



Text: Matthew 5:16 – 6:18; 7:1-5, 18-20

Lesson Themes:

- Before we can engage the culture with truth, the truth must engage us.
- The first step to engaging our culture with truth is to believe the truth in regard to salvation by grace alone.
- The second step to engaging our culture with truth is to allow the truth of God to overcome the habitual sin in our lives.
- The third step to engaging our culture with truth is to allow the truth of God to transform our thoughts and attitudes by renewing our minds.
- BEING THE GOSPEL

Theme Verse: Matthew 7:18-20

“¹⁸A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. ¹⁹Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.”

Outline of Text:

- I. Overcoming Cultural Idea of Salvation by Works (5:17-20)
- II. Overcoming Cultural Standards in Our Personal Lives (5:21-48)
- III. Overcoming Hypocrisy in Our Personal Lives (6:1-18)
- IV. Overcoming Hypocrisy in Our Judgment (7:1-5, 18-20)

‘How’ to Lead a Bible Study Discussion Group

- This discussion guide is designed for just that... discussion. When I lead discussion group Bible studies, I do not have answers anywhere in the material, nor do I use a leader’s guide with all the answers written in.
- This is INTENTIONAL! I believe that the discipleship process should be an encounter with God, not just listening to someone else tell you what words to write down to fill in the blanks.
- Our goal is to help you facilitate discovery learning for your students. As the questions are asked, every participant (including the leader) is required to search God’s Word to discover the appropriate morsel of truth. When facilitators are 'armed' with all the answers, they are less likely to allow the time needed for individuals to process the question and formulate an answer.
- Don't be afraid of silence! That discovery process is the key to the success or failure of this process. It is in those moments of silence that we stop teaching and the Holy Spirit takes over!
- We cannot forget what Jesus said in John 16:13: “when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth.”
- A “Lesson Commentary” is also available with these resources. We encourage you to study the material contained in the commentary, but do not try to teach (or lecture) your group from that material. Let it serve as a source of information for you to draw upon to help give context and perspective to the group discussion.
- For a deeper discussion of how to lead an inductive style, Bible discussion group, please download the “Leading Small Group Bible Studies” resource by clicking [HERE](#).

Ice-Breaker Options

The Surprising Truth

Ask each of the students to think of something about them that is true, but that very few people know about them. Ask each one of them to briefly share this truth about themselves.

For larger groups, you might consider dividing your group into multiple small groups and asking them to share within their small group.

After everyone has had the opportunity to share, ask the students if they were surprised by any of the truths that were revealed by their fellow students. Explain that sometimes the truth may be surprising, but that doesn't change whether or not it is true.

Two Diagnostic Questions

If you were to ask the following question, how would most people respond? How would you respond?

"Have you come to the place in your spiritual life where you know for certain that if you were to die today that you would go to heaven? Or is that something you would say that you're still working on?"

I'm not sure.

I'm still working on that.

Yes! I am certain!

No! I know that I wouldn't go to heaven.

The follow-up question to the previous question is this:

"If you were to die today and stand before God and He were to say to you 'why should I let you into my heaven?' what would you say to Him?"

What would your response be if someone asked you this question?

[The goal of this second question is more quiet reflection than discussion. We want students to consider their own spiritual condition first—before they consider how they should engage their culture for the cause of Christ!]

Bible Study Discussion Guide

In the world we live in today, there is a misconceived idea that somehow people are supposed to earn their way into heaven when they die by doing more good things in life than bad. The simple fact is that is just not true! The Bible doesn't teach this! Jesus didn't teach this! So in today's lesson, we want to explore Jesus' teaching from Matthew 5-7, which is often referred to as the Sermon on the Mount.

Overcoming Cultural Idea of Salvation by Works

Why is Matthew 5-7 called the Sermon on the Mount? What are some important teachings from this section of Scripture?

What are the big ideas that Jesus talks about in today's text (Matt. 5:16 – 6:18; 7:1-5, 18-20)?

An easy way for your students to answer this question would be for them to look at the heading of each section (or topic) included in our text.

Remind the students that these headings are added by the publishers to help us and should not be considered inspired by God.

Consider this example from the fifth chapter of Matthew.

Challenge your students to answer the previous question by looking for the answers in their Bibles.

Salt and Light

13 "You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.

14 "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that¹⁶ they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

Christ Came to Fulfill 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 fulfill them. 18 For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. 19 Therefore whoever relaxes 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 does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 20 For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Anger

21 "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' 22 But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother²¹ will be liable to judgment; whoever insults²¹ his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell²¹ of fire. 23 So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. 25 Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison. 26 Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.²⁶

TOPIC/SECTION HEADINGS

Read Matthew 5:17-20. In verse 20, what did Jesus say about those who would be allowed to go to heaven?

Who are the scribes and Pharisees, and what were they like? Was it easy to live even more righteously than the scribes and Pharisees?

Later in this same chapter, Jesus explains God's expectation for us. Read Matthew 5:48. What is God's expectation if someone wanted to earn their way into heaven? Is that even possible?

Overcoming Cultural Standards in Our Personal Lives

For this portion of the lesson, we encourage you to divide your group into six small groups. Assign each group one of the following sections of Scripture.

- Anger – Matthew 5:21-26
- Lust – Matthew 5:27-30
- Divorce – Matthew 5:31-32
- Oaths – Matthew 5:33-37
- Retaliation – Matthew 5:38-42
- Love Enemies – Matthew 5:43-47

Ask them to discuss these questions in relation to their section of Scripture.

What is the understanding of this issue in the culture of New Testament times?

In what ways did Jesus go against or go beyond the culture's teaching on this subject?

Read Matthew 5:20 & 48 again. Is anyone able to stand up to God's standards?

Overcoming Hypocrisy in Our Personal Lives

In Matthew 5, Jesus taught on issues of sin—things that His followers should not do. In Matthew 6, the narrative changes to focus on things that we should do but we need to be careful in how we do them.

Read Matthew 6:1-18. There are three good things described here in these verses. What are they and what does God say about how we should do them?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Why do people often struggle to give anonymously? ... to pray sincerely and privately? ... to live for Jesus without drawing attention to themselves?

Overcoming Hypocrisy in Our Judgment

Often, the reasons that we struggle with these areas of life is because we desperately desire to receive glory and praise for who we are or what we have done. Even though we are not able to live up to God's standard, we project ourselves as someone much better than we really are. This is the definition of hypocrisy! In Matthew 7, Jesus addresses this issue of hypocrisy when we are judging others the thoughts and behaviors of others.

Read Matthew 7:1-5. What does Jesus say here in these verses about judging others? Does He teach that we should never judge others under any circumstances, or that we should not judge others hypocritically? (Consider John 7:24)

Read Galatians 6:1-2. In this passage, Paul encourages believers to "judge" one another's actions in order to help restore them to a right relationship with God. According to these verses, in what way are believers to do this?

What danger does Paul mention in Galatians 6:1?

Is it important that Christians actually live according to the teaching of the Bible? Why? (Consider Matthew 7:18-20)

God's Message for Me Today

What am I trusting in to get me into heaven when I die? (Check all that apply!)

- I try to live a good life—doing more good things than bad.
- I am a member of _____ Church.
- I have trusted in Jesus as my Savior.
- I was baptized when I was _____ years old.
- I don't want to go to heaven when I die.

We talked today about several areas of our lives that can be a struggle for each of us. Which of these areas do you struggle with personally? Explain.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Anger | <input type="checkbox"/> Oaths |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lust | <input type="checkbox"/> Retaliation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Divorce | <input type="checkbox"/> Loving Enemies |

We also talked today about several things we do in our spiritual life that can sometimes be done in the wrong way or with the wrong attitude—this is called being hypocritical. Do you ever struggle with being hypocritical? In what way?

What do you need to do today in response to this lesson?