



THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

FAMILY DEVOS

The Beatitudes

Scripture: Matthew 5:1-12

Memory Verse: Matthew 5:3

“Blessed are the poor in spirit,
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

For My Family:

This series of devotionals will walk you through the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7), Jesus’ longest recorded teaching. When Jesus was seated on the mountain, His disciples (followers/students) came to Him and He taught them. If we love Jesus and want to learn how to follow Him, we have to let Him speak to us. To do that, we have to go where we will hear Him (His Word), listen to what He has to say (read), and receive His instruction as He teaches us (obey). Always remember to ask God to teach you as you open His Word. Ask Him to give you a heart that is willing to receive His instruction. If you haven’t done that yet, go ahead and do so.

This first portion of Matthew 5 is known as the beatitudes (the blessings). “Blessed” could actually be translated “happy!” That may sound strange as you read through the list, but it is more than the kind happy we think of when someone tells a joke or things are really going well for us. It is a deep happiness or joy that isn’t affected by the things that happen to us or go on around us. It is rooted in who God is and the truth in His Word, and because both God and His Word are unchanging, God’s people will always be blessed and have a reason to be happy.

The beatitudes also teach us what kind of people we should desire to be. You may find yourself in more than one of these beatitudes, and you very well could find yourself in all of them. We should desire to be poor-spirited, meaning we understand that we have nothing apart from God (see John 15:5). We should be meek (humble), hunger and thirst for righteousness, be pure in heart, etc. These are to be the characteristics of the people in God’s kingdom. The religious leaders in Jesus’ day were admired for the outward display of righteousness, but in God’s kingdom, righteousness comes from within. What an amazing promise that those who hunger and thirst for righteousness will be filled!

But what about being persecuted? Does that mean I should want people to be mean to me? No, but it is a promise that you will face hardship because of your decision to follow Jesus, and when you do, you are still blessed. God wants you to remember, whenever people are mean to you because you do what’s right in obedience to Him, that the kingdom of heaven belongs to you! He wants you to know that He will give you a great reward for standing up for Him even when it was so hard to do so. Sometimes following Jesus will be really hard, but knowing God’s Word and His promises will give us strength to stand. Following Jesus is always worth it, and that will never change.

Questions for Young Children:

Who did Jesus teach the Sermon on the Mount to?

Which of these beatitudes sticks out to you the most and why? (Read through them again if they need to be reminded.)

What does it mean to be persecuted?

Questions for Teens and Pre-teens:

Which of the beatitudes sticks out to you the most? Why?

Is the blessing in verses 10 and 11 for everyone who is persecuted? Who is it specifically for and why does Jesus tell them to rejoice?

Why does Jesus want us to remember that the prophets also were persecuted?

Salt and Light

Scripture: Matthew 5:13-16

Memory Verse: Matthew 5:4

“Blessed are those who mourn,
For they shall be comforted.”

For My Family:

Imagine for a moment that you live in a world where everything is in black and white, like an old movie. Now imagine that you are walking down the street and everyone you see is in various shades of grey when suddenly, you see a flash of red in the crowd. You think to yourself, “Wow! That’s different!” That person in red would really stand out from everyone else, and you would probably go investigate. Seeing something in color is a big difference when everything else is in black and white. The same way, as we follow Jesus our lives begin to look different.

Jesus explains this difference by telling His disciples that they are “the salt of the earth.” This meant something a little more to the people listening than it does to us today. Back then, they thought of salt as a preservative. You would rub salt into something to keep it from going bad (there were no refrigerators or freezers back then). Jesus is saying that Christians have that effect on the earth! But the way we think of salt on food also applies. Salt changes the way things taste (unless it loses its saltiness). As salt, we make life taste different for others. Think about our words. Colossians 4:6 says to “let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt.” Followers of Jesus point people to God by how they talk to others. Their words are kind, gentle, encouraging, gracious, etc. Speech seasoned with salt makes life taste better, and as people notice we get to point them to our heavenly Father!

The other thing Jesus calls His followers is “the light of the world.” Take note that light is seen, not heard. This doesn’t mean you glow in the dark... It means you look like Jesus! His light is in you. “For you once were in darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light” (Ephesians 5:8). So our aim as followers of Jesus is to look like Jesus so we can point people God, not ourselves. The religious leaders in Jesus’ day wanted everyone’s attention to be on them as they did good works so they could receive the praise, but Jesus says that as we do good works, we should do them to point people to our Father in heaven. The things you say and do matter. They could change someone’s life for all eternity!

Before we end today’s devotion, notice that even though we are salt, we can lose our saltiness, and even though we are the light of the world, we can cover up that light. The things we do (or don’t do) can be salt and light to the world around us, but when we act like those who are outside of God’s kingdom (in darkness), we cover up the light that is in us and may miss an opportunity to point others to our Father in heaven who loved us so much that He sent His Son to call us out of darkness into His marvelous light. Let your light shine!

Questions for Young Children:

How are followers of Jesus like light and salt?

How do we cover up our light?

What good works could you do today to point people to God?

Questions for Teens and Pre-teens:

Why does Jesus use salt and light to describe His followers?

How and why might followers of Jesus cover up their light?

Lots of people do good works, but what are some ways followers of Jesus do good works in a way that invites people to glorify God and not ourselves?

Not to Destroy, but to Fulfill

Scripture: Matthew 5:17-20

Memory Verse: Matthew 5:5

“Blessed are the meek,
For they shall inherit the earth.”

For My Family:

Today we are going to talk about Jesus and the Law, but before we do, we have to talk about what the Law is! In Jesus' day, the New Testament hadn't been written yet. They only had the Old Testament, which they often called the Law, or the Law and the Prophets. God gave Moses the Ten Commandments along with many other rules for God's people to obey, but there was a problem: No one could obey them all perfectly! No one had ever been able to keep the whole law! In fact, whenever someone sinned (broke God's rules), an innocent animal had to be sacrificed to cover that sin.

But why did God give the Law if no one could keep it perfectly? Why did all those animals have to die? To prepare the way for the coming of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! Paul tells us in Galatians that the law is a tutor to bring us to Christ. God's Law is like a mirror that shows us there is sin in our hearts that separates us from a perfect and holy God. It shows us our need for a Savior, someone who can take the punishment for our sins and make us righteous! But who could ever do this?

“I didn't come to destroy the Law and the Prophets... but to fulfill.” The answer was and is Jesus! He fulfilled the Law by obeying it perfectly, by fulfilling prophecy, and by becoming the only innocent sacrifice that could take our place. “For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21).

This is so important for us to understand as we follow Jesus and read the Bible! We need Him. Not just for salvation, but to help us live for Him. The Scribes and the Pharisees were the most righteous people on the planet outwardly, but their hearts were sinful. Jesus taught that sin comes from within, and without God's help we can't be made righteous (right with God). Maybe the beatitudes sounded impossible to you. Who could ever be merciful, humble, and pure in heart all the time? The answer is Jesus can and He lives in you!

As followers of Jesus, we don't work to keep commandments and traditions like the Pharisees did. We walk in the Spirit, depending on the strength that God gives us each day to live for Him. “It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me” (Gal. 2:20). The Bible tells us that no one is righteous, that our righteousness is like filthy rags. Righteousness couldn't come from the Law, it had to come from Jesus as He fulfilled the Law in His life, death and resurrection. We need Jesus to take away our sin and give us His righteousness. Sin separates us from God, but the righteousness of Jesus allows us to draw near to God. We can do all through Christ who strengthens us, but without Him, we can do nothing.

Questions for Young Children:

Can anyone keep all of God's commands in the Law?

What is it called when someone disobeys God's commands?

What is righteousness?

Questions for Teens and Pre-teens:

How does sin effect your relationship with God?

What is needed to make people right with God?

What does it mean for Christ to live in you? If He does, why do you still sin?

It Starts with the Heart

Scripture: Matthew 5:21-26

Memory Verse: Ezekiel 36:26

“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.”

For My Family:

In our last study, we looked at how Jesus came to fulfill the law and saw that He is the only Man who never sinned. That means that every other human being in all of history is a sinner. Now when some people hear that, they might think, “Sure I’m not perfect, but calling me a sinner sounds harsh. After all, I’ve never done anything really bad, like rob a bank... or kill someone.” However, in today’s passage, Jesus explains that sin isn’t just the bad things we do. Sin starts with our hearts.

Jesus begins the passage by reminding us that the sixth commandment tells us not to murder. But what He says next is shocking: if you have hatred and anger for someone in your heart, or if you call them a fool, that’s a sin too! That might sound like a strange comparison. After all, how can you compare calling someone a fool or being mad at them to actually killing someone? But what Jesus is saying here is not that these actions are the same, but that they are signs of the same problem: hatred for another person in your heart. Whether our hatred leads us to bitterness, name-calling, or even hurting another person, the problem is that we are showing hate for another human being, someone God created, someone He loves. While what people do about their hatred might be different, they all come from the same source: a sinful heart.

To illustrate the importance of having a heart free of hatred for others, Jesus gives the example of a man going to worship at an altar. Jesus says that if the man realizes that there is something causing division between him and a fellow believer, instead of going to the altar, he should make things right. The same way, if we have anger or hate in our hearts toward someone, especially another Christian, we need to make things right with them.

When we think about sin, usually we think about actions. We know that we shouldn’t steal, shouldn’t lie, and shouldn’t hurt other people. But as we saw in today’s passage, sin starts with the heart. We hurt others because of anger or hate in our hearts. We steal because of greed in our hearts. We lie because of selfishness or fear in our hearts. So if we want to obey God, we need to deal not just with our sinful actions, but our sinful hearts. But how do we do that? How can we fix a sinful heart? On our own, we can’t, but the good news is, Jesus can. When we ask Jesus to come into our lives, the Bible tells us that Jesus gives us a new, clean heart. If you’ve never done that before, talk to your family today about asking Jesus to save you and give you a clean heart.

Questions for Young Children:

Is it a sin to hate another person in your heart?

If you are going to worship God but you remember you are mad at someone, what does Jesus say you should do first?

Who gives us a clean heart?

Questions for Teens and Pre-teens:

Why do you think Jesus compares hatred to murdering someone? What do they have in common?

What does it mean that sin starts with our hearts, not our actions?

Can we fix sin in our hearts on our own? How can we fix the problem?

Mean What You Say

Scripture: Matthew 5:33-37

Memory Verse: Matthew 5:6

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
For they shall be filled”

For My Family:

Imagine that someone asks you if they can borrow some money. They promise they will pay you back, but they never do. Now imagine that they come back and ask you for more money. They promise they will really pay it back this time, but again they never do. Now imagine they come back a third time, and ask for money again. They say, “This is the last time, and I’m really *really* going to pay you back this time. I swear! Pinky promise!” Would you trust them? Why or why not? The more promises they make, the less you believe them because they have shown that they are not trustworthy. In Jesus’ day, people would swear by all kinds of things, like they do today. They would swear by heaven, earth, Jerusalem, even their own head! They would often do this to convince people they really meant what they said, even though they didn’t. Jesus warns that swearing like that comes from the evil one (the father of lies—John 8:44). It’s a sin!

In today’s passage, Jesus teaches His disciples that they don’t need to swear by anything or make promises to convince people that what they are saying is true. Instead, they just need to be trustworthy. They should say what they mean and mean what they say. In other words, citizens of God’s kingdom are supposed to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth by being trustworthy people. When they say we will be there, they are. When they tell their parents they will clean their room before dinner, they do. Good character outweighs every promise. Either people mean what they say, or they don’t.

But what’s the big deal? Is it really that bad to tell a little white lie? So what if I don’t clean my room up until after dinner, as long as it gets done? But that’s the point! Jesus is making it clear that there are a lot of things people don’t think are a big deal that are actually sin, and all sin is a big deal. All sin had to be paid for on the cross. Lies don’t belong in the kingdom of God. God is the God of truth! It is impossible for Him to lie (Hebrews 6:18). And when we show those around us that they can trust the things we say, it shows them that they can trust what God says. When God’s children show themselves to be trustworthy, it points people to their Father who is trustworthy (5:16).

Aren’t you thankful that God is trustworthy? He always means what He says. Are you trustworthy? Do you mean the things you say? What you say matters. It matters to those around you, and it matters to God. Don’t worry about making promises, just keep your word! Let your “yes” be “yes” and your “no” be “no.”

Questions for Young Children:

What does it mean to let your “yes” be “yes” and your “no” be “no”?

When we tell the truth, what does that teach others about God?

Does God ever lie?

Questions for Teens and Pre-teens:

Why does it matter if followers of Jesus swear or not?

How can we show others that we mean what we say?

What does today’s passage teach us about the kingdom of God?

Going Above and Beyond

Scripture: Matthew 5:38-42

Memory Verse: Matthew 5:7

“Blessed are the merciful,
For they shall obtain mercy.”

For My Family:

How do you respond when others wrong you? Do you want to wrong them back? If someone calls us names or makes fun of us, we are often tempted to get revenge by doing something just as bad (or worse) to get back at them. People in Jesus' day had used God's law as an excuse to get personal revenge when others wronged them, but Jesus taught His followers to live differently. When people wrong us, He wants us to react in love, or as Paul wrote in Romans 12:21, “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

Jesus doesn't want our hearts to focus on revenge. Instead, He wants our lives to be full of the fruit of the Holy Spirit who lives within us (see Galatians 5:22-23). “Vengeance is mine. I will repay,” says the LORD” (Romans 12:19). When we try to get revenge, we put ourselves in God's place. Not only that, but revenge is usually motivated anger, not love, and James tells us that “the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God,” (James 1:20), it only causes more hurt. It leads to war, not peace.

This doesn't mean we should allow others to take advantage of us, but we should ask for God's help to respond in ways that show His love to others. As God's people, this may even look like taking insults without responding in kind. Jesus knew exactly what this was like. He didn't just teach it, He lived it out. But Jesus is talking about more than insults here. He continues by telling us that when people require or ask things of us, we should go above and beyond in a show of love for God and for our neighbor. If someone sues you and gets your coat as payment, give him even more than he is asking for. If someone compels you to go one mile, go even further.

In Jesus' day the Jews were under Roman rule. At anytime a Roman soldier could come and lay his spear on your shoulder, and that meant you had to carry whatever he wanted you to carry for a mile. We saw this when Simon was made to carry Jesus' cross. Jesus is teaching us, not just to do what you are legally required to do, but to go above and beyond. Others seek to do the bare minimum, but followers of Jesus are willing to go the extra mile. After all, our work isn't unto men, it's unto the Lord (Colossians 3:23). We do all for His glory, whether it's sharing what belongs to you, doing yardwork, or cleaning your room.

None of these things come naturally. This is why we have to let God to teach us through His Word and ask for His help. He has given us everything we need to walk with Him day by day. Ask for His help to better love Him and others by going the extra mile.

Questions for Young Children:

Which one of the things Jesus talked about today is the hardest to do? Why?

Who is the Helper?

What should you do when someone calls you names?

Questions for Teens and Pre-teens:

How do you normally respond to insults? What might it look like to respond in the way that Jesus tells us to respond?

Does today's passage mean that we should allow others to take advantage of us? Why or why not?

How might you "go the extra mile" for someone this week?

Love Your Enemies

Scripture: Matthew 5:43-48

Memory Verse: Matthew 5:8

“Blessed are the pure in heart,
For they shall see God.”

For My Family:

In our last devotion we learned that we are to be the light of the world by going above and beyond what others expect or require of us. Today, we are going to learn that followers of Jesus are not just to love those who love them back, but everyone, even their enemies. Keep in mind that Jesus had told His disciples that their righteousness must exceed (be greater than) that of the Pharisees if they wanted to enter the kingdom of heaven. From Matthew 5:21-48, Jesus has gone on to explain what He meant by that by saying again and again, “you have heard that it was said.... But *I* say to you...” Jesus is teaching that the law requires much more than and outward show of obedience. It requires a clean heart.

There was a teaching in Jesus’ day that said, “You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemies.” While it is true that God’s Word commanded that you shall love your neighbor (Leviticus 19:18), nowhere in the Bible did it say that you shall hate your enemies. This was a false teaching from the religious leaders of the day, and it serves as a reminder to us why it is so important for us to read, study, and know God’s Word for ourselves. We aren’t supposed to just love some people and not others. We are to love everyone, just like our heavenly Father does. “For God so loved the *world*...” (John 3:16).

“Love... bless... do good... pray.” This is how we are to respond to our enemies. We already learned the blessedness of those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake and for Jesus’ sake. Our response to persecution earlier in the chapter was to rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is our reward in heaven. But here, we are taught further how we are to respond to our enemies. Love them, bless them, do good to them, and pray for them. These are difficult instructions! When is the last time you prayed for someone who made fun of you or did something mean to you?

Why are we supposed to respond in love? “That you may be sons of your Father in heaven.” This doesn’t mean that loving our enemies is how we get saved. Jesus is simply saying that once you are a son or daughter of God, there is a way to live that shows the world that God is your Father (5:16). Jesus started this section by saying we needed to be more righteous than the Pharisees, and now He closes this section with “be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.” This is impossible in our own strength, but Jesus died for us, in love, while we were His enemies (Romans 5:10), so that we could be made perfect, spotless, and pure. Through Jesus and the strength that He provides, we can love our enemies.

Questions for Young Children:

Who did Jesus say we are supposed to love?

How are we supposed to love our enemies?

When we love those who are mean to us, what does that teach them about God?

Questions for Teens and Pre-teens:

The Bible says, "You shall love your neighbor." Who is your neighbor?

How have you responded to your enemies in the past?

Loving our enemies is easier said than done. How do we get to the place in our day to day interactions where we really do love our enemies?

What's Your Why?

Scripture: Matthew 5:6:1-6

Memory Verse: Matthew 5:9

“Blessed are the peacemakers,
For they shall be called sons of God.”

For My Family:

It's not hard to imagine someone posting a video or photo of themselves performing an act of kindness to someone in need. This has become a very popular thing to do. But think for a moment about why you know many of those stories. You know them because the people doing those acts of kindness wanted you to know that they did them! The Pharisees did the same thing in Jesus' day. They gave in a way that made sure everyone would see their good works and praise *them*. They did same thing with prayer and fasting. The things God had intended to be done for His glory were done selfishly for their own glory.

Jesus uses the word “hypocrite” to describe this type of behavior. It is important for us to understand what this word means as we will see it again and again in the Bible, especially the book of Matthew. A hypocrite is a pretender. An actor. Someone who appears to be one way, but is another way on the inside. Can you think of any examples of this? The Pharisees prayed in public to be seen and heard by men, not God. When they fasted, they made it obvious so everyone would know. People would think, “Wow! What a man of God! Look at how he prays and fasts!” Jesus says that that admiration is all the reward they will get.

But followers of Jesus are to have a different motive, a different “why” behind their actions. Why are we kind, why do we pray, why do we fast (take note that Jesus assumes we will do all of these things)? To please and bring glory to our Father in heaven! We don't need the applause of people, because God applauds us when we serve Him and love others privately, and that is all the applause we need. Isn't it amazing to know that when you take time even to pray to God by yourself that He will give you eternal rewards for doing so? The most amazing stories of acts of kindness to others and faithfulness to God throughout history have remained untold and unseen. But God has seen and heard. He sees and hears what is done in secret, and those who give and pray and fast for Him will receive an eternal reward.

Do you love God with all your heart? Do you love your neighbor as yourself? Or do you simply love yourself? How you draw attention to yourself is a good test for us as we think about the answers to those questions. It is not wrong to be seen or heard doing good things. That was the point of Matthew 5:16! But the reason for our being seen is so that those around us would glorify our Father in heaven, not ourselves. It feels good to be accepted by others, and that's not always wrong. But it is a wrong motive. Above all, we must be sure that we are doing is what is pleasing and acceptable to God both in public and in private.

Questions for Young Children:

Does God see and hear you even when no one else does?

Jesus said not to be like the hypocrites. What does hypocrite mean?

What is a way that you can help someone secretly this week?

Questions for Teens and Pre-teens:

What motivates your actions throughout the day? (Go through a list of the things you do each day and list why you do them.)

Is it wrong when people post pictures/videos of themselves doing good things? Why or why not?

Does knowing that God sees you and will reward you for private acts of obedience and service motivate you? Why or why not?

The Lord's Prayer

Scripture: Matthew 6:7-13

Memory Verse: Matthew 5:10

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake,
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

For My Family:

Today we are going to go back and reread what is known as “The Lord’s Prayer.” Jesus instructed us not to pray to be seen and heard by men, nor are we to pray like the heathen, repeating certain phrases over and over again, as if God will answer our prayers only if we say the right thing the correct number of times. The prophets of Baal cried out all day like this with no result (1 Kings 18). Sadly, many have turned the Lord’s prayer into a vain repetition. They know the words by heart, but they don’t consider what they actually mean and how they are supposed to instruct us. Jesus wasn’t saying, “Pray these words.” He was saying, “pray like this, after this pattern, in this manner..”

When you pray, pray to your Father in heaven and praise Him for who He is! He’s your Dad and He wants you to talk to Him! His name is holy, the Name above all names. He is the King of kings, and we are His children. As His children, we want to see His kingdom everywhere: in our hearts, neighborhoods, schools, country, etc. We know that when everyone worships Him as the true King, everything will be as it should be, so we pray for His kingdom to come and His will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. It might sound scary asking for God’s will to be done. After all, what if what He wants is different than what I want? Well, we can rest in knowing that God loves us, and what He wants for us will always be way better than what we want. When we pray like this, it shows that we trust Him.

When we pray we should also ask God for our daily needs like food and water, things we might take for granted. We may have a fridge full of what we need now, but anything could happen, so we ask Him to provide those things for us. We pray for jobs for our parents so they can buy food, for grocery stores to stay open so we can go get food, etc. We should also remember to thank Him as He does provide our daily needs. Additionally, Jesus reminds us that we need more than just things to keep our physical bodies healthy. We need things to keep us spiritually healthy as well. We need clean, forgiven hearts that are willing to forgive others when they wrong us. And we need protection from being tempted to do wrong things. God accomplishes all of this when we pray!

We pray to God this way because He hears our prayer and is able to answer. He is our Father, but He is also our King. When we believe in Jesus, we become citizens of His Kingdom. The kingdom is His, all power is His, and all glory belongs to Him alone forever. What an amazing thing to be in God’s kingdom and to have the King as our Father!

Questions for Young Children:

What is prayer?

How did Jesus say we *not* supposed to pray?

What are some things Jesus tells us to pray about?

Questions for Teens and Pre-teens:

What part of the Lord's prayer sticks out to you the most? Why?

Why does Jesus tell us to talk to God about who He is?

The Father knows our needs, but also wants us to pray for our needs? Why do you think this is?

Where's Your Treasure?

Scripture: Matthew 6:19-24

Memory Verse: Matthew 5:11

“Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.”

For My Family:

Did you know that the only thing you will take with you when you go to heaven is you? You can't take anything else with you! But people have been trying to do this for thousands of years. Wealthy Egyptians were buried in big tombs with lots of treasure. Mighty warriors throughout history have been buried with their wealth, weapons, and battle horses. People have even been buried in their favorite car! The Bible makes it clear that *“we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out”* (1 Timothy 6:7), but we can store up treasure in heaven now that we will receive in eternity.

This heavenly treasure is different from treasure on earth. Even after millions of years it won't rust. It can't be destroyed by moths or stolen by thieves. It is guarded by the King of kings. He keeps it for us and will one day hand it over to us as a reward. How do you receive these eternal rewards? By following and serving our King! By doing things to bring *Him* glory, not yourself. By loving your enemies, and serving others. Even giving someone a cup of cold water in Jesus' name will be rewarded (Mark 9:41). Remember, *“Your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly”* (Matthew 5:4, 6, 18).

Where you store up your treasure will depend on how you look at the world around you. Do you look for opportunities to use what you have to bring glory to God? Do you look out for the needs of others, or just yourself? When we decide to follow Jesus, He opens our eyes to see the world in a new light, but we can then choose to continue to look at the world selfishly. If our eye is good, our body is full of light, and we can be the light of the world, but if our eye is bad, our body is full of darkness. Jesus came to give us light. Let's keep our eyes fixed on Him!

Take note. Jesus isn't saying that it is bad to have earthly treasures and things. He wants to make sure those treasures don't have you! Everyone has a master. Jesus says some serve God and others serve money, but no one can serve two masters. If you love one you will hate the other. We see an example of this in the rich young ruler who came to Jesus and was asked to give what he had to the poor (Matthew 19:16-30). The young man loved his stuff more than God. He couldn't serve both. Money is a great servant, but it's a cruel master. Paul tells us that the *love* of money is the root of all kinds of evil (1 Timothy 6:10). Where is your heart? We can do a lot of things for God by serving Him with our money. You can't take it with you to heaven, but you can use it to store up heavenly treasure that will last forever.

Questions for Young Children:

Can you take anything with you when you go to heaven?

How do we store up treasure in heaven?

How can you serve God this week?

Questions for Teens and Pre-teens:

Is it wrong to have earthly treasures? Why or why not?

Why does Jesus talk about our eye when speaking about treasure/money?

Think about who/what you serve. What do you love, and what do you hate? What are you loyal to, and what do you despise? The answers to these questions will show us the truth about who we serve.

Don't Worry

Scripture: Matthew 6:25-34

Memory Verse: Philippians 4:6-7

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

For My Family:

Before starting this devotion, ask your children, “What is worry?” Take a moment to discuss. Worry is that nervous or fearful feeling you get when something happens that you don't like, or you have to go somewhere you don't want to go, or when you are scared. The Bible tells us that worries weigh down the heart, but God doesn't want you to go through life carrying the weight of worry. Today we are going to learn that one of the ways we shine as lights in the world is not by holding onto our worries, but by giving them to our Father in heaven.

What kind of things do people worry about? Food, money, clothing, sickness, school, family... all sorts of things! But Jesus tells us not to worry because our Father loves us and knows what we need even before we ask. He created a world for us to live in that constantly reminds us that we don't need to worry! Look at the birds. Do they look worried about where their next meal is coming from? The Father feeds them and cares for them. If God takes care of the birds, He will definitely take care of you! Look at the fields. Are they worried about what they will wear? God clothes them with grass and flowers. How much more will He clothe you? You are much more important to God than birds and fields. In other words, knowing who God is, and who we are to Him (His children), should help us battle worry.

Everyone gets worried. What sets us apart as followers of Jesus is what we do with our worry. God tells us through the apostle Paul, *“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God”* (Philippians 4:6). So when we get worried, we should immediately pray about whatever is worrying us. But in addition to praying, we should also thank God! Thanking God may seem like a strange thing to do when we are worried, but we remind ourselves of all that we do have and who God is when we turn our minds to praise Him.

But Paul doesn't end there. He continues with a promise: *“and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus”* (Philippians 4:7). So when our hearts begin to get worried, we remember who God is. When we remember who He is, we come to Him in prayer and thanksgiving. And when we come to Him in prayer and thanksgiving, He promises to guard our hearts and minds through Jesus. Remember this promise, and when you get worried, come to Him in prayer.

Questions for Young Children:

What is worry?

What did God give us to remind us not to worry?

What should we do when we are worried?

Questions for Teens and Pre-teens:

How do we battle worry?

What does God want you to do with your worry?

How can we help others who are worried?

What's That In Your Eye?

Scripture: Matthew 7:1-6 (see also Luke 6:37-42)

Memory Verse: Luke 6:37

“Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.”

For My Family:

Have you ever noticed that your sin always looks worse on someone else? For example, when you tell a lie or when you tease your sibling, it doesn't seem that bad, but when someone lies to you or teases you, it's really hurtful and seems way worse! The Pharisees once brought a woman to Jesus who had been caught sinning. These Pharisees told Jesus that the law of Moses stated the woman should be stoned. Wanting to trap Jesus, they asked Him, “What do You think should be done?” As the Pharisees asked Him again and again, Jesus stooped over and wrote in the dirt with His finger as if He didn't even hear them. Knowing their sinful hearts, He stopped writing for a moment and told them, “Whoever is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone.” He then went back to writing in the dirt. As He did, one by one, the Pharisees began to walk away until there was no one left but Jesus and the sinful woman. Jesus looked at the woman and told that He did not condemn her, but told her to, “Go and sin no more” (John 8:1-12).

These Pharisees looked at this woman in her sin and judged her harshly. Jesus is teaching us in today's passage and warning us that we can do the same thing. It's easy for us to look at people and make judgements about who they are or what they must be like. We can often make these judgments without even thinking. But Jesus wants us to think before we judge. He teaches us to do this with a funny illustration.

Imagine you see a man walking around with a big wooden plank in his eye. He's walking through the supermarket knocking things off of shelves everywhere he goes. Every time he turns his head, everyone around him has to duck! Now imagine that this man came up to you and started telling you that you had a tiny speck of dirt in your eye. “You should really take care of that dirt in your eye,” he says, “That could really cause a problem!” It would be hard for us to take what he said seriously. After all, he has a much bigger problem in his eye that needs to be taken care of before he can talk about what's in your eye.

The same applies to our hearts. If we have sin in our own hearts that needs to be repented of, how can we go up to someone and judge them for their wrongdoings? Let's be clear that Jesus is not saying that we should not make judgements about people (we will talk about that later in this chapter). He wants us to be discerning, but first He wants to make sure when we do make judgements, we do so with a pure heart. Remember, a hypocrite is someone who acts one way, but is really another way inside. Let's take Jesus' warning to heart. When we are tempted to judge others, let's look at what is in our own hearts first.

Questions for Young Children:

What does it mean to judge someone?

What did the man in Jesus' story have in his eye?

Is Jesus really talking about cleaning our eyes? What is He talking about?

Questions for Teens and Pre-teens:

What does it mean and what might it look like to be a hypocrite?

What are some consequences you might face for judging someone?

How can we tell if there is a plank in our eye, and how do we remove it?

Ask, Seek, Knock

Scripture: Matthew 7:7-12 (See also Luke 11:5-13)

Memory Verse: Matthew 7:7

“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.”

For My Family:

Jesus once again brings us back to the topic of prayer. We already learned about how to pray and how not to pray (6:5-13), but Jesus calls us a step further in this passage by telling us to persevere in our prayers. In other words, Jesus calls us to pray and keep praying. We were warned about those who use vain repetitions to try to get God to do things for them, but that is not what Jesus is talking about here. Consider the parable in Luke 11:5-8. A man went and knocked on his neighbor's door in the middle of the night asking for some bread. The neighbor told him to leave since his whole family was asleep and he didn't want to wake them, but the man kept knocking and kept asking. Finally, the man's persistence was rewarded. The neighbor got up and gave him bread just to get rid of him!

That neighbor was clearly annoyed. He didn't get up and give the man bread because they were friends, but because the man kept knocking. Jesus tells us to be like that man knocking on his neighbor's door. Don't ask only once. Don't seek once. Don't knock once. God is instructing us to keep asking, keep seeking, and keep knocking. If you pray for something and don't see an answer to your prayer, don't be discouraged, keep praying!

But don't think that God is like that annoyed neighbor who just grants our request to get us to stop bothering Him. That's not who God is at all! He is a good and perfect Father who loves to give good gifts to His children. We are promised that when we keep asking, it will be given, that when we keep seeking we will find, and when we keep knocking, it will be opened. When we continue to come to God it shows Him that we trust Him and believe His promises. Sometimes God doesn't grant our request right away because He wants to grow our faith. At other times we may even ask for things that would be harmful for us! But if we ask for something harmful, like a scorpion or a stone, when we really need something else, God knows what we have need of before we ask, and graciously gives us what we really need instead of what we thought we needed.

“Therefore whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.” Jesus sums up everything He has been teaching in this verse. Remember, He was being accused of coming to destroy the Law and the Prophets, but He actually came to fulfill it. It had been taught that you should NOT do to others what you do NOT want them to do to you, but Jesus calls us to action. We can't be followers of Jesus by simply NOT doing things. Love does things, not to be seen and praised by others, but to bring glory to our Father in heaven. How do you want others to treat you? Go and treat them the same.

Questions for Young Children:

How many times should we ask God for something?

Does God give good things to His children, or bad things?

How should you treat others?

Questions for Teens and Pre-teens:

If you ask God for something, but don't see an answer to your prayer right away, what might this mean?

What encouragement did God give in today's verses to keep us from getting discouraged as we pray?

How do you want people to treat you? Who can you treat like that this week?

The Narrow Gate

Scripture: Matthew 7:13-14

Memory Verse: Matthew 7:14

“Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.”

For My Family:

Have you ever gone hiking before? Sometimes on a hike, you find yourself on a narrow path that's difficult to walk on. Other times, you might have to climb a fallen tree, leap across a stream of water, or balance on a small rock. Hiking is much harder than walking on a sidewalk or paved road, which is why some people don't like hiking much. But those who press on despite these difficulties are rewarded with beautiful views, such as mountaintops and waterfalls. In today's verses, Jesus says that the Christian life is like this.

In Matthew 7:13-14, Jesus continues his sermon by contrasting two paths. The first path is wide and easy to walk on, with a big gate in the front of it and many people on it. This path, He says, leads to destruction. The other path is much narrower and begins with a skinny gate. Few people even find this path, let alone walk on it, and it's not an easy path to take. However, this path leads to eternal life. These two paths represent the two different ways we can live our life.

The first path represents living life our own way, doing what makes us feel good. This is the easier path, which is why many people choose it. When you go down this path, you don't have to listen to God or follow His rules. You can do whatever you want. People on this path think that they know better than God. But while this path is easier and more popular, everyone who takes it regrets it in the end because it leads to destruction.

The narrow path is the path of following the Lord. This path is more difficult and less popular. It requires obeying God's commands, even when you'd rather do something else. You might feel left out when everyone else is living their own way and you're the only one on the path of following Jesus. Jesus asks us to be willing to give up everything we have to follow Him, and many times being a Christian will cost you something. But no matter how hard following Jesus gets, it is always worth it because the end reward is eternal life.

Each of us has a choice to make. Will you choose the wide, easy path, or the narrow, difficult one? If you just focus on your life here and now, it is likely you will pick the easy path and ignore its terrible end. That's why it's important to remember where each path leads. The living your own way might sound nice now, since you can do whatever you want, but the end is only misery and pain. On the other hand, following Jesus is hard work. It requires putting what He wants ahead of what you want. It could cost you friends and popularity. But no matter what following Jesus costs you, the reward at the end of eternal life makes it worth it. So choose the path of life today!

Questions for Young Children:

Why does the wide, easy path represent?

What does the narrow, difficult path represent?

Why is it better to choose the narrow path?

Questions for Teens and Pre-teens:

What are some things that make it difficult to follow Jesus?

Can you think of a time when doing what God wanted cost you something?

Why do you think so many people take the path that leads to destruction?

Ripe or Rotten

Scripture: Matthew 7:15-23

Memory Verse: Matthew 7:20

“Therefore by their fruits you will know them.”

For My Family:

Jesus has already taught His followers that we should be careful not judge others if we have sin in our own hearts that needs to be dealt with first, but He does instruct us to have wisdom and be discerning based on the things people say and do. In other words, it's not always wrong to make judgements about people. It's actually safe and wise for us to do so! Jesus explains this in a warning and illustration.

“Beware of false prophets.” This means beware of false teachers, whom Jesus describes as wolves in sheep's clothing: people who claim to serve God, but are actually just trying to serve themselves. Throughout the Bible, God's people are often described as sheep, and God is described as our Shepherd. Those who want to harm God's people are described as wolves. They may dress up as sheep so no one suspects them, but all of us know that if there really was a wolf wearing sheepskin, it wouldn't be hard to identify if we took the time to take a closer look (sheep certainly don't have claws or sharp teeth!) That is Jesus' encouragement: to take a closer look. We can know and recognize people who actually are trying to turn us away from God or harm us by their fruits.

But what does this mean? What does fruit have to do with anything? I thought we were talking about wolves and sheep! Jesus says everyone is a tree, and there are only two types: good and bad. Bad trees produce bad fruit, and good trees produce good fruit. If someone says they are a follower of Jesus and they love others, are patient, are kind, have self-control, etc., those are all good fruits (fruits of the Spirit—Galatians 5)! The things they do and say show me who they are on the inside. Good fruit comes from a good tree. But if someone told me they loved God, but made fun of Christians, or constantly bullied people, or were mean all the time, then I would know they are not who they say they are. That person's life is full of bad fruit, so they must be a bad tree.

One day, every tree that bears bad fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. Jesus further teaches this point by giving the example that not everyone who calls Him Lord will enter the kingdom of heaven. Sadly, there are those who claim to serve Jesus, but their hearts are far from God. They say they love God, but they don't care to do the things He commands them. Jesus said, “If you love Me, keep My commandments.” Thankfully, even though all of us once had bad hearts full of bad fruit, Jesus made a way for us to have our hearts transformed. He gives us His Holy Spirit who produces good fruit in our lives. And the gift of a clean heart and His Holy Spirit is made available to all who believe in Him.

Questions for Young Children:

How does Jesus describe false teachers?

What is the difference between bad fruit and good fruit?

How can our lives produce good fruit?

Questions for Teens and Pre-teens:

Can you think of any examples of false teaching/false teachers and how they might be harmful?

Jesus tells us we will know them by their fruits, but how do we know what is good fruit and what is bad fruit?

Does your life produce “good fruit” or “bad fruit”? How does your life show or not show that Jesus is Lord?

Building on the Rock

Scripture: Matthew 7:24-29

Memory Verse: Matthew 7:24

“Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock.”

For My Family:

Today we come to the end of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. As we've studied these three amazing chapters together, we've learned all sorts of things about what it means to follow God. We read in Matthew 7:28-29 that the men and women who first heard this sermon were astonished at this teaching. Truly there are few better ways to spend your time than by reading or listening to this message, but as He concludes the sermon, Jesus reminds us that simply hearing His teachings is not enough. We need to *do* what Jesus tells us to do.

To illustrate the importance of doing the things God tells us, Jesus tells a parable about two different builders. They are both trying to build a house, but the first builds his house on the rock, while the other builds his house on the sand. Now if you've ever played with building blocks or other construction toys, you know that the best place to build is on a hard, flat surface. Otherwise, the blocks will fall over easily. It turns out, the same is true when you build houses. The man who built on the rock was wise. He built his house on a firm, solid foundation, and so the house stood strong even when the wind and rain came. The man who built on the sand, on the other hand, was foolish. On such an unstable surface, his house easily collapsed when the storm came.

These two men represent two different ways we can live our lives. The wise man is the person who lives his life in obedience to God's Word. When we commit our lives to following God and obeying His commands, our lives will be able to withstand any temptation or difficulty (the "rain, flood, and wind") we may face. Obedience to God's Word then is our sure and solid foundation. Those who do not build their lives on obedience to God's Word, on the other hand, will not fare so well when they face challenges in their lives.

Notice that the difference between the wise and foolish man is not that one heard the Word of God and one did not. The foolish man's problem was that he heard Christ's sayings but *didn't do them*. What this means is that it's not enough simply to read or hear God's Word. We have to do what it says. If you've read the whole Sermon on the Mount series with your family, you've heard sixteen of Christ's teachings. If you've done all of our family devotions, you've studied eighty different passages of Scripture. The question now is, what are you going to do about it? Are you going to continue to live as you always have and not let the Bible change you? Or will you build your life on the foundation of God's Word and do the things that Jesus commands us to do in Scripture? Let's be wise and build our lives on the Rock by following Jesus and doing the things He tells us to do.

Questions for Young Children:

What does the wise builder represent?

What does the foolish builder represent?

What are some things that Jesus tells us to do?

Questions for Teens and Pre-teens:

How many of Jesus' teachings from the Sermon on the Mount can you remember? Name as many as you can.

What is one thing Jesus tells us to do that you need to work on?

Why is it so important that we not only hear the Word of God, but also do what it says?