

LEADERS GUIDE


WISDOM

FROM JESUS:
SERMON ON THE MOUNT



JOHN D. MORRISON

A RESOURCE OF LAKEWOOD BAPTIST CHURCH

 Lakewoodlife.org
DR. TOM SMILEY, SENIOR PASTOR

Wisdom from Jesus

The Sermon on the Mount

John D. Morrison, PhD



Wisdom from Jesus: The Sermon on the Mount

Copyright © 2020 John D. Morrison

Published by Lakewood Press

Lakewood Baptist Church

2235 Thompson Bridge Road

Gainesville, Georgia 30506

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from the ESV© Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version©), copyright © 2001 by Crossway.

A Letter from the Senior Pastor

Greetings! Welcome to a new year. Over the course of 2020 we are going to be learning about biblical wisdom. We all want to live wisely and we all want to make wise decisions. We all look back on moments or events in our lives and wish we would have done things differently. At

times, we all wish “we knew then what we know now.” But the real question is, “How can I know the wise thing before I do it?”

James 1:5 says, “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.” God teaches us in his word that we should go to him for true wisdom. The writer of Proverbs says, if you want “to know wisdom and instruction,” then start here: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.” In order to live a truly wise life, you and I must look first to God. The wisdom of God is often different than the wisdom of the world. Think about Paul’s message in 1 Corinthians 1:18, “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” In other words, the message of the cross of Jesus Christ is foolishness in the world’s eyes, but to Christians the message of the cross is the perfect wisdom of God. Where the world sees the death of a man, the Christian sees the depth of the love of God. Where the world sees the end of life, the Christian sees the resurrection of Jesus Christ. If you want to know what true wisdom is, you must ask God. And if you want to live a truly wise life, you have to live it by God’s standards and not the world’s standards.

To live wisely before God, you must prepare yourself for how the world will push back against you. Remember what God said in 1 Peter 2:15, “For it is God’s will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people.” Therefore, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight” (Proverbs 3:5–6). To be wise in God’s eyes means to worship and honor him first, and it means to look to Jesus Christ who is God’s true wisdom (1 Corinthians 1:30).

Over the course of this year we are going to immerse ourselves as a church with God’s wisdom. I’m excited that this year there will be a new “element” in our study. Each week you will have an activity to do or a devotional to read and write your own notes. I write in my journals all the time. I encourage you to write in yours and make this a memorable year. It will be great to look back on what the Lord taught you over the course of this year, or even to pass along to your grandchildren one day. Also, we will be memorizing Scripture together as a church. Check out the book for the verses and follow along.

Will you join me on this journey to live wisely and honor God first? The title of our study is Wisdom 2020. Of course, 2020 is the calendar year of our study, but it is also a reminder that like 20/20 vision, true wisdom means “Seeing Life Clearly through the Lens of Scripture.”

May God bless you as we journey this year through the biblical theme of wisdom.

Dr. Tom Smiley
Senior Pastor
Lakewood Baptist Church

Introduction

Following his baptism and temptation in the wilderness, Jesus's public ministry begins in Galilee. There, he calls his first disciples to follow him and starts his ministry. "He went throughout Galilee," Scripture tells us, "teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and affliction among the people" (Matt. 4:23). This ministry of teaching, proclaiming, and healing attracted great crowds. Matthew records,

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. And great crowds followed him from Galilee and the Decapolis, and from Jerusalem and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan (Matt. 4:24-25).

In response to these crowds, Jesus went up on a mountain and sat down to teach them. His disciples drew near to him, but it also seems that he went up the mountain so that the crowd could hear. The crowd certainly did hear him, for Matthew, "When Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one who had authority and not as their scribes" (Matt. 7:28-29).

These astonishing and authoritative teachings have become known as our Lord's Sermon on the Mount. From Matthew chapter 5 through chapter 7, the Gospel records Jesus's teaching in this setting. He spoke both to the disciples he had individually called and to the crowds who had heard his teaching and seen his miracles. To both groups, he outlines in this Sermon what it means to follow him.

Three images help us make sense of what Jesus accomplishes in this Sermon. The Sermon is (1) a mirror, (2) a lens, and (3) a guide.

1. *The Sermon as Mirror.* The Sermon on the Mount serves as a mirror to our own lives. It holds up God's standard and calls us to examine ourselves. We are to hold up the Sermon and see where we miss the mark. The great challenge of the Sermon is that Jesus is concerned about far more than our outward actions; he teaches that our hearts also must be turned toward God. Jesus's teaching in the sermon reveals our own sinfulness.

2. *The Sermon as Lens.* As much as the Sermon shows us our sin, it also points us to Christ's righteousness. The life he sets forth in his Sermon, he lives. The great hope of the gospel is that he has lived a perfect life and that we can share in his perfect life by faith. He became poor in spirit that we might be blessed with the kingdom of God. He became meek that we might be blessed by inheriting the whole earth. He suffered for righteousness sake so that we might be blessed with the kingdom of heaven. Jesus perfectly lives out his sermon, and we can share in the blessings of his perfect life when we trust in him by faith. Before Jesus calls us to obey, he calls us to look to him in faith.

3. *The Sermon as Guide.* In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus details how one should live in his kingdom. He explains what it looks like to follow him. According to Augustine, "If anyone were to ponder with piety and seriousness the sermon which our Lord Jesus Christ gave on the mount, I believe he would discover there, as far as norms for high moral living are concerned, the perfect way to lead the Christian life." Jesus teaches us his way of life, he models this way of life for us, and he empowers us to follow him in this way of life. If Christ only told his to live like him, we would have no hope. He calls us to obey and then makes it possible for us to obey. The risen and ascended Jesus has sent his Holy Spirit to dwell within believers and to bear his fruit in their lives. This is the same Holy Spirit who anointed Jesus at his baptism and empowered Jesus's earthly ministry. That same Spirit is now at work in our lives.

When we study our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, we are confronted by our own sinfulness, we are reminded that our only hope is his perfect righteousness, and we are called to live in a manner worthy of the gospel by the power of his Holy Spirit. The Sermon comes to us in the Gospel of Matthew, and so we now turn to an overview of Matthew in order to understand the context of Jesus's teaching in the Sermon on the Mount.

Authorship

The author of Matthew does not mention himself in the text of the Gospel, but our earliest evidence suggests that this work always bore the title *kata Maththaion*, that is, "according to Matthew." Similarly, early church fathers consistently affirm Matthew as the author of this Gospel. Papias (fl. c. 135), Iraneus (130-202), and Origen (c. 184-c. 253) all ascribe authorship of the work to the Apostle Matthew.

The idea behind the title, the Gospel according to Matthew, is that this is the Gospel of Jesus Christ that Matthew records. Matthew writes down the good news of Jesus. Together, the four Gospel accounts give us a fourfold witness to the good news of Jesus.

The Apostle Matthew who wrote this Gospel is the Matthew mentioned in chapter 9 of this book. Mark calls this same man, "Levi the Son of Alphaeus" (Mark 2:14), and Luke simply names him, "Levi" (Luke 5:27). It seems that Levi was given the apostolic name "Matthew," which means "gift of of the Lord." Just as Jesus gave Simon the name "Peter" (John 1:42), it seems that he gave Levi the name Matthew.

Our best evidence suggests that Matthew likely wrote this Gospel in the late 50s or early 60s. As many of the Apostles were dying, a need arose to record their testimony about Jesus in writing to pass on to future generations.

Purpose & Themes

Matthew writes his Gospel to testify to who Jesus is and to explain what Jesus does. Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah who fulfills God's promises from the Old Testament by ushering in the Kingdom of Heaven.

—Who Jesus Is: The Promised Messiah—

As the promised Messiah, Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Testament. He fulfills and surpasses the law and the prophets. This theme comes through clearly on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:1-13). Jesus is transfigured next to Moses, the giver of the law, and Elijah, the preeminent prophet. God the Father proclaims concerning Jesus, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him” (17:5). Next to the law and the prophet, God the Father calls us to listen to the Son.

Matthew demonstrates that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Testament through frequent allusions to the Hebrew Scriptures that show Jesus superseding a person or place from Israel's past. One of the more prominent fulfillment themes is that Jesus is the new and better Moses. Jesus comes out of Egypt (2:15), successfully navigates 40 days in the wilderness (4:1-11), gives a new law from a mountain (5:1-7:27), miraculously feeds thousands in a desolate place (14:13-21; 15:32-39), and ultimately delivers his people not through the blood of a passover lamb but by his own blood.

Furthermore, Jesus is the new and better David. From the start of the Gospel, Matthew establishes Jesus as the Son of David (1:1), and several people Jesus encounters in his ministry will call him “Son of David” (12:23, 15:22, 20:30-31). The most poignant example of the people seeing Jesus as the Son of David is the triumphal entry where he is praised, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” Jesus himself identifies with David as he discusses the Sabbath (12:1-8) and as he questions the religious leaders (22:41-45). Even as Jesus is mocked, beaten, and crucified, Matthew highlights that Jesus is the new and better king (27:27-31, 37), who conquers through his own death.

While the Mosaic and Davidic themes are some of the clearest in Matthew, there are a number of aspects of OT fulfillment that this Gospel highlights. Jesus is the new and better temple. He says in 12:6, “I tell you, something greater than the temple is here,” and in his trial and passion, references are made to Jesus speaking of himself as the temple (26:61; 27:40).¹ Jesus is also portrayed as the new and better Jonah as he explicitly references Jonah (12:38-41), and there is a more subtle allusion to Jonah as Jesus, too, sleeps in a boat during a storm (8:24).

To understand how Jesus fulfills these Old Testament themes, we return again to the mount of transfiguration where God the Father declared that Jesus is the beloved Son (17:5) just as he did at his baptism (3:17). Jesus surpasses these Old Testament people and places because he is the Son.

While many will refer to Jesus as the “Son of God,” Jesus never uses this title for himself in Matthew's Gospel. Instead, Jesus frequently refers to himself as the “Son of Man.” While “Son of Man” might sound less divine than “Son of God” to our modern ears, the title “Son of Man” would have been particularly powerful to a first-century Jewish audience. Many claimed to be sons of gods, but in calling himself the Son of Man, Jesus was referencing Daniel 7. This prophecy speaks of one who is human, “like a son of man,” who has divine authority: he came on the clouds and was “given dominion and glory and a kingdom.” As Daniel's vision continues, he explains that the dominion is everlasting, and the Son of Man's kingdom will not be destroyed; these are the same attributes of God's kingdom mentioned in Daniel 4:34. This Son of Man is at once human and divine.

—What Jesus Does: Founds the Kingdom—

The notion of an everlasting dominion and a kingdom that shall not be destroyed leads directly to the Gospel of Matthew's emphasis on what Jesus does: he ushers in the kingdom of heaven.

This kingdom is the fulfillment of all of God's Old Testament promises. In other words, the New Testament continues the Old Testament story of salvation: God will bless the whole world through Abraham and his descendants (Gen. 12:1-3). This promised blessing comes by God establishing his kingdom. God the Father rules through King Jesus, and this rule brings blessing to the world.

Where Mark and Luke speak of the kingdom of God, Matthew typically describes this kingdom as the kingdom of heaven.² Some have suggested that this substituting of “heaven” for “God” stems from a Jewish practice of showing reverence for the name of God by not writing it. However more recently, a far more compelling case has been made that Matthew uses heaven in order to contrast the kingdom Jesus brings with the kingdoms of this earth.³ The contrast is between heaven and earth - between the ways of God

¹³ I saw in the night visions,
and behold, with the clouds of heaven
there came one like a son of man,
and he came to the Ancient of Days
and was presented before him.
¹⁴ And to him was given dominion
and glory and a kingdom,
that all peoples, nations, and languages
should serve him;
his dominion is an everlasting
dominion,
which shall not pass away,
and his kingdom one
that shall not be destroyed.

Daniel 7:13–14

¹Interestingly, only in John do we have a record of this saying alluded to during the passion narrative. John 2:19 recounts how Jesus pronounced, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” Certainly, this fact should remind us of the need to read Scripture within its whole context and the blessing of having four Gospel accounts.

²In his Gospel, John uses the phrase “eternal life” or simply “life” to describe the same reality of the kingdom.

³For a in-depth look at the use of “heaven” in Matthew, see Jonathan T. Pennington, *Heaven and Earth in the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009).

and the ways of people. The kingdom Jesus brings is heavenly, and as its king, he exercises rule over all earthly kingdoms. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords.

Jesus teaches that his kingdom is both a present reality and has a future fulfillment. The kingdom has begun with Jesus, but it has not yet been completed. The kingdom is inaugurated but has not been consummated. Commentators speak of this as the “already - not yet” tension of the kingdom. It is here now, and yet it will be here more fully when Christ returns. In Matthew 12:28, Jesus declares, “But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.” The kingdom has come in Jesus, and yet, at this time, we do not see all the Old Testament promises about the complete and utter defeat of God’s enemies and the righteous being visibly blessed coming to fruition. The kingdom has come, and it will come in fullness when Christ returns.

The kingdom was present in the person of Jesus, but it would not be consummated until after his death and resurrection when he will return in glory.

- Dr. Tom Schreiner

The cross of Christ is central to the kingdom. The Gospel of Matthew culminates with the crucifixion and resurrection. Jesus establishes the kingdom’s victory in the most surprising way. He does not conquer through power but through suffering. He puts death to death through his own gruesome death. Apparent defeat becomes the pathway to victory. He conquers by suffering.

His death, however, is not the end of the story. Because Jesus was obedient to death, God raised him up and exalted him to his right hand, placing all things under his feet (Ephesians 1:15-23; Philippians 2:5-11). He is seated at God’s right hand, ruling over all things.

Again, we see the already-not yet tension, for “Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him” (Hebrews 2:8). King Jesus is ruling, but we do yet see everything as it should be. The kingdom has not yet been fully realized. As the Apostle Paul explains, the full realization of the kingdom will come when Christ returns:

For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death (1 Cor. 15:22–26).

King Jesus will destroy the last enemy, death, and then hand this kingdom back to God the Father. Revelation 19 gives us two pictures of what the culmination of this kingdom will be. For those who do not trust in Christ, King Jesus will come as the warrior king and judge to defeat God’s enemies (Rev. 19:11-21). For those who are trusting in Christ for the forgiveness of sins and the hope of eternal life, God the Father invites them as the bride to a great marriage feast (Rev. 19:6-10). The kingdom will come to its ultimate fulfillment when Christ returns. All things will be made new, and we will dwell in a new Eden—a new garden paradise—forever in God’s presence.

Living in the Kingdom Now

The kingdom has not yet come in its completed form, and yet Jesus teaches that with him, the kingdom has already come. How then can we presently live as members of the kingdom of God? What does the kingdom of God mean for our lives today?

What does the kingdom of God mean for our lives today?

In his *God’s Big Picture: Tracing the Storyline of the Bible*, Vaughan Roberts speaks of the kingdom as God’s people living in God’s place under God’s authority and thereby enjoying God’s blessing. This grid proves particularly helpful in understanding how the kingdom applies to our lives today. Through faith in Christ, anyone who believes can become part of the people of God. Through Christ, God’s place is no longer isolated to a single spot but extends to wherever his people are found. By his Holy Spirit, God dwells within each believer, and together as the church in Christ, the Apostle Paul teaches, “You [all] also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit” (Eph. 2:22). As followers of Christ, we follow him and are empowered by his Spirit to live under God’s rule. The same Spirit that helps us obey is also the blessing we receive as we live under his rule.⁴

To live in the kingdom now is to live a life of faith in Christ that is marked by Spirit-empowered obedience to the glory of God the Father.

Reading and Teaching the Sermon as Gospel

Although this is Jesus’s Sermon on the Mount, it is often easy to lose sight of his gospel when reading it. Where we should hear the grace of the gospel, we can distort the message so that we only hear the demand of the law. To keep the focus on the gospel, we first need to remember that Jesus has fulfilled all that he has taught in this sermon. The righteousness he demands is the righteousness he freely gives to all who look to him in faith. Second, the obedience he calls for is obedience that he empowers by sending his Holy Spirit to dwell within all who believe. Following the Sermon on the Mount begins and ends with following Jesus in faith. Only when we look to Christ will we be able to live out “the obedience of faith for the sake of his name” (Rom. 1:5).

⁴In Galatians 3:14, Paul describes the coming of the Holy Spirit to all kinds of people as the fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham: “In Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.”

The Beatitudes



Opening

A good place to start this study is by reviewing the first four chapters in this Gospel. Consider reviewing, in particular, Matthew 3:13-4:25.

Why were so many people following Jesus? What do you think attracted them to him?

What message did Jesus proclaim? Based on the rest of Matthew's Gospel, what was that message?

While familiar with the Beatitudes, many find them confusing or just do not know what to make of them. Consider beginning with the question: *What is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear "beatitudes"?*

Consider the audience: *To whom was Jesus speaking when he gave this sermon? (Consider Matt. 5:1-2 and 7:28-29). How does the audience (or audiences) help us think through the meaning of this Sermon?*

Blessed

What does it mean to be "blessed"?

What Scripture passages help unpack what blessing is?

What are some false expectations of blessing that some believers have? How does the Bible help correct those misunderstandings?

Beatitudes

For each verse in Matthew 5:3-11, you will want to unpack both the call (i.e. "poor in spirit") and the reward (i.e. "theirs is the kingdom of heaven"). Consider breaking your group up into small groups to search for biblical definitions of these words and phrases.

- Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.
- Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.
- Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.
- Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.
- Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.
- Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.
- Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Beatitudes and the Gospel

How do we see God's grace in the gospel at work in these verses?

Notes

Salt & Light

MATTHEW 5:13-16 | WEEK 8 GROUP GUIDE



Salt

What is salt's purpose?

How is the follower of Jesus supposed to be like salt?

Where has the Lord placed you currently to be his salt? What will being salty look like for you there?

What does Jesus's warning about being thrown out and trampled under foot mean? Does that mean believers can lose their salvation? What Scriptures point to the fact that Jesus will not allow his people to fall from his grace? How then are we to understand this warning?

Light

What is the purpose of light? What does it do?

How are believers supposed to be light in the world?

According to verse 16, how do believers shine their light before others?

How can you shine your light where the Lord has currently placed you?

Salt, Light, & Word

Jesus speaks of doing good deeds, are good deeds enough to make the gospel known?

How will others see your good deeds and glorify the Father?

Read Romans 10:12-17. How necessary for people's salvation is proclaiming the good news of Christ?

How can you proclaim the gospel with those God has brought into your life?

Notes

A Matter of the Heart



Jesus, Law, and Prophets

What does Jesus have in mind when he says law and prophets?

What does it mean that Jesus came to fulfill the law and the prophets?

The Pharisees and scribes were the most righteous people in Jesus's day. They were the most scrupulous followers of the law. They were the most faithful of an already religious people. *How could Jesus call his followers to be more righteous than these most righteous of people?* Consider Romans 1:16-17 and Philippians 3:9. *How do we receive such righteousness from God?*

Anger

Jesus shifts the focus from an action (murder) to an attitude (anger). *Why does Jesus move from the outward action to the heart? What does this say about what it means to follow him?*

How is your anger toward another a denial of the gospel?

How have you found hope for overcoming anger in the gospel of Jesus?

How has God worked in your life to combat your anger?

Where are you holding onto anger in your life? With whom do you need now to reconcile?

Lust

Again, Jesus moves beyond the outward action to the heart behind that action.

Why is Jesus so concerned with the heart? What does that say about what it takes to follow him?

What drastic measures do you need to take to stop making provision for your lust?

- *Are you willing to get rid of a smart phone? TV? Home computer?*
- *Are you searching for emotional intimacy outside of marriage? Are you willing to cut off that relationship for the sake of the gospel?*
- *Are you willing to open your life to Christian accountability?*

Divorce

What does Jesus teach about divorce?

What hope can a divorce person or child of divorce find in the gospel?

Oaths

Why is Jesus concerned about oaths?

What changes do you need to make in your life so that your yes is simply yes and your no is simply no?

Can others rely on your word? Your children? Your boss? Your teacher? Your spouse?

Notes

Love Your Enemies

MATTHEW 5:38-48 | WEEK 10 GROUP GUIDE



Retaliation

Where are you holding on to your “rights” where you need to forgive for the sake of Jesus?

Is there someone in your life that the Lord is calling you to serve willingly rather than fight against?

How can we as Christians be free from a concern about seeking justice for ourselves in this life?

Your Enemies

Who would you consider your enemy? Are you at war with someone in your life? A parent? A spouse? A child? A coworker?

What is your natural response to this person?

What response does Jesus call you from you?

What would it look like to love this person?

How can you pray for this person regularly? Consider committing to pray for this person for the next 30 days.

When will you next have the opportunity to greet this person with warmth and love?

Your Enemies + the Gospel

How are these calls to love and not to retaliate based on God’s character?

How are these calls to love others rooted in the gospel?

Read Romans 5:7-11. Who were we to God when Christ died for us?

Notes



Main Idea

Look at Matthew 6:1. *What does Jesus teach in this verse?*

Now, look through 6:1-18 and underline anytime you see the word “secret.” *Why does Jesus emphasize the need to do these good things in secret?*

Why as Christians are we able to do good deeds in secret? What about God gives us freedom to act in this way?

Where are you tempted to make much of your good deeds and draw attention to yourself?

Read and reflect as a group on Psalm 115:1. Pray that the Lord would continue to shape this desire in your own heart.

Give

Notice that with each of these spiritual disciplines that the Lord Jesus still commends them. Even though they should be done in secret, they should still be done by his grace and for his glory.

What are ways you have enjoyed giving to those in need?

How have you seen giving generously to the church grow your spiritual life?

Pray

Review the prayer Jesus gives us in 6:9-13. *How can we let these priorities of Jesus’s prayer shape our own prayer life?*

What other Scriptures have you found good to pray? How do you pray Scripture?

How is our forgiving others related to God’s forgiving us?

Fast

Consider reviewing some other passages to show what the Bible says about fasting. Neh. 1:4; Esther 4:3; Daniel 9:3; Joel 2:12; Luke 2:37; Acts 13:2-3; Acts 14:23; Matt. 6:16; Matt. 9:15

What is biblical fasting?

Why do we fast?

What should our expectations be when we fast?

Notes



Dr. Tom Smiley, Senior Pastor • 2235 Thompson Bridge Road, Gainesville, GA 30501
LakewoodLife.org • (770) 532-6307