

SERMON ON THE MOUNT

STUDY SERIES

A Navigators
bible study on
Matthew chapters
five to seven

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SERMON ON THE MOUNT

1. INTRODUCTION

1. To Begin...

Over the next two terms we will be working our way through the Sermon on the Mount. It could be a life-changing experience... or it could be a dry intellectual 'nice' thing to do. To a large degree the choice is yours. And to make it significant, we need God's help. So to begin, **we'd like you to pray**. God needs to meet with us to make it real, to help us deepen our relationship with Him, to understand better who He is, and to clarify what practical things we should be doing;

1. In your small group, together **read the Sermon on the Mount**: Mat ch 5-7 Make yourselves comfortable because it takes a wee while!
2. **Questions** to throw around in your small group...
- Q Gut reactions - What struck you as you read Mat 5-7? What themes did you pick up coming through? What issues does it address and raise as you see it?

Chris Marshall, a BCNZ lecturer, once made the following comment with regards to the Sermon on the Mount:

"..despite Jesus' reputation as a moral teacher, his actual teaching has been all but ignored by the Christian church... the church still muzzles the voice of Jesus on many issues.. and (in particular) on the issues that matter most: wealth, power, violence, and prejudice"

- Q These are strong words. He makes the above comment about the church in a generalised sense, but even so, why do you think the church at large would ignore these words of Jesus' sermon?
 - Q From your initial reading, do you think Jesus expects us to be able to put it into practice now? If not, what do you think he intended us to do with it?
 - Q And if the entire sermon is not meant to be put immediately into practice, which bits do you think are for us to do now?
3. **Note down** any other questions that are raised as you consider what Jesus intended us to do with this – keep a note of them as we go through the study.. hopefully some answers will start to emerge in the coming weeks.

What they say about the Sermon on the Mount...

"..the world's finest collection of ethical teaching" Gandhi

"..the principle showpiece of Jesus' ethical teaching. It is the purest, the clearest, the most inspiring, the most characteristic expression of Jesus' perspective" Chris Marshall, BCNZ

"..probably the best known part of the teaching of Jesus, though arguably it is the least understood, and certainly it is the least obeyed. It is the nearest thing to a manifesto that he ever uttered, for it is his own description of what he wanted his followers to be and do. To my mind no two words sum up its intention better, or indicate more clearly its challenge to the modern world, than the expression 'Christian counter-culture'" John Stott

SERMON ON THE MOUNT

2. BEATTITUDES MT 5:1-12

To Begin...

- **Talk to God.** Ask to meet Him in this time of study to deepen your relationship with Him, to understand better who He is, and to clarify what practical things you should be doing

intro

Jesus delivered the famous Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) at a time when his popularity was soaring. Crowds pursued him wherever he went, obsessed with one question: *Has the Messiah come at last?* On this unusual occasion Jesus skipped the parables and granted his audience a full-blown "philosophy of life," somewhat like a candidate unveiling a new political platform. What a platform!

Jesus teaching must have caused shock waves amongst his original audience, Jews in first-century Palestine. To a downtrodden people yearning for emancipation from Roman rule, Jesus gave startling and unwelcome advice. If an enemy soldier slaps you, turn the other cheek. Rejoice in persecution. Be grateful for your poverty. Jesus enjoined not revenge but love for ones enemies. How long would a kingdom founded on such principles survive against Rome?

Read Mt 5:1-12

Questions

- Q What do you think it means to be blessed?
- Q What do you think it is about these people mentioned that causes them to be blessed?
- Q In what ways have you experienced something of the blessings described here?
- Q Do you think Jesus is referring to a benefit we receive now or some sort of future reward? or something in between?
- Q In what ways do you think Jesus embodied these beatitudes?

Continued over...

The Message beatitudes..

3" You're blessed when you're at the end of your rope. With less of you there is more of God and his rule.

4" You're blessed when you feel you've lost what is most dear to you. Only then can you be embraced by the One most dear to you.

5" You're blessed when you're content with just who you are—no more, no less. That's the moment you find yourselves proud owners of everything that can't be bought.

6" You're blessed when you've worked up a good appetite for God. He's food and drink in the best meal you'll ever eat.

7" You're blessed when you care. At the moment of being 'care-full,' you find yourselves cared for.

8" You're blessed when you get your inside world—your mind and heart—put right. Then you can see God in the outside world.

9" You're blessed when you can show people how to cooperate instead of compete or fight. That's when you discover who you really are, and your place in God's family.

10" You're blessed when your commitment to God provokes persecution. The persecution drives you even deeper into God's kingdom.

11" Not only that—count yourselves blessed every time people put you down or throw you out or speak lies about you to discredit me. What it means is that the truth is too close for comfort and they are uncomfortable.

12" You can be glad when that happens—give a cheer, even!—for though they don't like it, I do! And all heaven applauds. And know that you are in good company. My prophets and witnesses have always gotten into this kind of trouble.

| Some Modern beatitudes.. | my understanding of what Jesus was on about in the beatitudes... |
|---|---|
| <p>Content are those who are independent and strong, they will make a mark in this world.</p> <p>Happy are those who have no worries, they'll enjoy life to the full.</p> <p>Fortunate are those who believe in themselves, they'll get ahead of others.</p> <p>Satisfied are those whose thirst for pleasure leads them to what they want.</p> <p>Fortunate are those who don't get involved with other peoples pain, they won't get hurt.</p> <p>Lucky are the attractive and strong, they will be honored by others.</p> <p>Blessed are the people who come out on top, they will be called favourite "sons" & "daughters"</p> <p>Happy are those who never make any waves, they'll be friends with everyone</p> | <p>"Blessed are the crumpled heaps who are utterly desperate, who need God to come through for them to meet their spiritual, emotional and material needs otherwise they are lost - theirs is the kingdom of heaven</p> <p>Blessed are those who mourn this state of utter desperation, who hate being so impoverished in every way - God will be with them and will be their comfort</p> <p>Blessed are the meek, those who don't think more highly of themselves than they know to be true, & relate with others in a humble way because they don't hide their self-poverty from others-they will inherit the earth</p> <p>Blessed are those who hate this state of imperfection & the violence caused by it, who seek like nothing else a justice, a putting right of relationships between them and God and others - they will be filled with this justice and 'alrightness'</p> <p>Blessed are those who cannot remain unaffected by God's getting involved in their own lives and as a result are compelled to show compassion and mercy to others - they will be shown mercy by God</p> <p>Blessed are those who have nothing to hide, whose lives are becoming integrated so that there is no disparity between their thoughts, their desires & their actions - they will see God in the same way they allow themselves to be seen</p> <p>Blessed are those who throw aside the laws of retaliation and revenge but instead seek and actively pursue peace and reconciliation at great cost to themselves - they will be called sons and daughters of God, because they display the family likeness</p> <p>Blessed - yes Blessed! - are those who are despised and persecuted for their identification with, & efforts to follow, Jesus of Nazareth; don't seek revenge but rather rejoice! bec you are in the company of the very great men & women of faith from the past - this is a confirmation that you are mine & so yours truly is the kingdom of heaven"</p> |

Q Time for the 'compare and contrast' question. Read the above 'Modern beatitudes'. As you think of your own experience of life, these modern beatitudes are the qualities you normally associate with power and influence, right? So, looking at the alternative version in the right hand column (or your own bible version), how do you explain the difference?

Getting Really Honest

- Q** As you read the modern rendering of the beatitudes, to what extent do you see these beliefs and values in your own life?
- Q** What is your heart set on? What do you believe leads to personal happiness?
- Q** What will it look like right here for us individually and as a group to be living out these beatitudes? In particular, think of specific things that will need to change

A good thing to do

On your own, write your own beatitudes reflecting what you honestly believe leads to personal happiness. (You may not like what you write). Does anything need to change for you? What are you going to do about it? Who are you going to tell to help keep you accountable? Now is the time to act.

Study two ends

SERMON ON THE MOUNT

3. SALT & LIGHT MT 5:13-16

To Begin... your personal preparation

- **Talk to God.** Ask to meet Him in this time of study to deepen your relationship with Him, to understand better who He is, and to clarify what practical things you should be doing

Intro...

In the last study we saw that the world would persecute the church (v10-12). But Jesus now turns to the response of the church – not to retaliate but to *serve* this persecuting world. And Jesus referred to this handful of Palestinian Jews as the salt and light *of the world* - so far reaching was their influence to be. And this, too, is our calling.

Read Mat 5:13-16

Background Information

- In Jesus day, salt and light were traditional metaphors of Jewish self-description. In other words, Jesus was reminding Israel of her true calling to be true Israel for the benefit of the whole world (Wright p.289)
- How can salt lose its saltiness? The Dead Sea was the main source of salt for Palestine. What was then popularly called 'salt' was in fact a white powder that would have contained sodium chloride as well as other chemicals, because it was unrefined. Of this white powder, sodium chloride was probably the most soluble and easily washed out part. The residue of white powder would still look like salt and be called salt, but neither tasted nor acted like salt - it was just road dust (Stott p.60, Morris p.104)
- In v13 and v14 the 'You are..' at the start of the sentence is emphatic and restrictive in the Greek - in other words, 'you and only you are' - not a promise but a statement (Morris p.104). In other words, if you aren't salt and light, I have no-one else to do the job for me – therefore you simply must not fail the world you are called to serve
- In v15 the Greek word for 'light' (κλαίω) lays emphasis on keeping a thing burning rather than starting a fire (BAGD)

Salt and light in The Message..

¹³"Let me tell you why you are here. You're here to be salt-seasoning that brings out the God-flavors of this earth. If you lose your saltiness, how will people taste godliness? You've lost your usefulness and will end up in the garbage.

¹⁴"Here's another way to put it: You're here to be light, bringing out the God-colours in the world. God is not a secret to be kept. We're going public with this, as public as a city on a hill.

¹⁵If I make you light-bearers, you don't think I'm going to hide you under a bucket, do you? I'm putting you on a light stand.

¹⁶Now that I've put you there on a hilltop, on a light stand—shine! Keep open house; be generous with your lives. By opening up to others, you'll prompt people to open up with God, this generous Father in heaven.

"Jesus did not say 'You are the honey of the world.' He said 'You are the salt of the earth.' Salt bites, and the unadulterated message of the judgement and grace of God has always been a biting thing"

Helmut Thielicke
(as quoted by Stott p.66)

Questions

As we consider what it means to be salt and light, remember that Jesus was "salt" and "light" to those he met and interacted with. Think about the different people Jesus was involved with. Think about the results of his interaction with these people and how they responded to him. This may help us as we consider what our part in all of this should be.

Salt

Q In everyday use, salt acts as a preservative - eg unsalted meat will decay, but this process can be stopped almost indefinitely by rubbing salt into the meat. Salt also acts as a seasoning, enhancing or bringing out the flavours in the food

How does this apply to us? What does it mean that we are the salt of the earth -both as individuals and as the Christian community?

Q What things make Christians less salty? (Consider the quotes over).

Light

Q What does it mean that we are the light of the world? What properties of light are we meant to have -both as individuals and as the Christian community?

Q What things prevent the light from being seen?

Q Salt and light are contrasted against unsaltedness and darkness. How are we meant to be similar to those around us and how are we meant to be different?

John Stott suggests that our Christian responsibility is twofold: a negative influence of arresting decay; and a positive influence of bringing light into darkness. He equates being "light" with evangelism and being "salt" with social action, and says that the two need to work together.

Q Given this definition, what practical things would Jesus need to see us doing here to say that we are acting like the salt of our University?

Q What practical things would Jesus need to see us doing here to say that we are acting like the light of our University?

For both of the above questions consider natural opportunities we have at this University both as individuals and as a group to be salt and light. Be creative! and ask God to give you ideas

Getting really honest

Q What causes you to lose your saltiness? In what ways have you struggled to be "salty" this year?

Q When and where do you hide your light "under a bowl"? What can you do to overcome this? (consider the case with the apostle Paul – even he felt afraid of the conflict with his audience - 1Cor 2:1-5).

Who can you tell to help keep you accountable?

Q In being distinctive salt and light, you may well bring ridicule on you from unbelieving friends and peers. How do you really feel about this?

Q What can you do this week to take a step of faith and go beyond what you would normally do to be salt and light?

Study three ends

What they say about Salt & Light...

"God intends us to penetrate the world. Christian salt has no business to remain snugly in elegant little ecclesiastical salt cellars; our place is to be rubbed into the secular community, as salt is rubbed into meat, to stop it going bad. And when society does go bad, we Christians tend to throw up our hands in pious horror and reproach the non-Christian world; but should we not rather reproach ourselves? One can hardly blame unsalted meat for going bad. It cannot do anything else. The real question to ask is: where is the salt?"

John Stott
(p.65)

"To try to improve society is not worldliness but love. To wash your hands of society is not love but worldliness"

Sir Frederick Catherwood
(as quoted by Stott p.67)

"The most obvious general characteristic of salt is that it is essentially different from the medium into which it is put. Its power lies precisely in this difference. So it is, says Jesus, with his disciples. Their power in the world lies in their difference from it"

VG Tasker
(as quoted by Morris p.105)

SERMON ON THE MOUNT

4. FOLLOWING THE TRUE LAW PART 1 MT 5:17-32

To Begin...

- **Talk to God.** Ask to meet Him in this time of study to deepen your relationship with Him, to understand better who He is, and to clarify what practical things you should be doing

Read Mat 5:17-20

Intro...

Jesus' opponents thought that he was making light of the law, doing away with it. But Jesus answers his critics: I have not come to abolish, but to fulfil the law and the prophets. But the way he did it was not what anyone expected. Jesus made the law 'look different' because no-one had ever seen it properly obeyed or fulfilled by anyone before.

Jesus goes on from affirming the law and his fulfilment of it (v17-18) to saying that unless our righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees, we will not enter the kingdom (v19-20). This was a startling statement, because the scribes and Pharisees seemed more fanatical about following the law than anyone else. If they weren't good enough, how then could anyone enter?

Background Information

The righteousness of the scribes and pharisees does appear impressive until we take a closer look. They had managed to break the Mosaic law down into 613 commandments and had worked out that if they could avoid breaking these 248 positive and 365 negative commands, they would have done what they needed to - nothing more, nothing less. Oral pronouncements became codified (the Mishnah c.300ad), and commented on (Talmuds) until every area of life was covered e.g. Shabbath 3-6 in the Mishnah: a new lamp can be moved from one place to another on the Sabbath but not an old one, an ass may go out on the Sabbath day wearing its saddle cloth if this was fixed on before the Sabbath, but may not wear a bell even if it is plugged...etc (Green p.74). The Pharisees and scribes sought to put a 'fence around the law' to make sure they met their side of the bargain with God.

But the righteousness Jesus sought was different. The Pharisees were content with external and formal obedience, but Jesus was saying what was required was a righteousness of the heart ie mind *and* motive *and* action. His righteousness surpassed the Pharisees and scribes in kind rather than degree - Jesus wanted serious depth and richness in following the law whereas the Pharisees wanted to reduce or relax the challenge of the law so to make the moral demands more manageable (Stott p.79).

Completing God's Law in The Message..

"Don't suppose for a minute that I have come to demolish the scriptures – either God's law or the prophets. I'm not here to demolish but to complete. I am going to put it all together, pull it all together in a vast panorama. God's law is more real and lasting than the stars in the sky and the ground at your feet. Long after the stars burn out and earth wears out, God's law will be alive and working.

Trivialise even the smallest item in God's law and you will only have trivialised yourself. But take it seriously, show the way for others, and you will find honour in the Kingdom. Unless you do far better than the Pharisees in the matters of right living, you won't know the first thing about entering the Kingdom.

"Jesus doesn't add to the laws. He just keeps them"

D Bonhoeffer

"The Essenes demanded more and more obedience to the law, whereas Jesus demanded deeper and deeper obedience"

John Stott
(p.79)

Over the next two studies we will look at some examples of how Jesus meant the law to be followed as compared to that of the most 'religious' people of his day. This week we will look at murder, adultery and divorce; next week we will look at oaths, revenge and love for enemies.

More background

The introductory phrase of Jesus 'You have heard that it was said...' in the Greek is ερρητηε ('it was said'), whereas when Jesus quotes scripture the word γεγραπται ('it stands written') is used. In other words, Jesus is not contradicting scripture but rather the traditions that have been built up over time (Morris p.113)

Jesus saw the way the scribes interpreted the law as a distortion of the law. He effectively was saying 'You have heard that it was said by men of old, by traditions built up over time.... BUT I say to you...'. In general, the scribes were trying to relax the demands of the law to make it more manageable. They sought to restrict the commandments of the law and extend the permissions of the law, whereas Jesus was trying to regain its original intention (Stott)

MURDER

Read Mt 5:21-26

Q Is anger just a harmless emotion?

Consider the comparisons between love and hatred in...

1John2:9-11, 3:15-18, 4:20-21

also consider one or two of the following stories when answering :

Gen27:41 Esau and Jacob;

Gen37:3-4,16-20 Joseph's brothers;

Esther 3:5-6 Haman and Mordecai;

Mk6:17-19 Herodias and John

Q Why do you think Jesus was so hard on being angry?

Q In v23-24 and v25-26 Jesus gives two examples of what you should do instead of being angry. What principles do these examples highlight? (consider who the types of people are, who is angry with whom, what priority was put on the action, and who took the initiative)

Q Why is it so hard to be the one who takes the first step in doing the reconciling?

Q Is all anger sinful?

Getting really honest

Q Who has never ever been angry? There is a good chance that you are angry or despising towards someone right now...or that you are the cause of someone's anger.

Therefore, following Jesus illustration and using his principles for dealing with anger, what practical things can you do? And who can you tell to help keep you accountable?

Q Consider the quote over by B Harrison. You may not consider yourself an angry person, but maybe that's because it's just hidden in indifference. True for you? Maybe there are some areas you could stop being indifferent over, even at the risk of becoming angry and having to deal with that? (e.g. friends who have let you down, people taking advantage of you..)

"Jesus traces murder to its dark lair in human hearts, hatred. The God who sees in secret is affronted not only by the fruit, murder, but by the root, hatred ...it is to have no place among members of the kingdom"

Michael Green
(p.75)

"We need to recognise that where the evasion of feeling is widespread, anger does not go away or disappear. Rather, in interpersonal life it masks itself as boredom, low energy, or it expresses itself in passive-aggressive activity or in moralistic self-righteousness and blaming.. where feeling is evaded, where anger is hidden or goes unattended, masking itself, there the power of love, the power to act, to deepen relationship, atrophies and dies"

Beverley Wildung Harrison
(The Power of Anger in the work of love p.220)

ADULTERY AND DIVORCE

Read Mt 5:27-32

Background Information

In general Jewish thinking of the time, adultery was not so much a sign of immorality but rather a violation of a husband's rights to have sole possession of his wife. It was not seen as adultery if a Jew had intercourse with a female slave or gentile woman. Adultery therefore was only really seen as infringing the rights of another Jewish man (Morris p.117-118 footnote). The rabbis and scribes had developed a narrow definition of sexual sin and a broad definition of sexual purity - which Jesus sought to turn on its head. (Stott p.87)

At the time of Jesus there was a major debate running between two opposing rabbinical schools, Shammai and Hillel, as to what constituted grounds for divorce (e.g. Hillel said a man could divorce his wife if she burnt his dinner). (Morris p.120) Jesus stood strongly in opposition to them both in three ways: they were preoccupied with divorce while he was more concerned about the positive institution of marriage; they called Moses' provision for divorce a command whereas Jesus said it was merely a restraining concession to the hardness of their hearts (Mt 19:7-9); and the Pharisees regarded divorce lightly whereas Jesus took it so seriously that, with one exception only, he called all remarriage after divorce adultery. (Stott p.95)

Questions

- Q In v.28 what is the connection that Jesus is making between the eyes and the heart (remembering that in Jewish thinking the 'heart' is the centre of a person's life - the entirety of their thoughts, emotions and will)? Read also Job 31:1,7,9
- Q From your own experience, how strong is this connection?
- Q Do you think Jesus' statements about gouging out a sinful eye (v29) and cutting off a sinful hand (v30) are to be taken literally? Or in other words, would a blind man really stop lusting? What principle is he giving his followers to help them maintain sexual purity?

John Stott suggests that we need discipline in guarding the approaches of sin, and that just as in war where sentries are posted, so too we need to post moral-sentries. (Stott p.90) This guarding of the heart (Prov4:23) may mean we choose not to go to certain movies or nightclubs or art exhibitions; whatever the case, the decisions need to be made ahead of time.

Getting really honest

- Q Recall a time when you know you lusted. What situation or place or frame of mind were you in when this happened? Are there any patterns? e.g. being alone and tired you watch a video you shouldn't; or going to the nightclub; or being with a certain group of friends.
- Q Practically speaking, are there things you can do to help you prepare for these temptations?
- Q What steps do you need to take to maintain your ongoing sexual purity? (Maybe one thing could be to memorise 1Cor 10:13 - see verse over) And who are you going to tell in order to help you keep accountable?

Study four ends

"'What?' they will say to us incredulously, '..you've not read such and such a book? You've not seen such and such a film? Why, you're not educated!' They may be right. We may have had to become culturally maimed in order to preserve our purity of mind..

"Jesus was quite clear... it is better to forgo some experiences this life offers in order to enter the life which is life indeed; it is better to accept some cultural amputation in this world than risk final destruction in the next. Of course this teaching runs clean counter to modern standards of permissiveness. It is based on the principle that eternity is more important than time and purity than culture, and that sacrifice is worth while in this life if it is necessary to ensure our entry into the next. We have to decide quite simply, whether to live for this world or the next, whether to follow the crowd or Jesus"

John Stott
(p.91)

some good advice...

"No test or temptation that comes your way is beyond the course of what others have had to face. All you need to remember is that God will never let you down; he'll never let you be pushed past your limit; he'll always be there to help you come through it"

1Corinthians 10:13
in the Message

SERMON ON THE MOUNT

5. FOLLOWING THE TRUE LAW PART II MT 5:33-48

To Begin...

- **Talk to God.** Ask to meet Him in this time of study to deepen your relationship with Him, to understand better who He is, and to clarify what practical things you should be doing
- **Re-read Mat 5-7**

Intro...

We continue to look this week at what Jesus meant when he called his followers to follow the true law, rather than the way the Pharisees had been doing it. This week we look at oaths, revenge, and love for enemies.

OATHS

Read Mt 5:33-37 and Mt 23:16-22

Background Information

The Scribes and Pharisees understood that you stood in judgement if you invoked the name of God in an oath and what you said did not happen. The oath needn't be a promise; it could be any solemn statement affirmed to be true before God (Morris p.123). So, to avoid the crime if they failed to fulfil their words, they came up with a list of things you could swear by which need not be as binding. This is where Jesus steps in and says that the alternatives they had come up with in v35-36 (eg heaven or earth) failed to get around the 'God issue' because God was as much connected to these things as if they invoked his name directly.

Questions

- Q Read Ex 20:7, Lev 19:12, Deut 23:21-23. Why do you think God was so harsh on unfulfilled oaths using his name?
- Q What is the underlying point Jesus makes when he says not to use oaths at all (v37)?

'You must come around for tea sometime', 'I'll give you a call later', 'I'll pray for you', 'No I haven't heard what they're saying about you', '.....'(ie silence when we should have spoken out)

There are many different ways we don't let our 'yes' be 'yes'. As you go through the coming week, notice the promises/statements you make and how truthful you are and how likely you are to fulfil them.

- Q Do you think others think of you as being reliable to your word and honest? Where can you start making changes to be more 'pure in heart - thought, motive, and action'?

the highest point of the Sermon on the Mount..

"The two final antithesis bring us to the highest point of the Sermon on the Mount, for which it is both most admired and most resented, namely the attitude of total love which Christ calls us to show towards one who is evil (v39) and our enemies (v44). Nowhere is the challenge of the sermon greater. Nowhere is the distinctness of the Christian counter-culture more obvious. Nowhere is our need of the power of the Holy Spirit more compelling"

John Stott
(p.102)

"In 1st century Palestine, the Jews felt oppressed and persecuted by the Romans. What would Jesus' hearers have been expecting to receive from someone announcing the inauguration of God's kingdom? Take up arms and march on Jerusalem; give up allegiance to Greek culture or Roman corroboration. But the real revolution would not come about through non-payment of taxes and the resulting violent confrontation...Jesus was summoning his followers to the real revolution..Israel reflecting the generous love of God to the whole world."

NT Wright
(p.281, 507)

REVENGE AND PASSIVE NON-RESISTANCE

Read Mt 5:38-42

Background Information

In Ex21:22-25 we have the 'eye for eye' passage (see also Deut 19:16-21). The context of this passage is in dealing with civil justice ie the law courts. In its original intention it had a great levelling effect: those who were powerful received no 'more justice' than the disempowered, and the 'little people' could not be walked over with extravagant penalties that far outweighed the offence. It set the rules and sought to take away the need for private revenge (Lev 19:17,18). But again, Jewish practice in Jesus' day tended to put private revenge back into the picture (Morris p.126).

Jesus gave 4 illustrations of what our response should be to an 'evil' person in v39-42: one dealing with someone who seeks to physically ride over you and/or insult you; one prosecuting you at law; one - the authorities - calling for your assistance (in Jesus day, to help support the 'oppressive' Romans was seen as being disloyal to Israel); and one begging from you.

- Q What could be some modern day equivalents for you today of these four illustrations Jesus used?
- Q In v39 Jesus says don't resist an evil person. How far do you take this? Wont aaawe be taken advantage of? consider 1Pet2:13-23 and Rom 12:17-21 when coming up with your answer.

LOVE FOR ENEMIES

Read Mt 5:43-48

- Q Why should we love our enemies?
- Q What do you think is the relevance of the sentence in v45 'God causes the sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous'?
- Q What should I do if I cannot love people who hate and persecute me?
- Q In v47 Jesus makes the point: if this repaying 'like for like' is all you do, what are you doing *more than others*? Why should we do more than others?
- Q In your everyday world here on the campus, create for yourself a mental picture of what it would look like if we were doing the 'more than others' that Jesus demands of us. What type of things would you see happening within our group and what type of things would the campus at large see as they came into contact with us?

Getting really honest

- Q In v44 Jesus said: love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. Think of those you are 'at odds' with. What are some specific actions you can take to show kindness to them?
e.g. for a start you could include them in your prayers this week (if not every week?).
- Q Jesus' concluding statement in Ch5 suggests we should set no bounds to our love, just as we should not operate within the narrow boundaries of set-down law in the hope of fulfilling the minimum requirement. What have been the boundaries to your love? Are they common to most people (i.e. doing no more than others)? Where can you begin to extend out your boundaries, even in just small ways? Who are you going to tell?

Study five ends

"If any man knew the meaning of suffering, (Martin Luther) King knew. House bombed; living day by day for 13 years under constant threats of death; maliciously accused of being a communist; falsely accused of being insincere...; stabbed by a member of his own race; slugged in a hotel lobby; jailed over 20 times; occasionally deeply hurt because friends betrayed him - and yet this man had no bitterness in his heart, no rancour in his soul, no revenge in his mind; and he went up and down the length and breadth of this world preaching non-violence and the redemptive power love"

Dr Benjamin Mays at
MLKing's funeral
(as quoted by Stott p.114)

"To return evil for good is devilish; to return good for good is human; to return good for evil is divine"

Alfred Plummer
(as quoted by Stott p.122)

"Retaliation is the way of the world; revenge on the one hand and recompense on the other, paying back injuries and paying back favours. Then we are quits, we are no man's debtors, we keep even with everybody... but it will not do in the kingdom of God!"

John Stott
(p.123)

SERMON ON THE MOUNT

6. WHAT TRUE DEVOTION LOOKS LIKE MT 6:1-18

To Begin...

- **Talk to God.** Ask to meet Him in this time of study to deepen your relationship with Him, to understand better who He is, and to clarify what practical things you should be doing

Intro...

To the Jews, giving to the needy, praying and fasting were expected elements of normal religious duty. Jesus moves from the last section (5:17-48) where he required wholehearted commitment to following the true spirit of the law, to this section (6:1-18) where he looks at how the disciple is to show his devotion to God.

Next week we will look at the prayer in more detail, but for the moment, let's consider the attitudes and actions Jesus demands of his followers in these traditional elements of religious devotion, with particular reference to giving and fasting.

Read Mt 6:1-18

Questions

- **Q** After telling his disciples to let their light shine before people (Mt 5:16), Jesus goes on to tell them not to do their religious exercises before men to be seen by them (6:1). How do you reconcile the apparent contradiction?
- **Q** Jesus says if you do your acts of righteousness before men, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven (v1). Why not? Is he saying we should never do these things publicly?
- **Q** Announcing your gift with trumpets (v2), praying standing in obvious places and with flowery language (v5,7) and fasting with a disfigured face (v16). Jesus condemns these. What are some modern day equivalents for us that Jesus would also condemn?

Background

The Greek word 'hupokrites' originally referred to an actor in a play, or one who was consciously playing a part (Morris p.137). Jesus criticised hypocrites for being pious in public (Mat 6:2; Mat 6:5; Mat 6:16). They were more interested in human praise when they gave alms, prayed, and fasted than in God's reward. Hypocrites were also guilty of being judgmental of others' faults and ignoring their own (Mat 7:1-5). Jesus often called the Pharisees hypocrites because of the conflict between their external actions and internal attitudes (Mat 15:1-9). But, Jesus said, their true attitudes would be revealed in the end (Luke 12:1-3).

the crux of it...

"Be careful not to do your 'acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

"The warnings on ostentatious almsgiving, prayer and fasting ... are about Israel's appropriation of the belief that YHWH is her father. She claims him as such, but apparently treats him as a faceless bureaucrat, to be bribed or wheedled into giving her what she wants. There is no place for such an attitude. Those who will be vindicated by YHWH are those who know him, and treat him, as father indeed."

NT Wright
(p.291)

Giving

- Q What sort of giving pleases God?
- Q Jesus seems to be very concerned about our motives when giving to others. Why do you think this is so important?
- Q Recall examples of Jesus giving to others recorded in the gospels. What can we learn about self-giving from Jesus? What do you honestly think and feel about being like Jesus in this area of self-giving?
- Q In Jesus' day, giving money to the needy was expected. Why should we give to the needy? How much should we give?
- Q Who are the "needy" on our doorstep? What are their needs? How could we meet these needs together? Who else might be interested in helping meet these needs? What action steps could be planned now?

Fasting

Fasting was mandatory for the Jewish people once a year, on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 23:32). The Pharisees, however, voluntarily fasted twice a week to impress the people with their "holiness."

- Q Why do you think Jesus suggests we fast? What could possibly be gained by going without food or some other physical need or pleasure?
- Q Have you ever tried fasting - whether it be food, tv, music, shopping malls or the internet? What might it look like in your life if you were to practice fasting? What needs to happen for fasting to become a reality in your life?

Getting really honest

- Q The Message translates Jesus words in Mat 6:2 as, "acting compassionate as long as someone is watching, playing to the crowds". Think of a situation where you tend to 'play to the crowds', or do things to please others or be honoured by them. Why do YOU do it? And how does this 'playing to the crowds' influence the way you respond to God and other people?
- Q Read James 2:14-17. Are you giving sacrificially of your time, money and other resources to those who need it?
- Q What are you going to do about any of these things... this week?

Study six ends

on giving to the needy..

²"When you do something for someone else, don't call attention to yourself. You've seen them in action, I'm sure—'playactors' I call them—treating prayer meeting and street corner alike as a stage, acting compassionate as long as someone is watching, playing to the crowds. They get applause, true, but that's all they get. ³When you help someone out, don't think about how it looks. ⁴Just do it—quietly and unobtrusively. That is the way your God, who conceived you in love, working behind the scenes, helps you out.

"Show when tempted to hide, and hide when tempted to show"

AB Bruce
(as quoted by Stott p.127)

on fasting...

¹⁶"When you practice some appetite-denying discipline to better concentrate on God, don't make a production out of it. It might turn you into a small-time celebrity but it won't make you a saint. ¹⁷If you 'go into training' inwardly, act normal outwardly. Shampoo and comb your hair, brush your teeth, wash your face. ¹⁸God doesn't require attention-getting devices. He won't overlook what you are doing; he'll reward you well.

"Jesus does not say 'if you fast...' but 'when you fast...'. He takes it for granted that they will fast... Fasting strengthens self-discipline, it lessens the hold of material things upon us, it shows God that we mean business, it lessens the power of habit, and it enables us to seek God without distraction."

Michael Green
(p.83)

SERMON ON THE MOUNT

7. PRAYER MT 6:5-15

To Begin...

- **Talk to God.** Ask to meet Him in this time of study to deepen your relationship with Him, to understand better who He is, and to clarify what practical things you should be doing

Intro...

Last week we looked at what Jesus expects of his followers as they show devotion to God – with particular emphasis on fasting and giving to the needy. This week, we look a little more into prayer within the section Mat 6:1-18.

Read Mat 6:5-15

Questions

- Q In their prayers, Jesus tells his followers not to be like hypocrites (v5) or pagans (v7). What are the sins Jesus protests against in these two, and what are the positive opposites that Jesus requires?
- Q If God knows what we need before we ask him (v8), why bother praying at all?
- Q Recall examples of Jesus talking to God. What can we learn about prayer from Jesus life?

Jesus gave his followers a model to follow when speaking with God..

| | |
|---|---|
| Our Father (v1) | relationship, the basis for the communication |
| your name (v9), your kingdom, your will (v10) | God's concerns are given priority |
| give us (v11), forgive us (v12), deliver us (v13) | our needs also laid before God |

Focusing attention on God takes up half of the prayer. If you want to dig deeper in your own time, consider also these examples from other prayers recorded in the bible: 1Chron 29:10-13, Dan 2:19-23, Eph 3:14-21.

Jesus' Prayer in the Message...

"And when you come before God, don't turn that into a theatrical production either. All these people making a regular show out of their prayers, hoping for stardom! Do you think God sits in a box seat? "Here's what I want you to do: Find a quiet, secluded place so you won't be tempted to role-play before God. Just be there as simply and honestly as you can manage. The focus will shift from you to God, and you will begin to sense his grace. "The world is full of so-called prayer warriors who are prayer-ignorant. They're full of formulas and programs and advice, peddling techniques for getting what you want from God. Don't fall for that nonsense. This is your Father you are dealing with, and he knows better than you what you need. With a God like this loving you, you can pray very simply. Like this:

'Our Father in heaven,
Reveal who you are.
Set the world right;
Do what's best—
as above, so below.
Keep us alive with three square meals.
Keep us forgiven with you and
forgiving others.
Keep us safe from ourselves and the
Devil.
You're in charge!
You can do anything you want!
You're ablaze in beauty!
Yes. Yes. Yes.'

"In prayer there is a connection between what God does and what you do. You can't get forgiveness from God, for instance, without also forgiving others. If you refuse to do your part, you cut yourself off from God's part.

In this model prayer Jesus also told his disciples to pray for their daily physical needs. Again, in your own time read Prov 30:7-9 to consider what the significance of the 'daily' bit is.

Getting really honest

- Q Jesus seems to be concerned about who our real audience is when we pray. What characterises your prayers to God when He is your **real** audience? What other audiences influence your prayers? What is their influence? and, why do you allow them to be an influence?
- Q If, like many people, you struggle to spend intentional time with God, talking, asking and listening to him, why do you think that is? i.e. Why do you find it so hard to pray? And what can we do about it?

God's ways are totally contrary to the ways of the world. When we are at our busiest, God would have us come and 'waste' time with him telling him about things he already knows. But prayer is a non-negotiable in God's eyes.

- Q What practical steps can we take for the remainder of this term in prayer, both individually and with others?

the practical bit

"Prayer cannot be taught, it can only be done" A.W.Tozer

Let's spend some time praying together!

Let's give space to each other to pray in ways comfortable to us all... some may want to pray short sentences, or just read passages, or make comments, or pray silently; whatever, lets turn our focus together up to God.

As a small group try using the basic form of Jesus prayer.

- Optional passages to get you started...
 - Psalm 103
 - Psalm 139
 - Isaiah 40
 - Plus the following...
 - Then Jesus said: I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry and he who believes in me will never be thirsty...all that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. Jn6:35ff
 - I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life Jn8:12ff
 - "I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep...whoever enters through me will be saved..The thief came only to kill and steal and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. Jn10:7ff
 - I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Jn11:25ff
 - I am the way and the truth and the life. No-one comes to the Father except through me. Jn 14:6
- Include some time to silently consider your own failings
- Consider needs: overseas disasters, our govt, our university
- Pray for friends who don't yet know God,
- pray for Christian friends, Navs, and any personal items

Study seven ends

"if we are to open our hands to receive his gracious pardon, we cannot keep our fists tightly clenched against those who have wronged us. So often our prayers are nullified because there is someone we think we cannot forgive...for He cannot and will not pardon the impenitent"

Michael Green
(p.82)

"The three petitions (v11-13) Jesus puts on our lips are beautifully comprehensive. They cover, in principle, all our human need - material (daily bread), spiritual (forgiveness of sins) and moral (deliverance from evil). What we are doing whenever we pray this prayer is to express our dependence upon God in every area of our human life"

John Stott
(p.150-151)

"With both prayer and sex, the depth of the experience depends not so much on technique as on love. Where the heart burns, it finds its own unique way to express its passion. God is not seeking a perfect performance, but a living relationship with you."

Mike Riddell
(Godzone, 1992 Lion Publishing, p.47)

SERMON ON THE MOUNT

8. AMBITION, MONEY & MATERIALISM MT 6:19-34

To Begin...

- **Talk to God.** Ask to meet Him in this time of study to deepen your relationship with Him, to understand better who He is, and to clarify what practical things you should be doing

Intro...

In the first half of Mt 6 Jesus taught that true devotion to God required that we don't act; that we don't seek admiration from others for our devotion; and that we don't approach God in a mechanistic way, demanding things from him as if we had put money in the machine and are waiting for the coke. Jesus taught what the private devotional life should look like.

In the second half of Mt 6, Jesus moves 'outward' from our devotional relationship with God to how that affects the way we see the practical realities of living. He moves from challenging the hypocrisy of the religious Jews (6:1-18) to challenging the materialism of the secular pagans (6:19-32). For true followers of Jesus, neither of these would do.

Treasure in Heaven

Read Mat 6:19-24

Three examples are given to show that you cannot value both Jesus *and* something above all else; it is one or the other. The examples used are: treasure, the eye and the slave

Questions

treasure

- Q What is the main difference Jesus highlights between treasure in heaven and on earth (v19-21)?
- Q What do you treasure? On a piece of paper write down the 5 things you treasure most in your life (be honest with yourself – this is just for you to look at)
Think about what you treasure most. Do you believe that the treasures you nominated are worthy of your thoughts, energy, heart and life?
- Q What, in principle, could be regarded as treasure in heaven? What type of things might that look like in practice to see us storing up treasures in heaven?

"Jesus places the alternatives before us at every stage. There are two treasures (on earth and in heaven v19-21), two bodily conditions (light and darkness v22,23), two masters (v24), and two preoccupations (our bodies and God's kingdom v25-34). We cannot sit on the fence"

John Stott
(p.153)

"Money, the ancients came to see, is like sea water. The more you drink of it the thirstier you get."

Michael Green
(p.84)

"Whether they are rich or poor, people see no harm in concentrating on getting more. Everyone has some "treasure", the main object in life. Jesus is asking whether it is to be the transient or the eternal"

Leon Morris
(p.152)

the eyes

In v22-23 Jesus talks about the eye. When you can see clearly, your whole body is better able to function correctly because it knows the reality it is dealing with e.g. not walking into walls. But when you see only dimly or as in the dark, how you see things may not be as they truly are.

- Q** Consider: if you were physically blind, how would that affect the way you live? In a spiritual sense, how would it affect the way you live if you had eyes but could not see God-reality? What sort of things can darken your view of God-reality?

slaves and masters

Jesus turns to the illustration of the slave and master. In those days, slaves were owned solely by one master and were available 24 hours a day for service - it was a relationship of complete devotion. Jesus uses this metaphor to describe the choices of devotion we have between God and Money. The word used for money, mammonas, is thought to come from a root meaning 'that in which one trusts' and which comes to signify wealth or property'.(Morris p.155)

- Q** Why do you think Jesus says it is not possible to be a slave to both money and God?
- Q** If it must be one or the other (for Jesus offers no middle ground) how do I know if I am serving the right master? consider also 1Tim6:6-10,17-19

Do not Worry

Read Mt 6:25-33

background

v25 begins with 'therefore' which connects the preceding v19-24 to what he is about to say. 'Therefore', having made your choice for heavenly treasure rather than earthly (v19-21), for light rather than darkness (v22-23), for God rather than wealth (v24), therefore let your worries and the way you live your life reflect these choices you have made...

Questions

- Q** What do you worry about? and Why do you worry about that?
- Q** What reasons does Jesus give as to why we should not worry about our physical needs?
- Q** How do I know when I'm worrying about the things Jesus commands us not to be anxious about - are there tell-tale signs?
- Q** How do you stop being anxious?
- Take a moment to pray, to listen to God, and to face up to yourself.
- Q** Are you content that, for you, seeking God's kingdom and justice takes priority over seeking to make life comfortable? Is your desire for money, possessions and a certain lifestyle really under control?
- Q** What practical steps will need to be taken? Who are you going to tell in order to make yourself accountable?

Study eight ends

"You either trust God to look after you or you trust in yourself. It's no use expecting Godbank to come to the rescue when you have a little nest-egg term deposit at First National Bank of Security. You have to let go of the trapeze before you find out whether the safety net works."

Mike Riddell
(p.56)

"just as there are only two kinds of piety (devotion), the self-centred and the God-centred, so there are only two kinds of ambition: one can be ambitious either for oneself or for God. There is no third alternative"

John Stott
(p.172)

SERMON ON THE MOUNT

9. RELATIONSHIPS MT 7:1-20

To Begin...

- **Talk to God.** Ask to meet Him in this time of study to deepen your relationship with Him, to understand better who He is, and to clarify what practical things you should be doing

Intro to Mt 7:1-12

Jesus moves on to talk about a variety of relationships: with fellow Christians (v1-5); stubborn negative non-Christians (v6); God (v7-11); and all people in general (v12). It is a bit quick-fire, but there are common themes!

Our Attitude to our brothers & sisters

Read Mt 7:1-5

- **Q** In v1 Jesus calls his followers not to judge. What do you think this means? (for more info consider also Rom 2:1-3, Rom 14:4,10-13, 1Co4:4-5, Lk 18:9-14)
- **Q** Cutting down 'Tall poppies' is a common NZ phenomenon. Negative judgmental comments often can come out when the person you're talking about is not present. Can you identify traces of it in your relating with others?
- **Q** What does Jesus suggest we do instead? What might it look like when we are doing it right? consider v5 and Mt 18:15-17

Our Attitude to hardened cynics

Read Mt 7:6

Stott suggests that the dogs and pigs with whom we are forbidden to share the gospel are not just unbelievers, but rather those who have had ample opportunity to hear and receive the good news but have decisively -even defiantly - rejected it. (Stott p182)

- **Q** What would it mean in our situation to not throw our pearls to the pigs? How extreme would things have to be? (for more info consider also Mt10:11-14, Ac 13:44-51, Ac18:5-6)
- **Q** What are the benefits of following this command of Jesus? and how could it be abused?

Our Attitude to our Heavenly Father

Read Mt 7:7-11

- **Q** On what basis does Jesus encourage his disciples to pray?
- **Q** What sort of an attitude should we therefore have towards approaching our heavenly Father?

on judging...

"We have a fatal tendency to exaggerate the faults of others and minimise the gravity of our own... Indeed, what we are often doing is seeing our own faults in others and judging them vicariously"

John Stott
(p.178)

"We need to be as critical of ourselves as we often are of others and as generous to others as we always are to ourselves"

John Stott
(p.180)

on prayer...

"(There are) conditions to answered prayer, and the ones listed here are not exhaustive. It is assumed I am a disciple. It is assumed that I pray, seriously and persistently (notice the present imperative in 'ask, seek, knock', indicating continuous prayer to show we mean business). It is assumed that God may answer in a way I did not want or expect.. It is assumed that I ask in filial faith and expectancy...There is no suggestion that if only we ask hard enough and believe passionately enough it will turn out as we ask. What we are promised is that it will turn out for our ultimate good."

Michael Green
(p.88)

Our Attitude to All people

Read Mt 7:12

The 'golden rule' is also found in other religions, but normally in the negative sense rather than the positive way Jesus put it. For example, a gentile once said to the great Rabbi, Hillel, that he would convert to Judaism if Hillel could teach him the whole Torah (first 5 books of bible) while the gentile stood on one leg. Hillel said "What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbour: that is the whole Torah. The rest is mere commentary thereof" (Shabbat 31a)

Q This is the target that is always before us, but how will we ever attain to it?

Spend some time praying for help to live out in the day-to-day the reality of love for others as you would want to be loved

Intro to Mt 7:13-20

In the remainder of the chapter, Jesus starts to wind up the sermon bringing to a head the choices before people: between the narrow and broad road; between the true teacher and false teachers; and between those who live out the teaching and those who hear but do nothing with it. We will save the last part (7:21-29) until next week but will tackle the gates and false teachers now.

Narrow and Wide Gates

Read Mt 7:13-14

Jesus indicates that there are two roads, two gates, two destinations and two crowds... and by definition, there is no middle option. One gate is difficult to find and requires some effort whereas the other is easily found and well populated.

Q How does this sit with you that there is no middle position?

Q Why do you think one road is narrow while the other is broad?

Q Consider these verses relating to the destination of those on the broad road. 2Thes1:8-9, Mt 25:41-46, 2Pet2:1-9. What do you think is our responsibility to those on the broad road and what is beyond our responsibility?

Beware of False Guides

Read Mt 7:15-20

Jesus tells us that without doubt there will come those who look like good teachers and leaders but are not as they appear - they point people towards the broad road and can do much damage. But Jesus said we could identify these counterfeits not by their appearance, but by their fruit. Stott suggests there are a number of fruits to test which reveal the true identity of the person: their character and conduct (Gal 5:22-23 displaying fruit of the Spirit); their teaching (Mt 12:33-37); and the effect their teaching has on their followers (e.g. upsetting people's faith, promoting ungodliness and causing bitter divisions - 2Tim2:16-26)

Q In what ways are false prophets deceptive?

Q It is the responsibility of all believers to make sure they are not being led by false guides. What sort of things should we be doing in our situation to ensure this doesn't happen?

Q From all you've looked at tonight, what things can you put into practice right away? Who can you tell this to in order to keep you accountable?

Study nine ends

on narrow and wide gates..

"What about those who have never heard the gospel? Let us leave those who have never heard to the God who came to rescue those who had never heard. They can be safely entrusted to his justice and his love. The judge of all the earth will do right. And the one who loved them enough to come for them and die for them will not wrong them... if we care about them we can go and tell them the good news of Jesus and the kingdom (MT 28:19) ..(and) we can make sure that we personally are wholeheartedly committed to Christ."

Michael Green
(p.92)

"Jesus is appealing both for an evangelical decision (the gate) and for an ethical endurance (the way). Taken together, then, the narrow gate and the tough way are simply the difficult choice for Jesus and the constantly challenging decisions for discipleship to him"

FD Bruner
(as quoted by Morris p175)

SERMON ON THE MOUNT

10. COMMITMENT MT 7:21-29

To Begin...

- **Talk to God.** Ask to meet Him in this time of study to deepen your relationship with Him, to understand better who He is, and to clarify what practical things you should be doing

Intro...

The seriousness of what we do with Jesus' sermon is laid before us as we come to the end of the Sermon on the Mount.

Following only with the lips

Read Mt 7:21-23

- Q** What positive features can you identify in those whom Jesus calls evildoers? Where did they go wrong? cf Lk 6:46

Following only with the Ears

Read Mt 7:24-27 and Lk 6:46-49

All the way through, Jesus has given only two alternatives in response to who he is, what he says and what he does.

- Q** Now, what are the two alternatives here?

- Q** Can you think of ways you have heard the words of Jesus without putting them into practice? What are the dangers of doing this?

In Luke's gospel (Lk 6:46-49) Jesus contrasts a man who dug down deep to lay foundations with one who laid no foundations, preferring instead to build on sand.

- Q** How could you notice any difference in these houses before the storm struck? And what is the place of storms in the Christian life?

- Q** What does it mean to dig deep foundations into Christ?

- Q** It seems such a difficult thing to do, but how do we put into practice what Jesus asks of us in the Sermon? How do we avoid this just becoming more head-knowledge stuffed into our brain?

"Verses 21-23 are a dreadful warning: the most orthodox vows of faith have no value in the eyes of God if they are not translated into concrete obedience to his will. One may with his (or her) lips loudly profess faith in God, and even invoke Jesus as Lord, yet deny him by thoughts, words and acts"

S. de Dietrich
(as quoted by Morris p.181)

the end is near...

Summary of the Sermon

Reflecting on all that we've looked at in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, consider the following questions...

Q What have been some of the things God has particularly spoken to you about?

Jesus final words are serious: putting into practice is what makes the difference.

Q What things do you need to put into practice?

Q How are you going to ensure these things don't 'get lost' in the good ideas pile?

Q Who are you going to share your findings and proposed actions with, and make yourself accountable to?

Whatever else you do, make sure you pray for help!

Study ten ends here

Bibliography

For further study on the Sermon on the Mount consider the following..

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reprint in one vol

Chris Marshall, "Kingdom Come" Impetus Publications 1993

Chris Marshall, three taped messages on the Sermon on the Mount from a Melbourne Conference, Apr 1995

Leon Morris, "The Gospel according to Matthew" IVP Eerdmans 1992

John Stott, "Essential Living - The Sermon on the Mount" IVP 1988

NT Wright, "Jesus and the Victory of God" vol 2 SPCK 1992

Of these I found Stott's book the most helpful.

Hard words to end with...

"The question is not whether we say nice, polite, orthodox, enthusiastic things to or about Jesus; nor whether we hear his words, listening, studying, pondering and memorising until our minds are stuffed with his teaching; but whether we do what we say and do what we know, in other words whether the lordship of Jesus which we profess is one of our life's major realities."

John Stott
(p.209)

the end