

V. Teaching Discourse #1 – The Sermon on the Mount (5:1 – 7:29)

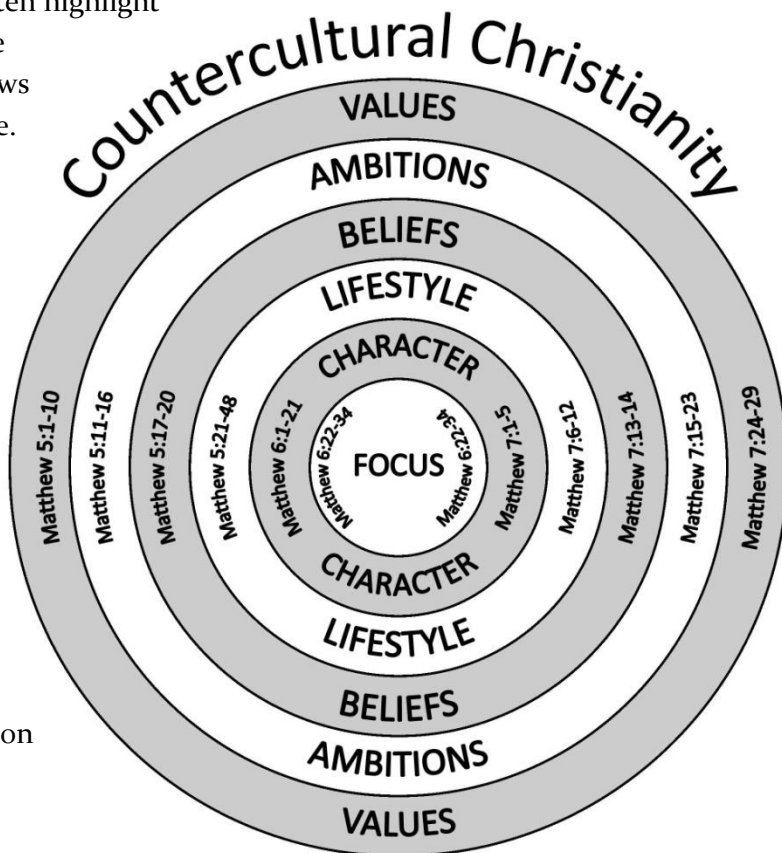
We find ourselves today, living in a society that scoffs at what they consider an outdated belief system. They rightly accuse us of being hypocritical because what we say we believe and the way we live our lives do not seem to correspond. So what will it take to change their view of Christianity? What will it take to change the world around us?

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus challenged the culture of His day and His words are continuing to challenge us even now. I believe that our lives must be defined by living counter to the cultural and social norms of society today. I believe that we must become 'Countercultural' Christians!

What does that mean? I believe that it means that every aspect of our lives must be changed—be brought under the submission of Christ. When this happens, our **VALUES** will change; our **AMBITIONS** will change; our **BELIEFS** will change; our **LIFESTYLE** will change; our **CHARACTER** will change. In fact, the **FOCUS** of our lives will change!

No one likes change! From a cultural point of view, it is hard to see the need for change if you have never spent any time outside your home culture. Having lived outside my 'home' culture for over half of my adult life, I have learned to recognize differences from one culture to another. What I have discovered—after taking the time to try to understand them—is that these differences are not always bad; in fact, they will often highlight flaws or short-comings in my home culture. It is when we see these flaws that we will be motivated to change.

So as we consider this first major teaching discourse of Jesus, our goal is to highlight Christ's teachings about our values, ambitions, beliefs, lifestyle, character and the focus of our lives. I want to share an info graphic that will hopefully help you to understand the structure we will be using to help understand the big picture of this teaching session. This delineates the corresponding sections of the sermon and the way in which we will be considering each section.



Counter-cultural Values: Wise and Foolish Builders

Matthew 7:24-29

In Jesus' teaching on the wise and foolish builders, contrast these builders in relationship to their character and the consequences.

- Sensible Builder (Wise Man)
 - Characteristics – listens to Jesus; obeys by doing;
 - Consequences – able to withstand the rain, floods and wind;
- Short-sighted Builder (Foolish Man)
 - Characteristics – hears the truth; does not obey it;
 - Consequences – destroyed by the rain, floods and wind;

As you think about the mindset of each builder, what were their primary concerns?

- Sensible Builder (Wise Man)
 - Long-term commitment
 - Quality construction
 - Perseverance in the difficult building process
- Short-sighted Builder (Foolish Man)
 - Short-term payoff
 - Quick construction
 - Desire to have an easy building process

God is in the process of 'building' our lives—what kind of builder will you be?

Counter-cultural Values: Beatitudes and Bad-attitudes

Matthew 5:1-10

God wants to *change* us from the inside out. He wants to change our system of values. What we value in life will determine how we live, what we do, what we buy and how we interact with others. To show us what we should **value** in life, Jesus shared what we now call 'The Beatitudes'—the attitudes we need to be blessed by God.

What are the Beatitudes of Christ? What are some correlating 'Bad-attitudes' that the world seems to value?

Beatitudes

- Poor in spirit
- Those who mourn
- The meek
- Hunger and thirst for righteousness
- The merciful
- Pure in heart
- The peacemakers
- Persecuted for righteousness

Bad-attitudes

- Arrogant and cocky
- Apathetic and cold
- Abusive and cruel
- Addicted to wicked and sinful things
- Austere and compassion-less
- Adulterous desires
- Agitators and problem makers
- Advanced for unrighteousness

Do any of the 'Bad-attitudes' describe you?

- Do you find yourself...
 - being an instigator and always keeping things stirred up?
 - looking out for yourself first, or promoting yourself above others?
 - looking for ways to get ahead—no matter who gets hurt in the process?
 - to be indifferent when people are hurting, and thankful it's not you?
 - speaking to people with a harsh tone of voice, or saying hurtful things?
 - being unforgiving or overly strict?
 - lacking compassion for others situations?
 - drawn into lustful thoughts, fantasies or emotional affairs?
 - in a full-blown addiction to gambling, porn, alcohol or drugs?
- If you found yourself saying 'Yes!' to any of those questions, then your VALUES are out of whack and you need the Holy Spirit of God to change you from the inside out!

Counter-cultural Ambitions: Known by Their Actions

Matthew 7:15-23

How would you describe a person with typical, worldly ambitions?

- It depends on who you ask!
 - Ambition is “an earnest desire for some type of achievement or distinction, as power, honor, fame, or wealth, and the willingness to strive for its attainment.”
 - Henry Wadsworth wrote: “Ambition is so powerful a passion in the human breast, that however high we reach we are never satisfied.”
- Typically, to refer to someone as being ambitious carries with it a negative connotation.

How did Jesus describe a person with unhealthy ambitions? (Matthew 7:15-23)

- Verse 15
 - False Prophets in Sheep’s Clothing – portraying themselves as something they are not; a con-man or scam artist;
 - Ravenous Wolves – their only concern is satiating their own appetites; no concern for the well-being of others;
- Verses 16-20
 - Recognizable by the fruit of their lives.
 - A person’s true ambition will reveal itself if given enough time.

What does Jesus say will happen to these people with unhealthy ambitions?

- Verse 21 – Warned by God
- Verses 22-23 – Shamed and rejected by God

Counter-cultural Ambitions: Measure of Success

Matthew 5:10-16

Last week, we studied about 'The Beatitudes.' Jesus shared these things to show us what we should value in life—the attitudes we need to be blessed by God. This is the reason that Matthew 5:3-12 begin with the word, 'Blessed.' This word can be translated many different ways, but the idea is that these are the attitudes that we need to be blessed by God—to be happy.

According to Matthew 5:10-16, how is a believer to measure success?

- Verse 10 – Blessed (or happy) when persecuted.
- Verse 11-12 – Blessed (or happy) when verbally or physically assaulted.
- Verse 13 – Blessed (or happy) when creating a thirst for God in others. If a believer is unable to maintain his saltiness, he is a failure.
- Verse 14-15 – Blessed (or happy) when shining a light for all to see God.
- Verse 16 – Blessed (or happy) when bringing glory to God and not himself.

How can Jesus ask us to have these self-effacing ambitions for our lives?

- We are called to be Christ-followers!
 - Jesus came to give His life away, and He asks us to do the same!
 - Michael W. Smith – “Secret Ambition”
Nobody knew His secret ambition
Nobody knew His claim to fame
He broke the old rules steeped in tradition
He tore the holy veil away
Questioning those in powerful position
Running to those who called His name
But nobody knew His secret ambition
Was to give His life away
- We have a choice to make—live according to the world’s standards or by God’s standards.
 - Francesca Battistelli – “It’s Your Life”

It's your life
Whatcha gonna do?
The world is watching you
Everyday the choices you make
Say what you are and who
Your heart beats for

It's an open door
It's your life
To live the way that you believe
This is your opportunity
To let your life be one that
lights the way

- If you want to be that one that lights the way, you cannot have the same ambitions that the world flaunts! You must have counter-cultural ambitions! It's your life; whatcha gonna do?

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