



6 Sessions for small group
or individual study

Kingdom Living

6 Studies on the Sermon on the Mount

Glyn Williams

Kingdom Living
Matthew 5-7

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Introduction to the Living 4 God Study Guides

The *Living 4 God* Study Guides are designed to ground a Christian in the study and understanding of Scripture. Essentially it is not designed for a person who became a Christian last week, even though it can be adapted for them and some sections will certainly be beneficial to them. It is also not as rigorous as Bible college class might be. Be prepared from some challenges and some stretching. This might be the first time you are exposed to certain theological concepts or terms, or to some in-depth methods of Bible study. Celebrate the challenge and strive to do your best. Peter tells us to “*make every effort*” to add knowledge to our faith (2 Peter 1:5). It will take some effort, but I can guarantee it will be well worth it in the end!

How to use the Living 4 God Study Guides

You can certainly use these guides on your own and benefit a great deal. The questions are designed to make you think, and there is space for journaling and reflection. All that you need is here. So if you want to use this guide on your own, enjoy!

At the same time, these guides are especially designed for group discussion. Most of us grow in life and in our spirituality as we talk and share with others. People learn best in an active mode of participation, conversation and dialogue, and we gain so much by hearing the ideas and insights of others.

If you use these guides in a group discussion format, you will need a leader. The leader will need to spend extra time preparing in order to help everyone to obtain the most out of the discussion. The leader's role is not to have all the answers. Instead the leader helps to facilitate the discussion, so that everyone learns from one another and from the wisdom in the guide and in the Bible.

Suggestions for group study

1. Come to the session prepared. Read over the session beforehand. Looking over the theme, Bible verses and questions beforehand will make the discussion more rewarding and stimulating.
2. Be willing to join in the discussion. The leader of the group will not be lecturing, but will encourage people to discuss what they have learned in the passage. Plan to share what God has taught you in your individual study.
3. Ask questions. Any question that is a real question for someone is a great question.
4. Stick to the passage being studied. Base your answers on the verses being discussed rather than on outside authorities such as commentaries or your favourite author or speaker.
5. Try to be sensitive to the other members of the group. Listen to each other, and build each other up. Affirm each other whenever you can. This will encourage more hesitant members of the group to participate.
6. Be careful not to dominate the discussion. By all means participate, but allow others to have equal time.
7. Be open to spiritual growth.
8. Have fun!
9. If you are the discussion leader, you will find additional suggestions and helpful ideas in the Leader's Notes on page ?

Suggestions for individual study

1. Begin each session with prayer. Ask God to help you understand the passage and apply it to your life.
2. A good modern translation, such as the New International Version (as is used throughout all *Living 4 God Study Guides*) will give you the most help. Questions are all based on the NIV.
3. Read and reread the passage(s). You must know what the passage says before you can understand what it means and how it applies to you.
4. Write your answers in the spaces provided in the study guide. This will help you to express more clearly your understanding of the passage.
5. Keep a Bible Dictionary handy. Use it to look up unfamiliar words, names or places.

Some additional titles have been recommended at the end of this book that will aid your study of the subject.

Icons used in the Living 4 God Study Guides



Ice Breaker Activity



Bible Reading



Points or Questions that Stir the Heart

INTRODUCTION

We have listened to the Sermon on the Mount and perhaps have understood it. But who has heard it aright? Jesus gives the answer at the end (Matt. 7:24–29). He does not allow his hearers to go away and make of his sayings what they will, picking and choosing from them whatever they find helpful and testing them to see if they work. He does not give them free rein to misuse his word with their mercenary hands, but gives it to them on condition that it retains exclusive power over them.

Humanly speaking, we could understand and interpret the Sermon on the Mount in a thousand different ways. Jesus knows only one possibility: simple surrender and obedience, not interpreting it or applying it, but doing and obeying it. That is the only way to hear his word. He does not mean that it is to be discussed as an ideal; he really means us to get on with it.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

The Sermon on the Mount is probably one of the best known portions of Scripture in the entire Bible, if not as a whole, certainly in part. However, it is also one of the least understood parts of Jesus' teachings. As Sinclair B. Ferguson states in his book, *“It is not a sermon about the ideal life in an ideal world, but about the kingdom life in a fallen world.”* It is from this perspective that this study guide has been written. Through each of the six sessions you will learn what it means to live as a member of God's Kingdom, while at the same time living in the fallen world here on earth.

Sometimes the issues are not easy to deal with when we look at our own hearts and lives. As C.S. Lewis once said when he was criticised for not caring for the Sermon on the Mount: *“As to 'caring for' for Sermon on the Mount, if 'caring for' here means 'liking' or enjoying, I suppose no one 'cares for' it. Who can like being knocked flat on his face by a sledge hammer? I can hardly imagine a more deadly spiritual condition than that of a man who can read that passage with tranquil pleasure.”*

Lewis was right. Studying the Sermon on the Mount exposes the depth of our sin and the shallowness of our commitment. The pain that it inflicts, however, is not there to destroy us, but rather to heal us. It is essentially the Christian's job description and is the most complete guide of the expectations that Jesus has of our lives.

Through this study you will learn the answers to some of the most pressing questions that you will encounter in your Christian walk. Questions like: What does it mean to be a Christian? Does God's law still have a place in the modern Christian life? How do I fast and pray? And many more.

Join us as we embark on a journey of discovering true Kingdom Living in this fallen world.

MATTHEW 5-7

The Beatitudes

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

Salt and Light

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 by men. ¹⁴You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵Neither 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. ¹⁶In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

The Fulfilment of the Law

¹⁷“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them. ¹⁸I tell you the truth, 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. ¹⁹Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰For 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.

Murder

²¹“You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgement.’ ²²But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgement. Again, anyone who says to his brother, ‘Raca,’

is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But 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 has something against you, ²⁴leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; 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 with him on the way, or he may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. ²⁶I tell you the truth, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.

Adultery

²⁷“You have heard that it was said, ‘Do not commit adultery.’ ²⁸But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹If your right eye causes you to sin, 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. ³⁰And if your right hand causes you to sin, 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.

Divorce

³¹“It has been said, ‘Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.’ ³²But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to become an adulteress, and anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery.

Oaths

³³“Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not break your oath, but keep the oaths you have made to the Lord.’ ³⁴But I tell you, Do not swear at all: either by heaven, for it is God’s throne; ³⁵or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. ³⁶And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. ³⁷Simply let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.

An Eye for an Eye

³⁸“You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’ ³⁹But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. ⁴⁰ And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. ⁴¹If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. ⁴²Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

Love for Enemies

^{43c}You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.’ ⁴⁴But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵that you may be sons 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. ⁴⁶If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? ⁴⁷And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? ⁴⁸Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Giving to the Needy

6^{1c}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. ^{2c}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 honoured by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. ³But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Prayer

^{5c}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 men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. ⁶But 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. ⁷And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. ⁸Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. ^{9c}This, then, is how you should pray: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, ¹⁰your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. ¹¹Give us today our daily bread. ¹²Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. ¹³And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.’ ¹⁴For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Fasting

^{16c}When you fast, do not look sombre as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. ¹⁷But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, ¹⁸so that it will not be obvious to men 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.

Treasures in Heaven

^{19c}Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. ^{22c}The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. ²³But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness! ^{24c}No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.

Do Not Worry

^{25c}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 important than food, and the body more important than clothes? ²⁶Look 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? ²⁷Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? ^{28c}And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labour or spin. ²⁹Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendour was dressed like one of these. ³⁰If 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, O you of little faith? ³¹So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³²For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. ³⁴Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Judging Others

7^{1c}Do not judge, or you too will be judged. ²For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. ^{3c}Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? ⁴How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? ⁵You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye. ^{6c}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 then turn and tear you to pieces.

Ask, Seek, Knock

⁷“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ⁸For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. ⁹“Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? ¹¹If 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! ¹²So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

The Narrow and Wide Gates

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. ¹⁴But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

A Tree and Its Fruit

¹⁵“Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. ¹⁶By their fruit you will recognise them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. ¹⁹Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰Thus, by their fruit you will recognise them. ²¹“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²²Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ ²³Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’

The Wise and Foolish Builders

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. ²⁵The 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. ²⁶But 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. ²⁷The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”

²⁸When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, ²⁹because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.

LESSON 1

KINGDOM WITNESS (MATTHEW 5:1-16)



Go around the room and have people rate themselves from 1-5 on the following 2 criteria: How happy and how blessed they are.



Matthew 5:1-12

General Observations:

Kingdom of Heaven:

Matthew was a devout Jew, and as is their custom, God's name was never spoken or written. This is seen throughout the book of Matthew by him using the term Kingdom of Heaven in place of Kingdom of God as is used by other New Testament writers.

Definitions:

Beatitude – from the Latin *Beatus*.

Also referred to as Macarisms – from the Greek *Makaristos*.

Both mean “blessed.”

Some modern translations use the word “happy,” but this is a poor rendering of the word, as will become evident through this study.

Character of the Blessings:

The blessing is directly related to the character involved:

e.g. The mourning will be comforted, the merciful will be shown mercy.

Same Reward:

We see two of the Beatitudes offer the same reward: the poor in spirit and those who are persecuted because of righteousness (the first and the last beatitudes). Both are promised the Kingdom of Heaven.

To begin and end with the same expression is a style called inclusion. They act as a kind of parentheses, meaning that everything included between them can be included into the same theme. In this case, the character of those who are part of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Blessed are the poor in spirit (v3)

1. What does it mean to be “*poor in spirit*”? (cf. Luke 18:13)

We are to come to Christ, acknowledge our spiritual bankruptcy, empty ourselves of any self-righteousness, and only then are we ready for Him to fill us.

Blessed are those who mourn (v4)

2. We are told by Paul in Philippians to “*rejoice in the Lord always*” (4:4), yet here we are told that those who mourn will be blessed. What then is the mourning referring to? (cf. Romans 7:24)
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The Christian is to be the truest realist. He reasons that death, sin and eternity in hell is before every person on this planet. On the other hand, he reasons that life, God's revelation, and eternity in heaven are just as present. All are realities that will not disappear, and the person who rightly assesses themselves in light of them, cannot help but mourn, not only for themselves, but for the sinful state of the world too.

3. But then these people will also be rewarded. What will that reward be? (cf. Revelation 21:4)
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Blessed are the meek (v5)

4. Define the word meek/meekness:
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Meekness flies in the face of the norms of the world. When many are trying to advance themselves, the meek are trying to advance everyone else.

Notice the paradox here: if you put others first, you will inherit the earth, not those who pursue the world for themselves (cf. Matthew 16:26).

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness (v6)

Dr. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones in his book *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount* said the following:

I do not know of a better test that anyone can apply to himself or herself in this whole matter of the Christian profession than a verse like this. If this verse is to you one of the most blessed statements of the whole of Scripture, you can be quite certain you are a Christian;

if it is not, then you had better examine the foundations again. (p74)

5. Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?

6. With what then will these people be filled with?

Those who drink of the living water will never go thirsty. Those who eat the bread of life will never go hungry. Our relying on Jesus will satisfy all the desires of our heart completely (cf John 4:14, 6:35)

Blessed are the merciful (v7)

Some try to interpret this verse legalistically by saying that the only way to receive God's mercy is if we show mercy ourselves. In order to clear up this understanding we first need to understand the concept of mercy:

7. Define the word "mercy":

We know that when we accepted Christ through his death on the cross, we were shown mercy in that no longer do we receive the judgement of death that we so rightly deserve as sinners. This then puts us at a crossroad, as we are then to show mercy to those who have not yet accepted Christ.

8. In what way are we to show mercy to others?

Blessed are the pure in heart (v8)

In Biblical imagery, the heart is the center of our entire being. It is the center of our personality. However, Jesus' assessment of the human heart later in Matthew is far from complimentary (15:19).

Here, Jesus is insisting that purity of heart, not actions, is what is needed to earn a place in heaven.

9. What are some of the ways that we can maintain a purity of heart?



We need to constantly ask ourselves: to what extent do our words and actions reflect our hearts, and to what extent are our words and actions a cover-up for the state of our hearts?

Blessed are the peacemakers (v9)

Note it is the peacemakers that are blessed, not the peacekeepers.

10. In what ways are peacemakers different from peacekeepers?

Jesus was the ultimate peacemaker in that he came to earth to make peace between man and God, not merely to keep the *status quo*. We are called to mirror that by doing what we can to spread this gospel of peace to the lost. In that sense we are then true peacemakers, bringing people into that right relationship with God.

11. What then will be our blessing? We will be called sons of God. Note “sons”, not “children” as in the King James Version. Although subtle, what is the difference between sons and children?

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness (vv10-12)

Note that this beatitude does not say: “blessed are those who are persecuted because they have joined a church, or are religious.” We are called to righteous relationship with Christ, not church membership or religious devotion.

12. In what ways are we persecuted today?



John 15:18-20 for an example of what Jesus was referring to here
(cf. 2 Timothy 3:12)

13. What comfort do we have in going through this persecution?



Matthew 5:13-16

Salt and Light (vv13-16)

These verses should not be read in isolation, but together with the beatitudes, as they are linked.

14. What are some of the uses of salt, and how do they link to our spirituality?

15. Explain the imagery of the term “*a city on a hill*”

Nowadays we do cover our lamps with lamp shades, but imagine if we were living in Bible times when there was no electric or gas lights to illuminate our lives, a single oil lamp would have provided enough light to illuminate the whole household. A welcome sight in a world of pitch blackness.

Notice that we are not commanded to be salt and light, as many people seem to think we are, but rather we are told that we are salt and light.

16. In what way are we salt and light?

Many of the reforms of the past – abolition of the slave trade, establishment of orphanages, etc. - the darkness of the world was alleviated. Professing Christians need to be less concerned with personal prestige and more concerned with the standards of the Kingdom. We need to live out the Beatitudes, and then the world will see our good works, and praise our Father in Heaven.