



**THE SERMON**  
ON THE MOUNT  
GOD'S KINGDOM COME

»»————→ Matthew 5-7 ←————««

**SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE**

**FALL 2016**

**ST. PAUL'S EVANGELICAL CHURCH**

# ***“The Blessed Life”***

# **Small Group Lesson 1**

Matthew 5:1-12

September 18

**Introductions and catching up.** As a small group we are going to journey together in God’s word for the next 9 weeks. This will be a place where, every week, we pray and encourage each other as we grow in our understanding of God’s word together.

Go around the group and share three things: your name, how you came to live in St. Louis, and your favorite highlight from the summer. Make sure everyone has a chance to contribute.

**Prayer.** Trade prayer requests with one another as you feel comfortable about anything that is on your heart. Assign someone to write down the prayer requests. Depending on your group, divide up the prayers or your small group leader will pray for them.

**Studying the word.** For the next 9 weeks, we are going to practice the “inductive Bible study method.” This is a way of investigating and using our powers of observation and logic to deduce the true meaning of a given passage. Only after studying the text together will we begin to apply it to our lives or to the world around us.

You will see three different symbols as we learn this method. These refer to the three steps of inductive method. The three symbols are

, , and , which correspond to observation, interpretation, and application. This will help us get to the meaning of the Bible.

## **Observation**

-  Have someone volunteer to read Matthew 5:1-12 out loud.
-  Who is Jesus talking to in this passage?
-  Look closely at the passage. Do you notice any repeated phrases?

- 🔍 What characteristics do the people have who are going to receive blessing? Make a list.
- 🔍 What are the blessings which are promised? Are they for now or later?
- 🔍 Is there any part of this passage that really startles you?

### **Interpretation**

- 💡 What does the word “blessed” mean? Use a Study Bible or google search to help figure it out.
- 💡 Are there 9 different sorts of people listed in this passage who receive different blessings, or is Jesus talking about something that comes as a package deal? Why do you think that?
- 💡 How do the future promises “shall inherit the earth, shall be comforted, etc.” grant blessing today?
- 💡 What do you think Jesus was trying to accomplish when he gave this sermon?
- 💡 What’s the main idea of this passage?

### **Application**

- Head – how does this passage challenge the way our culture today thinks? How you think?
- Heart – is there any way that Jesus’ words ignite a passion in your heart? Do they give you comfort or hope? Does it change your priorities or perspectives? How?
- Hands – how would this passage change what you do, where you go, or who you?

**Close With Prayer.**

# “Dealing With Anger”      Small Group Lesson 2

Matthew 5:17-26

September 25

**Getting Started.** We’re still getting to know one another, so let’s start with a fun question. If you had \$10,000 to spend on one thing before the end of the week, what would it be and why?

**Prayer.** Let’s pray for each other as we have need. Take some time to share prayer requests (no prayer is too big or too small for God!) Each person should pray for the person next to them if they are comfortable. It’s OK to not have any prayer requests.

**Studying the word.** We continue the inductive method today. You will see these three different symbols which correspond to

observation, interpretation, and application , , and . This will help us get to the meaning of the Bible.

## Observation

-  Have a volunteer read Matthew 5:17-26 aloud.
-  Make a list of things which Jesus says about the Law and God’s commandments.
-  What, according to Jesus, is equal to murder?
-  What does Jesus command when a person is angry with a brother or sister in Christ?
-  According to this passage, what are the consequences of anger? (Consider immediate and eternal consequences)

## Interpretation

-  What was Jesus’ attitude about the law of God?
-  Verse 22 is subject to many interpretations. Looking at that verse, what are you sure Jesus was trying to communicate?

- 💡 Does the altar (v. 23) correspond to anything in today's world?
- 💡 If the punishment for anger is judgment and hell, and we need righteousness greater than the Pharisees to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, what hope is there? How does this mesh with the rest of Scripture?
- 💡 Read aloud Jeremiah 17:10. What is the relation of the heart and outward conduct? According to Jesus, does God judge the heart alone or only actions?

## **Application**

### **A Case Study.**

In October 2006, Charles Roberts killed ten young schoolgirls in Lancaster, PA with a firearm. Then he took his own life. The schoolgirls were Amish, but Charles was not. That afternoon, the grandfather of one of the Amish girls visited the Roberts family and expressed forgiveness to Charles for his crime and sorrow for their loss. Nearly the entire Amish community reached out to forgive Charles, outnumbering the non-Amish at his funeral. They expressed no anger or condemnation toward him, and pursued a path of peace instead.

Does the response of the Amish community surprise you?

It is likely that you get quite angry for much less of an infraction. Why is that? Is it possible to live at peace with others?

If you have a dispute with someone else, what does God call you to do with that person?

Is there something in your past which still angers you? (If you feel comfortable, you can share it). How can you forgive that person?

## **“Making a Difference” Small Group Lesson 3**

Matthew 5:13-16

October 2

### **Getting Started.**

Go around the table and have each person name one person that is not a family member that has had the greatest influence in your life, and why.

**Prayer.** Let’s pray for each other as we have need. Take some time to share prayer requests (no prayer is too big or too small for God!) Each person should pray for the person next to them if they are comfortable. It’s OK to not have any prayer requests.

**The Inductive Method of Bible Study.** The goal is to understand and obey what God is communicating to us in his word. To do this we will be like detectives, observing the information and drawing conclusions as we ask good questions about what it means.

### **Observation**

-  Have a volunteer read Matthew 5:13-16 aloud.
-  Who is Jesus talking to? (look at vs. 1-2)
-  What metaphors does Jesus use to describe his audience?
  - What do the two metaphors have in common?
  - How are they different?
  - What does Jesus instruct his people to do?

### **Interpretation**

-  What does the metaphor of “salt” convey?
  - Check study Bible notes.
  - Google different possibilities
  - What can you conclude for sure?
-  What does the metaphor of light convey?

- Are there cross-references to other passages in your Bible's margins?
- What is the general symbolism of light and dark?
- 💡 What attitude or perspective is Jesus trying to cultivate in his disciples?
- 💡 What do you think are the "good deeds" (v. 16) that Jesus wants his people to carry out? (hint: consider the next verse too).
- 💡 What is the opposite of what Jesus is teaching?
- 💡 What does it mean that "if salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again?" What is Jesus getting at?
- 💡 How do we reconcile Jesus' teaching to "Let your light shine before men" and his teaching later in Matthew 6:1, "Be careful not to do your acts of righteousness before men, to be seen by them?"

### **Application**

- Where does the world need us to be "salt" and "light?"
  - Do I know someone that needs me to be a light in their life?
  - What is stopping me?
  - What can I do?
- Read John 3:19-21. What reactions might we expect as we live as light in the world? Will there be some positive reaction? Some negative? Why?
- Is there a way that we, as a group, could be a light to someone this week?
  - Could we serve someone?
  - Could we bless somebody?

# **“Adultery”**

# **Small Group Lesson 4**

Matthew 5:27-32

October 9

## **Getting Started.**

Have each person answer this question: “If you could change one law, what would it be?” Nobody is allowed to duplicate another person’s answer. 😊

**Prayer.** Let’s pray for each other as we have need. Take some time to share prayer requests (no prayer is too big or too small for God!) Each person should pray for the person next to them if they are comfortable. It’s OK to not have any prayer requests.

**Special Note (read aloud):** Today we are touching on a very difficult subject in our world today. The command “thou shalt not commit adultery” is still held by the world in the strict sense – most people view cheating to be a grievous betrayal and failure. Jesus takes this command and goes deeper, moving past external actions into the realm of what happens even in a person’s mind.

As we explore this topic, your pastors at St. Paul’s recognize that most families have felt the pain of adultery and divorce. In this study, be sure to refrain from passing judgment on another. Also, be sensitive to people’s histories. Wounds from the past take a long time to heal. God’s intention through the cross of Jesus is to forgive, heal, and transform those hurt by or trapped in the sin of adultery. It is not a weapon of judgment and condemnation.

## **Observation**

- 🔍 Have someone read Matthew 5:27-32 aloud.
- 🔍 Make a list of the explicit commands that Jesus gives in this passage (hint: there are two)
- 🔍 Add any implied commands to the above list.

- 🔍 Two times Jesus gives a reason for this command. What is this reason?

### **Interpretation**

- 💡 Is Jesus disagreeing with the original commandment “thou shalt not commit adultery?” Why or why not?
- 💡 What does the word “lust” entail? How do you know if you are lusting?
- 💡 Does God want us to literally gouge out our eyes and cut off our hands? If not, then what is Jesus trying to say?
- 💡 This passage explains the penalty for breaking this commandment is “hell.”
  - What is hell? How do you know that? (consider these verses)
    - Matthew 25:46, 2 Thessalonians 1:9, Matthew 13:50
  - What percentage of people that reach adulthood do you guess would deserve hell based on these criteria?
  - Is Jesus indicating this to be a hopeless situation? Yes or no?
    - Look at Romans 4:7-8, Romans 3:21-24, Ephesians 2:8-9

### **Application**

- What are some ways lust is embraced in today’s world?
- Since there is forgiveness for the sin of adultery, are we free to lust and sin? How do you know?
- Read aloud Ephesians 5:8-14. What is a way someone struggling with a sin in this area could bring “deeds of darkness” into the light?
- NOTE: Contact a pastor if you need help in this area. If the Spirit is convicting you, our church can offer help!

## **“Speaking the Truth”**      **Small Group Lesson 5**

Matthew 5:33-37

October 16

### **Getting Started.**

Here is this week’s icebreaker question: is there a fad you wish would come back? If not, is there one you want to stay gone forever? Give each person a chance to share.

**Prayer.** This week, we are going to thank God for the beauty of his creation. He is the Creator and Maker of all things, so let us take a moment to give glory to him. Each person should share personal prayer requests and also the part of the physical, created world for which they are most thankful. Then spend some time praying for that.

**Studying the word.** By way of reminder, the three steps of faithful Bible study are observation, interpretation, and application. The goal is to use our powers of investigation and reasoning to figure out what God is saying in this passage.

### **Observation**

-  Have someone read Matthew 5:33-37 aloud.
-  Jesus was quoting passages from the Old Testament. Have someone else read Leviticus 19:12, Numbers 30:2, Deuteronomy 23:21.
-  What are you not supposed to make oaths upon, according to this passage?
-  What is the goal according to verse 37?

### **Interpretation**

-  Is Jesus, in teaching that we are to take no oaths, disagreeing with the Old Testament command to fulfill all of our oaths? Why or why not?
-  What was the purpose of the Old Testament command?
-  What was the purpose of Jesus’ command?

- 💡 According to D. Martin Lloyd-Jones, “The Pharisees drew a distinction between various oaths, saying that some were binding while others were not. If you took an oath by the temple, that was not binding; but if you took an oath by the gold of the temple, that was binding... Do you notice how our Lord poured his scorn and ridicule... upon the utter dishonesty of it all?” What’s the main point of all of this?

### **Application**

- What are some ways that we see untruthfulness in our world? Consider the realm of law, business, medicine, and marketing. Consider interpersonal relationships.
- What do you think about honesty if a wife asks her husband if she looks good in an outfit? Is honesty appropriate? Why?
- It was once the case that lands or homes could be sold with just a handshake and verbal agreement. Why not today?

**A Case Study.** Once upon a time a ten-year-old girl asked her dad if, next weekend, they could go together to the mall and shop for some new shoes. While staring at his phone, the dad replied, “Yeah, sure honey.” The girl walked closer to her dad, tugged at his sleeve until he looked at her. Then she asked him, “Do you promise?”

What is the reason she needed a promise?

Why do you think he would say yes when he didn’t mean it?

Do you think she believes him when he speaks without a promise?

Do you think the girl respects and trusts her dad? Why or why not?

How could the dad live so that she would take him at his word?

## ***“Don’t Retaliate”***

## **Small Group Lesson 6**

Matthew 5:38-48, 7:1-6

October 23

### **Getting Started.**

Have each person share their answer to this question: “If you could master one skill you don’t have right now, what would it be?”

**Prayer.** Go around the room clockwise, sharing prayer requests. After each person shares, have the person next to them pray for those requests if comfortable. Repeat until everyone has been prayed for.

**The Inductive Bible Study Method.** Following the steps of

observation , interpretation , and application  helps us get at the original meaning and responsibly bring it to speak to our current day.

### **Observation**

-  Have someone read Matthew 5:38-48 and 7:1-6 aloud.
-  What is the O.T. command Jesus teaches about in vs. 38? (Look at Dt. 19:20-21) What does Jesus say about this?
-  What examples does he give on how to do this? (vss. 39-42)
-  In verse 43, Jesus is not dealing with an O.T. command but a teaching of his day. What does he command instead?
-  What reasons does he give? (vss. 45-48)
-  In chapter 7:1-5, what command does Jesus give to his followers?
-  Identify the two reasons that Jesus tells his people not to judge.

### **Interpretation**

-  How do we “be children” of the heavenly Father when we forgive enemies? What is the connection?

- 💡 Is the command in vs. 39 relevant to governments and police officers? (Consider Romans 13:1-4, 1 Peter 2:13-14). If not, then what is the point of the teaching?
- 💡 How does God's treatment of us, others, and the whole human race help us to love our enemies?
- 💡 What does "judge" mean in chapter 7?
- 💡 Is it ever wrong to remove the speck from your brother's eye? Why or why not? (Consider Galatians 6:1).
- 💡 What reward is Jesus talking about in vs. 46? Is it wrong to be motivated by that reward?
- 💡 Can you put into words the connection between the first part of vs. 45 and vs. 48? (If you agree there is a connection)

### **Application**

- Do you have enemies? If so, how can you forgive them?
- Jesus wants us to focus on God and his treatment of us to get motivation/power to treat others the same. What ways, this week, will you focus on Jesus? Write down one particular thing you will do, and next week we will check up on each other to see how we did.
- The cross is the ultimate example of forgiving your enemies (Romans 5:10-12 and following verses). Have you ever thought of yourself as having once been an enemy of God? Does God's forgiveness of you motivate you to forgive others?
- Where do you find yourself judging and condemning others? How can you avoid that attitude?
- What is a way to be prophetic (i.e. speak out against evil) without being judgmental? Is it possible?

**End with Prayer.** Pray, forgiving your enemies, either past or present. Be as specific as you feel comfortable. Pray for those who have wronged you, hurt you, frustrated you, or treated you badly.

## “Jesus and Giving”

## Small Group Lesson 7

Matthew 6:1-4, 19-24

October 30

**Icebreaker question.** In what ways are you the same as your childhood self? Give everyone a chance to answer.

**Checking in.** Last week we said we would do one thing to stay focused on Jesus. How did you do? Let people share if they followed through on their commitment.

**Prayer.** This week, we are going to pray for issues that are going on in society, since the election is right before us. If someone has an urgent prayer request, lift that as well. Read 1 Timothy 2:1-3 “I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—<sup>2</sup> for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.<sup>3</sup> This is good, and pleases God our Savior.”

- Coming elections and those currently elected
- Issues of national importance
- Our local city and schools
- Pressing issues from the news
- Children and youth

**The Inductive Bible Study Method.** Following the steps of

observation , interpretation , and application  helps us get at the original meaning and responsibly bring it to speak to our current day. Let’s ask the Spirit to guide us as we get into God’s word. (The leader should pray or have someone pray).

### Observation

-  Have someone read aloud Matthew 6:1-4, 19-24.
-  What is the warning that Jesus gives in 6:1?
-  What is the reason for the warning?

- 🔍 What was commonplace in Jesus' day that made him give the warning? (vss. 2-4)
- 🔍 What reasons does Jesus give for not laying up treasures on earth? (There are at least two reasons)
- 🔍 What two masters would Jesus have us choose between?

### **Interpretation**

- 💡 What is the nature of the "reward" that Jesus is speaking about in verse 1? What is the reward in verse 2?
- 💡 What does it mean to not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing?
- 💡 Regarding verse 21: How does it work? Is it that, if you place your treasure somewhere, that your heart will follow? Or is it that if your heart is in a certain place, your treasure will follow?
- 💡 Verses 22 and 23 are especially difficult to understand. How is the eye the lamp of the body? What do these verses mean?
  - Look at Study Bible notes.
  - Do an Internet search to see what comes up.
  - What can you conclude for certain about the meaning of these verses?

### **Application**

- How is your heart torn between God and money?
- When you give, are you seeking God's reward or are you doing it in private?
- It is common to struggle with money because we find it to be our security and a statement of our worth. How can we live so that our security and identity are in God?
- For private reflection during the week: Do you need to give more? Who or what would God lead you to give to?

## **“How to Pray”**

## **Small Group Lesson 8**

Matthew 6:5-18, 7:7-11

November 6

**Icebreaker question.** If you could go any place in the world, where would you go, and why? How long would you stay there? Give everyone a chance to answer.

**Prayer.** Take some time for personal prayer requests. Lift up anything that is weighing heavily on your heart. As you feel comfortable, pray for one another.

**Into the word we go!** One prayer of ours, as pastors at St. Paul’s, is that everyone in our church would feel very comfortable opening up their Bible. The things we pastors do to prepare these studies isn’t magic, it can be learned. Go through the steps of observation, interpretation, and application and you can even write your own study. (You will get better with practice) 😊

### **Observation**

- 🔍 Have someone read Matthew 6:5-18, 7:7-11 aloud.
- 🔍 What sticks out to you in this passage?
- 🔍 What are some heart attitudes that Jesus rebukes in this passage, with regard to prayer?
- 🔍 What are some heart attitudes of which Jesus approves?

### **Interpretation**

- 💡 Is verse 6:6 to be followed literally, or is there instead some other point Jesus is making? What is that point?
- 💡 What is an example of an “empty phrase?”
- 💡 How does the Lord’s prayer serve as a counterexample to the “empty phrases” of the hypocrites?

- 💡 How do you interpret Matthew 6:14-15 in light of the other teachings of Scripture, that we are saved by God’s grace, apart from works?
  - Hint: Avoid releasing the tension too easily. If this is a challenging passage, let it challenge you!
  - Romans 8:29-30 will help explain the relationship of forgiveness and obedience in the Christian life.
- 💡 Why would a “hypocrite” want everyone to know they are fasting?
- 💡 What is the point of fasting?
  - Consider Acts 13:4 and 14:23 – the church fasted before making big decisions to seek God’s answer.
- 💡 According to Matthew 7:7-11, what is the confidence we should have when we pray?
- 💡 How do we understand this verse in light of the fact that some prayers seem to go “unanswered” – and God may seem silent?

### **Application**

- Take a moment to evaluate your prayer life. Is there any way that you could grow in it?
- What is a way to have the confident expectation in your heart that God will answer your prayer with a “fish”, not a “snake”?
- Do you remember any times that God answered a prayer in a particularly powerful way? Would you be open to sharing them with the group?
- Most Christians do not fast regularly. Is this a part of your spiritual life at all? Would you be open to it?
- How can the Lord’s prayer teach us to pray? Is there one part of it which you may want to meditate on this next week?

## ***“Don’t Worry!”***

## **Small Group Lesson 9**

Matthew 6:25-34

November 13

**Icebreaker question.** Who is your personal hero? What did he or she do that makes you look up to him or her?

**Prayer.** This will be our last meeting until small groups meet up again in January. So let’s pray for each other, and if anyone has any prayers for the holidays (good time with family, a particular family member, etc.) let’s lift that up.

**Into the word we go!** Do you have the hang of this yet? I hope so! Anyone can study the Bible if they take the time to make careful observation, ask good questions of interpretation (what it means), and then figures out how it can apply to life today.

### **Observation**

-  Make a list of the imperatives in this passage (at least 5)
-  How many reasons can you find in this passage for not worrying? What are they?
-  Make a list of everything that God is in control of according to this passage.
-  What does God promise in this passage?

### **Interpretation**

-  Why does Jesus give so many reasons in this passage about worry? Does that indicate anything about worry?
-  The Bible speaks often about diligent planning and avoiding pitfalls. (Proverbs 21:5, Romans 15:23-24, James 4:15, Luke 14:28). How is worrying similar to planning? How is it different?
-  How do you reconcile Jesus’ teaching with regards to planning and worry?

- 💡 Why does Jesus call us “O ye of little faith?”
- 💡 Why is worry a sin? What is its spiritual root cause?

### **Application**

- What is it that worries you the most?
- Are you in control of this thing which worries you?
- In this passage, we learn that focusing on God and his sovereign care of us will help us to not worry. What ways, this week, will you focus on God’s care?
- If we don’t have to worry, then what are we free to do with that time instead?
- How can you seek God’s kingdom and his righteousness?
- Read Psalm 37:25. How did King David (and the Holy Spirit speaking through him) try to encourage God’s people to trust that God would provide?
  - Is there a way you need to hear that encouragement?
  - Is there a person to whom you could give that encouragement?
- Compare this passage to Philippians 4:8-9. What do they have in common to help us not worry?