; a person with pagan beliefs who do not believe in the God of the Bible.

Matthew 6:1-4

¹“Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.

²“Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ³But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Discussion Questions

1. What caution does Jesus give to his people (v.1)? Why?
2. Why do hypocrites want people to see them giving to the needy (v.2)?
3. What do you think is the meaning of Jesus’ figure of speech, “Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing” (v.3)?
4. What should the motive of our hearts be when giving to the needy according to Jesus? Why (v.2-4)?
5. Is there a significance in Jesus’ emphasis, “Your Father who sees in secret” (v.4)?



Closing Points

1. Loving our enemies is impossible due to our sinful natural tendency. Our hearts are not capable to do so unless God has changed us from within. When we do love our enemies out of love for God, it proves that God has changed our hearts and made us his children. We can only receive this grace by believing and trusting our lives to Jesus.
2. Loving our friends and enemies, praying for them, giving our time and resources to help the needy, and having a humble heart are behaviors that prove we are God’s sons and daughters—that we have a right relationship with him. God wants our behaviors to come from right motives in our hearts—out of love for him and not to show off or to be praised by others.
3. Jesus wants his people to live a life differently than others in this world, loving and praying for those we don’t like and those who hurt us, so that people can be drawn to our God through our love and actions for them. This is our *heavenly calling*. God will give us enough opportunities to practice loving others with a *god-like love*, and he will help us as our heavenly Father.
4. “So that you may be *sons* of your Father who is in heaven” (v.45). Our relationship with God gives us a new and much better identity. As God’s children, God assures us that he is always with us. He sees us and watches over our lives all the time. When no one else can be with us, our heavenly Father is still with us.
5. We need to daily read and study the Bible (the word of God). It is our only spiritual food that can make us grow spiritually healthy. God’s word has the power to change and teach us to be like God in our thoughts, words, and actions. To be like him is what God, our heavenly Father, most desires from us.

Notes

Righteousness: the quality of being righteous—blameless or morally right with God.

Sound no trumpet: do not make a big public show.

Grace: undeserved favor; an act of mercy and kindness to someone who does not deserve it. God’s grace for us is without consideration of our quality of good or worth.

The Great Teachings of Jesus

Lesson 7 – Growing a God-Centered Heart

Opening Questions

1. Why do some people pray to God only when they have needs?
2. How do you explain what self-centeredness is?

Introduction

Self-centeredness is the main enemy of any relationship. Self-centered people do not develop deep and lasting relationships with anyone. Self-centered people are concerned mainly with their own needs, desires, and ambitions. They do not care much about others' needs. Self-centered people even try to use others for their own benefits. Religious people can be very self-centered. The Pharisees in Jesus' time would give money to the poor to be seen and praised by others. If they helped the poor, they thought that God must bless them in return. Self-centeredness is the root of other sins, such as pride, envy, impatience, and being unkind. The cure of self-centeredness is a spiritual heart surgery, where God removes and replaces our sinful heart with a new heart—a heart that loves him, a God-centered heart. This can happen only when we trust our lives to Jesus Christ by faith.



To think about:

God says about his people, “And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God” (Ezekiel 36:26-28).

From the Bible



Matthew 6:5-10

⁵ “And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ⁶ But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. ⁷ “And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. ⁸ Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

⁹ Pray then like this: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

¹⁰ Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Discussion Questions

1. In Jesus' time, how did the religious hypocrites pray? Why (v.5)? Why does Jesus not want us to pray like them?
2. How should we pray then? Why (v.6)?
3. How else should we pray (v.7)? Why (v.8)?
4. What is the significance of calling God “our Father in heaven” (v.9)?
5. “Hallowed be your name” means giving great honor to God's name. His name is holy and worthy of being praised. In what ways can we honor and dishonor God's name?
6. Acknowledging God's sovereign rules over all things and his will to be done on earth, including in our lives, is pleasing to God (v.10). How can we be thankful to God in all things (good and bad things—especially bad things) in our lives?



Notes

Pharisee: a member of a Jewish religious group; a self-righteous person.

Sin: thought, word, or action that is dishonoring or disobedient to God.

Synagogue: a Jewish place of worship.

Gentiles: non-Jewish people who worship false gods.

Hallowed: greatly honored.

Matthew 6:11-15

¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread,

¹² and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

¹³ And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

¹⁴ For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you,

¹⁵ but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.



Discussion Questions

1. “Give us this day our daily bread” means acknowledging God as the Provider of our daily needs—food and many other things (v.11). How does this prayer help us not to be self-centered or self-reliant but be humble and God-centered in our thinking?
2. We sin against God daily in our thoughts, words, and actions. How can confessing our daily sins (mistakes, weaknesses, and self-centeredness), including not loving God with all our hearts as we should, and asking God’s forgiveness grow us to be more humble and forgiving towards others (v.12)?
Is there a time in your life when it was difficult to forgive someone?
3. The devil uses this broken world and our weaknesses to give us temptations, to deceive us, and to make us dishonor and sin against God. God often grows us to be spiritually more mature and stronger by letting us experience temptations and struggles. He wants us to be closer to him daily. God knows our weaknesses, and we can ask him not to let us be tempted but to be delivered from the evil one (v.13). How does this prayer develop our humility and dependance on God?
4. Why should we forgive others who wrong us (v.14-15)?
How much do you think we should forgive others? Is there a limit?
5. “Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you” (Ephesians 4:32).
What is the fundamental reason that we should forgive others according to this verse?

Closing Points

1. Prayer is not about getting things from God but is about growing us closer to God. Prayer is about honoring God, acknowledging his sovereignty over all things and our dependance on him, confessing our sins, asking God’s forgiveness, bringing our requests and needs, and thanking God for his guidance in our lives. Prayer builds and shapes God-centeredness in our thoughts, words, and actions.
2. When we believe in Jesus by faith and trust our lives to him, God gives us a new heart, capable of loving him with all our heart with his help. However, we still have the remaining sin in us that has corrupted our nature. Daily spiritual battle against the devil and his demons is real. We can be deceived by him and fall into his temptations. He knows our weaknesses. Prayer is a means for us to be strengthened by God as we humbly show our dependance on him. With prayer, we can overcome the evil one.
3. Jesus says, “... your Father knows what you need before you ask him” (v.8). We can be confident that God is always with us and watches over our lives as his people. There is nothing that can happen to us without his approval. “And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28).

Notes

Debt: sin against God (spiritual debt); thought, word, or action that is dishonoring or disobedient to God.

Debtor: a person who sins against us.

Trespass: sin; thought, word, or action that is dishonoring or disobedient to God.

Devil (Satan): a rebellious angel who is the leader of all **demons** (evil spirits).

The Great Teachings of Jesus

Lesson 8 – Serving God and Saving Our Heavenly Treasures

Opening Questions

1. What are some of the things that you value very greatly in life?
2. Does wealth buy happiness? Does happiness depend on wealth?

Introduction

Serving other people can be very hard for people who are very proud and selfish. Our self-centeredness has the tendency for wanting others to serve us. “I am first; others are second.” The Bible tells us that God is the source of joy, and only by learning to love and serve him with all our hearts can we receive true joy in our lives. We serve God by serving other people out of love for God and for his glory. We keep our eyes and thoughts on what is eternal—what exists forever in God’s kingdom—and not what is temporary in this world. Everything in this world will be gone one day, including ourselves. Why not start focusing on things that are truly valuable and eternal?



To think about:

Jesus told a parable of a rich, selfish, and foolish man. The rich man had a fertile farm that produced good crops. He said to himself, “What should I do? I don’t have room for all my crops.” Then he said, “I know! I’ll tear down my barns and build bigger ones. Then I’ll have room enough to store all my wheat and other goods. And I’ll sit back and say to myself, ‘My friend, you have enough stored away for years to come. Now take it easy! Eat, drink, and be merry!’” But God said to him, “You fool! You will die this very night. Then who will get everything you worked for?” Jesus teaches that a person, who does not have a rich relationship with God, is a fool to store up earthly wealth. Jesus wants us to live with an eternal perspective. Can we do so?

From the Bible



Matthew 6:16-18

¹⁶ “And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ¹⁷ But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, ¹⁸ that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever fasted? How did you fast—for how long and what did you abstain for? For what purpose did you fast?
2. Why should we not be like the hypocrites when we fast (v.16)?
3. What should we do instead (v.17)?
4. What is the purpose for (v.18)?
5. Is fasting a means for us to get a *reward* from God? If yes, what kind of reward?



Notes

Fast: to abstain or limit one’s food for spiritual purposes, such as to strengthen prayer, to seek God’s guidance, to humble oneself before God, and to express love and worship to God.

Matthew 6:19-24

¹⁹ “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, ²⁰ but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

²² “The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, ²³ but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

²⁴ “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

Discussion Questions



1. What is the reason Jesus teaches us not to lay up wealth on earth (v.19)?
2. What do you think “to lay up treasures in heaven” means? What is the benefit of laying up treasures in heaven (v.20)?
3. What does Jesus say about the relationship between our hearts and our treasures (v.21)? What do you think it means?
Give some examples of: (a) *worldly treasures* and (b) *heavenly treasures*.
4. What do you think “the eye is the lamp of the body” means (v.22)?
5. Jesus is speaking spiritually about our eyes and bodies. Our spiritual eyes cannot see the things of God or the will of God because of our self-centeredness that blinds us (v.22-23). How can we have healthy *spiritual eyes* (understanding) for God’s will for our lives and not be blinded by our own self-centeredness or selfishness?
6. Why can we not serve two masters—God and money (v.24)?
7. Jesus says, “What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet lose his soul?” (Mark 8:36). What is the obvious answer to Jesus’ question?

Closing Points

1. Genuine fasting before God is the humbling of the soul. Fasting helps us to grow in Godlikeness as God’s children in ways that we cannot have through any other means. When fasting, we pray and worship God. Through fasting, we learn to be more God-centered and less self-centered. Jesus taught and modeled fasting to his followers.
2. “You cannot serve God and money.” We are created to serve. When we serve God, our Creator, we are right where we are supposed to be and receive joy naturally from God. When we turn to serve other thing (God’s creation), we become slaves to it. Money—and all other things that God has created and given us—is not evil or bad but a good gift from God for us. *The love of money* is what Jesus warns us against. When we love money more than God, money becomes an idol to us, and we are enslaved by it.
3. Jesus teaches us to be careful of our own greed. Jesus says, “For one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions” (Luke 12:15). Where does our treasure really lie? What is it that occupies our minds most of the time? Right priorities give us joy, but wrong priorities make us anxious. Jesus teaches us to store up our treasures in heaven and not on earth, using what God has given us—money, skills, talents, abilities, knowledge, time, and other resources—to serve others out of love for God.
4. The love of Jesus Christ for us—what he has done for us (his sacrifice bearing the punishment of all our sins on the cross as our substitute) and what he continues doing in our lives (praying for us, guiding us, and protecting us)—is the truth that we can dearly treasure in our hearts.

Notes

Idol: an image or representation of a god used as an object of worship. Spiritually speaking, it is anything more important than God to us.

The Great Teachings of Jesus

Lesson 9 – Learning to See the Whole Life as God Sees It

Opening Questions

1. What things in life make you worry? Does worrying get us anywhere?
2. In our societies, how is success generally measured? Do you feel pressured to meet this standard?

Introduction

What is faith? Our dictionary defines faith as complete trust or confidence in someone or something. We have learned that when we put our faith or trust in things other than God, such as money, career, or a particular organization, we are enslaved by it. It brings anxiety to us. But when we put our faith or trust in the right object—God—we are freed from anxiety and most joyful. Fundamentally, a lack of faith in God will bring anxiety to us because our thoughts are consumed by the situations of this broken world.

The Bible defines faith as “the assurance of what we hope for and the certainty of what we do not see” (Hebrews 11:1). God wants his people to live by faith and not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). He wants us to have faith in him and to trust our lives to his care completely as our loving heavenly Father. He wants us to know him well—his character, sovereignty, and love for us—so we can be freed from anxiety or worry and be joyful.



To think about:

Sinclair Ferguson, a pastor from Scotland, says, “The secret of freedom from anxiety is freedom from ourselves.” He says that when we become anxious about a particular thing, it begins to dominate our thinking, and we see everything through the perspective of our anxiety. It seems that everything depends on resolving our anxiety, so everything in our lives seems related to it. Jesus wants us to learn to see the whole of life as God sees it—the world, animals, plants, and our lives—and to understand God as our Creator, Sustainer, Provider, and Heavenly Father. How far or deeply do we understand this truth?

From the Bible



Matthew 6:25-27

²⁵ “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷ And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?”

Discussion Questions

1. Why should we not be anxious about our lives? Does our happiness or joy depend on our food and clothes? Is life just about food and clothes (v.25)? What is your life about? What is the purpose of your life?
2. What example does Jesus use to teach that we are valuable in God’s eyes (v.26)? Is there a significance in Jesus’ emphasis referring to God as “your heavenly Father” rather than as “your Creator” or “your King” or even simply “your God?”
3. Can we add a single hour to our lives by being anxious (v.27)? Why? What is Jesus’ point in asking this rhetorical question?



Notes

Happiness vs. Joy:

Happiness is an outward expression that comes because of pleasant circumstances.

Joy is an inner feeling that comes from trusting God, knowing him, and having a personal and close relationship with him.

Matthew 6:28-34

²⁸ And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹ yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ³⁰ But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?

³¹ Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³² For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. ³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

³⁴ "Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.



Discussion Questions

1. What is Jesus' point in asking us to consider the beauty and wonder of the lilies of the field in comparison to King Solomon's glory (v.28-30)? How will God clothe us—provide our basic needs?
2. One of the fundamental realities that distinguishes God's people from the Gentiles is that God's people have God as their heavenly Father who knows their needs and who watches over their lives (v.31-32). Why are many of God's people still ignorant of the reality of this truth and live with anxiety?
3. What does Jesus teach us to focus on in our lives (v.33)? What do you think this means?
4. What do you think the meaning of Jesus' statement is in v.34? Does this mean we should not work hard and plan for tomorrow and the future?

Closing Points

1. When we want to control our own lives, we find ourselves consumed by worry. However, when we trust our lives into the hands of our heavenly Father, who is sovereign and loves and cares for us, we find peace and joy. Planning for tomorrow is spending time well; worrying about tomorrow is wasting time. We should not let worries about tomorrow affect our relationship with God today. Right priorities give us joy, but wrong priorities make us anxious.
2. Jesus commands us not to worry about our lives, food, drink, and clothing for several reasons: (1) God feeds birds, even though they do not work, and we are more valuable than birds in God's eyes. (2) Worry is meaningless and does not add a single hour to our span of life. (3) God clothes the grass and makes wildflowers look beautiful, so he will more than take care of our clothing. (4) God knows all our needs.
3. As our good heavenly Father, God always gives us what we need but not what we want. God always gives us good things. Our job is to discern what is good in God's eyes for us. Romans 12:2 teaches us, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."
4. Jesus commands his followers to *seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness*. This means that we are to love God with all our hearts. Our lives should be for God, his kingdom, and his righteousness personally, communally, locally, nationally, and internationally. It means we are to aim for our spiritual growth through spending time with God in daily prayer and Bible reading and serving God by serving people around us so they too may know Christ and be made righteous people in him. We are to seek first to be righteous before God by trusting our lives to Christ, and all necessary things will be added to us by our heavenly Father.

Notes

Solomon: a great and very rich king of Israel.

Gentile: a non-Jewish person; a person with pagan beliefs who do not believe in the God of the Bible.

The Great Teachings of Jesus

Lesson 10 – Pray Persistently and Trust in God’s Goodness

Opening Questions

1. What was the best gift you ever received from your parents?
2. What have you received from God that you prayed for for a very long time?

Introduction

God is perfectly loving and just. He is a perfect and loving heavenly Father to all his children. He is also a perfect and just Judge. While many people can accept a loving God, some struggle with a just God who must fairly deal with all sins and evil. One reason is because we know that we do bad things—even though we may not think that we are too bad. We are also often unjust in our behavior because of our self-centeredness. For God’s people, knowing God as a perfect Judge motivates us to live righteously and to do good for others around us. It also gives us assurance that God will make all things right in this broken world in the end. Sadly, for those who reject God, not only do they not have a heavenly Father, but they will also face his just judgment.



To think about:

How can a just God end all sins and evil in this world without ending us? A loving God must have a way. God sent Jesus Christ, the Son of God, for us. Jesus came from heaven to this world to sacrifice himself, bearing the punishment for all our sins as our substitute so that we, who put our faith and trust our lives to him, can receive his righteousness credited to us, God’s forgiveness, and a new life in union with him as God’s children.

From the Bible



Matthew 7:1-6

¹ “Judge not, that you be not judged. ² For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. ³ Why do you see the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? ⁴ Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when there is the log in your own eye? ⁵ You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye. ⁶ “Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you.

Discussion Questions

1. What does Jesus want his followers not to do (v.1)? Why (v.2)?
2. If God were to put on a big screen for everyone to see how everyone in this world has expressed himself/herself in their thoughts, words, and actions towards other people and God himself, what do you think we would see? If God will judge everyone simply based on all their thoughts, words, and actions, what do you think the result will be?
3. What illustration does Jesus use to teach about our own pride and spiritual blindness (v.3-5)? What is the reason that sometimes we cannot see “the log” in our own eye—a far greater sin or failure than “the speck” in the lives of others?
How can we not have a judgmental or critical attitude towards others?
4. On one hand, we should not judge others, but on the other hand, we should judge or discern people wisely when we give them the message of the kingdom of God (the truths of the Gospel). What illustration does Jesus use to teach this (v.6)?



Notes

Sin: thought, word, or action that is dishonoring or disobedient to God.

Dogs and pigs:

Here represents people who would try to destroy or trample the truths of the Gospel message under their feet.

Matthew 7:7-11

⁷“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ⁸For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. ⁹Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? ¹¹If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

**Discussion Questions**

1. What illustration does Jesus use to teach us about praying to God (v.7)? What do you think this illustration means? Consider the meaning of asking, seeking, and knocking. What do these three words suggest?
2. Does this mean that we can pray and ask God for whatever we want? What does Jesus teach us about God? What does God want from us (v.7-8)?
3. How does prayer grow us to be spiritually more mature?
4. How does Jesus emphasize the goodness of God as our heavenly Father? How does he compare our heavenly Father to earthly fathers? What is Jesus' point in using rhetorical questions (v.9-11)?

Closing Points

1. God has instituted the courts of law to judge people and to maintain justice. However, there are people who have a habit of judging others harshly or slandering them without grounds. Jesus warns us about this kind of behavior. We need to judge ourselves and should not assume authority over others. Ultimately, God is the one who maintains justice and judges everyone justly.
2. The failure of a hypocrite is his own pride and spiritual blindness. He cannot see his own “log” (big sin or failure) but so easily points to a “speck” (small sin or failure) in others. His heart has a defensive system to defend his own pride. When he discovers his own “log,” instead of softening his heart, he hardens it and magnifies his pride. This is the tragedy of a hypocrite. This is the enslaving power of sin in us that we need to be aware of and careful about. Only God can liberate us from this enslaving power of sin. By trusting our lives to Jesus Christ, we can be set free from it.
3. Jesus teaches us to pray persistently to God. We need to keep praying and asking God, not giving up even when it has been a long time without an answer. Jesus teaches us to keep asking, seeking, and knocking. We must pray in faith and with the right motive.
4. Jesus teaches us to trust in the goodness of God as our heavenly Father. God loves us and desires for us to spend much time with him. He loves to hear our prayers. In his wisdom, he does not quickly grant what we ask for, but when he does give, the timing is always perfect. The most important thing he wants is for us to make him the priority in our lives, loving him more than all other things in this world. He promises us that he will “give good things to those who ask him.”

The Great Teachings of Jesus

Lesson 11 – Choosing Between Our Way or God’s Way

Opening Questions

1. Which one is easier: (a) not doing something bad to others or (b) doing something good to others? Why?
2. Why do people make multiple entrances to enter a big shopping mall? Why not just one?

Introduction

The Bible (God’s Word) tells us that fundamentally there are only two ways to live our lives: God’s way and our way. Either we receive God to be our King and live our lives according to his will or we make ourselves to be Kings for our own lives and live our lives according to our own wills. Each of us chooses his/her own way of life, whatever we think is right or good for us, no matter that the way is different from one person to another as long as it is not God’s way. God’s chosen way of life for us is only one option with one destiny, while our chosen ways of life for each of us are many options yet with one destiny.



To think about:

Many people believe that Jesus was only a good religious teacher. However, Jesus makes exclusive claims about who he is that many people ignore. Jesus says, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). He says that he is the only way and there is no other way. He says that he is the truth—there is no falseness in him. And he essentially says that if we don’t believe in him, we have no *life*.

From the Bible



Matthew 7:12-14

¹² “So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

¹³ “Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. ¹⁴ For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.

Discussion Questions



1. Several well-known religious teachers said, “Do not do to others what you do not want them to do to you.” This teaching, stated in the negative, forbids actions and sets limits. Jesus’ teaching, stated in the positive, specifies actions without limits. What does Jesus want his followers to do for others [Jesus’ Golden Rule] (v.12)? What would it be like if all of us practice Jesus’ Golden Rule—what heaven looks like?
2. Jesus teaches that there is heaven and the kingdom of God for God’s people, and there is hell, a place of punishment where God will put all rebellious angels (evil spirits) and people who reject him. What does Jesus teach about the road to life [God’s kingdom or heaven] and the road to destruction [hell] (v.13-14)?
3. Why does Jesus say that there will be many people who do not want God in their lives and those who want God to be the King of their lives are very few? Consider what we have learned from previous lessons about sin and spiritual blindness—our *logs and specks*. Why do many people not want to “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness” (Matthew 6:33) but would rather seek first their own *kingdom* (interest)? If you were an evil spirit (a rebellious angel), what would you do to prevent people from believing in and following the true God?

Notes

The Law and the Prophets: refer to the whole Old Testament, which teaches us to love God with all our hearts and to love other people just as we love ourselves.

Matthew 7:15-20

¹⁵ “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶ You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.

**Discussion Questions**

1. What does Jesus warn us about (v.15)? How do we recognize them (v.16)?
Are there any of them in our present time?
2. How does Jesus illustrate a healthy tree and a diseased tree (v.17-18)?
What do you think this illustration means concerning false and true Bible teachers?
Why would someone want to be a false prophet or Bible teacher?
3. What will happen to false prophets and Bible teachers (v.19)?

Closing Points

1. Jesus' *Golden Rule*, “Do to others what you would have them do to you,” is his explanation of God’s law that we are to love our neighbors just as we love ourselves. Since Jesus states the Golden Rule in the positive, it means that we are to do for others *continuously* and *endlessly* what we want them to do for us. The scope of the command is unlimited. We are to love others *continuously* and *endlessly* just as we love ourselves because this shows that we are God’s people, and it brings honor and glory to God. God will help and strengthen us to do this.
2. Jesus teaches us that the gate to heaven and to eternal life with God is narrow and the way is hard, marked by many struggles and sufferings. In contrast, the gate to destruction—hell—is wide and the way is easy, marked by worldly pleasures. Those who enter the wide gate to hell are many, but those who enter the narrow gate to heaven are few. Jesus is the narrow gate. He is the way to heaven and to eternal life with God. Many would not believe in Jesus and would reject him. For those who follow and believe in Jesus, their lives would be marked by many struggles and sufferings in this world. Followers of Jesus have three enemies: (1) the devil, (2) this sinful world, and (3) the flesh – the sinful nature and its sinful desires that are in us. Jesus teaches us that the eternal joy and life with God in heaven is incomparable with the temporary struggles and sufferings in this world.
3. Jesus says about the devil, “He is a liar and the father of lies” (John 8:44). The devil always tries to deceive us by saying, “You need to be in charge of your life, not God and not anyone else, otherwise you won’t be happy. Choose your own way.”
4. Jesus gives a warning to all false teachers who attempt to corrupt and lead people away from God and his truth. God will surely judge and destroy them. Two major false gospels in America and other places are: (1) Prosperity gospel that teaches Jesus Christ is a means to health and wealth. (2) Self-help gospel that promotes your ability—what you can do, how you can become a better person and have a better life, while using the Bible and the name of Jesus. False Bible teachers like to mix or blend Bible teaching. Sadly, many people follow and like the “sweet” teachings of false Bible teachers.

The Great Teachings of Jesus

Lesson 12 – The Right and Strong Foundation of Our Lives

Opening Questions

1. Have you ever experienced when certain people are suddenly nice to you because they want something from you? Are they really your good friends?
2. Have you ever experienced an earthquake?
What was the most fearful or difficult situation in life you have ever experienced?

Introduction

A major earthquake can shake and collapse many buildings. Modern innovation has enabled us to build stronger foundations for tall buildings. People have more confidence living in a high-rise apartment building, not being afraid that the building will collapse. Our lives are similar, what we make to be the foundations of our lives will impact us. Some people make money or power the foundations of their lives. The more money or power they have, the more secure they feel. The less money or power they have, the less secure they feel. When the global economic crisis happened in 2008, many people committed suicide because their foundation (wealth/money) collapsed. They lost hope. People commit suicide because they lose hope. They have no more foundation for their lives.



To think about:

What is the foundation of my life? Is it strong? Is it the right one? Jesus teaches us to have a strong foundation for our lives that can hold us regardless of any difficult circumstances that can happen to us. He teaches of a strong foundation that cannot be destroyed—something that can give us security, happiness, joy, peace, and hope that does not end. It is rather someone than something. Someone who can give us those things and more importantly who loves us and who is eternal.

From the Bible



Matthew 7:21-23

²¹ “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ ²³ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’

Discussion Questions



1. Will everyone who calls Jesus, “Lord (Master),” enter his kingdom [the kingdom of heaven] (v21)? Why? How do we know if someone is a true follower of Jesus Christ and has a personal relationship with him (see also Matthew 7:17-20)?
2. Where can we learn the will of God for us?
3. What will many people say to Jesus on the day he returns to judge this world (v.22)?
4. False prophets and teachers do the work of the devil. They can do great works—deceptive signs and wonders—and deceive people. What will Jesus say to false prophets and teachers (v.23)?
5. Why do many people want to pray and get good gifts from God but do not want God to be in control of their lives and do not want to have a personal, loving, and committed relationship (a covenant relationship) with God?

Notes

On that day: the day Jesus returns to judge the world.

I never knew you: I do not have a personal relationship with you.

Matthew 7:17-20

¹⁷ So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.

Matthew 7:24-29

²⁴ “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵ And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. ²⁶ And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. ²⁷ And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.”

²⁸ And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, ²⁹ for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.



Discussion Questions

1. How does Jesus describe a person who hears his words and obeys them (v.24)?
2. What would happen to the house built on the rock when a storm hit it? Why (v.25)?
3. How does Jesus describe a person who hears his words but does not obey him (v.26)?
4. What would happen to the house built on the sand when a storm hit it? Why (v.27)?
5. There are many foundations that people try to build their lives upon. From what sources do people try to find happiness or security for their lives?
6. The storm is a sudden hardship that comes to our lives. It can be a natural disaster, a sudden tragedy, or a crisis. Have you ever experienced any of these?
7. How did the crowd react to Jesus’ teaching (v.28)? Why (v.29)? What do you think it means?

Closing Points

1. Jesus says that he will return. The first time he came to this world, he came to sacrifice himself and die for us, bearing the punishment of all our sins as our substitute on the cross. The second time he comes to this world, he will come as the King of heaven and the Judge of this world. He will judge all people. Those whom he has a personal and loving relationship with—his people—he will take them to his heavenly kingdom. To those who reject him, he will say, “Depart from me.” To be departed from God is to be completely separated from him and all his goodness—to be put in hell, a place of God’s judgement. His judgment is the most terrible crisis that people without Jesus Christ will experience.
2. Jesus teaches us that we need a strong foundation for our lives so that we will not collapse when a sudden hardship, tragedy, or crisis comes to us. Jesus points to himself as the foundation we should have—not one of the foundations, but the only foundation. Jesus was teaching, “If you have me as the foundation of your life, I will hold and sustain your life.” He is the eternal God, who is the giver and the sustainer of our lives. If we have him as the foundation of our lives, we are completely secure.
3. If we attempt to build our lives upon any other foundations, we will collapse one day. All other foundations have no power to hold our lives and are not permanent. However, Jesus is eternal and almighty. He is inviting each of us to have him as the Lord and the foundation of our lives. He is the true foundation, who can hold our lives permanently and sustain us when hardship, tragedy, or crisis comes to us. He is the true and eternal source of strength, joy, and hope for our lives.
4. To have a covenant relationship with Jesus means to believe in him and to trust our lives to him. When we do so, he is committed to love us regardless of our many weaknesses and selfishness. He will teach, guide, grow, and mature us as his people. He is always faithful to us.

Notes

Scribe: an expert who transcribed and taught the Jewish laws.

Covenant: a binding agreement with promise of faithfulness.

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