



Sermon on the Mount

MATTHEW 5-7

A DISCIPLESHIP CURRICULUM FOR STUDENTS

DISCIPLESHIP FOUNDATIONS

Defining Discipleship

There are many ways to grow as a disciple of Jesus. When we say “discipleship” we mean a time in which mentors intentionally invest in others—in partnership with the Holy Spirit—to help their mentees grow in their relationship with Christ, their Christlike character, and their mission in Christ. So discipleship is growing:

- in Christ,
- like Christ,
- and with Christ,

with the help of a mentor, and in step with the Holy Spirit.

Even though we will have real human ups and downs, Christians who are in a discipling group will experience growth and change over time. Believers in Jesus need each other to grow more like Christ. By deciding to become a mentor, you are joining Jesus, Paul, and generations of Christians that have said “yes” to the greatest mission of all time: making disciples (Matt 28:19).

God’s Work in Discipleship

God, in the power of the Gospel and through the Holy Spirit, works through Scripture, Prayer, and Community in growing a disciple of Jesus in Christlikeness.

Jesus is the one who transforms people. All people have sinned and fallen short of God’s glory, but thankfully, the Lord has not left us in this way. God, in Jesus, came to rescue humanity and restore this broken world. Jesus lived the perfect life, died a death that we deserve, rose from the dead—defeating sin’s power—and ascended into heaven where he continues to work out his purposes today. Jesus is Lord. As we come to trust in and live for God, we receive new life both today and into eternity. God gives us the Holy Spirit to live in us, uniting us with Christ, and giving us his presence and the power to live an abundant life for his purposes and glory.



HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Three Main Parts

Each study guide has three main parts: 1) the Bible passage, 2) “Before the Study,” and 3) “The Study.” This is divided to help you prepare and engage well.



Bible Passage

The first part of each week’s study is the Bible passage. It is set up for both: 1) your use as you prepare for the study, and 2) the student’s use during the study. You will need to make 2 copies each week of the Bible passage: one for you, and one for the student. The passage will be the anchor and center point of each meeting. Study it with intentionality, even as you rest in its truth and grace. Your willingness to disciple students is far more important than having a lot of “smart” thoughts about the passage. Look first to Jesus’ word to you and then walk that same good road with students. Trust that God is already at work and that the word won’t come back “empty” (Isaiah 55:11).



“BEFORE THE STUDY”

Before each week’s leader’s guide, there is a “Before the Study” page. It includes discipleship goals (with prayer points), Scripture context and background info, and time for your reflection.

Read this section carefully to help you get the most out of each week’s passage and additional discipleship material. Create a checklist like the one below to make your discipleship prep time effective.

WEEKLY PREPARATION CHECKLIST

- Pray that the material will speak to the student.
- Study the Passage for the week and allow God to apply it to your life.
- Read the “Before the Study” Notes.
- Read the Session and decide if you will follow the script exactly or adapt the wording as needed.
- Text students: confirm and remind the time/place.
- Print Session Notes and the necessary handouts.
- Pray for your continued mindfulness to God’s leading throughout your week.





"THE STUDY"

TIMING

The study itself has time stamps on each major heading. Each session is designed for 60 minutes. Many discipleship sessions are closer to 50 minutes to allow for time in between classes and appointments. Other disciplers like to have 90-minute appointments. Adjust this guide to suit your context.

While 30 minutes is usually allotted in the Scripture portion of the study, think about breaking that down to 5 minutes for "Entering the Passage", 15 minutes for "Discussing the Passage", and 10 minutes for "Applying the Passage." This provides the best balance of engaging the content and Scripture well, while also having space to apply it.



INTRODUCING THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Matthew Chapters 5-7

MAIN THEME AND SUMMARY

Following Christ: The Blessing of Humility, Forgiveness, and Service.

From the beginning, God created a good world and empowered people to share with others. God's people had the Old Testament laws to give them this wisdom and guidance on how to love God and love others. Yet God's people lost their way. Instead of following the letter of the Law, Jesus came to call people to follow the Spirit of the Law. The Sermon on the Mount is one place where we see Jesus clearly preaching this message.

In one of the longest and most well-known sermons in history, Jesus defines what it means to truly follow the greatest two commandments: "Love the Lord your God... and love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:37-40). His answer shows blessings above and beyond merely following rigid rules. Being blessed, Jesus tells us, is actually a thoughtful life of seeking the kingdom of God.

He begins with "the Beatitudes," one of the most well-known parts of the sermon itself. "Blessed are..." he says and lists a life full of traits and situations that seem to be the opposite of being blessed: hunger, grief, humility, persecution. This life can look radically different from our own lives, no matter where we're from or how we think about God.

As Jesus preaches to a crowd of thousands of people (with no microphone!), his message is directed to the ones who already claim to be his followers. Followers of Jesus would eventually be called Christians, meaning "little Christs," who are called to live a life like Christ's through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

Studying the Sermon on the Mount is our chance to join the crowd and listen as Jesus unpacks topics like judgment, prayer, sexuality, anxiety, money, integrity, salvation, and more.



Let's pray together that this study gives students space to look deeply into their hearts, minds, and communities as we think about who we are and who we are becoming as we pursue a blessed life in and through the Lord.

BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

Jesus gave this famous speech to his followers and a large crowd, including women and children. Just as Moses had brought God's laws down from Mount Sinai, Jesus was now teaching on a mountain. But Jesus wasn't just explaining the old rules - he was showing people a new and better way to live. He took the basic ideas from the Ten Commandments and showed how following Him leads to a fuller, more meaningful life.



GETTING STARTED AS A DISCIPLER

- Read the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7), start to finish in one setting. Set aside an hour or so to do this.
- Take notes of your questions and observations and themes as you go.
- Watch this Bible Project video: [Sermon on the Mount Overview](#)
- If you have remaining questions, find a trusted mentor or commentary to address them.
- Begin preparing for week 1.



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WEEK ONE | LAUNCH WEEK

HOLY SPIRIT-FUELED GROWTH

Sermon on the Mount

MATTHEW 5-7

A DISCIPLESHIP CURRICULUM FOR STUDENTS

BEFORE THE STUDY: LEADER REFLECTION & PREP TIME

Discipler's Guide

DESIRED OUTCOMES



PRAY THAT STUDENTS:

- will be able to focus and be guided by the Holy Spirit during your time together
- will gain a deeper understanding of how they belong in the community of God
- will be challenged to live counter-culturally in their communities on campus
- will see the value and comfort of a kingdom where “the last will be first, and the first will be last” (Matthew 20:16)

PREPARING FOR THE DISCUSSION TIME

THINKING THROUGH THE SEMESTER:

Spend some time reflecting on how you and your students might experience dissonance with the radical character traits of the kingdom of God described here.

Remember that different backgrounds affect how different people experience the passage. Allow room for plenty of their questions and “active listening” (reflecting their ideas/feelings back to them without judgment) on your part.

REFLECT

- What does discipleship mean to you? This time will be focused on the student, but you will find you'll grow and change as well. How are you hoping that the Holy Spirit will make you more like Jesus during these 12 weeks?
- Reflect on the planning you'll need to do for a successful time of discipleship. When and where will you meet? How will you connect with the student to check in and make sure the plan is clear?



THE STUDY: LAUNCH WEEK

Holy Spirit-Fueled Growth | 55 Minutes



DEVELOP COMMUNITY 10 MIN

COMMUNITY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Say: "I'm looking forward to getting to know you better over these 12 weeks. Thank you for agreeing to this time of discipling. Here are a couple questions we can use to get to know each other:

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS TO CHOOSE FROM

Choose a few questions from the ones below:

- "What was one exciting thing and one challenging thing that happened over break/over the last month?"
- "Tell me more about your story. What is your faith background? What people in your life have helped shape you?"
- "On a scale of 1-10, how was your break for spiritual growth?"
- "How is your semester going so far?"
- "What is an area of your life that God is shaping you in?"



PREPARING FOR THE SEMESTER 30 MIN

CASTING VISION FOR DISCIPLESHIP

Say: "Most of college focuses on what you do: What major do you choose, will you be part of organizations, and will you lead in those spaces? What classes will you take, and what will you do after graduation? The list goes on and on. God cares about what we do with our time, but he's even more interested in who we are becoming. Are we becoming more like Jesus as we grow in our relationship with God? Are we partnering and being led by the Holy Spirit in our day-to-day lives? So during our time together, we'll talk about these three main ideas to see how you're doing."

Say: "First, we'll talk about Intimacy in Christ. Intimacy tracks our desires: the things we want most in life. So during our time together, we'll talk about how to align our heart's desires with God's."

Say: "Next, we'll talk about growing our character like Christ. Our actions affect our character. It shows through how we act, talk, and treat others. Growing in character like Jesus, we'll talk about how to live as he lived."

Next, say: "Finally, we'll talk about the idea of being in mission with Christ. Because mission tracks our purpose, it shows the direction of our lives. In discussing mission with Christ, we learn how to partner with Jesus and align our leadership with his mission."



As we look to Scripture to reflect on how we are growing in intimacy, character, and mission, we will grow and change. I'm looking forward to seeing you deepen your relationship with Jesus, ready to rest in him and share the good news with others."

Say: "Let's talk about our expectations for this time together. Here are some questions to think through:

Give the student time to discuss each question with you:

- What are you hoping to gain from our meetings?
- How would you like to be growing in relationship with Christ this semester?
- How are you feeling about our time together?
- Nervous, excited, not sure?

SETTING EXPECTATIONS FOR DISCIPLESHIP

Say: "Having clear expectations will help us get the most out of our time together. Let's commit to: sharing vulnerably, praying for each other, encouraging, and challenging each other. It's also important to seek God outside of our time together, letting our discipleship times frame our individual relationship with God. Growth requires both individual and community times, and it's my hope that our time together will give you the space you need to partner with the Holy Spirit in seeking God.

We'll also commit to being on time to our meetings and communicating if an emergency comes up.

DISCUSS

Say: "How do you feel about the vision and these expectations? What parts feel comfortable to you? What do you think will be most challenging for you? Why? How can I support you during this time?"

After the student has shared, **say:** "Thank you for sharing with me. Let's move to a time of prayer."



PRAYER 10 MIN

PARTNER PRAYER

Say: "It makes sense to pray: to ask God to make us more like Jesus. During this partner prayer, you share 1-2 prayer requests, for about 3 minutes. I'll pray for about 2 minutes, and then we'll switch. After you pray for about 2 minutes, I'll end our prayer time."

After the student prays, end the prayer time by saying: "In Jesus' name, Amen."





NEXT STEPS 5 MIN

AFFIRMATIONS & END

Then say: “Thank you for being here. I’m looking forward to starting our Bible study together next time.”

Once the student has left, also remember to fill out the “Notes, Prayer Requests, Growth” section in the chart you printed out, and pray for the student.





WEEK TWO | UNUSUAL BLESSINGS

MATTHEW 5:1-12

Sermon on the Mount

MATTHEW 5-7

A DISCIPLESHIP CURRICULUM FOR STUDENTS



MATTHEW 5:1-12

Unusual Blessings

¹ Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, ² and he began to teach them. He said: ³“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. ⁵ Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. ⁶ Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. ⁷ Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. ⁸ Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. ⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. ¹⁰ Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹ “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.



BEFORE THE STUDY: LEADER REFLECTION & PREP TIME



Unusual Blessings

MATTHEW 5:1-12

DESIRED OUTCOMES

PRAY THAT STUDENTS:

- will be able to focus and be guided by the Holy Spirit during your time together.
- will gain a deeper understanding of how they belong in the community of God.
- are challenged to live counter-culturally in their communities on campus.
- will see the value and comfort of a kingdom where “the last will be first, and the first will be last” (Matthew 20:16).



BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

KINGDOM OF HEAVEN (V. 3)

- Jesus began his mission by talking about the kingdom of Heaven, or the kingdom of God (Matthew 4:17).
- The Kingdom of God represents God’s rule and reign breaking into our world. When Jesus announced that “the Kingdom of God is at hand,” it was accompanied by demonstrations of God’s power through healings and deliverances—showing God’s will being done on earth as it is in heaven.
- Through honoring and obeying God, we can follow his example.

Therefore, entering the kingdom of Heaven can be synonymous with following Jesus.

BEATITUDES & BLESSINGS

- The word beatitudes means “blessings.”
- These blessings are promises of a future when God’s kingdom comes fully.
- The sermon might also have brought immediate comfort to a people suffering under an unjust human king—the Caesar—who arrogantly claimed himself to be a god.

POOR IN SPIRIT (V 3)

- The “poor in spirit” could be described as people with no spiritual assets who know they are spiritually bankrupt.
- Jesus used the Greek word for the truly poor in this verse to indicate those who cannot earn anything and must rely on others’ generosity.





PREPARING FOR THE DISCUSSION TIME

THINKING THROUGH THE PASSAGE

Spend some time reflecting on how you and your students might experience dissonance with the radical character traits of the kingdom of God described here.

Remember that different backgrounds affect how different people experience the passage. Allow room for plenty of their questions and “active listening” (reflecting their ideas/feelings back to them without judgment) on your part.



Also remember to fill out the “Weekly Goal” section in the chart you printed out, and pray over that goal.

Before meeting with your student, set a specific weekly goal for discipleship growth. For example:

- “Help the student understand the countercultural nature of Kingdom values”
- “Guide the student in exploring what it means to be ‘poor in spirit’ in their context”
- “Support the student in identifying one area where they can practice being a peacemaker this week”

During your meeting, discuss progress on previous goals and set new ones together. Record these in your tracking chart for prayer and follow-up.



THE STUDY: UNUSUAL BLESSINGS



Matthew 5:1-12 | 60 Minutes

DEVELOP COMMUNITY 10 MIN

COMMUNITY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Say: “Imagine you are posting photos or videos of your friends, your community, or your campus on Instagram or TikTok. Maybe you’re texting pictures to your family. What do these posts and texts look like? Who is in the photos, and why did you choose these images?”



SCRIPTURE 35 MIN

ENTERING THE PASSAGE

MEMORY VERSES (OPTIONAL)

Because Scripture is one of the main ways that Jesus disciplines us, memorization can be a powerful way to experience growth. Tips for memorization:

- break the passage up into smaller parts
- post the passage where you can see it often--the fridge, mirrors, phone background, etc.
- read it out loud several times
- text or DM it to your memory partner daily

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. (Matthew 5:3-8)

SCRIPTURE CONTEXT

To begin studying the Scripture together, give the student some context on the passage.

Say: “Jesus gave the Sermon on the Mount to massive crowds, but it was mostly directed toward his disciples and current followers. This part of the Sermon on the Mount is known as the Beatitudes, which means “Blessings.” There’s a plot twist, though. Jesus’ definition of blessings is very different than what the people expected.”

CONTEXT DISCUSSION QUESTION

Say: “What makes you feel truly blessed?”



SCRIPTURE

After the student shares, say: "Thanks for sharing. Let's read the passage to find out Jesus' perspective."



Read the passage aloud.

After you've read the passage aloud, say: "Now we'll spend three minutes silently looking for observations, repetitions, questions, etc."

DISCUSS

After the three minutes, allow the student to share one or two observations. Say: "What one or two things really stood out to you?"

POSSIBLE OBSERVATIONS TO CHOOSE FROM

After the student has shared, if they didn't mention any of the observations below, choose one or two to share with them. **Choose from the list below and say:** "That's great. We can also see these couple of ideas in the passage..."

- "Blessed" is repeated nine times.
- "For theirs is the kingdom of heaven" is repeated twice (v.3 & v.10).
- Command to "rejoice and be glad" (v. 12).
- Both positive (or more desirable) and negative (or less desirable) attributes are considered blessed. For example, "pure in heart" (more desirable) vs. "poor in spirit" (less desirable) are blessed (v.3 & v.8).

After you've both shared observations, check in with the student. Say: "Did the passage bring up any questions for you?"

PASSAGE QUESTIONS TO CHOOSE FROM

After the student has shared, if they didn't mention any of the questions below, choose one or two to share with them. **Choose from the list below and say:** "Great--here are some other questions we can look into..."

Blessed (v. 3-8)

- What does it mean to be poor in spirit?
- Out of everything Jesus could have started his sermon with, why do you think He decided to start with "blessed are the poor in spirit?"



- Why does Jesus name the kingdom of heaven twice?
- What do you think Jesus means when He uses the word “blessed?” Kingdom of Heaven (v. 9-12)
- What is Jesus communicating about his kingdom through these actions and characteristics? (mourning, meekness, merciful etc.)
- Why is Jesus calling them to rejoice and be glad in the midst of persecution?

DISCUSS

Choose three or four of the brainstormed questions to discuss. Focus most on the student’s questions. Don’t worry if the student gets distracted—studying the Bible is a skill that improves with time. **If you need to get back on track, you can say:** “That’s interesting. Do you mind if we focus on these questions during the time we have left in this section of our study together?”

SUMMARY/BIG IDEA

Say: “Let’s sum up this passage of Scripture before we discuss applying it to our everyday lives. Jesus’ message is certainly different than what the crowd was expecting to hear! The poor, those who mourn, the meek and merciful are not the type of people that society praises, much less tries to be.

But Jesus is offering a different way, one which goes directly to the heart of God. When we follow this countercultural path of the kingdom of God, we find ourselves in community with Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Choose a couple of questions from below that fit the discussion you’ve had. Say: “Now let’s talk about applying this passage to our daily lives. Let’s think about what it means to be blessed in our current time and society.”

- How can you align yourself with Jesus’ standards of what it means to be blessed?
- What are one or two of your personal values or goals you might need to reevaluate in order to surrender to Jesus’ way of living?
- Jesus’ ends with a promise of a future reality: a greater and everlasting kingdom. Does this promise feel like good news to you today?



PRAYER 10 MIN

LISTENING PRAYER

Say: “It makes sense to move to a time of prayer as we ask God to make us more like Jesus. During this listening prayer, we’ll take time to listen to God twice, for about thirty seconds each. Holy Spirit, please speak to us.”



Part One (Affirmation)

Say to the student: "For part one, ask God, 'What positive characteristics do you already see in me?' As you ask and listen, I'll give you 30 seconds of silence."

Using a watch or phone on silent, give the student 30 seconds of silence.

Part Two (Challenge)

Then say to the student: "Great. Now ask God, 'Which characteristic are you calling me to pursue this semester?' I'll give you another 30 seconds to listen to what God might be saying to you."

Give another 30 seconds of silence.

Then say: "Did you hear anything? It's totally normal if you didn't. Is there a characteristic that God has pointed out to you or has come to mind?"



NEXT STEPS 5 MIN

AFFIRMATIONS & END

After the student has shared, say: "Thank you for sharing, and for making it a priority to be disciplined. Anything else you'd like to share?"

Give them time to share, then say: "I'm looking forward to our next Bible study together. Please be thinking until then about what you're learning about God's blessings so you can share with me next time."

Once the student has left, also remember to fill out the "Notes, Prayer Requests, Growth" section in the chart you printed out, and pray for the student.





WEEK THREE | SERVANT LEADERSHIP

MATTHEW 5:13-16

Sermon on the Mount

MATTHEW 5-7

A DISCIPLESHIP CURRICULUM FOR STUDENTS



MATTHEW 5:13-16

Servant Leadership

¹³ “You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. ¹⁴ “You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden.

¹⁵ Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl.

Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.



BEFORE THE STUDY: LEADER REFLECTION & PREP TIME



Servant Leadership

MATTHEW 5:13-16

DESIRED OUTCOMES

PRAY THAT STUDENTS:

- will feel God's presence and be encouraged by it.
- will gain a deeper understanding of the Scripture.
- will feel encouragement to talk about Jesus.
- will have a vision for being counter-cultural like Jesus on campus
- will follow Jesus into doing good deeds with humility.



BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

SALT (V. 13)

- In Jesus' day, salt was a valued commodity, even serving as payment to some Roman soldiers.
- Salt was used to provide flavor, preserve meats, and slow decay.

THROWN OUT AND TRAMPLED (V. 13)

- Salt in ancient times could become contaminated with other minerals, causing it to lose its effectiveness
- That made the "un-salty" salt worthless, except for lining paths, like the way we use gravel.



PREPARING FOR THE DISCUSSION TIME

THINKING THROUGH THE PASSAGE:

Note: "Salt of the earth" has taken on a common meaning of being down-to-earth or hardworking. Students may initially think of this meaning, so be prepared to discuss the original context.

While "sharing the gospel" might make some students nervous, try asking them to take one step in letting their "light shine" in their communities. Small steps of risk and obedience will stretch the students' muscles for a lifetime of "running with perseverance" with Jesus (Hebrews 12:1).



Reflect on your experiences sharing the gospel, and which story you'd like to tell to students. You will have a specific time in the prayer section of the study where you can share about how you want to focus on being salt and light.



Also remember to fill out the "Weekly Goal" section in the chart you printed out, and pray over that goal.



THE STUDY: SERVANT LEADERSHIP



Matthew 5:13-16 | 60 Minutes

DEVELOP COMMUNITY 10 MIN

COMMUNITY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Say: "Describe a time you were at dinner and felt like the food needed some help. What was that experience like? What spices or sauces did you wish you could add?"



SCRIPTURE 35 MIN

ENTERING THE PASSAGE

MEMORY VERSES (OPTIONAL)

Because scripture is one of the main ways that Jesus disciplines us, memorization can be a powerful way to experience growth. Tips for memorization:

- break the passage up into smaller parts
- post the passage where you can see it often--the fridge, mirrors, phone background, etc.
- read it out loud several times
- text or DM it to your memory partner daily

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. (Matthew 5:3-8)

SCRIPTURE CONTEXT

To begin studying the Scripture together, give the student some context on the passage. **Say:** "Jesus used a lot of analogies and examples to help his followers understand his message. In this passage, he talks about two very common things: salt and light. Everyone would understand relying on oil lamps to see after sundown. The people would also be very familiar with the uses of salt in food preparation. Jesus wasn't just giving home design advice, though. At the end of this section, he also makes a direct connection to a very important part of the Christian life."

CONTEXT DISCUSSION QUESTION

Say: "What do you think of when you hear the phrase 'salt and light'?"



SCRIPTURE

After the student shares, say: "Great--now let's see what the passage tells us about Jesus' thoughts on these common household items."



Read the passage aloud.

After you've read the passage aloud, say: "Now we'll spend three minutes silently looking for observations, repetitions, questions, etc."

DISCUSS

After the three minutes, allow the student to share one or two observations. Say: "What one or two things really stood out to you?"

POSSIBLE OBSERVATIONS TO CHOOSE FROM

After the student has shared, if they didn't mention any of the observations below, choose one or two to share with them. **Choose from the list below and say:** "Sure! We can also see some of these things in the passage..."

- Directly calling people "salt" and "light" instead of comparing people to salt and light (v. 13 & 14).
- Consistent imagery with light, town on hill, lamp, and light inside a house (v. 14 & 15).
- There is a relationship between light shining and good deeds (v. 16).
- There is a relationship between good deeds and how the passage ends: the Father being glorified (v. 16).

After you've both shared observations, check in with the student. Say:

"Did the passage bring up any questions for you?"

PASSAGE QUESTIONS TO CHOOSE FROM

After the student has shared, if they didn't mention any of the questions below, choose one or two to share with them. **Choose from the list below and say:** "Great--here are some other questions to discuss..."

Salt and Light (v. 13-16)

- Why is salt keeping its saltiness so crucial?
- Why is Jesus calling His people "the salt of the earth?"



- Compare and contrast the purposes of both salt and light. What does letting “your light shine before others” really mean?
- What is the difference between doing good deeds to be seen (and admired) and doing good deeds so that God is glorified?

DISCUSS

Choose three or four of the brainstormed questions to discuss. Focus most on the student’s questions. Don’t worry if the student gets distracted—studying the Bible is a skill that improves with time. **If you need to get back on track, you can say:** “That’s interesting. Do you mind if we focus on these questions during the time we have left in this section of our study together?”

SUMMARY/BIG IDEA

Say: “Let’s summarize this passage and then discuss how we can apply it. It’s interesting that Jesus isn’t saying his followers need to try to be like salt and light. Instead, he’s saying what’s already true: we are salt and we are light to the world around us.

Not only were salt and light common items that everyone would understand, Jesus used them as examples because they bring change to whatever interacts with them. Light means that darkness is gone, and salt means that food is tastier and safer.

Jesus wants his followers to be easy-to-understand examples that stand out and change the world for the better.”

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Choose a couple of questions from below that fit the discussion you’ve had. Say: “So how can we apply this to our everyday life? Let’s talk about how and why we share our faith.”

- If we’re the “salt of the earth” and the “light of the world,” it seems like we’re not supposed to keep our faith to ourselves. But it can be tempting. How are you tempted to stay silent when you feel that you should speak? How are you tempted to talk too much when you could be listening?
- What do you think could happen if you were more open about your faith with others? Or if you already are, what would it look like to listen to others’ thoughts more?
- Jesus is calling his followers to stand out and shine for a couple of reasons: both for the benefit of people and God’s glory shining out.

What areas of your Christian walk do you find tempting to seek your glory above God’s glory? How can you seek him first?





PRAYER 10 MIN

ASKING FOR GUIDANCE

Say: "Let's ask God to help us be salt and light in specific ways. We'll take about two minutes to brainstorm how we can let our light shine this coming week. You can take notes in your phone or on paper. I'll let you know when the two minutes is up."

Use your silenced phone or a watch to keep track of time. Be prepared to share some ways you want to be salt and light, too. If the student seems stuck, you can offer some of the following ideas:

- Send texts or DMs to some friends/family asking for specific prayer requests.
- Ask how you can help someone in their daily life. For example: if you have a car, offering rides; studying together; sharing meals together, etc.
- Send an encouraging note to some classmates or church folks you don't know very well.
- Ask someone if they would share their thoughts about faith with you.

Be ready to listen first, and only share as the Holy Spirit leads.

After the two minutes is up, say: "Looking at your list, what's one practical way that you want to do good deeds that show God's glory?"

Once the student has shared, share one thing on your list. Then say: "When things seem weird or impossible or scary is the best time to pray about them. Let's do that now. Would you be willing to pray for me out loud?"

I can start the prayer and then say 'Amen' after you pray."

Hopefully the student will be okay with praying out loud for you. Give them space to say no, but also encourage them to say yes! This is part of your role in discipling them.

Unsure how to pray? You can pray by saying: "Lord, please bless [student's name] with confidence and bravery to [do the thing they're committing to]. Help them to find one next step and follow through. And let them always remember that God will be glorified no matter what they do or don't do. May that good news give them the freedom to be open about their faith."



NEXT STEPS 5 MIN

AFFIRMATIONS & END

After the time of prayer, say: "Thank you for praying with me. I would love to hear how that went for you. Also, last time, I asked you to think about what your blessings are. Is there anything you'd like to share?"



Give them space, as it might take them time to think through your question or they might be shy. When it's time to move on, **say:** "Thank you so much for being here and being open with me. I'm looking forward to our next Bible study together."

Once the student has left, also remember to fill out the "Notes, Prayer Requests, Growth" section in the chart you printed out, and pray for the student.





WEEK FOUR | CONNECTING OLD & NEW

MATTHEW 5:17-20

Sermon on the Mount

MATTHEW 5-7

A DISCIPLESHIP CURRICULUM FOR STUDENTS



MATTHEW 5:17-20

Connecting Old & New

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 tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. 19 Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 20 For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.



BEFORE THE STUDY: LEADER REFLECTION & PREP TIME



Connecting Old & New

MATTHEW 5:17-20

DESIRED OUTCOMES

PRAY THAT STUDENTS:

- will focus on what the Holy Spirit is showing them in the passage.
- will be encouraged that their righteousness comes from Jesus.
- would intentionally reflect on how their character matches the character of God.
- will leave with practical ideas on how to align their actions with Christ-like character.



BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

LAW OF THE PROPHETS (V 17)

- The Law and the Prophets refers to the entire Hebrew Bible, or the Old Testament. This is the Bible that Jesus read and preached from.

ABOLISH (V.17)

- To “abolish” the law means to disobey the law and its authority.
- In Hebrew culture, if anyone disobeyed the law it was grounds for complete expulsion from the Jewish community.
- When Jesus challenged their interpretation of the law, he was going against established culture.

FULFILL & ACCOMPLISH (V.17, 18)

- To fulfill the law can mean “to bring out a full meaning.” In this case, Jesus is talking about the true meaning and intent of the Old Testament.
- The Jewish people were awaiting a prophet like Moses (Deut. 34:10-12) to lead them out of exile and reestablish God’s Kingdom. Jesus fulfilled this expectation in an unexpected way.

SMALLEST LETTER (V 18)

- The smallest letter refers to the word yod, the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet. Jesus uses this illustration to show the importance of even the smallest part of the law.

PHARISEES AND TEACHERS OF THE LAW (V. 20)

- Pharisees were religious leaders, experts of the law, and culture-makers.
- They had the Old Testament and all its laws memorized, but Jesus shows how their hearts were far from God.





PREPARING FOR THE DISCUSSION TIME

THINKING THROUGH THE PASSAGE:

Students may have a lot of questions about the culture and interpretations of this passage. Encourage deeper study while maintaining focus on the passage during your time together.

To learn more about Biblical Law and how to interpret it through a modern-day lens, watch this [Bible Project Video](#) for more info. You can even recommend it to students, if you think it would be helpful to them.

Also remember to fill out the “Weekly Goal” section in the chart you printed out, and pray over that goal.



THE STUDY: CONNECTING OLD & NEW



Matthew 5:17-20 | 60 Minutes

DEVELOP COMMUNITY: 10 MIN

COMMUNITY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Say: "Think of someone you admire for their good deeds. Who is this person and what specific qualities do you most appreciate about them?"



SCRIPTURE 35 MIN

ENTERING THE PASSAGE

MEMORY VERSES (OPTIONAL)

Because Scripture is one of the main ways that Jesus disciples us, memorization can be a powerful way to experience growth. Tips for memorization:

- break the passage up into smaller parts
- post the passage where you can see it often--the fridge, mirrors, phone background, etc.
- read it out loud several times
- text or DM it to your memory partner daily

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. (Matthew 5:3-8)

SCRIPTURE CONTEXT

To begin studying the Scripture together, give the student some context on the passage. **Say:** "To begin studying the Scripture together, give the student some context on the passage."

Say: "In this section of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is making it clear that he is not trying to 'abolish' the Law and the Prophets. Instead, He came to fulfill them and reveal their true meaning. He wants to transform not just individuals, but the entire community."

CONTEXT DISCUSSION QUESTION

Say: "What do you think of when you hear the word 'law'?"

SCRIPTURE

After the student shares, say: "Right--now let's see what Jesus thinks of the Biblical law."





Read the passage aloud.

After you've read the passage aloud, say: "Now we'll spend three minutes silently looking for observations, repetitions, questions, etc."

DISCUSS

After the three minutes, allow the student to share one or two observations. Say: "What are a couple of observations that you have?"

POSSIBLE OBSERVATIONS TO CHOOSE FROM

- Jesus is focused on actually practicing the law (v. 19)
- Jesus calls out the Pharisees (v. 20)
- The kingdom of Heaven is repeated three times (v 19 & 20)

After you've both shared observations, check in with the student. **Say:** "What questions do you have about this passage?"

PASSAGE QUESTIONS TO CHOOSE FROM

After the student has shared, if they didn't mention any of the questions below, choose one or two to share with them. **Choose from the list below and say:** "Good questions. We can also ask a few of these..."

To Fulfill or Abolish? (v. 17)

- Why might people of the day think that Jesus was going to abolish the law?
- How might Jesus' audience have responded to His message?

The Smallest Letter (v. 18-19)

- What does Jesus' attention to the "smallest letter" reveal about both individual commands and the whole Law?

Called Out (v. 20)

- How could someone's righteousness surpass that of the religious leaders?
- Why is this the entry requirement for the kingdom of Heaven?
- What hope does this offer to those who feel inadequate?

DISCUSS

Choose three or four of the brainstormed questions to discuss. Focus most on the student's questions. Don't worry if the student gets distracted—studying the Bible is a skill that improves with time. **If you need to get back on track, you can say:** "Sure--is it okay if we look at these questions now?"



SUMMARY/BIG IDEA

Say: “Let’s look at the main idea of this passage before we look at applying it to our lives. To the Jewish people the law was their national constitution, marriage contract with God, and story of their liberation from Egypt. To disobey or try to change it was blasphemous and could harm the entire community.

But Jesus didn’t want to change the law, he wanted to transform the community! Through Him, we receive the Holy Spirit’s help to have God’s law written on our hearts (Jeremiah 31:33 and 2 Corinthians 3:3).”

Jesus does something amazing, though—he affirms the need for perfection under the law, but the entirety of the Sermon on the Mount shows that what he most cares about is the heart of the law. He doesn’t want harsh rule followers, he wants his people to rely on him. Because Jesus fulfilled the law perfectly, we can receive help from the Holy Spirit to follow Jesus in writing God’s law on our hearts (Jeremiah 31:33 and 2 Corinthians 3:3).”

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Choose questions that build on your previous discussion. Say: “Let’s explore how this applies to our lives today.”

- How do you navigate the balance between following God’s commands and avoiding legalism?
- Where might you struggle with aligning your actions with your beliefs? What could help bridge that gap?
- How can you participate in building a community that reflects God’s character?
- Where do you want to receive forgiveness and healing? What might it look like to let God soften your heart in those areas?



PRAYER 10 MIN

THE “ACTS” PRAYER

Say: “Today we’ll do a style of prayer called the ‘ACTS’ prayer. Each letter stands for an important part of prayer: Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication.

When we want to align our hearts and actions with God’s will, we need to be honest with Him. The ACTS prayer helps us structure our time with God in a meaningful way.

While there are many ways to pray, ACTS prayer is a structured way to help us identify God’s goodness, confess our sins, thank God, and ask for what we need. I’ll walk us through each step.

I’ll guide us through each section, and you can pray either silently or aloud as you feel comfortable.



For this section, 'A for adoration,' we'll give Jesus praise based on his characteristics, not gifts. We'll thank the Lord for gifts during the third part, 'T for Thanksgiving.'"

Pause for a second, and then say: "God, you are so good to us. We adore you because you are..."

Especially if the student seems to need ideas, you can also fill in the sentence with some of God's character traits. For example:

- holy
- loving
- wise
- powerful
- caring
- just

Next, move to Confession. Say to the student: "Lord, please bring to mind anything You know we need to be honest with You about. We'll take 30 seconds of quiet reflection."

Pause again for a second, then say: "Lord, we fall short of your perfect law. We need forgiveness from Jesus. Please forgive us for these sins..."

Time the 30 seconds using a watch or a phone on silent.

After the 30 seconds, say: "Now we'll move on to 'T for Thanksgiving.' Here is where we thank God for specific gifts. Again, I will start the sentence, and you can complete the thought." **Pause again for a second, and then say:** "God, you are so good to us. We thank you for things like..."

You can also fill in the sentence with some of the things you're grateful for. This can help the student understand the prayer and feel more comfortable with it.

For example:

- opportunities on campus
- friends and family
- health and safety
- a fun activity

Finally, move to Supplication. Say to the student: "Supplication is asking for what we need spiritually, physically, mentally, and emotionally. Basically, we're asking for God to supply all our needs. I'll start, and then you can fill in your prayers, either silently or out loud. After about 30 seconds, I'll lead us in finishing our prayer time."



Pause again and then say, "God, would you help us to be more like Jesus? Please meet our needs so we can praise you. We ask you for..."

By this time, the student should be familiar with both the structure of this prayer, as well as the idea of asking God for help. **Give about 30 seconds before you finish up the prayer time.**

Say: "Lord, we thank you that you hear us and you love us. Make us more like Jesus. In his name we pray, Amen."



NEXT STEPS 5 MIN

AFFIRMATIONS & END

After the time of prayer, say: "I'm glad we got to pray together. Do you have any questions about the 'ACTS' style of prayer? Any other questions?"

Give a little space--it's okay if they don't have any questions! **When it's time to move on, say:** "Would you try using the ACTS prayer format this week? I'd love to hear about your experience when we meet next time."

Before the student leaves, confirm your next meeting time and any action steps discussed. Once the student has left, also remember to fill out the "Notes, Prayer Requests, Growth" section in the chart you printed out, and pray for the student.





WEEK FIVE | HEART, MIND, & SOUL

MATTHEW 5:21-30

Sermon on the Mount

MATTHEW 5-7

A DISCIPLESHIP CURRICULUM FOR STUDENTS



MATTHEW 5:21-30

Heart, Mind, & Soul

²¹ “You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ ²² But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother, sister, or sibling will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother, sister, or sibling, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell.

²³ “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother, sister, or sibling has something against you, ²⁴ leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift. ²⁵ “Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still together on the way, or your adversary may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. ²⁶ Truly I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.

²⁷ “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ ²⁸ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹ If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. ³⁰ And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.



BEFORE THE STUDY: LEADER REFLECTION & PREP TIME



Heart, Mind, & Soul

MATTHEW 5:21-30

DESIRED OUTCOMES

PRAY THAT STUDENTS:

- will be able to be honest and open during the study.
- will reflect on their own hearts, desires, and how they are reflecting Christ.
- will take one practical step to actively respond to the Holy Spirit's leading



BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

RACA (V. 22)

- Raca can be translated as “empty headed or worthless.” This insult is more extreme than calling someone foolish.
- Some Jewish teachings argued that internal anger that cultivates or meditates on an act of violence goes against the spirit of God in the same way as the physical act itself.
- Jesus affirmed this view, and the importance of taking it seriously.

RECONCILE (V. 24)

- In the Old Testament, if someone had mistreated or oppressed their neighbor and did not seek reconciliation and repayment, God would not accept their physical offerings at the temple.
- Sacrifices and gifts can only be offered with a pure heart to be accepted from God.

ADULTERY & LUSTING (V. 27, 28)

- While many in Jewish culture blamed women’s “seductiveness,” Jesus only emphasizes the responsibility of the one lusting in this passage.
- Jesus shows that lusting (fantasizing, obsessing about, etc.) is ultimately the same as adultery.



PREPARING FOR THE DISCUSSION TIME

THINKING THROUGH THE PASSAGE:

Reflect on how you interpret v. 29-30, and why. Is there a time when you needed to be extreme to protect yourself from sin? How did that go?

If students take a more literal interpretation of v. 29-30, encourage them to look at the underlying message of the sermon. Is Jesus literally telling people to cut off limbs? Most likely



not. Rather, he is creating a shocking metaphor illustrating the cost of sin taking over our hearts and minds. Encourage students to think of ways they can take sin seriously without going over the top or being legalistic.



Also remember to fill out the “Weekly Goal” section in the chart you printed out, and pray over that goal.



THE STUDY: HEART, MIND, & SOUL



Matthew 5:21-30 | 60 Minutes

DEVELOP COMMUNITY 5 MIN

COMMUNITY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Say: “Last time, we did the “ACTS” prayer: Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication. Did you try it? How did that go?”

If they did try it, let them share how it went. If they didn’t try the ACTS prayer, encourage them by saying: “Some types of prayer work better for different people. We’ll try a new type today, and I’ll help you be accountable to trying it this coming week.”



SCRIPTURE 40 MIN

ENTERING THE PASSAGE

MEMORY VERSES (OPTIONAL)

Because Scripture is one of the main ways that Jesus discipled us, memorization can be a powerful way to experience growth. Tips for memorization:

- break the passage up into smaller parts
- post the passage where you can see it often--the fridge, mirrors, phone background, etc.
- read it out loud several times
- text or DM it to your memory partner daily

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. (Matthew 5:3-8)

SCRIPTURE CONTEXT

To begin studying the Scripture together, give the student some context on the passage. **Say:** “In this passage, Jesus continues His thoughts on the state of our hearts being more important than rigidly following the letter of the law. He gives specific examples about people’s hearts, minds, and souls: murder, greed, and adultery.

Again, His interpretation of the law would have been shocking to His listeners. Followers of the law were used to their outwardly good deeds being “enough. But Jesus says that our inner life affects our outer actions.”



CONTEXT DISCUSSION QUESTION

Say: “We’ve all done it--called someone worthless. When you’ve done that in the past, how did it affect your relationship with that person? How do you think they felt about it?”

SCRIPTURE

After the student shares, say: “It’s not easy to be honest about our failings and I appreciate you sharing with me. Let’s look at these verses to find out what Jesus has to say.”



Read the passage aloud.

After you’ve read the passage aloud, say: “Now we’ll spend three minutes silently looking for observations, repetitions, questions, etc.”

DISCUSS

After the three minutes, allow the student to share one or two observations. **Say:** “What one or two things really stood out to you?”

POSSIBLE OBSERVATIONS TO CHOOSE FROM

After the student has shared, if they didn’t mention any of the observations below, choose one or two to share with them. **Choose from the list below and say:** “Thanks for sharing those. We can also see these couple of ideas in the passage...”

- Jesus compares murder to anger (v 21-22).
- Jesus addresses relationships and reconciliation (v 23-27).
- Jesus compares adultery to lust (v 27).
- Issues of the heart include anger, bitterness, resentment, unforgiveness, and lust (v 21-27).

After you’ve both shared observations, check in with the student. **Say:** “Did the passage bring up any questions for you?”

PASSAGE QUESTIONS TO CHOOSE FROM

After the student has shared, if they didn’t mention any of the questions below, choose one or two to share with them. **Choose from the list below and say:** “Right, and here are a few other questions we can discuss...”

Matters of the Heart, Mind, and Soul (v. 21-22, 27-28)

- Why does Jesus compare murder to anger?



- Why does Jesus compare adultery to lust? Response to Heart, Mind, and Soul Sin (v. 23-26, 29-30)
- Why does Jesus address reconciliation and broken relationships as he is discussing murder and adultery? What is he trying to communicate?
- Jesus says it's better to cut off one part of your body than for the whole body to go into hell. He doesn't mean it literally, so why does Jesus say this? (note: Jesus is intentionally using exaggerated language to point out the necessity in addressing sin. He's not trying to encourage self-mutilation but rather removing anything from one's life that causes one to sin)

DISCUSS

Choose three or four of the brainstormed questions to discuss. Focus most on the student's questions. Don't worry if the student gets distracted—studying the Bible is a skill that improves with time. **If you need to get back on track, you can say:** "That's interesting. Do you mind if we focus on these questions during the time we have left in this section of our study together?"

SUMMARY/BIG IDEA

Say: "Let's sum up what we've read and then discuss applying it to our everyday lives. While murder, adultery, anger, lust, and broken relationships might seem to be different issues, Jesus weaves them together to illustrate his core message: everything starts with what's going on in our heart, mind, and soul.

Jesus points out that large, horrendous acts against our neighbors don't just happen overnight. Sin first takes root in our inner beings, bleeding into our actions until we cross lines and sin against others—and ultimately, against God.

But Jesus shows us a different way. When we address inner issues immediately, in the same way we would take care of physical problems, our reliance on the Holy Spirit can help us heal our outward actions as well.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Choose a couple of questions from below that fit the discussion you've had. Say: "So let's talk about applying this passage to our lives. If we're not meant to literally cut off our body parts, what is Jesus asking?"

- Jesus redefines righteousness in a way that goes beyond external obedience to the law and addresses the deeper issues of the heart. If following Jesus is more than simple rule following, let's get to the heart of what He's talking about:
 1. In my heart where have I made an object out of another human to be taken at will instead of honorable images of God?
 2. What could growth in the area of self-control look like with respect to this desire?



3. Where in my sexuality has Jesus invited me to a life that is fully integrated—where thoughts, desires, and actions are in harmony with God’s will?
 - If lust isn’t your primary struggle, what is it? What about anger, judgment of others, unforgiveness, or greed? How do you deal with that?
 - How could your life look differently if you actively practiced forgiveness, anger without sin (Ephesians 4:26), generosity, and kindness in your thoughts about others? How could that change your relationships with others and with God?
 - What’s one thing you can commit to, right now, to help you pursue God’s heart? What can you do in this moment to confess, receive forgiveness, and pursue righteousness? Could that be part of being blessed?

Give the student about one minute to share out loud or think silently. **Then say:** “One thing we can do right now is to pray. Today we’ll do a simple type of prayer called the Examen.”



PRAYER 10 MIN

THE EXAMEN

Say: “While Jesus is bigger than our feelings about Him, our feelings are a gift from Him—they’re an important part of who we are.

So I’ll read these questions and give you about 30 seconds after each one to reflect out loud or silently.

1. Where have you felt your character reflect God most this week?”
Give the student about 30 seconds, and then say:
2. In contrast, where have you felt like your character reflects God the least?”
Give them another 30 seconds, and then say: “Now let’s think about our experience of God.
3. This past week, where did you feel like the Holy Spirit was most present?” In about 30 seconds, say: “Finally, think about this question:
4. Where did it feel like the Lord was absent?”



NEXT STEPS 5 MIN

AFFIRMATIONS & END

After the student has shared, say: “That was some heavy stuff. Take a deep breath with me and be encouraged that no matter what we feel, God is with us and for us (Acts 17:27, Romans 8:34).

Slowly breathe in and out together a few times. **Say:** “When we meet again, I’d like to hear your experience of this Examen prayer, asking these four questions:

1. Where did I feel like I was reflecting Jesus
2. Where did I feel like I wasn’t being like Him



3. Where did I sense God's presence
4. Where did I feel like the Lord was absent?

I'm looking forward to our next Bible study together and grateful that you are willing to be disciplined."

Once the student has left, also remember to fill out the "Notes, Prayer Requests, Growth" section in the chart you printed out, and pray for the student.





WEEK SIX | HANDS, FEET, & SPEECH

MATTHEW 5:31-42

Sermon on the Mount

MATTHEW 5-7

A DISCIPLESHIP CURRICULUM FOR STUDENTS



MATTHEW 5:31-42

Hands, Feet, & Speech

³¹ "It has been said, 'Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.'³² But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, makes her the victim of adultery, and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

³³ "Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not break your oath, but fulfill to the Lord the vows you have made.'³⁴ But I tell you, do not swear an oath at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne;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 swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black.³⁷ All you need to say is simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.

³⁸ "You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.'³⁹ But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also.⁴⁰ And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well.⁴¹ If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles.⁴² Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.



BEFORE THE STUDY: LEADER REFLECTION & PREP TIME



Hands, Feet, & Speech

MATTHEW 5:31-42

DESIRED OUTCOMES

PRAY THAT STUDENTS:

- will gain a deeper understanding of how their inner being is connected to their outward actions.
- would reflect on their own words and integrity.
- will also learn to set healthy boundaries with their commitments and their generosity.



BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

REMARriage AND ADULTERY (V. 31)

- During this time, divorce was allowed for almost anything. Men could break their oaths and marriage commitments at any time.
- This led to women being victims who often needed to remarry for financial survival and basic needs.
- Jesus elevates fidelity and takes a highly countercultural view by only allowing divorce when one partner has already broken their marriage covenant, making remarriage in other cases adulterous.
- This becomes one example of commitment and seeking the heart of God in all ways of life.

OATHS (V. 34)

- In the broader culture, oaths were thought to summon the witness of a (false) god. They assumed that this god would someday avenge any broken oaths or false testimonies.
- Because of this, people would swear by all kinds of things other than God to avoid any wrath from any deities while also showing their word was "true."
- Eventually, people broke their oaths so much that religious leaders had to decide what kinds of oaths were completely binding and which ones weren't. Again, there was an unhealthy dependence on the letter of the law, while missing God's heart.

BLACK AND WHITE HAIR (V. 36)

- Most people in Jewish Palestine had black or dark hair, unless they were older and their hair had started to turn gray or white.
- This phrase would have referred to the concept of God's control over aging and life in general.



RIGHT CHEEK/CLOTHES (V. 39-40)

- Rather than being about damaging someone physically, a ‘blow on the right cheek’ was one of the most severe forms of insults in the ancient world.
- Because the poorest people at the time only had an inner and outer garment, the theft of a cloak would lead to legal retaliation, which would affect the community (as shown in last weeks’ passage—Matthew 5:25).

**PREPARING FOR THE DISCUSSION TIME***THINKING THROUGH THE PASSAGE:*

This passage may bring up difficult questions around marriage and divorce. Take some time to review the tips below. If and when students become distracted or upset by these controversial verses, you can help guide them toward the core point of the passage: God’s heart for wisdom, justice, and faithfulness in his people.

If you have students who do not raise these questions, you do not need to cover this information with them. Rather, use this background context and the discussion questions as needed.

Questions that students might ask:

1. Why does Jesus give an exception for adultery, but not other issues like abuse and neglect?

If the student asks this type of question, you could **say:** “There are two major interpretations of this passage. One is that sexual immorality and adultery are the only reasons for divorce, as shown in Matthew 19:9.

The other perspective is that adultery, neglect/abuse, and abandonment all fit together under the category of being unfaithful. We see this also reflected in Matthew 19:9, but also Exodus 21:10-11, 1 Corinthians 7:15, and other places.

This view seems to address the fullness of Scripture more. It also connects specifically to the Sermon on the Mount because Jesus is preaching here only on one part of the Hebrew Bible: Deuteronomy 24:1.

Zooming out from specific parts of this passage gives us the chance to see Jesus’ main point: the standard isn’t just for marriage, it’s for all areas of life.

What matters is the integrity of everyone’s word and character that can lead to a more healthy and just society.”

2. Why doesn’t Jesus talk about women’s character and choices? Why only focus on men? What if a woman marries a divorced man, or if the man is the one who is unfaithful?



If the student asks this type of question, you could **say:** “While this part of the Sermon on the Mount might seem one-sided, Jesus does address a larger perspective on divorce throughout the gospels. In Mark 10:10, we see that adultery applies to everyone involved in the marriage.

Jesus is also preaching here only on one part of the Hebrew Bible: Deuteronomy 24:1. So his sermon is specific to that context.”

If this discussion about marriage and divorce lasts for more than 10 minutes, or if they have remaining questions about this topic, you can **say:** “This is such an important discussion. Can we book a time, outside of our regular discipleship time, to discuss this more in-depth? I want to give your questions the time they deserve in the same way that we want to prioritize the Sermon on the Mount during this time. Thanks so much. Let’s head back to Matthew 5: 31-45.”

Also remember to fill out the “Weekly Goal” section in the chart you printed out, and pray over that goal.



THE STUDY: HANDS, FEET, & SPEECH



Matthew 5:31-37 | 60 Minutes

DEVELOP COMMUNITY 5 MIN

COMMUNITY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Say: “So how are you feeling about the Examen prayer? What about other actions you can take to help grow your heart, mind, and soul to be more like Jesus? What about growing your perspective on your body and words?”



SCRIPTURE 35 MIN

ENTERING THE PASSAGE

MEMORY VERSES (OPTIONAL)

Because Scripture is one of the main ways that Jesus disciples us, memorization can be a powerful way to experience growth. Tips for memorization:

- break the passage up into smaller parts
- post the passage where you can see it often--the fridge, mirrors, phone background, etc.
- read it out loud several times
- text or DM it to your memory partner daily

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. (Matthew 5:3-8)

SCRIPTURE CONTEXT

To begin studying the Scripture together, give the student some context on the passage. **Say:** “As Jesus continues to show how our inner and outer lives are intricately connected, he brings up more specific examples for the topics of faithful sexuality, promises, justice, and generosity. Some of these examples might apply to our modern lives, and some might seem outdated. Some parts of this passage might apply to our everyday lives directly, and others might not seem to fit where we are in life.”

CONTEXT DISCUSSION QUESTION

Say: “What types of things make you think about the importance of your words and actions?”



SCRIPTURE

After the student shares, say: "Makes sense--let's look at the Scripture now to see what Jesus thinks about our actions, bodies, and words."



Read the passage aloud.

After you've read the passage aloud, say: "Now we'll spend three minutes silently looking for observations, repetitions, questions, etc."

DISCUSS

After the three minutes, allow the student to share one or two observations. **Say:** "What parts did you have specific observations about?"

POSSIBLE OBSERVATIONS TO CHOOSE FROM

After the student has shared, if they didn't mention any of the observations below, choose one or two to share with them. **Choose from the list below and say:** "Great. We can also see some of these things in the passage..."

- Jesus quotes Jewish laws around divorce and oaths (v 31, 33)
- Jesus holds people accountable to these laws, even to a greater standard (v. 32).
- There are strong examples going above and beyond in Jesus' instructions (v. 39-41).
After you've both shared observations, check in with the student. Say: "Did the passage bring up any questions for you?"

PASSAGE QUESTIONS TO CHOOSE FROM

After the student has shared, if they didn't mention any of the questions below, choose one or two to share with them. **Choose from the list below and say:** "Great--here are some other questions to discuss..."

Adultery (v. 31-32)

- Why does Jesus specifically bring up marriage and adultery in this passage?

Oaths and Promises (v. 33-37)

- Why does Jesus care so much about oaths and vows? What does this say about how the culture at the time handled their "word"?
- What is similar in our time and cultural context? What's different?
- What's the core message Jesus is trying to convey? Justice and Generosity (v. 38-42)



- Why shouldn't we resist an evil person? Is Jesus saying we have to let ourselves be victims of abuse?
- When do we know we have given enough? Is there a way to have healthy boundaries that balance generosity and justice?

Turning the Other Cheek (v 38-43)

- Why does Jesus tell his followers to respond to others in this way?

DISCUSS

Choose three or four of the brainstormed questions to discuss. Focus most on the student's questions. Don't worry if the student gets distracted—studying the Bible is a skill that improves with time. If you need to get back on track, you can **say**: "That's interesting. Do you mind if we focus on these questions during the time we have left in this section of our study together?"

SUMMARY/BIG IDEA

Say: "Let's summarize this passage and then discuss how we can apply it. This is a complicated part of the Sermon on the Mount. In the previous passage, Jesus challenged his followers to focus on where all sin comes from: the inward life. He doesn't leave it there, though. He still supports the law that says our actions must be perfect before the Lord.

In a world without modern legal contracts, a person's verbal promise meant everything to how society functioned. Businesses, family relationships, temples, and many other areas all balanced on people's integrity.

Rather than making it more complicated, Jesus actually gets to the heart of the matter: our words and actions must be honest and faithful. This is how we see the kingdom of God coming into the here and now. When Jesus' disciples, past and present, show truthfulness and love, people praise God's name.

In fact, Jesus says it's better not to swear an oath at all. Why? Because swearing a vow in God's name is not the point. The point is to grow as a trustworthy disciple of God."

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Choose a couple of questions from below that fit the discussion you've had. **Say**: "So how can we apply this to our everyday life?"

- In our day and age, promises look different, but they're still important. Whether it's committing to a leadership role or a friend in need, our word reflects on Jesus. Where do you need to ask for forgiveness in a way that points to Christ's salvation? Where do you need to be more consistent in keeping your word?



- With so many events and people around us, it can be easy to get lost and overcommit. Jesus wants us to be able to say “yes” to things, but also to say “no” when needed. Being realistic, where can you graciously decline an activity or opportunity so that you can really show up for your commitments?
- What do healthy boundaries look like in your life? How can you live sacrificially for Christ without taking actual abuse? How can your community help you discern those boundaries?



PRAYER 10 MIN

“POPCORN” PRAYER

Say: “Today we’ll do “popcorn” prayer where we see what “pops” up.

When it’s done in a small group, each person can take a turn or decline to pray out loud.

Since we’re focusing on growing as disciples of Christ and this is our sixth meeting, let’s both commit to praying out loud as the Holy Spirit leads us. I’ll go first and then leave space for you. Pauses and silence are okay! You don’t have to force anything. You can share once or more during this time.

After four minutes is up, I’ll say “Amen” to end our prayer time.

Use your silenced phone or a watch to keep track of time. Try to use short sentences (remember Matthew 6:5-8!) to allow room for the student to share. Simple prayers will also encourage hesitant students that they can pray this way, too.

If the student does seem hesitant, pray for them! Silently **say:** Lord, please help [student’s name] to feel your presence. Comfort their worries and give them the freedom to share out loud. Holy Spirit, speak to and through them that they might grow more like Jesus.



NEXT STEPS 5 MIN

AFFIRMATIONS & END

After the time of prayer, say: “Thank you for praying with me, and committing to this time of discipleship. How can I be praying for you this coming week?”

Give them space to figure out their requests. **When they’re done, say:** “I’m looking forward to our next Bible study together. See you then!”

As soon as you’re done, write down their prayer requests so that you can:

1. pray for them throughout the week and
2. follow up at your next discipleship meeting.

Once the student has left, also remember to fill out the rest of the “Notes, Prayer Requests, Growth” section in the chart you printed out, and continue praying for the student.





WEEK SEVEN | PERFECT LOVE

MATTHEW 5:43-48

Sermon on the Mount

MATTHEW 5-7

A DISCIPLESHIP CURRICULUM FOR STUDENTS



MATTHEW 5:43-48

Perfect Love

⁴³ “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’

⁴⁴ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵

that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. ⁴⁶

If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? ⁴⁷ And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? ⁴⁸ Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.



BEFORE THE STUDY: LEADER REFLECTION & PREP TIME



Perfect Love

MATTHEW 5:43-48

DESIRED OUTCOMES

PRAY THAT STUDENTS:

- will reflect honestly on how they are (or are not) loving people who are different from themselves.
- will identify one practical step of countercultural love they can take in their communities.
- will find freedom in knowing that they are made perfect in Christ.



BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

SUN & RAIN (V. 45)

- For this mostly agricultural society, weather could mean the difference between life and death. In our modern age, many folks don't feel this as clearly, but it's still true that our entire food system is affected by sun and rain.
- Jesus' listeners knew that their food and basic livelihoods depended on consistent sun and rain.

TAX COLLECTORS AND PAGANS (V. 46, 47)

- Tax collectors were notoriously corrupt, overcharging people so that they could pocket the difference. This made them wealthy at the expense of the people.
- Pagans, who followed false gods, were known for terrible religious practices including human sacrifice. God addresses this evil in Deuteronomy 18:9.
- So when Jesus mentions "enemies" to this crowd, these two groups would be at the top of the list.

BE PERFECT (V. 48)

- The command to "be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" was another way of saying, "be like God," (Leviticus 19:2).
- That's how God originally made us (Genesis 1:26-27), and in this context, Jesus is challenging the crowds to become more like the Lord by living out all the things he's been teaching in the Sermon on the Mount up until this point (Matthew 5:21-42).

WALKING A MILE (V. 41)

- At this time, Roman soldiers had the legal right to demand labor from any animals or local residents.



- Because of this, listeners may have felt some strong dissonance and discomfort in hearing Jesus' example of non-resistance and showing love to their oppressor (NT Commentary, pg. 59).



PREPARING FOR THE DISCUSSION TIME

THINKING THROUGH THE PASSAGE:

This passage can feel even more controversial than the previous one. Don't panic! Pray for God to guide you as you lead: to equip you and the students with wisdom, kindness, and patience.

Ask yourself what enemies you have and/or who you feel a lot of anger toward.

How does Jesus want to meet you in this? Trust him to help you stand for justice so that your anger doesn't become bitterness.

Pray the ACTS prayer for yourself. Adore God for being righteous. Confess the ways that you only love people like yourself. Give Thanksgiving to God for the sun & rain and your food & shelter. Submit to humble Supplication. Ask that you will know you are a good child already, because of what Jesus has done for us.

Ask that this truth will come through during your time with students.



THE STUDY: PERFECT LOVE



Matthew 5:38-48 | 60 Minutes

DEVELOP COMMUNITY 10 MIN

COMMUNITY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Say: "Describe a time someone went above and beyond for you for no apparent reason. What did they do for you, and how did that person make you feel?"



SCRIPTURE 35 MIN

ENTERING THE PASSAGE

MEMORY VERSES (OPTIONAL)

Because scripture is one of the main ways that Jesus disciplines us, memorization can be a powerful way to experience growth. Tips for memorization:

- break the passage up into smaller parts
- post the passage where you can see it often--the fridge, mirrors, phone background, etc.
- read it out loud several times
- text or DM it to your memory partner daily

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. (Matthew 5:3-8)

SCRIPTURE CONTEXT

To begin studying the Scripture together, give the student some context on the passage.

Say: "As Jesus continues his sermon, he addresses more situations where his followers have the chance to be like Jesus and make countercultural decisions. In the areas of relationships, weather, money, and religion, Jesus gives clear examples of how we can act with humility and follow Jesus in his perfect ways.

CONTEXT DISCUSSION QUESTION

Say: "What's a countercultural decision you've made lately? Something that others thought was strange or unnecessary?"



SCRIPTURE

After the student shares, **say:** "Great--now let's see what the passage tells us about Jesus' thoughts on these common household items."



Read the passage aloud.

After you've read the passage aloud, say: "Now we'll spend three minutes silently looking for observations, repetitions, questions, etc."

DISCUSS

After the three minutes, allow the student to share one or two observations. **Say:** "What one or two things really stood out to you?"

POSSIBLE OBSERVATIONS TO CHOOSE FROM

After the student has shared, if they didn't mention any of the observations below, choose one or two to share with them. **Choose from the list below and say:** "Sure! We can also see some of these things in the passage..."

- "You heard what it was said" is repeated two times.
- Jesus uses some active words to describe what we should be doing. For example, "turn," "give," "hand over," and "love."
- He also uses some passive words that point to what God is doing in us: "be children" and "be perfect." After you've both shared observations, check in with the student. Say:

"Did the passage bring up any questions for you?"

PASSAGE QUESTIONS TO CHOOSE FROM

After the student has shared, if they didn't mention any of the questions below, choose one or two to share with them. **Choose from the list below and say:** "Interesting questions! Here are a few more that could be interesting to discuss."

Love Your Enemies (v. 44-45)

- What does Jesus mean by saying "love and pray for your enemies?" What would this look like? (v. 43)
- Why would Jesus tell the crowd to pray for those who persecute them? What might the original audience be feeling at that moment? (v. 44)
- Why does Jesus mention that God provides sun and rain to both good and evil people? What's the point? (v. 45)



You Love Just Like Them (v. 46-47)

- Why does Jesus bring up tax collectors and pagans? (v. 46-47)

Perfect Love (v. 48)

- Why would Jesus tell them to be perfect like their heavenly Father? How could that be possible? (v. 48)

DISCUSS

Choose three or four of the brainstormed questions to discuss. Focus most on the student's questions. Don't worry if the student gets distracted—studying the Bible is a skill that improves with time. **If you need to get back on track, you can say:** "Those are important questions-- maybe we can talk later. Do you mind if we focus on these questions during the time we have left in this section of our study together?"

SUMMARY/BIG IDEA

Say: "Let's summarize this passage and then discuss how we can apply it. Jesus tells the crowds to love perfectly. To love enemies who hate and hurt them. He is speaking to us as well. Perfect love doesn't just take care of friends and family. It goes above and beyond. Jesus explains that God the Father loves perfectly, that he goes above and beyond. He shows that the standard of the law is perfection, and that God's love has no limits.

That's exactly why Jesus came to the earth! To show what perfect love looks like: faith and sacrifice. God loves us perfectly, so we can love others the same way. Rather than thinking we are better than them, we see them through Jesus' eyes: as people he has created that need his forgiveness and love, just like we do.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Choose a couple of questions from below that fit the discussion you've had. Say: "So how can we apply this to our everyday life?"

- It's easy to love your friends. It's much more difficult to love those who do not love you back, or even those who hate or hurt you. If that's the standard, how can you love well but still have healthy boundaries?
- How might God be using people or situations in your life to strengthen your capacity to love? What would it practically look like to love people like Jesus loved us?
- Why do you think that humans tend to stay with others who are like us?
- Because perfect love is not just loving those who are like you but also those who are different, how can you pursue relationships with others? What do you do when folks are different ethnicities and nationalities? What about those with different political parties, family cultures, or religions?



- How would our communities be better if we appreciated, respected, and even celebrated our differences? What are practical ways we can show appreciation and love for those who are very different from us?



PRAYER 10 MIN

ASKING FOR GUIDANCE

Say: “Let’s ask God to help us love sacrificially, in very specific ways. We’ll take about two minutes to brainstorm one practical step for this coming week. You can take notes in your phone or on paper. I’ll let you know when the two minutes is up.”

Use your silenced phone or a watch to keep track of time. Be prepared to share your practical step, too. If the student seems stuck, you can offer some of the following ideas:

- Pray for wisdom to know who it is that God wants you to learn more about. Then pray for that person by name each day.
- Engage with someone that you don’t get along with, asking them about their life and how you might serve them.
- Find out how to get involved in your community, and then do it!

After the two minutes is up, say: “Looking at your list, what’s one practical way that you want to do good deeds that show God’s glory?” Once the student has shared, share one thing on your list. Then **say:**

“When things seem hard or frustrating, it’s a good time to pray about them. Let’s do that now. Would you be willing to pray for me out loud? I can start the prayer and then say ‘Amen’ after you pray.”

Hopefully the student will be okay with praying out loud for you, especially since this is the second time you’ve done this type of prayer, and it’s week seven. Give space to say no, and encourage them to say yes! This is part of discipling them.

Unsure how to pray? You can pray by saying: “Lord, please bless [student’s name] with confidence and bravery to [do the thing they’re committing to]. Help them to find one next step and follow through. And let them always know that you love them perfectly and will help them grow in their love for others.”



NEXT STEPS 5 MIN

AFFIRMATIONS & END

After the time of prayer, say: “Thank you for praying with me, and thank you so much for being here and being open with me. I’m looking forward to our next Bible study together, continuing to see how God is helping us grow in his perfect love.”

Once the student has left, also remember to fill out the “Notes, Prayer Requests, Growth” section in the chart you printed out, and pray for the student.





WEEK EIGHT | HUMBLE HABITS

MATTHEW 6:1-18

Sermon on the Mount

MATTHEW 5-7

A DISCIPLESHIP CURRICULUM FOR STUDENTS



MATTHEW 6:1-18

Humble Habits

“Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. ² “So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. ³ But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. ⁵ “And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. ⁶ But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. ⁷ And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. ⁸ Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.⁹

“This, then, is how you should pray: ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,¹⁰ your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. ¹¹ Give us today 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 the evil one.’ ¹⁴ For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵ But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

¹⁶ “When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. ¹⁷ But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, ¹⁸ so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.



BEFORE THE STUDY: LEADER REFLECTION & PREP TIME



Humble Habits

MATTHEW 6:1-18

DESIRED OUTCOMES

PRAY THAT STUDENTS:

- will identify where they might be doing the right things for the wrong reasons
- would see the Holy Spirit's role in helping them figure out their motivations.
- will learn that the greatest reward is being in the presence of God.



BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

HYPOCRITES (V. 2,5,16)

- 'Hypocrites' means "actors" in this context, not the modern meaning of "two-faced."
- Actors did things for the performance, and Jesus uses this theater-style language throughout this passage.
- Famous actors were announced during the play with a trumpet blast, they would stand up to act, and would "disfigure" their faces with make-up to exaggerate for the audience to see their expressions.

REWARDS (V. 2)

- "Reward" can have two different meanings in Greek.
- When he refers to a reward for the hypocrites, it means to 'pay for a service' (whether figuratively or literally).
- When Jesus uses it to describe the reward from the Father, it means to 'give up, give back, or restore'.

BABBLING (V. 7)

- "Babbling" translates to a "nonsense word," insinuating the idea of "gibberish".
- It's not so much about constant repetition, but about it being empty noise and trying to bully God into paying attention.



PREPARING FOR THE DISCUSSION TIME

THINKING THROUGH THE PASSAGE:

What has been your experience of the ups and downs of the Christian walk? How do you think that affects you as a leader? What humble habits do you have that you could share with your students?



Encourage students to compare and contrast the two notions of reward in this passage as they read, especially as they think about their relationships with the Lord and with others.

Also remember to fill out the “Weekly Goal” section in the chart you printed out, and pray over that goal.



THE STUDY: HUMBLE HABITS



Matthew 6:1-18 | 60 Minutes

DEVELOP COMMUNITY 5 MIN

COMMUNITY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Say: “Think back to a time when you met new people. When did you see someone being fake? What did it look like, and how did it make you feel? Did you feel tempted to be fake or exaggerate who you are?”



SCRIPTURE 35 MIN

ENTERING THE PASSAGE

MEMORY VERSES (OPTIONAL)

Because Scripture is one of the main ways that Jesus disciplines us, memorization can be a powerful way to experience growth. Tips for memorization:

- break the passage up into smaller parts
- post the passage where you can see it often--the fridge, mirrors, phone background, etc.
- read it out loud several times
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Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. (Matthew 5:3-8)

SCRIPTURE CONTEXT

To begin studying the Scripture together, give the student some context on the passage. **Say:** “Jesus used a lot of analogies and examples to help his followers understand his message. In this passage, he talks about two circumstances that his followers would have related to: theaters and pagan temples. He draws a contrast between the drama (in both circumstances) and the authenticity of the Christian life. Rather than worrying about appearances, Jesus shows his followers another way.”

CONTEXT DISCUSSION QUESTION

Say: “What do you think of when someone mentions the idea of a reward in the Christian faith?”



SCRIPTURE

After the student shares, say: “Great--now let’s see what the passage tells us about Jesus’ thoughts about actions and rewards.”



Read the passage aloud.

After you’ve read the passage aloud, say: “Now we’ll spend three minutes silently looking for observations, repetitions, questions, etc.”

DISCUSS

After the three minutes, allow the student to share one or two observations. Say: “What one or two things really stood out to you?”

POSSIBLE OBSERVATIONS TO CHOOSE FROM

After the student has shared, if they didn’t mention any of the observations below, choose one or two to share with them. **Choose from the list below and say:** “Right. Here are a couple other observations from this passage...”

- Reward is repeated 7 times.
- There is a contrast between a reward for hypocrites vs. a reward from the Father who sees what is done in secret (v. 2, 18).
- Hypocrites do things for show: play trumpets on street corners and disfigure their faces (v. 2,5,16)
- There is a contrast between being seen (ex: to be seen by them (v.1), to be honored by others (v.2), to be seen by others (v.5), to show others (v.16) – vs what is done in secret (v. 4,6,18). After you’ve both shared observations, check in with the student. Say: “Did the passage bring up any questions for you?”

PASSAGE QUESTIONS TO CHOOSE FROM

After the student has shared, if they didn’t mention any of the questions below, choose one or two to share with them. **Choose from the list below and say:** “Great--here are some other questions to discuss...”

Motivation Matters (v. 1-7, 13-17)

- How do the hypocrites give, pray, and fast? What is Jesus’ response to this?
- What is the motivation for the hypocrites when performing these “righteous” acts? What is Jesus communicating about the state of their hearts?



- What is the reward for the hypocrites in each example? What is the reward from the Father?

The Lord's Prayer (v. 9-13)

- Why does Jesus instruct the disciples to pray in this way?
- What does this prayer reveal about who God is?

DISCUSS

Choose three or four of the brainstormed questions to discuss. Focus most on the student's questions. Don't worry if the student gets distracted—studying the Bible is a skill that improves with time. **If you need to get back on track, you can say:** "That's interesting. Do you mind if we focus on these questions during the time we have left in this section of our study together?"

SUMMARY/BIG IDEA

Say: "During Jesus' time, 'hypocrite' was actually another term for actors: people skilled at putting on a show for others to see. It was their job!

But Jesus says that's no way to be in the kingdom of God. Why? Because acting only leaves one reward: approval and applause from those watching the show. While giving to the needy, prayer, and fasting were all central elements in Jewish religion and important for the disciples, Jesus argues that it's not just about doing the right things, rather it's all about the heart behind the action.

And when the heart is in the right place, the greatest reward is found. So, there are two ways to practice righteousness: Both are seen, both are rewarded, but only one leaves us with the ultimate reward of a restored relationship with the Father."

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Choose a couple of questions from below that fit the discussion you've had. **Say:** "So how can we apply this to our everyday life? Let's talk about how and why we seek God in prayer."

- While they were technically doing what God wanted, their motivation was in the wrong place. Where in your life are you doing the right things for the wrong reasons? Consider leadership, volunteering, even social media.
- What does it look like to do spiritual things in "secret" for God, not for the show?
- How can you keep doing good things with the right motivation? What healthy, humble spiritual habits do you already have (prayer, Bible reading, community, etc.)?
- What spiritual habits would you like to add (possibly meditation, giving, fasting, etc.)?
- If praying/being alone with the Father gives us the greatest reward, what does that say about him? About us?





PRAYER 15 MIN

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Say: "Let's pray the way Jesus taught his disciples. I'll read a section of the prayer with a little explanation, and then you'll pray something specific to match it. It's similar in some ways to the ACTS prayer.

If at any time you have a question or need more time, that's great!

Remember, prayer is a conversation with the Father—it's not about what others think. So take the time and space you need to seek God during this time. Ready?" Give the student a moment to get settled and/or ask questions. Then **say:** "'Our Father in heaven, we praise your name because you are...'"

If the student seems confused or stuck, you can prompt them by saying: "Choose one or two of God's characteristics to praise God for, such as his holiness or his patience with his followers. I can go first. God, we praise you because you are strong."

After the student prays, say: "For this section, we'll pray for the people of God across the world. You can choose another country, missionaries you know, or even the churches in your community."

'Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth like it is in heaven.' We pray for your people... Again, if the student seems confused or stuck, you can prompt them further by saying: "God's kingdom is all over the world, and we want to see believers everywhere grow in Christ. Is there a specific church you'd like to pray for right now?"

After the student prays, say: "Great, let's keep praying. 'Give us today our daily bread.' Please meet our needs, like..."

If the student seems confused or stuck, you can help them by saying: "We can share our needs with God, both big and small. I can go first. God, would you help me grow in seeking you first? And would you help me with my classes?"

After the student prays, say: "Great, here's the last section we'll do of the Lord's Prayer. 'Forgive us for our sins, like we've forgiven others for sinning against us. And help us resist temptation and the evil one.' Father, please forgive me for..."

If the student seems confused or stuck, especially in a vulnerable part of the prayer, you can help them by saying: "Confessing our sins can be scary, but it's one of the humble habits we need to grow in. If you can go first, even silently,

I'll also pray for forgiveness for something, then we'll say 'Amen' together. This part of the prayer can be tricky, so give the student a little time—about 30 seconds—and then pray out loud: "God, please forgive us for the ways we worry about what others think. Help us remember your forgiveness and love. In Jesus' name we pray together, Amen."



NEXT STEPS 5 MIN

AFFIRMATIONS & END

After the time of prayer, say: “Thank you for praying with me. I would love to hear how that went for you. I know it can be a little awkward, so I’m grateful that you were willing to try it. As you think about the different ways we’ve been praying, which one do you like best? Which one do you think you should work on as a humble habit?”

After they’ve had time to share, say: “I’m glad we got to be together to read, discuss, and pray. I’ll see you next time!” Once the student has left, also remember to fill out the “Notes, Prayer Requests, Growth” section in the chart you printed out, and pray for the student.





WEEK NINE | KINGDOM PRIORITIES

MATTHEW 6:19-34

Sermon on the Mount

MATTHEW 5-7

A DISCIPLESHIP CURRICULUM FOR STUDENTS



MATTHEW 6:19-34

Kingdom Priorities

¹⁹ “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, 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. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light. ²³ But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness! ²⁴ “No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

²⁵ “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? ²⁷ Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? ²⁸ “And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. ²⁹ Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. ³⁰ If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? ³¹ So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ³² For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³ But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. ³⁴ Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.



BEFORE THE STUDY: LEADER REFLECTION & PREP TIME



Kingdom Priorities

MATTHEW 6:19-34

DESIRED OUTCOMES

PRAY THAT STUDENTS:

- would evaluate if they view God through a lens of abundance or scarcity.
- will ask themselves about situations that make them feel free to be generous, and what causes the opposite in them.
- will learn to be peacefully and sacrificially generous, as Christ first was for us.



BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

HEALTHY VS. UNHEALTHY EYES (V. 21-23)

- The Greek word for 'healthy' implies generosity, while the Greek for 'unhealthy' implies stinginess.
- A Rabbinic common saying referred to the "ayin tovah" (a good eye) or the "ayin ra'ah" (a bad eye), which referred to seeing the world through a good or bad lens—either expecting the best or the worst.
- Someone with a bad eye was stingy and turned away from others' needs; but someone with a good eye looked out for others and was generous to the poor.

PAGAN (V.32)

- Pagan was a term used to refer to anyone who did not believe in the one Jewish God.
- Pagans were viewed as faithless and anxious because they never knew if their gods were for them or against them.



PREPARING FOR THE DISCUSSION TIME

THINKING THROUGH THE PASSAGE:

Be sure to make time and space for personal reflection before leading this study. This will help you guide students as they unpack their own heart postures. For example, review your last bank statement, Venmo, your calendar, or what takes up most of your day. Where is your treasure? What has consumed most of your thoughts, money, and time this past week/month?

Be willing to share first and be vulnerable. This will allow an open floor for students to wrestle with how they view God: either from a posture of abundance or scarcity. Also remember to fill out the "Weekly Goal" section in the chart you printed out, and pray over that goal.



THE STUDY: KINGDOM PRIORITIES



Matthew 6:19-34 | 60 Minutes

DEVELOP COMMUNITY 10 MIN

COMMUNITY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Say: “Are you a glass-half-full or a glass-half-empty kind of person? Why? How does that affect how you relate to others?”



SCRIPTURE 35 MIN

ENTERING THE PASSAGE

MEMORY VERSES (OPTIONAL)

Because Scripture is one of the main ways that Jesus disciplines us, memorization can be a powerful way to experience growth. Tips for memorization:

- break the passage up into smaller parts
- post the passage where you can see it often--the fridge, mirrors, phone background, etc.
- read it out loud several times
- text or DM it to your memory partner daily

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. (Matthew 5:3-8)

SCRIPTURE CONTEXT

To begin studying the Scripture together, give the student some context on the passage. **Say:** “In this passage, Jesus gives further clarity on what the kingdom of heaven looks like, and what this means for his followers. God’s priorities are not our priorities, and Jesus (once again!) shows a different way.

Rather than being wasteful, selfish, or worried, we are invited to be thoughtful, service-oriented, and trusting. That can seem like a lot to ask, but that’s the good news! Jesus doesn’t expect us to do it on our own. In fact, we can’t do it on our own!

We can seek the kingdom first, knowing that God cares for us. Jesus’ listeners would have been familiar with the idea of God providing for their needs, but like us today, would still have worried about life, especially under unjust Roman rule. And, Jesus tells his listeners, when we seek him first, something amazing happens.”



CONTEXT DISCUSSION QUESTION

Say: “What do you think the kingdom of heaven is? Or another way to think about it is, what isn’t the kingdom of heaven?”

SCRIPTURE

After the student shares, say: “Now we’ll look at the passage and see what Jesus preaches about the kingdom and how to be part of it.”



Read the passage aloud.

After you’ve read the passage aloud, say: “Now we’ll spend three minutes silently looking for observations, repetitions, questions, etc.”

DISCUSS

After the three minutes, allow the student to share one or two observations. **Say:** “What are one or two things you noticed?”

POSSIBLE OBSERVATIONS TO CHOOSE FROM

After the student has shared, if they didn’t mention any of the observations below, choose one or two to share with them. **Choose from the list below and say:** “Sure, and here are a few other things we can see in this passage...”

- There is a contrast between treasures on earth (v. 19) vs. treasures in heaven (v. 20)
- The healthy eyes lead to light, while the unhealthy eyes lead to darkness (v. 21-23)
- Money and God are both masters, but we cannot serve both (v. 24)
- “Do not worry” is commanded three times
- Instead, the command to “seek first his kingdom and his righteousness” is followed with the promise of earthly things being provided (v. 33)

After you’ve both shared observations, check in with the student. **Say:** “Did the passage bring up any questions for you?”

PASSAGE QUESTIONS TO CHOOSE FROM

After the student has shared, if they didn’t mention any of the questions below, choose one or two to share with them. **Choose from the list below and say,** “Right, and here are a few other questions we could look at...”



Healthy Eyes (v. 19-24)

- What is the difference between treasures on earth and treasures in heaven, and what do they have to do with the heart?
- What does Jesus mean by a healthy or unhealthy eye? What does this have to do with money?
- Why does Jesus pit money and God against each other? Why can't both be served as masters, and what does this have to do with the heart?

Do Not Worry (v. 25-34)

- What is the connection between Jesus' caution on money, and his command "do not worry?"
- What is the pagan approach to life, and what does Jesus command his followers to do instead?
- What happens when the command "seek first his kingdom and his righteousness" is followed, and what does it reveal about who God is?

DISCUSS

Choose three or four of the brainstormed questions to discuss. Focus most on the student's questions. Don't worry if the student gets distracted—studying the Bible is a skill that improves with time. If you need to get back on track, you can **say**: "That's interesting. Do you mind if we focus on these questions during the time we have left in this section of our study together?"

BIG IDEA

Say: "At first glance, Jesus' sermon may seem all about money and worry. Makes sense, right? We can relate to the intersection of stress and finances. But then he pivots and brings our eyes into the picture too. Because the original Greek words tell us that healthy eyes are generous, and unhealthy eyes are stingy, it's a powerful reminder that our heart, mind, and soul posture affects our hands, feet, and words.

Jesus says that if someone is so focused on what they can get from life, then they have cloudy and compromised vision. They can't see God clearly because they want the best, but expect the worst. This naturally leads to worry, whether it's about food, clothes, or what will happen tomorrow. But Jesus offers a totally different approach for his audience, a 20/20 vision for seeing who God really is: abundant and generous.

And because God is generous, God's people can also be generous with what they've been given. Jesus tells his followers to prioritize God's kingdom first because in God's kingdom, there's always enough. Sometimes it doesn't feel that way, and the Lord understands that, too. 'Come to me,' says God, and 'I will give you rest' (Matthew 11:28)."



APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Choose a couple of questions from below that fit the conversation you've had. **Say:** "Let's talk now about how we can apply this to our day-to-day lives."

- Jesus says that no one can serve two masters. So how do we serve God but still exist in a world that mostly uses money (as opposed to bartering things)? How can we keep our focus straight?
- How do our cultural approaches to money affect your current view of money and your ability to be generous? What is one way you could practice generosity this week?
- Jesus tells us multiple times not to worry and to seek his kingdom first, but what does that actually look like?
- What do you worry about most, and why? How can you shift your eyes towards God's abundance and trust instead of these worries?
- What does it look like to trust God when money is an issue? What does it look like to not worry when our mental health is struggling?

**PRAYER 10 MIN***LISTENING PRAYER*

Say: "When we think about the real difficulties we face, the thing to do is seek God's kingdom in prayer! During this listening prayer, we'll take time to listen to God twice, for about thirty seconds each. Holy Spirit, please speak to us."

Part One (Affirmation)

Say to the student: "For part one, ask Jesus: 'Please show me how you see me.' These will be positive things because followers of Jesus are God's beloved children! As you ask and listen, I'll give you 30 seconds of silence."

Using a watch or phone on silent, give the student 30 seconds of silence.

Part Two (Challenge)

Then say to the student: "Great. Now ask God: 'Please show me the negative ways I see others. Jesus, please help me to see others through Your loving eyes. Holy Spirit, help me be gracious to others.' I'll give you another 30 seconds to listen to what God might be saying to you."

Give another 30 seconds of silence.

Then say: "Did you hear anything? It's totally normal if you didn't. If God did reveal something to you, was it an image, a Scripture, a sensation, a memory? Did it make you feel confused,



comforted, excited, discouraged? However it turned out, prayer is a chance to be in the Lord's presence and that's a very good thing."

NEXT STEPS 5 MIN

AFFIRMATIONS & END

After the time of prayer, say to the student: "I'm glad we got to be in the presence of God together. I'm grateful that you've committed to this discipleship time, and I look forward to seeing you next time."

Once the student has left, also remember to fill out the "Notes, Prayer Requests, Growth" section in the chart you printed out, and pray for the student.





WEEK TEN | GROWING IN COMMUNITY

MATTHEW 7:1-12

Sermon on the Mount

MATTHEW 5-7

A DISCIPLESHIP CURRICULUM FOR STUDENTS



MATTHEW 7:1-12

Growing In Community

¹ “Do not judge, or you too will be judged. ² For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. ³ “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother, sister, or sibling’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? ⁴ How can you say to your brother, sister, or sibling, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? ⁵ You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother, sister, or sibling’s eye.

⁶ “Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces. ⁷ “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. ⁹ “Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰ Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? ¹¹ If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! ¹² So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.



BEFORE THE STUDY: LEADER REFLECTION & PREP TIME



Growing In Community

MATTHEW 7:1-12

DESIRED OUTCOMES

PRAY THAT STUDENTS:

- would evaluate the health of their relationships with others.
- will examine the ways in which they interact with others in InterVarsity, church spaces, etc.
- will understand God's trustworthiness and care for them.



BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

JUDGMENT (V. 1-2)

- Jewish texts used a scale as a symbol for "the day of judgment," a time when everyone's actions would be weighed against God's holiness.
- In the Old Testament, God was opposed to unjust people, but especially unjust judges.

HYPOCRITES (V. 5)

- "Hypocrite" is from the same Greek word as in chapter 6, so the emphasis is still on being performative and trying to make oneself look impressive. We can also see how the modern word has come about—it's the insincerity and lack of humility that is the main problem. It's feeling one way, but acting another.

DOGS AND PIGS (V. 6)

- Dogs were considered unclean to Jewish people. At this time, dogs were not the cute pets we have today, but scavengers on the streets.
- Pigs were also an unclean animal, in part because they ate literally anything.
- Both animals could be dangerously aggressive to people.

BREAD & FISH (V. 9-10)

- Bread and fish were common food items in Jesus' time. They were basic staples that were essential to life.

LAW AND THE PROPHETS (V 12)

- The Law and the Prophets, or the Law, refers to the entire Hebrew Bible, or the Old Testament.
- This is the Bible that Jesus read.





PREPARING FOR THE DISCUSSION TIME

THINKING ABOUT THE PASSAGE:

This passage can be tricky in a discipleship relationship, especially if you've been exhorting students to really examine themselves and their motivations. It's also tricky as you consider your own growth as a leader. If you find yourself getting stuck in your own thoughts, don't panic. Take time out to pray and breathe and ask God to help you see yourself and the student with God's eyes.

You might also feel discouraged if the student doesn't seem to be responding much. Are you throwing your "pearls to pigs"? Remember the verse immediately after, which is often taken out of context—"ask and it will be given to you." So, ask for the growth of both you and the student.

Remember, no matter how you look at the passage (and be prepared for various interpretations!), the good news of Jesus' kingdom is that his people are the pearl of great price (Matthew 13:45-46), and he gave up everything to be with us! Nothing can crush or destroy the community of God.

Also remember to fill out the "Weekly Goal" section in the chart you printed out and pray over that goal.



THE STUDY: GROWING IN COMMUNITY



Matthew 7:1-12 | 60 Minutes

DEVELOP COMMUNITY 5 MIN

COMMUNITY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Say: “Have you ever asked someone for a kindness and received cruelty instead? Have you ever been disappointed by a holiday present you received? How did that make you feel about that person? How did you feel about yourself?”



SCRIPTURE 35 MIN

ENTERING THE PASSAGE

MEMORY VERSES (OPTIONAL)

Because Scripture is one of the main ways that Jesus disciplines us, memorization can be a powerful way to experience growth. Tips for memorization:

- break the passage up into smaller parts
- post the passage where you can see it often--the fridge, mirrors, phone background, etc.
- read it out loud several times
- text or DM it to your memory partner daily

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. (Matthew 5:3-8)

SCRIPTURE CONTEXT

To begin studying the Scripture together, give the student some context on the passage. **Say:** “There are many different interpretations to this passage.

There are many understandable questions about what the different items represent. Is the sawdust smaller sins? Is the plank a larger sin? (Many people say yes.) What about the dogs and pigs? (That’s more complicated.) Do the fish and snake have a deeper meaning? (Some people think so.)

For today, we want to focus on three main things: judging, asking, and receiving. Remember the context of the entire Sermon on the Mount. Jesus is speaking to a huge crowd, but he’s teaching the group of his disciples and followers. He’s challenging them to not get lost in the tiny details, but to focus on 1) not judging others, 2) asking God for their needs, and 3) receiving God’s good gifts.



CONTEXT DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Say: “Which feels easier: not judging others, or asking and receiving help? What is harder for you? Why do you think that is?”

SCRIPTURE

After the student shares, say: “Great--now let’s see what the passage tells us about Jesus’ thoughts about the complexities of community.”



Read the passage aloud.

After you’ve read the passage aloud, say: “Now we’ll spend three minutes silently looking for observations, repetitions, questions, etc.”

DISCUSS

After the three minutes, allow the student to share one or two observations. **Say:** “What one or two things really stood out to you?”

POSSIBLE OBSERVATIONS TO CHOOSE FROM

After the student has shared, if they didn’t mention any of the observations below, choose one or two to share with them. **Choose from the list below and say:** “Sure! We can also see some of these things in the passage...”

- Jesus uses several images in this passage: plank vs. speck (v. 3-5), pigs and dogs (v. 6), knocking on a door (v. 7-8), and compares the parent/child relationship to God and his children (v. 9-11)
- Jesus says to address the plank in your own eye first (v. 5). But he doesn’t tell people to never talk about the speck in a brother, sister, or sibling’s eye.
- Jesus starts by just using the word “you” (singular) but then he shifts to using “everyone” (v. 8)

After you’ve both shared observations, check in with the student. **Say:** “Did the passage bring up any questions for you?”

PASSAGE QUESTIONS TO CHOOSE FROM

After the student has shared, if they didn’t mention any of the questions below, choose one or two to share with them. **Choose from the list below and say,** “Thanks for sharing those questions. Here are a few other things we can look at...”



Judging Others (v. 1-6)

- What's the difference between a speck and a plank? How can they get in the way of having community with others?

Ask, Seek, Knock (v. 7-12)

- What does it mean to "knock"?
- What does it mean that the "Father in heaven [will] give good gifts"? Who is he giving them to?
- Why does Jesus start by talking about people's relationship with others and then shift to talking about their relationship with God?
- How do judgment and hypocrisy connect with asking for things from God? How does asking for things from God connect with our relationships with others?

DISCUSS

Choose three or four brainstormed questions to discuss. Focus most on the student's questions. Don't worry if the student gets distracted--studying the Bible is a skill that improves with time. If you need to get back on track, you can **say**: "That's so interesting--I wish we had time to talk about more! Do you mind if we focus on these questions during the time we have left in this section of our study together?"

SUMMARY /BIG IDEA

Say: In the last passage, Jesus preached that fear and worry prevent people from trusting God. Now he follows up with a similar convicting connection: judgment and hypocrisy cultivate division, pride, hurt, and distrust between one another, which ultimately impacts our trust in God. Yet, Jesus says that God is the opposite of these traits. He is a generous and trustworthy Father who will provide all that his children need. What's more, God's generosity is an example for all of humanity so we can be generous towards others, bringing unity and health into our communities. Jesus completely redefines the purpose of God's abundance for his Jewish listeners: God provides for his children so they can provide for others in return."

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Choose a couple of questions from below that fit the discussion you've had. **Say**: "So how can we apply this to our everyday life? Let's talk about how individuals' spiritual growth can help lead to healthy communities.

- Where do you see examples on campus of people being kind? Being judgmental? What does that bring up in you?
- Where might you be tempted to judge others before addressing your own heart? How has this impacted your relationships with others? With God?



- How might God be inviting you to trust him and extend a posture of generosity towards others instead?
- Jesus says that God is a generous and trustworthy Father. Where do you struggle to trust God the most? Why?
- What might God be inviting you to trust him with today?
- What good gifts can you ask for your community and yourself?



PRAYER 15 MIN

CONFESSION & ASSURANCE PRAYER

Say: “Now we’ll spend time in prayer. Like the passage, there’s good and bad news. The bad news is, we sin against God and others. The good news is, Jesus provides the way to forgiveness, healing, and reconciliation. When we do things that divide us from God, we are invited to confess and repent (or “turn away”) from those things. Confession isn’t just a one-time activity. It’s a healthy habit of turning back to Jesus over and over again, of getting our hearts realigned with God so we can seek restoration and growth for us and our communities. You’ll have the option to pray silently, but I really hope you will pray out loud at least part of the time. I will ask you to share how this prayer time goes for you, so be ready for that.”

Say: “Start by taking a few deep breaths. As you do, invite the Lord to be present with you as you pray. I’ll give you about 30 seconds to pray after each question.”

Say (pray!): “Lord Jesus, would you bless us during this time of confession and receiving forgiveness. Bring all your people closer together. because of your love for us.” Pause briefly, then say to the student:

“First, what is one area where you aren’t trusting God? If you don’t know, ask him. If you do, ask him for forgiveness. Here’s an example of how you could pray: ‘God, I’m not trusting you with my finances. Please forgive me for that.’”

Using a watch or phone on silent, give the student 30 seconds of silence. Then say:

“Secondly, think about your relationships in your InterVarsity chapter, church, etc. Can you see one way you’re in the wrong? Confess that to God and ask him for forgiveness. I’ll check back in with you in about 30 seconds.”

Give another 30 seconds of silence. Then say: “Now we’ll be blessed by a Scripture of assurance from Psalm 103:8-12:

‘The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.’”



**NEXT STEPS 5 MIN****AFFIRMATIONS & END**

Say: “What good news that we’re forgiven, and that Holy Spirit will help us to grow in community! How was that prayer time for you?”

If the student prayed silently the entire time, you could push into the discipling relationship by saying, “Would you share one thing that you are working on so that I can pray for you? I’d like to hear about what you’ve received forgiveness for. Not to be nosy or hold anything over your head, but to be able to celebrate together.”

If the Holy Spirit leads, you could pray for the student out loud: “God, thank you for this discipling relationship. Help [student’s name] to feel truly loved and forgiven. Bless them with good community and true comfort when things are awkward, hard, or even scary. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

After the student has shared, say: “I really do appreciate you making time to be discipled and I know it’s a blessing to me and your communities. I’m looking forward to seeing you again next time.” Once the student has left, also remember to fill out the “Notes, Prayer Requests, Growth” section in the chart you printed out, and pray for the student.



Sermon on the Mount
Matthew 5-7

WEEK ELEVEN | WISDOM & SECURITY

MATTHEW 7:13-29



MATTHEW 7:13-29

Wisdom & Security

¹³ "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. ¹⁴ But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it. ¹⁵ "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. ¹⁶ By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

²¹ "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?' ²³ Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

²⁴ "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. ²⁶ But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. ²⁷ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."²⁸ When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, ²⁹ because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.



BEFORE THE STUDY: LEADER REFLECTION & PREP TIME



Wisdom & Security

MATTHEW 7:13-29

DESIRED OUTCOMES

PRAY THAT STUDENTS:

- will understand that following Christ isn't something we do halfway, but a complete life choice that radically transforms his believers in every way.
- would feel confident in their faith in Jesus, not anxious that their good deeds aren't enough.
- will trust in God's ability to give them wisdom and to keep them secure in the kingdom of heaven.



BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

FALSE PROPHETS (V. 15)

- God used prophets in the Old Testament to both warn and guide his people.
- Someone was considered a false prophet if they advocated for idolatry (worshiping anything other than God) or denied God's law.

ETERNAL LIFE (V. 14)

- Jesus' listeners would have been familiar with the Old Testament prophecies that promised God's people would be with him after their deaths.
- They also would've been familiar with the idea that some will experience eternal life while others will experience death.

KINGDOM OF HEAVEN (V. 21)

- Jesus began the Sermon on the Mount by sharing about the blessings that his followers will have when we seek the kingdom of heaven, also known as the kingdom of God (Matthew 4:17).
- The rest of his sermon has been expanding that idea, giving examples, challenges, and clarification to his disciples and followers. When we follow Jesus into the kingdom of God, we are blessed in both this life and the next.
- In a way, entering the kingdom of heaven could be synonymous with following Jesus.

TREES (V. 17-19)

- Trees were often used as symbols for people in Jewish culture. This symbolism goes all the way back to the language used in Genesis when God created the world.



- The original audience would have known this and likely would have thought back to the other times in Scripture that trees were used as a symbol.

PHARISEES AND TEACHERS OF THE LAW (V. 20)

- Again, the passage mentions the Pharisees (or the teachers of the law). They were the religious leaders, experts of the law, and overall known to be respected for their spiritual leadership and teaching in this culture.
- Although they had the Old Testament and all its laws memorized, their hearts remained far from God.
- In contrast, Jesus (an uneducated carpenter from a tiny rural town) taught with authority even though he didn't have any of the learning or respect of the leaders!

PREPARING FOR THE DISCUSSION TIME

THINKING THROUGH THE PASSAGE:

The gospel is not the good news that we are perfect, but rather the good news that we are forgiven by a perfect God. Students are often very aware of their failures, but try to keep busy to avoid having to think about them. Actually, that's a human thing! Students might also be very concerned with some of the same ideas as the dogs and pigs from Matthew 7:1-12. They might get distracted by wondering if they're keeping on the right path, if their fruit is good enough, if their house is strong enough, etc.

Remind them (and yourself!) that Jesus is speaking to his followers—those already in the kingdom of God. Those that he has gathered to himself and has promised eternal life to already. Remind them that the passage is saying that if they believe and follow Jesus, they are already on the straight and narrow, God will protect them from false prophets with bad fruit, and the foundation of their house is Christ.

Also remember to fill out the "Weekly Goal" section in the chart you printed out, and pray over that goal.



THE STUDY: WISDOM & SECURITY



Matthew 7:13-29 | 60 Minutes

DEVELOP COMMUNITY: 5 MIN

COMMUNITY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Say: “Describe a time when you put 100% of your effort into a project, goal, school, or something else. What was this like? How did your work pay off in the end? Did it feel worth it? How did you know you had done a good job?”



SCRIPTURE 35 MIN

ENTERING THE PASSAGE

MEMORY VERSES (OPTIONAL)

Because Scripture is one of the main ways that Jesus disciplines us, memorization can be a powerful way to experience growth. Tips for memorization:

- break the passage up into smaller parts
- post the passage where you can see it often--the fridge, mirrors, phone background, etc.
- read it out loud several times
- text or DM it to your memory partner daily Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. (Matthew 5:3-8)

SCRIPTURE CONTEXT

To begin studying the Scripture together, give the student some context on the passage. **Say:** “Jesus wraps up his sermon with some strong words. He tells the crowds that it is difficult to find the narrow road that leads to life. He warns his followers of false prophets that will bear bad fruit that can destroy communities. He talks about rejecting fake believers and storms that will destroy houses.

But for all that, the message concludes with hope and encouragement. The crowds were amazed, and we can be, too.”

CONTEXT DISCUSSION QUESTION

Say: “How do you feel so far about the Sermon on the Mount? Do you feel like you’re on the “narrow road that leads to life?”



SCRIPTURE

After the student shares, say: "Great--now let's see what the passage tells us about Jesus' thoughts on about the complexities of community."



Read the passage aloud.

After you've read the passage aloud, say: "Now we'll spend three minutes silently looking for observations, repetitions, questions, etc."

DISCUSS

After the three minutes, allow the student to share one or two observations. **Say:** "What one or two things really stood out to you?"

POSSIBLE OBSERVATIONS TO CHOOSE FROM

After the student has shared, if they didn't mention any of the observations below, choose one or two to share with them. **Choose from the list below and say:** "Right. And here are some other interesting things in the passage..."

- There are several opposites: narrow vs. wide, death vs. life, good fruit vs. bad fruit, God's will vs. deeds
- There's a lot of imagery used: gates (v. 13-14), sheep/wolves (v.15), trees (v. 16-19), a house in a storm (v. 24-29)
- Jesus warns his listeners several times (v. 13, 15, 21, 26)
- Themes of life, eternal life, the kingdom of heaven (v. 14, 17, 19, 21)
- Jesus' teaching was different than the teachers of the law's teaching (v. 28-29) After you've both shared observations, check in with the student. Say: "Did the passage bring up any questions for you?"

PASSAGE QUESTIONS TO CHOOSE FROM

After the student has shared, if they didn't mention any of the questions below, choose one or two to share with them. Choose from the list below and say, "Thanks for sharing those questions. Here are a few other things we can look at..."

Narrow and Wide Gates (v. 13-14)

- What are the gate & the road? Why use this image?
- What is "good fruit" and what does it have to do with the narrow and wide gate?



Choices (v. 24-29)

- What is the significance of the house built on the rock vs. the sand?
- What's the significance of Jesus teaching with authority?
- What choices does Jesus give his listeners? Why does Jesus warn the people so many times about the choices they make?

DISCUSS

Choose three or four of the brainstormed questions to discuss. Focus most on the student's questions. Don't worry if the student gets distracted—studying the Bible is a skill that improves with time. **If you need to get back on track, you can say:** "Thank you for sharing. Do you mind if we focus on these questions during the time we have left in this section of our study together?"

SUMMARY /BIG IDEA

Say: "The teachers of the law had been studying and teaching God's Law for hundreds of years. Rather than sharing his interpretations like the leaders and teachers though, Jesus preaches it himself. (Yet another) plot twist: this is something that only God has the authority to do! In a way that his listeners would have understood, Jesus claims his authority as God in the flesh, and makes it clear that his Law is not what the crowd thinks it is.

Though many listeners would have cried out "heresy!" Jesus' followers would have started to connect the dots that Jesus being God's true son meant he could interpret the law fully.

Through a series of images, Jesus illustrates that God's Law isn't about looking righteous on the outside. It is about being part of a community that has a holistic relationship with God that leads to complete, radical life transformation. And, his good fruit proves that he is not a false prophet! Instead, God the Son can and will protect and guide his followers."

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Choose a couple of questions from below that fit the discussion you've had. **Say:** "So how can we apply these important challenges to our lives?"

- Good fruit isn't something a person can fake, even if they seem perfect on the outside. Do you worry that you're producing bad fruit in your life? If you're a follower of Jesus, he says that's not possible. Could there be a difference between having some bad "leaves" (day-to-day issues) but still having good fruit (thoughts and actions that show growth over time)?
- If you're not a follower of Jesus, what does that mean about the fruit that you are producing? What does Jesus say about your options and what to do next?



- If you have some bad “leaves,” how can Jesus help you with that? Remember back to our discussions of inner and outer thoughts and actions. How might God be inviting you to make real changes in your life that live out his teaching?
- Jesus finishes his sermon with a choice so important that he repeats the options four times just to make sure his listeners understand. Are you part of the community of believers? Are you choosing your own broad path?
- If you’re not walking with Jesus day-to-day, is there something that is keeping you from desiring that right now?”



PRAYER 15 MIN

COMMITMENT PRAYER

Say: “Now we’ll pray for God to daily transform our lives.” **If the student is NOT a believer, you can say:** “If you’re ready to follow God from the path that leads to death onto the path that leads to life, will you pray this prayer with me? I’ll say a sentence, then you repeat after me. Jesus, I see that without you, I am spiritually dead.

Pause between each sentence while the student prays, and help the student with the words if they forget any. Pray that these words will be written into their heart, soul, and mind! Living my life the way I want it to means I’ve made a mess of things. I need your forgiveness so that I can join the path that leads to life.

Thank you for giving your life for mine!

I trust you now, and I want to love and know you more.

I need you to lead my life from here on out. Give me the power to live as you want. Give me your Holy Spirit to guide me in wisdom and security all the days of my life.

In your holy name, Jesus, Amen!”

If the student IS a believer, you can say: “Following Jesus isn’t a one-time decision, and that’s what being discipled is all about! If we trust in Jesus, we don’t have to worry about his love for us. We do get to return to his throne in prayer again and again. Will you pray this prayer with me? I’ll say a sentence, then you repeat after me.

Jesus, thank you for rescuing me from spiritual death.

Pause between each sentence while the student prays, and help the student with the words if they forget any. Pray that these words will be written into their heart, soul, and mind!



Sometimes I forget that I'm on the narrow path that leads to life. Thank you for giving your life for mine! Forgive me for when I wander.

Thank you for your forgiveness. I trust you, and I want to love and know you more.

Holy Spirit, keep reminding me that God is my leader, Jesus is redeemer, and you are my comfort. Guide me in wisdom and security all the days of my life.

In your holy name, Jesus, Amen!"

If the student is UNSURE, you can say: "Let me pray for you. God, would you show [student name] your truth and forgiveness? Let them come into your kingdom through Jesus our savior. Guide them into the wisdom and security that only you can give, not the world. In your holy name, Jesus, Amen!"

No matter which category they fall into, **say:** "I'm so grateful for God's forgiveness! What a difference it makes."



NEXT STEPS 5 MIN

AFFIRMATIONS & END

Say: "I can't believe our official discipleship time is almost over. Next week, we'll celebrate all that God has done through our study of the Sermon on the Mount. What's one high for you during the past 11 meetings? A low? Something that's stuck with you? **After the student has shared, say:** "Thank you for sharing, and thank you for being here! See you again soon for our time of celebration!"

Once the student has left, also remember to fill out the "Notes, Prayer Requests, Growth" section in the chart you printed out, and pray for the student.





WEEK TWELVE | CELEBRATION

AFFIRMATIONS

Sermon on the Mount

MATTHEW 5-7

A DISCIPLESHIP CURRICULUM FOR STUDENTS

BEFORE THE STUDY: LEADER REFLECTION & PREP TIME

Celebration & Affirmations

DESIRED OUTCOMES

PRAY THAT STUDENTS:

- felt God's presence and were encouraged by it.
- gained a deeper understanding of the Scripture.
- will continue to feel encouraged to talk about Jesus.
- won't feel ashamed about being counter-cultural on campus.
- will continue to follow Jesus, growing in intimacy, character, and mission.

REFLECT ON THE SEMESTER

Where did you personally grow as you discipled the student? How did you grow in community?

Where do you think the student grew? Look back over the chart you filled out each week. Fill out the final "Weekly Goal" section.



THE STUDY: CELEBRATION & AFFIRMATION



Ending Well | 50 Minutes

CELEBRATE COMMUNITY 10 MIN

COMMUNITY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Say: "Describe a time where you celebrated the end of something. Maybe High School graduation or someone moving away. How did it feel to celebrate that, balanced with the emotions behind letting go?"



SCRIPTURE 5 MIN

MEMORY VERSES (OPTIONAL)

After the student shares, and if you worked on the memory verses, celebrate learning the passage together:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. (Matthew 5:3-8)

RE-READING THE BEATITUDES

If you didn't do the memory passage together, say: "Let's recite the Beatitudes together one more time." Then read it together.

DISCIPLESHIP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Say: "Let's talk about your growth over our time together. What did you see God do in InterVarsity and/or in ministry? How did God grow you personally this semester? How did you grow in community?"



AFFIRMING OTHERS 20 MIN

PERSONAL AFFIRMATIONS

Say: "It's been great to see you grow during our time together. Encouragement is an important part of community and growing in Christ, so I'd like to affirm you now in how I've seen God at work in your life."

Using your notes from the semester, **say:** "I've seen you grow in these ways:" and take about 5 minutes sharing with the student.

DISCUSSION

Say: "I'm curious about a few things. What was it like having another person specifically speak about your strengths and qualities? How would you like to keep growing in those areas? What would your next step be in doing that?"



After the student shares, say: “Thank you for sharing. Now let’s pray to end our time together.”



PRAYER 15 MIN

COMMISSIONING PRAYER

Say: “I’m going to read Ephesians 3:14-21 and then give us some time to reflect in silence.”

Read the passage aloud. Then spend 3 minutes silently reflecting.

“For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”

After the reflection time, say: “Now I’d like to read the passage over you, personalizing God’s word for you as a blessing.” Read the passage again, substituting the student’s name every time the passage says “you” or “your.” Pray it over each student in turn and by name.

Example: “I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen ‘Emily’ with power through his Spirit...”

After you pray the passage over the student, say: “Thank you again for meeting with me for discipleship. It’s been a great time together.”



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