



THE
SERMON
ON
THE **MOUNT**

The True Kingdom Lifestyle

KAY-CHONG YEO



TEACHING SERIES
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The Sermon on the Mount

The True Kingdom Lifestyle

IHOP – One Thing Ministries

Kay-Chong Yeo
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**The Sermon on the Mount —
The True Kingdom Lifestyle**
by Kay-Chong Yeo

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Introducing the Sermon on the Mount

A. Introduction

1. The Sermon on the Mount is a very important message that the Body of Christ needs to take heed of. We need to establish and build our lives and ministry around it.
2. It is vital to study the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7) together with Revelation Chapters 2 and 3 because both passages of Scripture give us insight into what Jesus is looking for in His Church.
3. Matt. 5-7: Sermon on the Mount is the clearest statement and teaching in the Bible on how to walk as individual believers. It describes
 - a. What the true Kingdom lifestyle is about;
 - b. What are true Kingdom people;
 - c. How we can live out the Kingdom lifestyle;
 - d. What matters to God in our life and ministry.
4. We need to emphasize the Sermon on the Mount because the gospel is about producing the Kingdom people. God is looking for people who walk out the Kingdom lifestyle.
5. The Sermon on the Mount provides the clearest roadmap in walking out the Kingdom lifestyle. We have to take this teaching literally and seriously, living out what is being described in the teaching in a precise way. We must not be casual about it but aggressively pursue it.
6. Rev. 2 & 3: The seven letters to the seven churches focus on how to establish and build a Church. It gives the clearest and most complete picture of what Jesus is looking for in His Church.
7. In the seven letters, Jesus defines the seven specific areas of spiritual maturity that He wants the Church to cultivate:
 - a. Ephesus: First love for Jesus
 - b. Smyrna: Grace to be fearless and faithful in the midst of persecution
 - c. Pergamos: Resist and confront wrong doctrines
 - d. Thyatira: Resist and confront compromise
 - e. Sardis: Cultivate the I-H-O-P lifestyle
 - f. Philadelphia: Persevere in obedience
 - g. Laodicea: Resist lukewarmness
8. The message in Rev. 2 and 3 is so important that Jesus emphasized its importance by saying seven times, "He who has ear, let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church."

B. What is the Sermon on the Mount

1. Matthew 5-7 is commonly called the Sermon on the Mount.
 - a. It consists of more than just the Beatitudes. The Beatitudes, Matt. 5:3-10, form the heart of the message of the Sermon on the Mount, around which Matt. 5-7 is centered.
 - b. The Sermon on the Mount is Jesus' first public teaching.
 - c. It is called Sermon on the Mount because Jesus taught this sermon on a mountain. This passage is different from Luke 6:20-49.
 2. The Sermon on the Mount is probably the greatest teaching of Jesus during His earthly ministry.
 - a. All the teachings of the Epistles are derived from the Sermon on the Mount. The Sermon on the Mount, in turn, is built from the Torah, which is in turn built from the Ten Commandments.
 - b. At the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus was basically "re-teaching" the Torah from a New Covenant perspective. (Jer. 31:31 – 34).
 - c. Over the years, the Rabbis and Pharisees had added many more legalistic rituals and regulations to the Torah. Therefore, Jesus was re-teaching the Torah and made clear the real spirit behind the Torah.
 - d. The Torah is more than laws and commandments, or a set of do's and don't's. The Torah is the way of God. The whole Bible, which is built from the Torah, teaches us how we should walk with Him.
 - e. Matt. 5-7 is like a re-enactment of Exodus 19 and 20 where the Ten Commandments were given to Moses at Mount Sinai.
 - i. The first time the Ten Commandments were given by the audible voice of God, the earth quaked under the power of God and the voice of God put holy trembling in the heart of the Israelites. Mount Sinai shook and darkness like a cloud descended, mingled with fire, and unseen angels blew unseen trumpets all around.
 - ii. The second time, Jesus came in great humility and love of God to address them not from a cloud of lightning burning with fire, but in the humble form of a servant. God manifested as man to speak the "heart and spirit" of the Ten Commandments. The Son of God, Jesus spoke audibly and taught about the true Kingdom lifestyle.
 - f. Jesus came not just to teach the Torah. He came to demonstrate how to live it out. (Matt. 5:17)
 3. The Sermon on the Mount is the clearest teaching and the most concise and precise presentation of the True Kingdom lifestyle. It lays out:
 - a. The core values of the Kingdom of God – what is important to God.
 - b. The constitution of the Kingdom of God – how God is going to run His Kingdom.
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4. The Sermon on the Mount is Basic Christianity:
 - a. It is “Christianity 101”;
 - b. It is the starting point for all believers;
 - c. It is not just for “super-Christians” or some “holy men”;
 - d. Every true and real believer should manifest certain degrees or measures of the Sermon on the Mount lifestyle (Matt. 7:21-23);
 - e. Our basic Christian faith is built around and upon the Sermon on the Mount, and the goal of every believer is to cultivate the fruits of the Beatitudes.

C. The Importance of the Sermon on the Mount

1. The Sermon on the Mount describes the core reality of the Kingdom of God.
 - a. It defines what it means to be a true believer of God and the Kingdom character that a true believer should possess.
 - b. It teaches us how to live out the true Kingdom lifestyle and how to develop an eternal perspective.
 - c. It prepares us for the coming trials and testings in the End-Times.
2. It is the litmus test of God to measure the spirituality of all believers and our ministry impact on earth.
 - a. True spirituality: The benchmark of true spirituality is measured by the fruits of the Sermon-on-the-Mount lifestyle.
 - b. Ministry impact: We should measure our ministry impact by how much people seek to walk out the Sermon-on-the-Mount values and not by the size of our ministry or how exciting it is.
 - c. These values should be the focus and emphasis in our discipleship of people and in our ministries. 1 Cor. 3:12 – 15 tells us that everything we build will be brought before God at the judgment seat. God will test our works with fire to reveal what we have built upon: gold (character/heart), silver (godly motives) and precious stones (values), or wood (works of flesh), hay (wrong motives) and straw (non-essentials in life).
 - d. We need to build the foundation of our faith upon what endures, as laid out in the principles of the Sermon on the Mount. We need to cultivate the fruits of the Beatitudes so that all who build on these values will endure the test of fire.
3. The Foundational Call in the Sermon on the Mount:
 - a. Live / Walk out the Kingdom lifestyle - Walk out the eight beatitudes in Matt. 5:3 – 12 and cultivate / grow the Beatitudes: being poor in the spirit, mourning spiritually, walking in meekness, hungering for righteousness, showing mercy, embracing purity, being a peacemaker, and enduring persecution.

- b. Set our hearts in growing and cultivating these eight fruits of the Kingdom lifestyle in the “garden of our heart”. The Beatitudes are like eight fruits of the Spirit that we should cultivate in our lives. God wants these fruits to fully form in our lives.
 - c. Make this our life goal - We may not attain the full measure possible of these eight fruits but we must aggressively pursue them and set our heart to attain as much as possible. For if we pursue it, we are blessed.
4. The Importance of the Beatitudes:
- a. The Beatitudes define what pleases God: love, godliness, Kingdom values and spiritual maturity that we grow in our lives. They describe the lifestyle that is the core reality of God’s Kingdom.
 - b. It is the clearest vision of what God wants for our life.
 - c. The Beatitudes contain eight virtues / fruits that come with blessing and promises. We are blessed when we pursue the virtues (Beatitudes) because it will result in a vibrant spirit. Instead of a dull spirit, we will have a fiery spirit, a sensitive and tender heart towards God, freedom in Christ, and experience the fullness of life.
 - d. The Beatitudes are NOT a code of ethics – They are not a list of “do”s and “don’t”s from God. God desires that we grow and cultivate the values of the Beatitudes and become Kingdom people. We do not simply “do” it but we need to find out how to cultivate the eight fruits of the Beatitudes.
 - e. Matt. 5 – 7 basically describes the process that allows the eight fruits of the Beatitudes to fully mature. Jesus was not rebuking His people, but was helping them by giving insights that lead their hearts to freedom. He focused on the need to make quality decisions in order to cultivate the fruits of the Beatitudes.

D. Four Exhortations in the Sermon of the Mount

There are 4 primary exhortations in the Sermon on the Mount. These give us insights into what the Sermon on the Mount is about – its importance and God’s heart for us to pay attention to it. The 4 exhortations are placed intentionally and strategically at specific junctures of the sermon to emphasize various points. All the exhortations are centered on having and pursuing the eight fruits of the Beatitude.

1. The Invitation to be GREAT in the Kingdom of God (Matt. 5:19 – 20)
 - a. Jesus wants us to be great in the Kingdom, and invites “whosoever” or everyone to be great in His Kingdom. We cannot repent of the desire for greatness because God designed our spirit with this longing. We only repent for seeking it in wrong ways.
 - b. Without having the paradigm of being on a journey to greatness, the Sermon-on-the-Mount lifestyle is much more difficult to sustain. God invites us to greatness without regard for our outward achievements or the size of our ministry. It is based on the development of our heart – i.e. love, meekness, righteousness, peace, joy.

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- c. We are GREAT in the Kingdom of God if we walk / live out and if we disciple / teach people to live out the Sermon-on-the-Mount lifestyle.
2. The Call for us to be LIKE GOD (Matt. 5:48)
 - a. Jesus calls us to pursue a life of obedience that seeks to be perfect and mature in obedience. The pinnacle of the Gospel and our pursuit of God is to be Christ-like (1John 3:2).
 - b. Walking in obedience is relative in this age and absolute in the Age-to-come. In this age, even though we will probably never attain to perfection in the absolute sense, we should still seek to walk in the fullness of the light that we receive from the Spirit.
 3. The Call to be Single-Minded, Focused and Whole-hearted (Mathew 6:22 – 27)
 - a. The source of light in this case is on where our eyes are focused upon, so where and what we focus on will determine whether or not we are filled with light (“good” light or “bad” light).
 - b. We experience the power and pleasure of godliness, when the lamp of our body which brings light to our inner man, is good or single. When we are focused on living in pursuit of 100-% obedience, the result will be a burning and shining lamp.
 - c. Therefore we are to be single-minded, focused and wholehearted in our pursuit of the Beatitudes.
 4. The Call to BUILD an unshakeable foundation (Matt. 7:24 – 29)
 - a. There will be a time when God is going to shake everything (Heb. 12: 25-27). Just as the wise man builds his house on the “rock” that is able to withstand the storms of life, this passage exhorts us to build our personal life and ministries on the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount, such that we will not be shaken.
 - b. The foundations of our personal walk and ministry will be tested in life. This test is three-fold:
 - i. “Rain” – the pressures and trials of life;
 - ii. “Flood” – the specific End-Time Test (Joel 2:11)
 - iii. “Wind” – the evaluation we receive at the Judgment Seat of Christ (1 Cor. 3:11-15; 2 Cor.5:10)
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E. Brief Outline of Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5 - 7)

Matt.5:3-10	The heart of the Sermon on the Mount: Eight fruits of the Beatitudes.
Matt. 5:12-16	The two-fold result of being true Kingdom people <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The world will hate us (v11-12) • We are salt and light and will impact society (v13-16)
Matt. 5:17-20	The invitation to be great in the Kingdom of God.
Matt. 5:21-47	Six hindrances/toxins that will deter us from growing the Beatitudes. We are to say “no” to these hindrances/toxins.
Matt. 5:48	The invitation to be like God – the pursuit of 100% obedience.
Matt. 6:1-18	Five Kingdom activities that will enhance the growth of the Beatitudes. We are to say “yes” and cooperate with God.
Matt. 6:19-21	The exhortation to live with an eternal perspective.
Matt. 6: 22-23	The call to be focused in pursuing the Sermon-on-the-Mount lifestyle.
Matt. 6:24	The greatest hindrance in pursuing the Sermon-on-the-Mount – money and worrying about money.
Matt. 6:25-34	God’s assurance for us as we pursue the Sermon-on-the-Mount lifestyle.
Matt. 7:1-5	Chapter 7 focuses on the relational challenges and dynamics that we face as we seek to pursue the Sermon-on-the-Mount lifestyle. It teaches us to beware of self-righteousness.
Matt. 7:6	The recognition that not all will be receptive to this message.
Matt. 7:7-12	The key to walking out the Sermon-on-the-Mount lifestyle: Prayer.
Matt. 7:13-14	The pursuit of the Sermon-on-the-Mount lifestyle will not be easy. Exhortation to not choose the easy way.
Matt. 7:15-20	The warning to beware of false teachers and teachings about the Kingdom of God, and to test the fruits.
Matt. 7:21-23	The true test of a believer – the fruits of the Beatitudes.
Matt. 7:24-29	The call to build our lives on the Sermon on the Mount.

Overview of The Sermon on the Mount

(Matthew 5 – 7)

A. Review

1. The Sermon on the Mount is the “constitution of God’s Kingdom”.
 - a. It is the clearest and most comprehensive teaching on what it means to be a Kingdom people and on how we can live and walk out the true Kingdom lifestyle.
 - b. It is a “roadmap” to cooperating with God to receive His grace and become Kingdom people.
2. It is the **litmus test** to measure spiritual development and ministry impact.
 - a. We measure our ministry impact by how much the people we minister to seek to walk out the Sermon on the Mount values, and not by the size of our ministry.
 - b. These values are what we are to emphasize most in our ministries.

B. The Beatitudes – the Eight Fruits of the Kingdom of God (Matt. 5:3 – 10)

1. **The foundational call** in the Sermon on the Mount is to live out the eight beatitudes described in Matthew 5:3 – 10.
2. The beatitudes are like the eight fruits in the “garden of our heart” that God wants to fully mature. They define the love, godliness and spiritual maturity that please God. They describe the lifestyle that is the core reality of God’s Kingdom.
3. These eight fruits need to be carefully and continually cultivated. Matthew 5 – 7 describes the process that allows the eight beatitudes to mature.
4. A brief description of the Beatitudes:
 - a. Being poor in spirit – theirs is the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 5:3)
We have to acknowledge that we are in great need of help to sustain wholeheartedness, and to understand our serious dilemma in needing a breakthrough of godliness in our hearts and ministries.
 - b. Mourning for breakthrough – they shall be comforted (Matt. 5:4)
We have to be desperate enough to be “extreme” in the pursuit of progressive and consistent breakthroughs in our hearts and ministries.
 - c. Walking in meekness – they shall inherit the earth (Matt. 5:5)
 - i. We have to live a fasted lifestyle and have a servant spirit as we use what has been given to us (i.e. time, money, energy, reputation, authority, etc.).

- ii. Humility or meekness speaks of using our resources with a servant spirit, and laying down our personal rights as we serve without regard for reward, honor, money, etc. from people.
 - d. Hungering for righteousness – they shall be filled (Matt. 5:6)
This refers to a sustained faithfulness in seeking God wholeheartedly through the changing circumstances and seasons of our lives.
 - e. Relating to others with mercy – they shall obtain mercy (Matt. 5:7)
This refers to having a tender spirit in our treatment of others in light of having received God's mercy in our many failures. (Ps. 18:35; 130:3 – 4)
 - f. Being pure in heart – they shall see God (Matt. 5:8)
This refers to breakthroughs of purity in our hearts, thoughts and motives.
 - g. Becoming an anointed peacemaker – they are called sons of God (Matt. 5:9)
This refers to an anointing to bring peace and reconciliation to that which is outside of God's will.
 - h. Enduring persecution – theirs is the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 5:10 – 12)
This refers to bearing the "counterattack" for plundering Satan's Kingdom as we operate in power and/or stand for righteousness.
3. In Matt. 5:3 – 5, we begin the process of transformation through the realization of who we really are. The first three beatitudes – poverty of spirit, mourning and meekness – relate to perceiving ourselves differently.
 4. Matt. 5:6 points to "sustained zeal" in the search for breakthrough. This is the heart's response unto God after realizing who we really are.
 5. As a result of our sustained pursuit for breakthrough, we will experience mercy, purity and anointed service (Matt. 5:7 – 9), which brings persecution that requires endurance (Matt. 5:10 – 12).

C. The Three-Fold Result of being True Kingdom People (Matt. 5:11 – 20)

1. We can expect persecution from the world. (Matt. 5:11 – 12)
2. We will impact society. (Matt. 5:13 – 16)
 - a. Jesus emphasized the impact that God's people will have on individuals and society. He used two metaphors to illustrate this: salt (which is for flavoring and preservation) and light (which is to give direction and life).
 - b. This impact is dependent upon us walking out the beatitudes in a consistent and corporate way.

3. We will be great in the sight of God. (Matt. 5:17 – 20)
Jesus is inviting “whosoever” or everyone to be great in His Kingdom. God invites us to greatness without regard for our outward achievements or the size of our ministries. It is based on the development of our hearts.

D. Six hindrances to growing the fruits of the Beatitudes – an exhortation to resist the toxins of sin (Matt. 5:21 – 48)

1. Jesus came not to destroy the moral law, but to make a way for God’s original intention in the Old Testament – the full expression of God’s righteousness.
2. Jesus commands us to wage war in these six practical areas:
 - a. Anger – spirit of murder (Matt. 5:21 – 26)
 - b. Adultery – spirit of immorality (Matt. 5:27 – 30)
 - c. Disregard for the sanctity of marriage – spirit of treachery (Mal. 2:13 – 17) and disloyalty in any relationship. (Matt. 5:31 – 32)
 - d. False commitments – spirit of manipulation. This refers to using “spin” to misrepresent our past works and present commitments (most often seen in a lack of follow-through) (Matt. 5:33 – 37)
 - e. Demand for justice – spirit of pride or bitterness that insists upon our personal rights (Matt. 5:38 – 41)
 - f. Passive love (Matt. 5:42 – 47)
3. Jesus ends this section with a call to be perfect or mature in our obedience to God (Matt. 5:48).

E. Five Kingdom-activities to position our hearts to receive grace to grow the fruits of the Beatitudes (Matt. 6:1 – 18)

1. Jesus describes five “grace-releasing activities” in our devotional life that position our hearts to receive more strength in the grace of God. Our hearts receive more grace as we:
 - a. Consistently and secretly serve and do charitable deeds: serve and/or sow financially (Matt. 6:1 – 4, 19 – 21)
 - b. Pray (Matt. 6:5 – 13)
 - c. Bless adversaries and forgive (Matt. 6:14 – 15)
 - d. Fast (Matt. 6:16 – 18)
2. These five areas are expressions of “voluntary weakness” because we invest what has been given to us (i.e. time, money, energy, reputation, etc.) into Kingdom purposes.
 - a. We usually use of our gifts to increase our personal comfort, wealth and honor.

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- b. However, living the fasted lifestyle means bringing our natural gifts to God as we trust Him to “give back” to us in a way that enriches our personal spheres of responsibility and transforms us with meekness (2 Cor. 12:9).
 3. Our devotional lives are the means to appropriate free grace and not to earn it.
 - a. We position our “cold hearts” in these five ways before the “bonfire of God’s enabling grace” in order to receive the Spirit’s empowering.
 - b. We must not allow these “means of grace” to be reduced to mechanics that we use in a hypocritical show of devotion to seek superiority over others.
 4. Spiritual disciplines (i.e. prayer, fasting, meditation on the Word, etc) are ordained by God as necessary to posture our hearts to freely receive more grace.
 - a. Spiritual disciplines do not earn us God’s favor but give us the opportunity to show how much we value our relationship with Him.
 - b. God sees our hunger for Him as part of our love for Him. God honors the extent to which we value the relationship by giving us more according to our hunger.

F. Pursuing our destiny without fear or anxiety (Matt. 6:19 – 21, 24 – 34)

1. Jesus teaches us how we can pursue our destiny without fear or anxiety by addressing one of the most important areas in life: our finances and material possessions. Obeying Him is vital to sustain the grace needed to walk out the beatitudes.
2. Faith in God’s provision is a vital dimension of our spiritual life. We are not only to be different in our devotional lives, but also in the way we view and use our money and possessions as we pursue our destiny.
3. Jesus calls us to escape the slavery of covetousness that is fueled by the fear of not having enough. We are naturally preoccupied with our pursuit of food, drink, clothing and housing. Fear or anxiety rises up in us to resist our progress in walking out the beatitudes.
4. Jesus gives three exhortations regarding money:
 - a. He exhorts all to live with an eternal perspective by using money now in a way that lays up treasures for us in heaven (Matt. 6:19 – 21).
 - b. He declares the impossibility of loving both God and money. (Matt. 6:24)
 - c. Jesus addresses the fear of being in lack. We must love God while we believe Him for the release of the covenant blessing of prosperity (Matt. 6:25 – 34).
5. In Matthew 6:22 – 23, Jesus calls us to be single-minded in pursuing the Kingdom lifestyle. God promises that anyone with a good eye will have a vibrant heart that is full of light. Having a good eye means that our primary life vision is to pursue the eight Beatitudes.

G. Walking out the Beatitudes (Matt. 7:1 – 20)

1. Seeking to walk out this Kingdom lifestyle will result in many complex dynamics in our relationships that are both positive and negative. Many relationships will change as we walk out Kingdom values. New relationships will be established as old ones change.
2. We must not judge as we seek to walk in a Kingdom lifestyle (Matt. 7:1 – 5). We are not to judge the hearts and intentions of people in the areas of spirituality mentioned in Matt. 6:1 – 33. In the case of seeking to help a brother with a non-scandalous issue in his life, Jesus exhorts them not to give advice about truth to those who are unreceptive. This is very different from the scriptural responsibility to bring scandalous sin into the light through due process. (Matt. 18:15 – 18; 1 Tim. 5:19 – 20; 1 Cor. 5:1 – 13; 2 Thes. 3:10 – 15; Rev. 2:2 – 3, 14 – 15, 20)
3. Some will reject our pearls (Matt. 7:6). The “pearls” refer to the Kingdom values laid out in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus states that some in the Church will be unreceptive to these values.
4. We must not trust our natural strengths to war against sin. We must be careful not to neglect prayer knowing that the spirit of prayer is our best, though not our only tool (Matt. 7:7 – 12).
5. We will face false prophets and messages that will seek to hinder us from entering by the narrow gate and the difficult way (Matt. 7:13 – 20).
 - a. There are two ways to approach our faith and life. One will lead us to life and the other to the path of “destruction” (Matt. 7:13 – 14).
 - b. We must discern counterfeit messengers and messages as they will be part of adversarial elements that we encounter. (Matt. 7:15 – 20)

H. Manifesting the Kingdom reality in our lives and the test of our faith (Matt. 7:21 – 27)

1. These eight fruits of the Beatitudes will be fully tested. It is not enough to proclaim them as a reality. The essential issue is whether we can walk them out under pressure.
2. The eight fruits of the Beatitudes are the true measure of our faith. God will use them as a “benchmark” to judge us at the end of our lives (Matt. 7:21 – 23).
3. “Storms” will test the reality of our foundation. There are 3 kinds of “storms”:
 - a. The storms of personal pressures (rain)
 - b. The eschatological storm (flood) (2 Thes. 2:3 – 4)
 - c. The final judgment (wind) (1 Cor. 3:10 – 15)
4. “Storms” will reveal which of the two approaches we have chosen to build our lives and ministries (Matt. 7:24 – 27).

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Chapter 3

The Foundational Beatitude: Poverty in Spirit

(Matthew 5:3)

A. Introduction

1. Poverty in the spirit is the first and foundational Beatitude (Matt. 5:3). All the following seven Beatitudes build on this. Our journey in the Christian faith starts with this virtue / value.
2. Having this foundational fruit will determine how far we go in our walk with and our pursuit of God. We will keep returning to this foundational Beatitude because we will never “graduate” from realizing our need for God and from asking for more of Him (John 10:10; 17:3).
3. There is an order, sequence and progression to the eight fruits of the Beatitudes as laid out in Matt. 5-7.
 - a. The eight Beatitudes start with poverty in the spirit, with the other fruits following and building upon it.
 - b. Without the foundational fruit of the Beatitude, we will not be able to cultivate the rest of the fruits – mourning, meekness, hunger and thirst for righteousness, mercy, purity in heart, peacemaking and enduring persecution.
4. The Sermon on the Mount in Matt. 5-7 describes the process that allows the eight Beatitudes to come into fullness and maturity.
 - a. It is the most comprehensive statement on HOW we can cooperate with God’s grace to grow the Beatitudes. We need to understand God’s grace rightly in order to cooperate with Him, as it is all about His grace, how we respond, and how we appropriate it. There are six hindrances that will close the door (Matt. 5:21-48) and five disciplines that will open the door (Matt. 6:1-18) to growing the Beatitudes.
 - b. It is Jesus’ most excellent teaching on the grace of God.
 - i. The grace of God is now freely and instantly given to us because Jesus has accomplished everything for us on the cross. We are no longer sinners and stand perfectly righteous before God because of what Jesus alone has done, and there is nothing we can do to earn this grace. All the spiritual promises and blessings of God have also been given to us freely (Eph. 1:3). This is our legal position in Christ and is called “justification”.
 - ii. Jesus is now working progressively in us as we take up our cross in response to His grace. We have yet to experience the fullness of His grace and abundant life that He speaks of in John 10:10. This is our living condition and the process of walking into this fullness in cooperation with God, by the power of His grace is called “sanctification” (Phil. 2:12).

- iii. The Sermon on the Mount teaches us how to increasingly align our living condition with our legal position in Christ, by responding to God's grace in cooperation with Him. By cultivating the eight fruits of the Beatitudes, we live and walk in the grace of God towards fullness and maturity in Him.
- iv. We will begin to live in the reality of God's grace and manifest the eight fruits of the Beatitudes as we respond by "doing" the five kingdom activities laid out in Matt. 5-7 (loving your enemies, doing good / charitable works, praying, fasting and giving financially).
- v. Doing the five Kingdom activities do not earn us the grace of God; rather, we posture ourselves to receive what God desires and has already decided to give us through carrying out these activities.
- vi. Poverty in the spirit is so vital as a realization of where we are and a recognition of our need for God will cause us to respond by posturing our heart and lives in accordance with His word, and by pressing in to receive from Him (Matt. 5-7; Prov. 2:1-5; 2 Chron. 7:14).
- vii. This is also why some believers experience more of God in their lives – they keep appropriating the work of the cross and cooperating with God's grace.

B. Defining Poverty in the Spirit

1. The Beatitudes are eight virtues / core values of the Kingdom of God that come with blessings and promises.
 - a. They give us the biblical perspective of what makes us happy (or blessed). Happiness (or blessed-ness) is defined as being connected with God and having a spirit and heart that is alive and vibrant in God.
 - b. We are promised blessedness as we pursue and grow in the eight fruits of the Beatitudes.
2. Poverty in spirit is a virtue, and we are blessed when we possess this virtue. The promise that God has for cultivating this virtue is that we will inherit the Kingdom of God! (Matt. 5:3)
3. Being "poor in the spirit" means that we acknowledge our spiritual poverty before God (as we stand before Him) and apart from God (without God). It is an awareness of our spiritual lack, our great need for God and our present deficiency in God (i.e. what we now have is so little compared to the fullness of what He has for us). This is different from being poor in the material sense. The natural progression as we pursue poverty in the spirit is:
 - a. Realization – we see our condition before God that we have fallen short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23) and that we need Him.
 - b. Recognition – we recognize our lack / deficiency in light of what God desires to give us. There is so much more that God has for us in our hearts, lives and ministries, yet we are experiencing so little.

- c. Response – our response in light of realization and recognition can be found in the second Beatitude: spiritual mourning. The combination of these two Beatitudes – poverty in spirit and spiritual mourning – will empower us to progressively experience the rest of the Beatitudes.
4. We have NOT understood or acquired poverty in the spirit if the realization of our need for God and our lack doesn't give rise to a response or action.
5. A true realization of our state - the huge gap between where we are and what we can have - will lead us to an intense and weighty response. It will not simply be a casual observation, but will lead us to spiritual mourning and a resolve to press into God for more. We will take needful action (e.g. fast, pray etc.) and posture ourselves to receive more of what has been made available to us.

C. Two Great Enemies of Poverty in the Spirit

1. The two great enemies of poverty in the spirit that will hinder us are spiritual pride and spiritual passivity.
 - a. Spiritual Pride
 - i. We do not recognize our lack in God spiritually or think that we are doing fine when we are in reality so far from the fullness of what God has in store for us.
 - ii. The cause of spiritual pride is often the measurement of our spiritual condition based on the wrong benchmark. Instead of using the Word of God to define the “richness” in our faith, we look at outward appearances and / or use what the world defines as “rich”.
 - iii. This includes the size of our ministry, amount of money we have, how enthusiastic we are outwardly etc. It is this spiritual pride that caused Jesus to rebuke the Church of Sardis in Rev. 3:1-6, “... you have a name that is alive but you are dead.”
 - b. Spiritual Passivity
 - i. We realize our lack in God spiritually - how low or superficial our spiritual experience is, but we are not taking any action in response to it.
2. Both spiritual pride and passivity will eventually lead us to lukewarmness. The primary issue with the Laodicean Church in Rev. 3:14-22 is not that they were rich, famous or influential, but that they believed they had enough of Jesus and were rich in the spirit due to their outward achievements.
3. We must be gripped by the reality that there is a huge gap between what we can know and experience in Christ, and where we are now. We will never have enough of Jesus and there is so much more we can experience in the grace of God!

D. How to Cultivate Poverty in the Spirit

1. We become poor in the spirit by understanding God's highest purpose for us in accordance with His Word.

2. There are three primary ways to cultivate poverty in the spirit:
 - a. See what Scripture says about how much God desires to do in us (in our lives) and through us (in our ministries), and compare that to where we are now. These promises include:
 - i. Fullness and abundant life (John 10:10)
 - ii. Victory over sin (Gal. 5:16)
 - iii. Moving in signs and wonders (John 14:12; Mark 16:17)
 - iv. Loving God with all our heart (Matt. 22:37-38)
 - v. Knowing God (1Cor. 2:9-10)
 - b. Read biographies of what God has done through others such as John G. Lake, John Wesley, Smith Wigglesworth, Brother Lawrence, as well as testimonies of transformation.
 - c. Receive teaching that strengthens our vision to live for the fullness of the Spirit and God (Jude 3).
3. As our understanding increases, we will be able to discern the gap between what God desires to give us and what we are currently experiencing. This reality needs to grip our hearts and awaken us so that we will mourn for more of God.
4. As we pursue this foundational fruit of the Beatitudes, we need to guard against lowering our expectations or settling for anything less than the fullness of God because of what others say. We need to guard against unbelief, skepticism, or false comfort, which threaten to rob us of this gift from God.

E. How to Sustain Poverty in the Spirit

1. Here are some keys to sustaining the cry in our hearts for more of God:
 - a. Don't be comforted by the externals in our quest for spiritual breakthroughs – do not let big crowds, growing popularity and influence, human enthusiasm and money give us a false sense of comfort and the impression that we are not in the need for more of God.
 - b. Don't be content with growth, answered prayers and breakthroughs – while we are to thank God for every breakthrough, we must not be content with where we are at, but keep pressing in for more and greater breakthroughs. There is so much more of God to lay hold of in our hearts and ministry experiences!
 - c. Don't settle down – the greatest challenge for any church and ministry is to sustain a sense of poverty in the spirit. We often lose the sense of urgency to keep reaching out and pressing in for more after a while and thus, most “settle down” after a few years.

F. Common Mistakes in Applying This Truth

1. Comparing the achievements, gifts and dedication of others with ours
God has given each one different gifts and ordained different journeys for us in our faith. Comparing ourselves with others will lead to us either feeling inferior, (which is

different from poverty in the spirit), or becoming jealous of others. Instead of comparing, we should be zealous and press in for what God has for each of us as individuals.

2. Despising the smallness of our spiritual breakthroughs and impact in ministry (Zec. 4:10)

While we must not be contented with where we are, we should not despise our little breakthroughs and impact in ministry. We can enjoy and be thankful for them.

3. Equating the requirement to press in with earning the grace of God

When we press in for more of God, we must recognise that we are not earning God's grace or blessings through our dedication. There is no amount of dedication that is good enough to earn His grace, for it is freely given to us. Our pressing in for more of Him is about posturing our hearts to receive His grace. This confusion often leads to legalism, pride or condemnation:

a. Legalism – when we think it is our dedication that earns God's grace and blessings

b. Pride – when we think we are more dedicated than others

c. Condemnation – when we begin to relate to God based on how dedicated we are in reading the Bible, praying, etc., we feel condemned and not good enough when we fall short in our dedication, as we believe that God will not accept us anymore. However, God doesn't accept us or love us more because we are more dedicated to Him. He accepts us and love us because of His grace and the finished work on the cross.

4. Relating with God based on our dedication and how much we reach for breakthrough

We must realize that all our dedication is weak and fragile. However, we must be confident that God knows, still enjoys us, and values our weak devotion and dedication. Also, we must not be content or settle with where we are but respond to God's love by growing to love Him more.

5. Measuring based on superficial outward appearances

Poverty in the spirit does not equate having to stay in small house, giving up travel and / or driving a car etc.. These are outward measurements that will lead us to legalism if we abide by them.

G. The Promise that Accompanies the Foundational Beatitude

1. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 5:3) - The promise of this foundational Beatitude is in the present tense, in contrast to the subsequent six Beatitudes, which bear the promise of "they shall..." This means that we can receive the Kingdom of heaven now, while the other six promises are future-oriented. How much of the Kingdom of heaven we receive now is dependent on the depth of our poverty in the spirit.

2. While the focus and fullness of the subsequent six Beatitudes are in the future, we may also receive partial fulfilment now.

H. Conclusion

1. We respond in and express poverty of spirit as we pray, intercede and contend for the promises of God (Jude 3) individually and corporately.
2. We are often contented with the things of God and but not contented with worldly / material possessions. This should not be the case for us as children of God as we have been blessed with so much more, including eternal life (1Tim 6:6-12). God desires that we respond with intensity and urgency, contending and mourning for more of Him.

IHOP – One Thing Ministries

Chapter 4

Blessed are those who Mourn, who are Meek and Hungry

(Matthew 5:4-6)

A. Introduction

1. A true realization of our state - the huge gap between what we have and how much more God desires and has destined to give us - will lead us to an intense and weighty response. It will not just be a casual observation but will lead us to spiritual mourning and a determined resolve to press in to God for more.
2. Poverty in the spirit and spiritual mourning are twin and vital Beatitudes that are closely connected and linked together. Both Beatitudes empower our heart to pursue the other six Beatitudes.

B. The Second Beatitude: Spiritual Mourning

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.” (Matt. 5:4)

1. Spiritual mourning refers to the desperate pursuit of God for breakthrough in our hearts, ministries and in our generation. It is the refusal to accept and be contented until the fullness of God has broken in.
2. True spiritual mourning is “extreme” in the eyes of the world. People in spiritual mourning are people who are intense, focused and determined. They are like pit bulls that won’t let go until they get what they want.
3. Spiritual mourning is the result of poverty in the spirit. How we see ourselves and where we are (realization of the huge gap) will lead to how we feel about what we see and cry out, “There must be more!”
4. How we feel is the result of what we see. It is thus vital to see our condition clearly. The problem with the Laodicean Church in Rev. 3:14-22 was that they were “blind”. Jesus exhorted them to “anoint [their] eyes with eye salve” so they could see that they were “wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked” (v17-18).
5. Their primary issue was blindness, and not their wealth, fame or influence. They thought that they had enough of Jesus and were rich in the spirit based on outward measurement.

C. Four Things we need to understand about Spiritual Mourning

1. Spiritual mourning is a gift of God. We are to thank God for it when we receive it and not allow others to rob us of it with false comfort that may be borne out of good intentions. We are to embrace this gift of God because:
 - a. It leads us to greater breakthrough in our walk with God;
 - b. It delivers us from the dullness in our spirits and powerless ministry;
 - c. It is rare among and precious to believers.
2. We need to differentiate between godly sorrow and natural sorrow.
 - a. In 2 Cor. 7:9-11, Paul was unapologetic that his letter to the Corinthian church made them "sorry in a godly manner," as this spiritual mourning (or godly sorrow) over their condition produced in them repentance, leading to salvation.
 - b. Godly sorrow is different from natural sorrow that leads to death (depression, hopelessness etc.). Paul laid out the benefits of godly sorrow:
 - i. It produces repentance and turns us to wholeheartedness;
 - ii. It leads to salvation as we experience breakthrough and deliverance from a dull spirit;
 - iii. We will be diligent, having intensity in our pursuit of God instead of being passive;
 - iv. It will cause us to be indignant and refuse to accept compromise;
 - v. It produces the fear of God in us, a vehement desire for Him, and a zeal and passion for Jesus.
 - c. When we feel the "pain" in seeing the gap between what God has for us and what we are currently experiencing, we will mourn for a breakthrough and pursue it continuously and relentlessly.
 - d. Natural mourning or sorrow is normal. For example, we mourn over difficult circumstances where we experience losing a loved one, losing money, tragic accidents etc. It is biblical to mourn for all these human experiences. However, prolonged natural mourning will lead us to depression, hopelessness etc. We need to come out of it and learn to move on in our life journey. As we focus on God and not our pain or circumstances, we come out of natural mourning and move on by God's grace.
3. Spiritual mourning doesn't mean that we do not walk in joy.
 - a. The Bible exhorts us to walk in both dimensions of pain and joy. We need to hold both truths in tension and learn to walk in spiritual mourning and joy at the same time.
 - i. If we focus only on spiritual mourning without walking in joy, we will eventually develop a "doom and gloom" outlook in our walk with God.

- ii. If we only focus on experiencing joy with no desperation to go deep, there will be no vibrancy in our heart. This kind of joy is simply superficial.
 - b. We can be both intense in our pursuit of God and yet have a happy spirit. The key in walking this out is to be simultaneously aware of what we have and what we don't have, but which God desires to give us. We should be thankful to God for whatever we have yet not be content with what we have because there is so much more that God desires for us.
 - c. This holy discontent and holy dissatisfaction will propel us to be desperate and intense in our quest for a breakthrough.
4. Spiritual mourning is the work of the Holy Spirit in us. Therefore, we need to humble ourselves and ask God for grace to walk in spiritual mourning (James 4:8-10).

D. Two Warnings

1. The promise that accompanies spiritual mourning – "...for they shall be comforted" – means that God will comfort us by releasing breakthroughs in our lives. The breakthroughs will be partial and progressive, gradually leading to the fullness of God in us. However, we must be mindful of the following:
 - a. Refuse to be comforted by anything less than God's highest and fullest for us (Jude 3) – We must choose to not be content except with the continuous and progressive breakthroughs that God brings as we cry out to Him in spiritual mourning.
 - b. Beware of false comfort – there may be well-meaning believers who will unintentionally put out the "fire" in us. Such false comfort steals our vision for greater breakthroughs that God desires to give us.

E. The Third Beatitude - Meekness

"Blessed are those who are meek, for they shall inherit the earth." (Matt. 5:5)

1. Meekness is the result of spiritual mourning. A meek person is one who lays down his/her personal rights, agenda, entitlement, recognition etc., and his/her chief concern is the Kingdom of God.
2. A meek person serves with a servant heart and has no regard for honor, recognition, entitlement etc. from man. They give their all in any task, whether big or small, and even when no one notices and no recognition accorded to them.
3. He/She uses his/her strength and resources for the advancement of the Kingdom and the benefit of others. Phil 2:3-4 gives us the best description of meekness. The Bible calls us to be like Jesus in meekness and humility (Phil. 2:6-11).
4. The essence of meekness is pre-occupation with Jesus and His Kingdom (John 3:28).

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5. The opposite of meekness is pre-occupation with self – selfishness, self-centeredness etc. We become pre-occupied with self because we lack the awareness that everything we have is a gift of grace. We wrongfully think that what we have is a result of our dedication and hard work.
 6. Meekness is related to and an eventual result of poverty in the spirit – When we begin to be aware of our lack without God, we will mourn for more of God and for breakthroughs. Meekness recognizes that Jesus is the source of our breakthroughs – He is the source of our ability, power, gifts, talent, provision, wisdom, finance etc.
 - a. A meek person knows that everything comes from God and is thus owes everything to God;
 - b. A meek person also has a revelation that Jesus owns everything that has been given us - ministry, money, anointing etc.;
 - c. He / She realizes that it's not about him/herself but all about Jesus and His Kingdom.
 7. When we believe that God is the Source and Owner of everything we have, we will be grateful and use all of it - gifts/talents/anointing/resources etc. - with a servant heart. We will be generous and not self-centered, and have a big heart.
 8. Meekness is NOT a personality trait or temperament.
 9. Meekness is not timidity. Timidity is rooted in the fear of man and in low self-esteem (2Tim. 1:7).
 10. Meekness is not weakness but power under control. A meek person is one with power and strength who knows how to use that power – not for self but for God's agenda and Kingdom purposes.
 11. Meekness is power over selfishness, self-centeredness and pre-occupation with self:
 - a. A meek person refuses to gratify and glorify self but chooses to bless others.
 - b. Meekness is the power to turn away from the “gravitational force” of self-centeredness (an “I, me, myself” mentality).
 - c. When we wrongfully think that what we have is a result of our dedication and hard work, it will give rise to preoccupation with self and offense when we perceive ourselves as overlooked and unappreciated.
 - d. We often become pre-occupied with self because:
 - i. We lose sight of our indebtedness to the SOURCE and the OWNER of all.
 - ii. We allow pride to seep in. We begin to make demands, seek entitlement, and complain about things etc.
 - e. The meek know that they deserve nothing. If they receive anything more, they see it as the grace of God. Thus, they don't complain about things and are not
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demanding. They embrace any task, big or small, with gratitude, knowing that they are getting more than they deserve from God (Luke 17:7-10)

12. The promise of being meek - "...for they shall inherit the earth"
 - a. God will entrust the meek with greater influence and impact because He can trust us.
 - b. The promise to inherit the earth will be partial in this age.
 - c. The fullness of this promise will be in the Age-to-come where we will rule and reign with God (Matt. 19:28; Rev. 3:21; 5:10; 20:4-6).

F. The Fourth Beatitude: Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled." (Matt. 5:7)

1. Hunger and thirst for Righteousness is a SUSTAINED and PERSISTENT pursuit of God for His fullness through all seasons and circumstances of our lives. We keep pressing in to God to experience more of Him. Hunger is necessary and key to receiving from God, and we can glory in it.
2. God releases to us according to the measure of our hunger and desire. Thus, the more we hunger and desire, the more we receive. This Kingdom principle is seen in Matt. 15:28.
3. How far we progress in our faith is determined by our hunger and desire.
4. God loves us the same regardless of how much we hunger and desire. The issue is not God loving us more or less but experiencing more of God in our spirit.
5. All the great men of God have great hunger and desire for God – e.g. David (Psa. 63:1-2) and Paul (Phil. 3:12-14).
6. Hunger is one of the most important signs that we are healthy. A person who is feeling unwell or sick has no appetite for food, indicating a deficiency in health.
7. In like manner, lacking of spiritual hunger is a serious sign of sickness in the spirit.
8. Hunger and thirst for righteousness has to be sustained over the long-term. This hunger and desire for more of God is not just for a season because faith is never static – we either become hotter or colder. If we are not gaining new ground then we are losing ground and backsliding from God.

IHOP – One Thing Ministries

Meekness: The Magnet that Attracts God

A. Introduction

1. Meekness is one of the most important character traits / attitudes in the Kingdom of God. It is the way of the Kingdom.
2. God highly values meekness and esteems the meek (Jas. 4:6; Isa. 66:1-2). He esteems those who are poor in the spirit, humble in heart and take the Word of God seriously. With those who are in alignment and agreement with Him, God can be at “rest” as He does not need to wrestle or strive with them.
3. Meekness is a magnet that attracts God. In 1Pet. 3:3-4, which is in the context of humility and meekness, God calls this character trait beautiful - “the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.”
4. As George Otis Jr. aptly puts it, “God will find it irresistible and He will come!”
5. God wants us to embrace, cultivate and walk in meekness. Here are some godly biblical characters who walked in meekness:
 - a. Moses (Num. 12:3)
 - b. David (Psa. 37:11)
 - c. John the Baptist (Matt. 11:11; John 3:28)
6. Humility and meekness are core identities of the Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. It is part of God’s eternal nature.
 - a. God the Father is meek - Meekness is the foundation of who He is, what He will bless and how He will lead the nations. All of God’s government and authority operates on the basis of meekness (Psa. 45:3-4).
 - b. Jesus is meek - Jesus didn’t just “do” meekness. He is meek – in the past, present and will be forever. Here are some Scriptures on the meekness of Jesus:
 - i. Mark 10:45 – He came not to be served but to serve;
 - ii. Phil. 2:6-11 – The ultimate passage that describes the meekness of Jesus;
 - iii. Matt. 11:28-30 – In one of the rare occasions in the Bible where Jesus described Himself, He chose to describe Himself as “gentle” and “humble”, and not as Someone wise, holy, powerful, rich, and beautiful, even though He was all these as well.

- c. Holy Spirit is meek - The Holy Spirit never draws attention to Himself. He functions as the “supporting ministry” within the Godhead. He is fully God yet He chooses to work behind the scenes to focus the “spotlight” on the Father and Jesus (John 16:13-14).
7. God is giving us an invitation to embrace and cultivate meekness. He is calling us to make the attaining and walking out of meekness our primary focus, both individually and corporately.
8. Meekness is the foundation to receiving more from God (Jas. 4:6). In other words, we cannot have more until we are meek (Matt. 5:5). Poverty in the spirit will awaken us to press in for more, while meekness is the key that helps us to carry our hearts when God gives us more. It keeps us from pride and helps us overcome our preoccupation with self.

B. The Call of Jesus to Grow and Cultivate Meekness (Matt. 11:28-30)

1. Matt. 11:28-30 is one of the clearest passages in Scripture that calls us to make the pursuit of meekness our primary focus. It is the clearest teaching of Jesus on how to have a vibrant spirit and how to get out of a dull spirit.
2. God exhorts us to primarily grow, cultivate and pursue two characteristic traits: meekness (Matt. 11:28-30) and love (1John 4:17-18). Meekness and love are magnets that attract God; they are two sides of the same coin. Humility/meekness is an attitude of the heart, while love is the expression of a humble and meek attitude through action (1 John 3:18, 1 Cor. 13:13, Jas. 4:6).
3. Jesus invites us to come to Him, as He is the SOURCE of instruction and power. “Come to Me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and My burden is light.” (Matt. 11:28-30)
 - a. **“Come to me...”** – Jesus invites us to have a vibrant spirit. The key to having a vibrant spirit is to go to Jesus.
 - b. **“all you who labor and are heavy laden”** – when we begin to strive in wrong ways, we will have a heavy spirit within us. It is often due to the lack of meekness or the presence of pride in us that we strive in a wrong way. When we get preoccupied with self and try to protect our own position and rights, we strive emotionally and a dull spirit sets in within us.
 - c. **“I will give you rest”**- Jesus promised those who come to Him will have rest from the wrong kind of striving. They will have a vibrant, free and happy spirit.
 - d. **“Take my yoke”** – Jesus exhorts us to take up the yoke of commitment and bind ourselves to Him. It is a commitment to learn and walk with Jesus in the realm of meekness. We need to yoke or “bind” ourselves to Jesus because it won’t be easy

at the beginning – our natural self tends to repel meekness and gravitate towards selfish pride. It will feel uncomfortable and awkward at first and we will often want

to get off the path of meekness. However, Jesus calls us to stay with Him in the yoke.

- e. **“...learn from Me...”** – Jesus calls us to make this our primary life goal: to be meek, humble and lowly in heart.
- f. **“Take my yoke... learn from Me... you will find rest”** – Through this passage, Jesus teaches us the way to have a vibrant spirit. He exhorts us to learn from Him by cultivating and walking in meekness, as it is key to finding rest. Without walking in meekness, we will not find rest.
- g. **“For my yoke is easy and My burden is light.”** – Jesus promised that if we persevere in being yoked with Him in meekness, we will experience breakthroughs in our heart. As we become meek, meekness will become a delight. It will be easy and light.

C. Defining Meekness – The Third Beatitude (Matt. 5:5)

1. In the Bible, the terms meekness and humility are used interchangeably.
2. There are many facets and definitions of meekness. In general, a meek person is one who lays down his personal rights, agenda, entitlement, recognition etc. and his/her chief concern is the Kingdom of God and others.
3. He/she serves with a servant heart with no concern for recognition, honor and entitlement. He/she knows that Jesus is the source and owner of all resources and will use his/her resources and strengths for advancing the Kingdom and for the benefit of others.
4. Phil. 2:3-4 is the ultimate passage that describes what meekness is – the esteeming of others better than oneself and looking out for the interests of others. It is a radical passage that is offensive to the natural mind. Jesus grew in humility and meekness. We, on the other hand, seek to grow in power, but rarely in humility and meekness.
5. The essence of meekness is rooted in preoccupation with the person of Jesus and His Kingdom (John 3:27-30, Matt. 6:10, Phi.2:1-16).
6. The opposite of meekness is pride, which is preoccupation with self:
 - a. Pride is primarily a fixation on and preoccupation with self. It is subtle, often unperceived, and hidden deep in our hearts. It is elusive and evasive and has many layers. Its evidence is seen in complaints, bitterness, anger, jealousy and envy, demands for entitlement etc.
 - b. While meekness is a result of confidence in God being the Source and owner of all, pride is often caused by an inappropriate confidence in ourselves. This false confidence emboldens us resulting in a proud and condescending attitude which shows in our actions towards others.

- c. The main stronghold of pride is knowledge and revelation. Having more knowledge and revelation will give us an idea that we know more than others and thus causes us to think that we are more superior. Paul says in 1 Cor. 8:1 that “knowledge puffs up”. Yet it doesn’t mean we do not pursue knowledge. We must understand the “danger” of knowledge and pursue it with a heart of humility and the attitude to edify others.
7. Meekness is not weakness or absence of power. In fact, meekness is power in these two aspects:
 - a. Power over self-centeredness – Meekness is power to pull ourselves away from the gravitational force of self. It is the power to refuse gratification or glorification of self.
 - b. Power under control – Meekness is the restraint of power for the accomplishment of a higher cause. Meekness uses power for the right purpose at the right time (eg. Jesus and Pilate in John 19:10-11).

D. The Seven Signs of Meekness

1. A teachable spirit – Someone who is eager to learn, easy to correct and quick to listen. He/she is not defensive and do not have a condescending attitude (James 1:19, 1 Cor 3:18).
2. Quick to see personal faults and takes responsibility – Someone who does not shift the blame to someone else or blame circumstances (1 Tim 3:6).
3. A grateful heart – Someone who does not complain or grumble. Complaining implies that we believe we deserve better when in fact, we are often getting a better deal than we deserve. Pride shows up in complaints, offence and grumbling about being mistreated.
4. Sees the value in others and puts others before self – Someone who has an awareness of others’ giftings, strengths and contributions. He/she realizes that he/she can learn from others, including children and those who criticize us (Phil 2:3). He/she also has an awareness of others’ needs and is not self-absorbed with his/her own needs.
5. Kind and patient with others’ faults – Someone who is not easily insulted, offended or angered with others. They recognize that they themselves are not perfect, and are not quick to “write-off” others. The measure of our manifested anger is the measure of our unperceived pride.
6. Does good in secret – Someone who does good in secret but does not brag and boast because they are not looking for accolades. Their focus is to draw attention to God and their primary concern is God and His Kingdom. Conversely, a proud person does good in public and draws attention to how devoted and dedicated he/she is (Matt 6:1-6, 16-18).
7. Seeks the interests of others and wants to promote others (Phil 2:4-5)

E. Three Stages in the Pursuit and Growth of Meekness

1. Stage One: Develop insight to and understanding of the importance and significance of meekness to God (Phil. 1:9-10)
This includes praying for greater clarity and understanding, and letting this truth grip and strike our hearts. Being meek is key to receive what God desires to release to us. We will not have the fullness of our inheritance until we have meekness.
2. Stage Two: Set our mind to pursue meekness
We have to make cultivating a culture of meekness our primary goal and vision, and seek to attain and maintain this culture individually and corporately. Pursuing meekness must transcend seasons of life, sermons from the pulpit, or just occasional “acts” of meekness (Phil. 2:3-4). It has to be the primary focus of our life and prayers, where we ask God for meekness, for insights (Phi 1:9-10), and for a new mindset to be meek like Jesus (Phil. 2:5).
3. Stage Three: Breakthrough in our heart
As we seek to walk out a lifestyle of meekness, God gives us more grace (Jas. 4:6). As we grow towards becoming meek, meekness will become a delight. Then it will be more than a commitment, but will be easy and light (Matt. 11:30).

F. Conclusion

1. In Phil. 2:19-22, Timothy was commended as one who stood out in meekness and humility. “For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus. But you know his proven character...”
2. God highly values meekness and esteems the meek. It is rare and precious in God’s sight. May we understand its importance and significance and pursue it, making it our primary goal and vision to cultivate, attain and maintain a culture of meekness.
3. 1 Pet. 5:5-6 exhorts us, especially young people, to cultivate humility. Let us help the young people and children in our midst develop insight and understanding of meekness and so establish in them the mindset and culture of meekness.

IHOP – One Thing Ministries

Chapter 6

Blessed are those who are Merciful, Pure in Heart, Peacemakers and Endure Persecution

(Matthew 5:7-12)

A. The Fifth Beatitude - Showing Mercy to Others

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.” Matt. 5:7

1. This Beatitude applies to believers. As Christians and people of the Kingdom of God, we are called to be vessels of mercy.
2. It is a call to experience a greater measure of God’s mercy in our lives. Receiving mercy is contingent upon us walking out in mercy because the receiving and giving of mercy is correlated.
3. Mercy is an attribute that we have to pass on. Giving mercy to others is essential to walk in blessedness and freedom from anger, bitterness and offense etc.
4. We typically give mercy to others according to the measure of our understanding of the mercy we have received from God. When we are harsh or lack mercy towards others, it is a vital sign that we do not clearly see and do not understand the mercy that God has given us (Luke 18:9-14).

B. Parable of the Unforgiving Servant – Matthew 18:21-35

1. This parable highlights the reason the unforgiving servant refused to show mercy to another servant and its consequence:
 - a. Reason for not showing mercy – the servant has neither understood nor experienced the mercy of God.
 - b. Result – he is unable to experience a greater measure of God’s mercy. Being unable to show mercy to others, the servant lives in his own “prison” of anger, hurt and bitterness.
2. **“I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven”** (v.22)
Jesus introduced God’s standard of showing mercy, which is totally outrageous, overwhelming and humanly impossible.

3. **“Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants”** (v.23)
This refers to the Day of reckoning when God will “settle accounts” with us at the Judgment Seat (2Cor. 5:9-11). When we have a realization of this Day, we will be more concerned about what Jesus will say than about what people will say.
4. **“...one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents.”** (v.24)
The servant owed the king a serious debt that he could never repay. This represents the serious and un-payable debt that we owe God.
 - 1 talent = 6,000 denari
 - The servant owed the king 10,000 talents = 60 million denari
 - The normal daily wage of a servant in those days = 1 denari per day
 - The yearly wage of a servant = approximately 360 denari
 - Number of years it would take to pay back what the servant owed = 60 million / 360 = 167,000 years of work.
 - The average life span in those times was 70 years.
 - This means that it was humanly impossible for the servant to pay the king his debt of 10,000 talents!
5. **“But as he was unable to pay...”** (v.25)
We need to realize that there is no possible way for us to “make it up” to God. We all have fallen short of the glory of God and simply cannot measure up to God’s standard of righteousness (Rom. 3:23).
6. **“...have patience, I will pay you all”** (v.26)
This was the servant’s “root problem”:
 - a. He did not realize that he was unable to pay the debt. Thus, he did not have a true encounter with the mercy of God.
 - b. As a result, he was unable to show mercy to others (v. 28-30). In his self-righteousness, he thought that he could do something within his own means to pay back his debt to the master. Similarly, we sometimes think that we can do enough to “earn” our salvation (Luke. 18:9-14).
7. Through this parable, Jesus illustrates the principle of mercy (v. 32-35): we cannot receive the fullness of mercy unless we pass it on (Matt.5:7; 6:12). Mercy won’t flow to us unless it flows through us.
8. Having a heart of mercy means relating to others with a tender spirit in the light of God’s mercy towards us. We can strengthen our heart of mercy towards others by meditating on the mercy that we have received from God.
9. Having a tender heart and showing mercy are correlated (Mic. 7:18; Hos. 6:6). When we become harsh, judgmental, critical and self-righteous, it is a sign that we have not fully understood or appreciated God’s mercy.

C. Understanding Five Things about Mercy (Col 3:12-13)

1. It is not an option – Showing mercy is not an option. God delights in showing mercy and wants us to delight in it by the work of the Holy Spirit within us.
2. Being merciful is NOT a call to be casual about sin:
 - a. It is a major misunderstanding, called “unsanctified mercy,” if we think that being merciful is to be casual about sin.
 - b. Giving mercy has to result in the strengthening of people’s resolve to renounce sin, and walk in righteousness and the fear of God. This is evidence that people have understood mercy rightly (Psa. 130:4; John 5:14; 8:11). Thus, the way of God is to show mercy first, then point to righteousness.
3. Purpose of extending mercy – To help people know that God accepts them and still values them even in their weakness. This will embolden and empower them to walk in righteousness without condemnation.
4. Three Primary ways of expressing mercy:
 - a. **Towards those who mistreat us**
 - i. These are people who gossip behind our back, lie about us, falsely accuse us, start rumors about us, scheme to “steal” our position and honor etc.
 - ii. We are to refuse revenge and instead extend mercy to them by the supernatural work of grace. We are to go beyond simply forgiving them, but to bless, do good, and pray for them (Matt 5:44). This releases us from bitterness and anger and we will experience greater mercy and more of God’s presence in our lives.
 - b. **Towards those who are in need and suffering**
 - i. These are people who are poor, struggling, needy or in difficult circumstances.
 - ii. We express mercy by showing God’s tenderness and sympathy towards those who are suffering, and helping to alleviate and minimize their suffering and misery where possible. This goes beyond expressing an emotion or feeling, but includes taking action (Luke 10:30-37).
 - c. **Towards those who stumble in scandalous sin**

These are people who fall into major sins that will significantly alter their lives and relationships – e.g. divorce, imprisonment etc. We show mercy by helping them recover as a person.
5. Justice gives us what we deserve while mercy gives us what we do not deserve:
 - a. God is just and will, at the very least, give us what is just and due us. Thus, no one can charge God as being unjust (Heb. 6:10).
 - b. However, after giving us what is just and due us (what we rightly deserve), God gives mercy according to His pleasure. At times, God chooses to show more mercy to some over others, as mercy is not something we are entitled to, but something God gives freely by His grace (Exo. 33:19; Matt. 20:1-5).

The promise for those who extend mercy: “for they shall obtain mercy” (v7b) – Those who extend mercy will experience more mercy at the heart level. This is the Kingdom principle of mercy – that in passing it on to others, our hearts will be freed from anger and bitterness, and we can receive more mercy.

D. Pure in Heart – the sixth Beatitude

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” Matt. 5:8

1. The PINNACLE of all the Beatitudes is the promise that we can SEE GOD. This refers to:
 - a. Knowing God with revelation and understanding;
 - b. Experiencing the nearness of God in our hearts;
 - c. Living with a fascinated heart;
 - d. Loving the Word and prayer;
 - e. Not being spiritually bored.
2. Purity in heart is VITAL to experience God. It doesn't earn the revelation of God but it enlarges our capacity to see and experience Him.
3. There is no substitute for purity in heart if we want to see God (Heb. 12:14; 2 Cor. 6:16-7:1).
4. Definition of “purity in heart”:
 - a. Agreement with God. Impurity, or disagreement with God, diminishes our ability to see God. Purity increases our capacity to feel and encounter Him. We will see God only to the degree that we are walking in the light (1John 1:5; 2 Cor 6:16 - 7:1).
 - b. Wholeheartedness. We live with the goal of single-minded obedience to Jesus and resist the defilement that comes from lusts.

E. Three Aspects of Purity in heart

1. There are three aspects of purity in heart that we need to grow into:
 - a. Moral values (Psa. 15:1-2; 24:3-4; 1 Pet. 2:11):
 - i. emotions / thought life
 - ii. deeds / actions
 - iii. words

- b. Motives – we need to check our motives in our interactions with people. We can be free from outwardly immoral behavior but have motives that are not pure (1Tim. 1:5):
 - i. What are our intentions?
 - ii. Are we sincere? Or are there ulterior motives and hidden agendas?
 - iii. Do we seek to take from others more than we seek to give?
- c. Methods:
 - i. In the process of dealing with people and issues, our methods and approach should be without manipulation or distortion.
 - ii. We must learn to trust God and seek to be pure and real in both business transactions and personal relationships.

F. Being a Peacemaker – the seventh Beatitude

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.” Matt.5:9

1. Peacemakers primarily have a ministry of reconciliation. They have an anointing to bring peace and reconciliation to that which is out of God’s will. It includes the restoration of relationships, in the body of Christ.
2. A peacemaker:
 - a. Seeks to reconcile man with God (2Cor. 5:20):
 - i. Peacemakers are ministers of the Gospel who bring people to Christ.
 - b. Avoids creating strife in community. They:
 - i. Refuse to let their own pride and selfishness create discord in community;
 - ii. Refuse to have an argumentative or contentious spirit;
 - iii. Refuse to impose their will on others at all costs;
 - iv. Choose to live peaceably by humbling themselves to serve (Rom. 12:18; Prov. 13:10);

(Note: If a leader has to make a decision or judgment call in ministry that could result in unhappiness amongst members, this does not mean that he is not a peacemaker.)
 - c. Seeks to restore and reconcile relationships between others:
 - i. Peacemakers see the value of investing time and energy in order to bring peace between individuals, families and different members of Christ’s body.
3. However, peace must NOT be sought at the expense of truth and righteousness (Matt. 10:34).

G. Enduring Persecutions – the Eighth Beatitude

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake. For theirs is the kingdom of heaven...” Matt.5:10

1. This is Jesus’ call to embrace persecution:
 - a. We need to recognize that persecution does exist (v.11-12);
 - b. We need to recognize the benefits of persecution;
 - c. Jesus teaches us how to respond in persecution. We are to rejoice and not grumble or complain (v.12).
2. This Beatitude refers to persecution:
 - a. For righteousness’ sake, for example, by standing up for a righteous cause (2Tim. 3:12).
 - b. For Jesus’ sake, for example, by standing up for our faith.

It does not refer to persecution that results from being fleshly, foolish, or immature.

3. Persecution is more than just martyrdom or being physically beaten for our faith. It includes being verbally abused, resisted, ostracized, mocked, ill-treated etc. for righteousness’ sake. It means we are penalized in some form, be it socially, financially or physically.
4. Jesus warns us to expect these persecutions (John 15:18-25).

F. Enduring and Embracing Persecution with a Rejoicing Heart – Three Blessings

1. Persecution produces perseverance and character (Rom.5:3-5).
 - a. Our blind spots are often revealed through our “adversaries”. We need “adversaries” in our life to help refine our character and grow in wisdom (2Cor. 12:7-9).
 - b. In standing for righteousness, we have to do it in tenderness and humility and in the right spirit as we learn to carry our heart well.
2. The Spirit of glory rests and increases on those who are being persecuted (1Pet. 4:14), but we must respond in the right spirit. We must not be defensive, critical or retaliate when under persecution. We can rejoice by God’s grace and not waste a good trial by having a bad spirit.
3. We will receive a GREAT REWARD in the Age-to-come (Matt. 5:17; Rom.8:17-18; 2Cor. 4:16-18).

Chapter 7

Being the Salt of the Earth and Light of the World

(Matthew 5:13-16)

A. Introduction

1. Matthew 5:13-26 is a familiar and widely known passage where Jesus calls us to be salt of the earth and the light of the world. It is a call to impact society and transform nations. It is a call to be relevant and a change agent.
2. It is an invitation given to all of us, His disciples, regardless of how weak we are, and regardless of our position / status or job / vocation. We are all called to be vessels and channels of God to make Him known and transform society. We are called to influence and create impact, advancing the Kingdom of God here on earth.
3. However, being the salt and light is the RESULT of walking out the eight Beatitudes. Matt. 5:13-16 comes after Matt. 5:3-10; in other words, we can't truly advance God's Kingdom unless we become Kingdom people.
4. We can't be effective change agents of God in transforming society without walking out the Beatitudes. We cannot transform others UNLESS we ourselves are firstly being transformed.
5. It is a common mistake to teach Matt. 5:13-16 outside the context and independent of the Beatitudes. As a result, being salt and light becomes a strategy or program. We rely on our talents, gifts, plans and strategies to attempt transformation.
6. It is vital to CONNECT Jesus' call to be the salt of the earth and light of the world to Jesus' call to pursue the eight Beatitudes in our lives. They are not supposed to be separate or taught independently of each other.

B. Two-fold Call of Jesus – Salt of the Earth

1. The primary functions of salt in Jesus' time were as follows:
 - a. To preserve food and prevent it from decaying, spoiling and rotting
 - b. To add flavor to food and make it tastier.
2. As salt of the earth, we are called to
 - a. Prevent society from moral decay and depravity in accordance with the Truth of God.
 - b. Make people thirsty for God as they see the reality of God in our lives and the vibrancy of our hearts.

3. As we walk out the Beatitudes, we will naturally be a witness and testimony for Jesus. It is not difficult. We are not perfect but we can be real. God will give us grace as we seek to live out the Beatitudes.
4. We are the salt that prevents decay in society when we:
 - a. Resist decay in our own lives – It begins with us. We cannot overcome darkness if we are not walking in the light of Christ.
 - b. Resist decay in our society – We are called to be in the world and not of the world. We are to resist the decay of morals and values in our society.
5. Here are two practical ways of being the salt of the earth:
 - a. Through godly character, lifestyle and methods:
 - i. Refuse compromise in morality, modesty and values, wherever we are, whether at home, in school or at the workplace. Our lives and actions speak louder than words. It's often not what we say but how we live that impacts others.
 - ii. The most powerful testimony of a businessman is not how successful his business is but that he runs his business with integrity and refuses to compromise on his values, even if he / she suffers loss in the process.
 - b. Through taking a stand against moral decay and depravity wherever we are, with the wisdom and grace of God. We do this by refusing to be a part of it, voicing out what is wrong and most importantly, by interceding and praying. We must not be passive or accept what we see around us. We must take our stand with God, especially in prayer.
6. In Matt. 5:13, Jesus emphasized that our effectiveness as the salt of the earth is contingent upon us walking out the Beatitudes. Being salt is more than a program or strategy. We lose our "saltiness" when we neglect walking out the Beatitudes and living the Sermon-on-the-Mount lifestyle.

C. Two mistakes the Church makes in seeking to be salt

1. We seek to be salt outside the context of walking out the Beatitudes. As a result we have no power to change ourselves, those around us, or society. We need to recognize that as a vessel and lamp of God, we need oil to shine. "Oil" here refers to a life of walking out the Beatitudes.
2. We try to win / transform the world by becoming like the world
 - a. The idea of blending into the secular music, fashion, entertainment etc. scenes to become like the secular world is a mistake. We are to be in the world but not of the world (John 17).
 - b. Jesus makes it clear that believers who are indistinguishable or no different from non-believers are useless in bringing real change to the world (Matt. 5:13). We are not called to be the same but distinct so that we can impact and transform.

- c. It is true that Jesus called us to “invade” all realms of society as salt and light and be relevant in these spheres, whether political, social, economic etc. However, we become relevant by displaying the values, life and power of Christ, not by being the same as the world.
- d. We have to clearly define “salt and light” and being “relevant” according to the Bible. Being relevant is about manifesting God’s reality, character and power. As people see God in our lives, they will praise the Father in heaven (Matt. 5:16).
- e. O. S. Guinness pointed out that the idol of the 21st century Church is the idol of being relevant. In his book “Prophetic Untimeliness”, he says, “By our uncritical pursuit of relevance we have actually courted irrelevance; by our breathless chase after relevance without a matching commitment to faithfulness, we have become not only unfaithful but irrelevant; by our determined efforts to redefine ourselves in ways that are more compelling to the modern world than are faithful to Christ, we have lost not only our identity but our authority and relevance. Our crying need is to be faithful as well as relevant.”
- f. It is a deception when we seek to become “like” the world so as to win them. More often, many are being won over by the world instead of winning over the world for Christ.
- g. We can “cross over” to the various arenas of society but we have to maintain our DISTINCT lifestyles, values and message in order to be effective agents of change. We have to hold fast to biblical standards of morality and modesty and not compromise.

D. Two-fold Call of Jesus – Light of the World

1. Light exposes darkness and gives direction. Being the light of the world means that we are vessels of God that reveal the Truth and Reality of Jesus through our words and deeds.
2. We are the light of the world in two primary ways:
 - a. As an individual, nation or generation, we bring a living understanding of who Jesus is and what He wants..
 - b. We are a voice that brings the message of hope, direction and destiny to people, our generation and the nations. We have to speak with clarity and in accordance with what is in God’s heart and not what is popular. We speak of:
 - i. What God is saying to the nations and this generation
 - ii. What time and season we are living in
 - iii. How God defines success
 - iv. The judgment and justice of God
3. As light of the world, we point people to God and tell them the ways of God. We expose darkness by bringing light to society. We demonstrate God by doing good deeds.

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4. As light of the world, we represent God.. We are to stand with God and proclaim the message He has given us even if it is unpopular. We have to be proactive in bringing forth God's message that is both world-affirming and world-denying at the same time (Matt. 5: 15):
 - a. World-affirming – We are “for” the world as we fight for the destinies of our cities and nation
 - b. World-denying – We stand for righteousness and speak to our cities and nation what is not right in the eyes of God.
 5. Lighting a lamp in Jesus' time does not take place by the simple flipping of a switch. The lamp must first be filled with oil, then lit, and then carried around the house to bring forth light.
 6. The goal of being the light is for people to see God. We have to be proactive not only to “light up the lamp” but also to “carry the lamp around” so that we can glorify our Father in heaven (Matt. 5:16).
 7. Here are two practical ways of being the light of the world:
 - a. Stand for and speak of who Jesus is and what He wants – He is more than a God who forgives our sins. He is a God of love and justice. He judges sin and calls us to live in righteousness.
 - b. Demonstrate the Truth and Reality of Jesus with practical deeds and supernatural works (Matt. 5:16). Ask the Holy Spirit for a divine idea in how and in what capacity to serve (v.15 - “light a lamp”).
 8. Jesus also exhorts us to be the salt and light together as a community, because it will be more glorious and even more impactful (Matt. 5:14). While we can be individual lights, we can make an even greater impact collectively as a community and body of Christ. This impact cannot be hidden. A city of light that is made up of many individual lights that shine together is glorious and impactful.

Chapter 8

The Invitation to be Great in the Kingdom of God

(Matthew 5:17-19)

A. Introduction

1. Matthew 5:17-19 is Jesus' invitation to every believer to be great in the Kingdom of God. It is not just one of the themes but is the central theme and focus of the Sermon on the Mount. This call has to grip our hearts because it will determine how we live in this Age.
2. The call to pursue being great in the Kingdom of God is in the context of living out the Beatitudes:
 - a. It is an invitation given to all and is unrelated to our abilities, talents, anointing, position in ministry, size of ministry, level of education etc.
 - b. The key word "whoever" means that everyone who responds and says yes to live out the Beatitudes can become great in the Kingdom of God.

B. Greatness in the Kingdom of God

1. It is not wrong to desire or long to be great. In fact, we should desire for greatness because Jesus exhorted us to. However, in pursuing greatness, we must align ourselves with what the Bible says about:
 - a. How we define greatness
 - b. How we pursue greatness
 - c. Why we pursue greatness
2. God designed every human being with a desire or longing to be great. We are wired with this longing and it is part of our emotional and spiritual DNA. Because we are made this way, we feel "good" when we are great.
3. We cannot repent of this desire or longing to be great. However, we repent only when we pursue greatness:
 - a. In the wrong ways – Do we focus on developing our inner qualities (such as growing in love, meekness and faithfulness) or do we pursue outward achievements (such as having a position and a large ministry)?
 - b. With wrong motives – Do we seek to be great in the sight of man? Do we lord over the people God has given us?
 - c. With a wrong timeframe in mind – Do we seek greatness in this Age or in the Age-to-come?

C. Four Kingdom Paradigms of Greatness

1. Greatness in the Kingdom is primarily in the sight of God and not in the sight of man.
A prime example of someone who was great in the sight of God is John the Baptist (Matthew 11:1-11; Luke 1:15-17; John 3:27-30). John's greatness was not defined by the size of his ministry or by the number of people he influenced, but by the size of his heart.
2. Greatness as defined by the Word of God, and not by the world's definition. There are three primary conditions that define greatness in God's sight:
 - a. Obedience to the Word (Matt. 5:19)
 - b. A servant heart (Matt. 20:26-27)
 - c. Humility and meekness (Matt. 23:11-12)
3. Greatness is based on our heart response and not on our gifts, resources, accomplishments or ministry influence. In the Parable of Talents (Matt. 25:14-30), the two servants received the same reward ("ruler over many things") even though their degrees of influence were different. This was due to each being faithful to what each had been given, which varied from the beginning (five talents vs. two talents).
4. Greatness is primarily related to the Age-to-come:
 - a. The promise of greatness will be fully manifest in the Millennial Kingdom and Eternity (2 Cor. 4:16-18).
 - b. Our life here on earth, about 70 years, is an internship that prepares us for the Age-to-come. This is the Kingdom paradigm of life.
 - c. The fullness of our ministry calling will take place in the next Age (Rev. 20:4-6).

D. Pursuing Greatness

1. Pursuing greatness is one of Jesus' main teachings. He taught it more than anyone in Scripture. There are over 50 passages where Jesus used different terms to describe greatness and invite us to pursue it. Here are some of these phrases:
 - a. To be great
 - b. To receive riches from God
 - c. To be ruler over many things
 - d. To have authority over cities
 - e. To have power over nations
 - f. To sit on Jesus' throne
 - g. To be exalted
 - h. To receive honor from Father
 - i. To be chosen

E. The Invitation of Jesus to be Great - Matthew 5:17-19

1. This passage is the central theme of the Sermon on the Mount. It is Jesus' invitation for us to pursue greatness and tells us how to pursue greatness.
 - a. We pursue greatness by being obedient to the Word of God.
 - b. We pursue greatness by pursuing the eight fruits of the Beatitudes.
2. **Verse 17** "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill it."
 - a. The "Law" refers to the Law of Moses and the "Prophets" refer to the Word of God given through the Old Testament Prophets. In a nutshell, Jesus was referring to the commandments of God in the Torah and the words of the Prophets that the Jewish people were familiar with.
 - b. Jesus made it clear that He did not come to minimize or nullify the commandments and the Word of God. He did not come to make obedience to the commandments and the Word of God invalid, but came to give us a NEW START, INSIGHT and POWER to fulfill the commandments of God to the full intent of God's heart. He promises to give us grace and empowerment to live this out."
 - c. It is wrong to teach that because of the New Covenant and grace, there is no requirement to obey the Word of God. This is a totally unbiblical and wrong mindset!
 - d. These are some wrong definitions of Grace:
 - i. "Grace is a delete clause that exempts us from obeying the Word of God." It is not. Paul explains that because of grace, we do not obey God's commandments legalistically anymore (Rom. 6:4-16).
 - ii. "Grace is a license for us to sin without repentance." It is not. Believers are commanded to confess our sins to one another and repent (1John 1:9).
 - iii. "Grace gives us the license to live a life of slothfulness, laziness and carelessness about God." It does not. The Bible teaches us to contend for fullness and we will not be immune from being held accountable for our laziness (Jude 3).
 - e. The Bible defines Grace as:
 - i. The ability for us to have a new beginning when we sin, to return to God immediately with no guilt and shame, if we repent.
 - ii. The empowerment of God in our hearts to fulfill and live out the commandments of God to the full intent of His heart.
3. The glory of the New Covenant is NOT exemption from the law but empowerment to live out the fullness of God's requirement in the Word (Heb. 10:16).
4. Titus 2:11-13 speaks of grace as the power in our hearts to deny ungodliness at the heart level.

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5. These are **two wrong teachings about the grace of God:**
- “1 John 1:9 is not for believers” – This is untrue as John wrote this epistle to believers, exhorting them to repent because God is faithful and will forgive their sins and cleanse them from all unrighteousness when they do so.
 - “The grace of God minimizes / nullifies the requirement to obey the Word” – This is untrue because while grace takes away guilt, shame and the penalty of our sin, it also empowers us to live out and obey the requirements found in the Word of God.
6. **Verse 17** “I did not come to destroy but to fulfill it.”
There are **Four Primary Fulfillments:**
- Jesus fulfilled all the prophecies concerning Him as the Messiah. Jesus is the Promised One (Isa. 9:6-7; 61:1-3)
 - Jesus fulfilled all the requirements as the sacrificial Lamb on the cross. He is the unblemished, pure and spotless Lamb that takes away the sin of the world (Heb.10:10).
 - Jesus demonstrated how to live out the full intent of God’s commandment as a human being on this earth (Heb. 4:15).
 - Jesus is going to bring the Word of God to its fullest expression in the lives of His people (Rom. 5:17). He will empower God’s people to walk in fullness.
7. Jesus promises that the Word of God will be fulfilled in its entirety according to God’s original intent when He returns.
Verse 18 “For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.”
- God will bring about the fullness of the fulfillment of His Word in the next Age, i.e., the Millennial Kingdom and in Eternity.
 - Every aspect of the Word, even the seemingly small and negligible things, will be fulfilled. ALL the promises of God will come to fulfillment (Isa. 60-66).
8. **Verse 19** “Whoever therefore BREAKS one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so, shall be called least in the Kingdom of heaven...”
This is a strong exhortation from Jesus:
- “Whoever breaks it” – This refers to people who disregard the Word, disobey the Word consistently (not out of weakness), or do not bother about the Word. This is in contrast to those who tremble at God’s Word and who take His commandments seriously (Isa. 66:2).
 - “...and whoever... teaches...” – This refers to those who teach others that it is alright to compromise and to not take the Word seriously, out of humanistic compassion.
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F. Defining “the least of these commandments”

1. “The least of these commandments” does NOT refer to obscure passages of Scripture to remote passages that are hidden somewhere, or to books in the Bible that seem unpopular or unfamiliar.
2. “The least commandments” refer to commandments that are least honored or emphasized because they focus on the hidden and private issues of our hearts, such as our thought lives, our attitudes, values, character, words and how we respond to people etc.
3. Compared to the “least commandments”, the common mindset of the Jewish people then was to only honor and be concerned about the “big commandments”:
 - a. These refer to “well-known laws” that seem more important and have obvious impact on society. These include “do not murder”, “do not commit adultery” and “do not steal” etc.
 - b. They are primarily external.
 - c. They are considered great commandments in the eyes of the Jewish people because of their social impact and greater visibility.
4. In Matt 5:17-19, Jesus pressed the Jewish people on this point and in essence said to them, “Will you take My Word seriously?” “Will you wrestle with My Word?” (Isa. 66:2).
5. This is a reminder for believers to focus not just on “external and outward” commandments that impact society but more on the very commandments that involve our heart. We must not focus on the superficiality of the Word but wrestle for what is on God’s heart and to understand the intent of His Word.
6. God’s Word is not intended to address only external activity but also our internal attitude.
7. Jesus then focused on us taking His Word seriously, wrestling for what is on His heart and thus dealing with our hearts and internal attitudes (Matt 5:21 – 48):
 - a. In the eyes of man, not committing murder is good enough. However, Jesus got to the heart of the matter and commanded, “Don’t be angry in an ungodly way” (Matt. 5:21-22).
 - b. In the eyes of man, not committing physical adultery is good enough. However, Jesus commanded, “Deal with the lust in your heart” (Matt. 5:27-28).
8. Jesus in essence exhorted the Jewish people to do the following:
 - a. He exhorted them to NOT reduce God’s broad, multi-faceted and glorious commandments to only external actions.
 - b. He exhorted them to wrestle with God and press in for what was on His heart: “What does God really want?”; “What does He mean when He commands us to ‘love our enemies?’” etc.

9. The Problem with the Pharisees and the Scribes:
 - a. They focused on the superficial and externals.
 - b. They became legalistic and self-righteous as their confidence was in their abilities to meet the requirements of the law.
 - c. They stopped at the outward, external actions of the Ten Commandments that included “do not murder”, “do not commit adultery” and “do not steal”.
 - d. They did not wrestle with God’s Word to find out the intent of God’s heart.
10. “Whoever does and teaches them” (Matt 5:19)
Jesus exhorts believers to go beyond “doing” and instead wrestle with the Word to find out God’s intent.
 - a. God is looking for people who care about what He thinks and wants, who care about being wholehearted and being obedient to Him and His Word.
 - b. God esteems those who tremble at His Word, who take His Word seriously and who pay attention to even the “least of these commandments” (Is 66:2).
 - c. Jesus also exhorts us to teach, disciple and challenge people to wrestle with God’s Word. We are to teach others to press in to the heart of God, whether through a big public ministry, or through interactions with our friends, small discipleship groups or children etc.

G. Conclusion – Five Primary Areas in Obeying God

1. These are five primary areas in which God commands us to obey Him. Out of these, four often seem like the least important:
 - a. Our Eyes (Psa. 101:3; Job 31:1) – what we look at;
 - b. Our Speech (Jas. 3:2; Eph. 4:29 – 5:4) – what we say;
 - c. Managing of our Time (Eph. 5:15-16) – what we spend our time doing;
 - d. Money (1Tim. 6:8; Matt. 6:19-21) – what we spend our money on;
 - e. Prayers (Matt. 6:5-13) – how much priority we give to prayer, especially when no one sees us.

Chapter 9

Resisting Anger — Overcoming the Spirit of Murder

(Matthew 5:21-26)

A. Introduction

1. In Matt. 5:21-48, Jesus laid out six hindrances to cultivating the fruits of the Beatitudes. These are six poisons and toxins that war against our souls. They are the areas of defilement most common to man that cause our inner-man to become dull.
2. Jesus calls and warns us to SHUT the doors of our hearts to these six toxins. We are to close the “windows of our souls” to these toxins.
3. These are the six main “battlefronts” of our soul and their spiritual roots:
 - a. Anger – root: a spirit of murder (Matt. 5:21 – 26)
 - b. Adultery – root: a spirit of immorality (Matt. 5:27 – 30)
 - c. Disregard for the sanctity of marriage and disloyalty in any relationship – root: a spirit of treachery (Mal. 2:13 – 17; Matt. 5:31 – 32)
 - d. Manipulation of our Words – root: a spirit of deception (Matt. 5:33 – 37)
 - e. Demand for justice / retaliation – root: a spirit of revenge (Matt. 5:38 – 41)
 - f. Passive love – root: a hardened heart (Matt. 5:42 – 47)
4. Jesus commands us to wage war in these six areas of defilement. We are not to be passive about them or let them fester within our heart. He exhorts us to be intentional, proactive and aggressive in dealing with these areas that war against our souls (1Pet. 2:11).
5. We need to understand the two primary enemies of our souls:
 - a. External – the devil
The devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. However, he can't do anything to our souls if we don't open the doors of sin to him (1Pet. 5:8).
 - b. Internal – defilement from within
Defilement proceeds from our hearts because of our sinful nature (Mark 7:15-16; 20-23).
 - i. Jesus calls us to close the doors to our hearts by dealing with the defilement. If we open our hearts, Satan will help us: our weakness will become wickedness and our struggles will become strongholds.

- ii. We are to deal with these toxins at the roots and uproot them completely before they fester and grow within us.
 - iii. All of us face the “storms of life” – hurts, disappointments, betrayals, temptations, lusts etc. We only become better when we deal with them and respond according to God’s ways.
6. Besides exhorting us to close the doors of our hearts to the six toxins, Jesus exhorts us to open the doors to five Kingdom lifestyles (Matt. 6:1-18) – serve (v.1-4), give (v.1-4), pray (v.5-13), forgive (v.14-15), and fast (v.16-18). It is vital that we “do” these five disciplines that will help us grow the fruits of the Beatitudes.

B. Anger – the Spirit of Murder (Matthew 5:21-26)

1. By addressing anger in Matt. 5:21-26, Jesus was referring to the spirit of murder. He was actually re-teaching the Sixth Commandment (Ex. 20:13).
2. The Pharisees had narrowed the Ten Commandments to something that applied only externally and superficially. Thus, the Sixth Commandment applied only to the outward physical act of killing someone.
3. Jesus was instead teaching the “spirit” behind the Law. He taught the heart of the matter and God’s original intent when the Ten Commandments were given. More than mere outward actions that God does not want us to do, He wanted us to deal with what was within our hearts.
4. **Verse 21:** “You have heard that it was said to those of old, “You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.”
 - a. Jesus was referring to the Sixth Commandment, “Thou shall not murder”.
 - b. The phrase “in danger” is mentioned four times in v. 21-22. Jesus warns us of the dangerous consequences of not dealing with the spirit of murder.
 - c. In speaking of the “judgment”, Jesus referred to being punished in the civil court of Moses.
 - d. The Pharisees were only concerned with the outward / external. Jesus brought it further. He was not raising the bar or standard but pointed them to the original intent of the Commandments.
5. **Verse 22:** “But I say to you, whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of judgment.”
 - a. In this verse, Jesus focuses on anger, which is the initial / basic manifestation of the spirit of murder. There are many levels and stages to the spirit of murder. It begins with anger and the ultimately manifests itself as the physical act of murder.
 - b. The spirit of murder is common to everyone and pervasive in our hearts. Even a two-year-old gets angry because he/she is feeling uncomfortable or does not get what he/she wants.

- c. We can trace the spirit of murder all the way back to Gen. 4:6-7 where Cain's anger led him to commit the first murder in human history.
- d. We are born with this weakness and sin in our hearts and thus need to deal with it at its root. This requires more than just "managing" anger. This requires overcoming the spirit of murder and not allowing it to stay in our hearts. Our hearts will eventually become locked, imprisoned and hardened if we allow anger to take root (v. 25).

C. What is Anger?

1. When it begins, anger is an attitude. However, it can develop into a demonic stronghold.
2. There are different levels of the progression of anger:
 - a. Anger – this is the most basic manifestation of the spirit of murder.
 - b. Bitterness – this results when we hold on to anger and unforgiveness in our hearts.
 - c. Hatred – bitterness turns into hatred when we begin to verbalize our bitterness and unforgiveness.
 - d. Murder – when we act on our hatred to physically murder someone, this is the ultimate manifestation of the spirit of murder.
3. These are some signs of anger and bitterness that we should watch out for:
 - a. We become defensive and are easily agitated by people;
 - b. We are very critical or harsh with people, especially in our speech;
 - c. We have a guarded heart and do not trust people or leadership.
4. We need to take our anger seriously and deal with it at its root. Anger has a root system that we must not take lightly. We must uproot it before it establishes itself as a stronghold.
5. In Heb. 12:15, God exhorts us to be serious and diligent in dealing with anger. If not, our hearts will eventually be locked up and lose our vibrancy. We must not allow anger to remain uncontested in our hearts!
6. **Verse 22** (cont'd): "But I say to you, whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire."
 - a. The core message and major point in Matt. 5:21-16 is the issue of anger.
 - b. Jesus refers to people who hold on to anger and "camp" in that lifestyle. It does not simply refer to falling into anger accidentally but refers to allowing anger to remain uncontested in our hearts.
 - c. Jesus thus warns us that if we persistently hold on to anger, we are on the pathway to "judgment".

- d. Jesus warns us of the following three dangers:
 - i. "...whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of judgment." – This "judgment" refers to our hearts being imprisoned, locked and hardened.
 - ii. "And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' ('stupid', 'idiot') shall be in danger of the council." – This refers to the Judgment Seat of Christ where Jesus will hold us accountable for our anger and any outward manifestation (e.g. words) of that anger (Rev. 20:11-15).
 - iii. "But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire." – This refers to losing our salvation if anger remains uncontested. Jesus is serious about our anger and His reference to "hell fire" is not figurative or symbolic. In 1 John 3:15, John warned, "Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him."
7. In v. 22, Jesus implies that anger is valid in certain cases – "But I say to you, whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of judgment."
 - a. We can be angry for godly reasons. Jesus was angry when His people turned His House into a "den of thieves". He overturned the tables of the money-changers and drove out those who bought and sold within the temple (Matt. 21:12-13; Mark 11:15-17; Luke 19:45-46).
 - b. We can have righteous anger especially towards injustice and oppression (e.g. abortion or human trafficking).
 - c. This has nothing to do with our personal agendas (Jas. 4:1-4). For example, being robbed by someone else of a position or blocked for a promotion that we are going after are not valid reasons for anger.

D. Dealing with Anger (Matthew 5:22-26)

1. **Verses 23-24:** "Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift."
 - a. Due to the serious consequences of holding on to our anger, Jesus teaches us to "therefore" deal with it urgently and before we even come before God to worship Him. This verse refers in particular to anger that exists between a fellow brother and us.
2. There are two main principles when dealing with anger:
 - a. Deal urgently with it
We should not wait or allow anger to take root (Eph. 4:26-27). Jesus exhorts us that it is more important to deal with anger first before doing any spiritual activity. We release anger by extending forgiveness.

- b. Operate in the opposite spirit
Instead of allowing our anger to fester and take root in our heart, we should seek reconciliation and ask for forgiveness where possible. Our heart wins when we operate in the opposite spirit. It does not matter if someone has wronged or mistreated us – we simply do our part.
3. **Verses 25-26:** “Agree with your adversary quickly while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny.”
 - a. The “adversary” in this verse refers to the anger in our hearts.
 - b. Anger will become a foothold for bondage in our hearts (v.25) and thus we need to deal with it so that our hearts will not be hardened and locked up.
 - c. We are to deal with every ounce of anger in our lives (v.26) and we need to ask the Holy Spirit to reveal it to us so that we can be set free.

E. Conclusion – Four Main Principles of Anger

1. The nature of anger is subtle but it has roots that can and will grow deep and strong in us (Heb. 12:15). We need to confront it urgently!
2. There are consequences if we hold on to anger (Matt. 5:22) and allow it to fester. We will be in danger of judgment, council and hell fire.
3. We must act in the opposite spirit to overcome anger (Matt. 5:23-24).
4. We will face the full penalty / judgment for anger if we refuse to repent (Matt. 5:25-26).

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Overcoming The Spirit of Immorality

(Matthew 5:27-30)

A. Introduction

1. In Matt. 5:21-48, Jesus was not rebuking us about sin, but as a good Shepherd, He was:
 - a. Teaching and equipping us to cultivate and grow the Eight Beatitudes;
 - b. Giving us insight into the destructive and deceptive nature of the six hindrances or toxins that poison our souls – anger, lust, disloyalty in marriage / relationships, manipulation of our words, demand for justice / revenge and passive mercy.
 - c. Exhorting us to “close the window” of our souls to these six toxins and to war against them as they rob away the life and vibrancy in our hearts and defile our souls.
 - d. Exhorting us to “open the window” of our souls by pursuing five Kingdom lifestyles. Matt. 6:1-18 is Jesus’ call to respond through these five disciplines - serve (v.1-4), give (v.1-4), pray (v.5-13), forgive (v.14-15), fast (v.16-18). It is vital for us to “do” these five disciplines as they will help us grow the fruits of the Beatitudes.
2. We need to resist ALL six toxins and respond by living out ALL five Kingdom disciplines continuously and diligently in order to have a vibrant spirit. We cannot “pick and choose” which to resist and which to pursue. This is not an option for believers who want to have a vibrant spirit.
3. We are unable to simply overcome anger or immorality by resisting. We need to, at the same time, “open the window” of our souls and walk in the five disciplines that are the keys to receiving God’s grace in order to overcome.

B. Overcoming the Spirit of Immorality (Matthew 5:27-30)

1. In Matt. 5:27-30, Jesus exhorted His disciples to resist and overcome the spirit of immorality. He was re-teaching the Seventh Commandment: “Thou shall not commit adultery” by teaching the “spirit” behind the Law.
2. The Pharisees had narrowed the Ten Commandments and reduced it to mere superficial and outward acts. Thus, people were comfortable with “hidden sins” as long as they did not commit the physical act of adultery.
3. However, Jesus was pointing them back to God’s original intent when He gave the Ten Commandments. God wanted us to deal with what was within our hearts.

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4. **Verse 27** - “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’”
 - a. Jesus referred back to the Seventh Commandment, “Thou shall not commit adultery” in Exo. 20:14.
 - b. The Pharisees had minimized this commandment to apply only to mere physical adultery, but Jesus pointed to the original intent of God’s heart when He gave this commandment.
 - c. More than avoiding the physical act of adultery, Jesus was teaching about how the spirit of immorality operates and grows. He was also warning us of its dangers if we allow it to take root in our soul.

 5. **Verse 28** - “But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”
 - a. The root of adultery is the spirit of immorality.
 - b. It does not start or begin with physical adultery; it begins with our eyes. The spirit of immorality begins to operate the moment we look at a man or woman in a lustful way.
 - c. The ultimate manifestation is physical adultery. However, there are different stages and levels upon which the spirit of immorality progresses.
 - d. In this verse, Jesus reveals to us how the spirit of immorality operates and grows. It is vital for us to understand it in order to confront it. This may not be the most comprehensive teaching on sexual sin but it teaches us how immorality works in our hearts and how to deal with it.
 - e. How the spirit of immorality operates and grows:
 - i. This impurity is rooted in our hearts. It is an internal enemy and thus defilement begins in our hearts.
 - ii. The spirit of immorality is fueled and fanned into flame by our lustful looks and ‘gazes’. The moment we look with lust, the spirit of immorality is already powerfully working in us.
 - f. It is important to recognize the importance of the EYE GATE, which can open the door for the spirit of immorality to come in. We grant it legal access into our hearts when we look lustfully. It immediately grows and is enhanced and strengthened by what we look at (Job 31:1).

C. The Spirit of Immorality – How it Operates and Grows

1. Stage One: It starts with a lustful look
2. Stage Two: The spirit of immorality is able to come in, because lust has opened the door and given Satan legal access to our body.

3. Stage Three: If we persist in lust, the devil will heighten his activity within us and strengthen his hold on us through sinful habits and lustful desires. The spirit of immorality will grow into a foothold and stronghold in us, leading to obsession, wickedness etc. (Jas. 1:14-15).
4. Warnings about lust and immorality:
 - a. We should not even entertain a moment of lust or give in to even a minute of sexual fantasy. It is way too long and costly.
 - b. The spirit of immorality is dangerous. It doesn't just happen suddenly or overnight. If we do not deal with it radically and immediately, it will grow and eventually become uncontrollable.
 - c. We must be vigilant and always assume we are vulnerable to it. The moment we are presumptuous and casual about it, we are most likely to fall.

D. Three Lies about the Spirit of Immorality

1. Lie #1: It will eventually go away
 - a. This is untrue. Immorality will never stop at the "introductory / minimum level". It is like a drug addiction that has an appetite and craves for satisfaction. However, once it is fanned into flame, the cravings cannot be satisfied and will simply grow.
 - b. It is thus "easier" to deal with it at the eye gate and not wait until lustful passions have flamed up.
2. Lie #2: We can manage it
 - a. It is a lie to think that we can manage the spirit of immorality, as it is uncontrollable. Scripture exhorts us to flee from sexual immorality and avoid it at all costs (1Cor. 6:18).
3. Lie #3: We need something outside the will of God to be satisfied
 - a. God wired us to desire and enjoy pleasure. We need to recognize that the ultimate pleasure that a human can experience is spiritual pleasure, and this is found when we encounter the knowledge of God in our spirit-man and emotions (Song 1:2; Psa. 16:11). Sexual pleasure has to be enjoyed within the boundary of a marriage covenant.

E. The Primary Strategy of Satan – Sexual Impurity and Immorality

1. A common question people often ask, whether consciously or unconsciously, is, "How far can I go with regard to lust and immorality?"
2. Jesus exhorts us to not even give an inch to lust and immorality! Lust is more powerful and dangerous than we think. It grows faster than we expect it to and quickly causes our hearts to become impure.
3. We need to deal with the spirit of immorality radically or it will cost us dearly and deeply (Matt. 5:29-30). Not dealing with it radically will affect:

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- a. Our Relationships with People – We will not be able to have pure and sincere relationships with people if we have the spirit of immorality in our hearts.
 - b. Our Relationship with God – Our minds will be too perverted and cannot be filled with thoughts of God and thoughts that are aligned with His Word (Matt. 5:8; Heb. 12:14).
4. The primary strategy of Satan to defile the Church is through sexual impurity and immorality.
- a. In Rev. 9:21, God warned us of four primary sins that have roots that lurk in the hearts of people – murder, sorcery, sexual immorality and theft. These will escalate in the Last Days.
 - b. In Rev. 2:14 & 20, sexual immorality had established footholds in the Churches of Pergamos and Thyatira. Through these letters to the two churches, Jesus exposes and warns the Church of the two-fold goal of Satan:
 - i. Satan wants to cause the Church to lose her vibrancy;
 - ii. Satan wants to cause the Church to become God's adversary.
 - c. This is similar to "the counsel of Balaam", where Balaam advised King Barak to cause Israel to become God's adversary. This was accomplished by causing the Israelites to participate in sexual orgies (Num. 24:14; 25:1-3; 31:16; Jude 11; Rev. 2:14).

F. Four Stages of the Destructive Power of Lust and Immorality

1. Stage One: Heart becomes dull or cold
2. Stage Two: Mind becomes darkened
 - a. Instead of having our minds filled with thoughts of God, pervasion takes its place. Immoral thoughts and images fill our mind and rob us of the place where God dwells and speaks to us (Phil. 4:8).
3. Stage Three: Conscience becomes darkened
 - a. In Rom. 1:24-28, Paul describes how our conscience progressively becomes darkened:
 - i. Uncleanness (v.24) – Initially, one loses control and is compelled to lust. The person becomes in bondage to lust and has to engage in more immoral activity.
 - ii. Vile Passions (v. 26) – Sexual desires become even stronger and lust burns at the heart level. This leads to perversion, causing one to go beyond "normal" sexual activity.
 - iii. Debased Mind (v. 28) – All restraints are lifted off and one's conscience is seared. There is no conscience and guilt, and no sense of what is right or wrong.
 - b. In Rom 1: 24-28, it was mentioned three times that "God gave them up to uncleanness... to vile passions...over to a debased mind." This does not mean

that God causes our conscience to become darkened / hardened or that He releases immorality upon us. Rather, if we keep choosing to sin willfully in disobedience, He eventually “gives us over” to sin.

4. **Stage Four: Body becomes defiled**

- a. Finally, our physical bodies become filthy and defiled on the outside as we continue to indulge in sexual sin. Sexual sin is the only sin that the Bible says is against the body. As our bodies, minds and souls become impure, we are unable to think of God.

G. Defining Sexual Immorality

1. Sexual immorality refers to all sexual activity that is outside a marriage covenant between a man and a woman. This could be physical, verbal, emotional, in thought, media etc. This includes lusting with our eyes, indulging in sexual fantasy, watching pornography, and committing fornication (sex before marriage), adultery (sex outside of marriage), and homosexual activity.
2. The Stages of Adultery:
 - a. Eye Adultery – This refers to looking lustfully at a person.
 - b. Heart Adultery – This refers to sexual fantasies within a person’s heart and thought-life.
 - c. Emotional Adultery – This refers to a connecting of emotions beyond friendship. It is not possible to have a platonic friendship (i.e. a special emotional connection that is beyond friendship) between a man and woman. If a man is married, the closest person to him in all ways should be his wife and not someone else.
 - d. Physical Adultery – This refers to engaging in actual sexual intercourse.

H. Dealing with the Spirit of Immorality and the Consequences of Not Doing So

Verses 29 – 30 “If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.”

1. In these verses, Jesus gives us two very important principles regarding the spirit of immorality. They are very significant yet often neglected.
2. Jesus makes two major points with regard to dealing with sexual immorality:
 - a. He teaches us what our attitude should be as we deal with sexual immorality. He exhorts us to be radical as we deal with it.
 - b. There are serious consequences if we leave sexual immorality alone and not deal with it.

3. How to Deal with Immorality:

- a. Adopt a radical attitude – Jesus emphasizes the importance of dealing with immorality radically. A casual and passive approach to lust is not good enough. We must take a radical approach even if it is going to cost us, even if it is painful and even if it seems extreme.
- b. Exercise spiritual self-denial – Jesus is not advocating physical mutilation. Both the right eye and the right hand represent the most precious and useful parts of a person's body. Jesus calls us to make radical, costly and painful decisions to remove anything and everything that stirs up lust, even the most cherished or precious things in our lives, such as people, places, possessions etc.
- c. For example, if being in our workplace causes us to lust, we should quit the job. If an unhealthy relationship stirs up lust, we should stop that relationship. If our iPhones or computers cause us to lust, we should get rid of them.

4. Serious Consequences of Leaving Lust Undealt With

- a. There are serious consequences of not dealing with immorality. Jesus emphasized the importance of radically dealing with immorality by repeating this phrase twice, "...for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell."
- b. The consequence of sexual immorality, if left undealt with, is eternal judgment. The Scriptures are consistent regarding this (1Cor. 6:9-10; Eph. 5:3-7; Rev. 21:8; 22:14-15).
- c. This does not refer to people who genuinely work at dealing radically with it or to people who struggle and fall occasionally due to weakness. This eternal judgment is instead for people who are unrepentant and immoral and who choose to "camp" in an immoral lifestyle.

hl. Five Practical Steps to Deal with the Spirit of Immorality

1. Forward

- a. Say "no" to lust. We are to lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness (Jas. 1:21).
- b. Close the eye-gate. Like Job, we should make a covenant with our eyes not to look with lust (Job 31:1).

2. Backward

- a. Search our hearts diligently and honestly to see if we are struggling in this area (Psa. 139:23-24).
- b. If we find that there is lust in our hearts, we need to repent and deal with immorality radically (1John 1:9; Matt. 5:27-30).

3. Inward

- a. Pray in order to cultivate clean hearts and a right spirit before God (Psa. 51:10-12).

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- b. When we meditate on, fill and renew our minds with the Word, and receive His Word with meekness, we are strengthened (Phil. 4:8; Rom.12:2).

4. Outward

- a. Jas. 5:16 commands us to confess our sins to one another. Making ourselves accountable to one another if we struggle and are weak helps us.
- b. We need to draw boundaries and avoid situations where we will be vulnerable to temptation.

5. Upward

- a. As we learn to walk in the Spirit, we will not gratify the lust of the flesh (Gal. 5:16).

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Chapter 11

Loyalty in Marriage and Honoring our Words

(Matthew 5:31-37)

A. Introduction

1. In Matt. 5:31-37, Jesus spoke about the following temptations:
 - a. Temptation to disregard the sanctity of marriage (v.31-32). This is an issue of "Covenant-Breaking".
 - b. Temptation to dishonor our words (v. 33-37). This is an issue of "Commitment-Breaking".
2. These two temptations are closely related and are very common in the world and even in the Church.
3. It is common to see many who do not honor relationships and their words. However, we must resist both temptations because God honors relationships and He keeps His Word. We must not be casual or flippant about these but take them seriously.
4. Honoring our commitment in relationships and keeping our words are attributes that reflect the character of God and that God looks for in a man. An example of such a man is David.

B. Matthew 5:31-32 – Temptation to Disregard the Sanctity of Marriage

“Furthermore it has been said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery.”

1. More than specifically marriage and divorce or dishonoring the sanctity of marriage, Jesus was addressing the issue of breaking covenants.
2. Our God is a God of covenant. God binds Himself to us through covenants similar to that of a marriage covenant. E.g. the Abrahamic Covenant, the Mosaic Covenant, the Davidic Covenant and the New Covenant.
3. God is faithful to His covenants. Covenants never cease UNTIL one party of the covenant dies. God never dies and He will never break them. Thus, His covenants are binding forever.

4. In this passage, Jesus uses marriage to address the issue of honoring and upholding commitments in our relationships, including those between God and man, husband and wife, friends brothers and sisters-in-Christ etc.
5. The opposite of honoring and upholding relational commitments is betrayal. Betrayal is a serious issue to God because it affects our hearts.
6. Betrayal violates trust, which is vital in any relationship. The root of betrayal is the spirit of treachery. We must deal seriously with this toxin and get rid of it so that our hearts will come alive.

C. The Sanctity of Marriage

1. The following are three reasons why it is important to understand the sanctity of marriage:
 - a. It will help us to understand our covenantal relationship with God.
Marriage is about a covenant between a man and a woman. It mirrors our covenantal relationship with God (Eph. 5:32).
 - b. It will help us to deeply value the sanctity of marriage.
Understanding the sanctity of marriage will cause us to take marriage seriously. It will cause us to choose our spouse wisely, for the marriage covenant will be binding until the death of one spouse.
 - c. The health of the Church and society will decline / deteriorate if we do not uphold the sanctity of marriage and our commitments in relationships.
Marriage is the foundational pillar of any society. Thus, the health of marriages and relationships will affect the health of the Church and society.
2. In Matt. 5:31-32, Jesus did not give a comprehensive teaching on marriage and divorce. Instead He was focusing on the foundational principle behind the sanctity of marriage. Jesus was emphasizing the importance of honoring the marriage covenant and through it, highlighting the importance of loyalty in all relationships.
3. These are the key passages on marriage and divorce found in Scripture:
Gen. 2:24; Deu. 24:1-4; Matt. 5:31-32; 19:3-9; Mark 10:11-12; Luke 16:18; Rom. 7:2-3; 1Cor.7:10-39.
4. **Verse 31:** "Furthermore it has been said, "Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce."
 - a. In this verse, Jesus highlighted the Pharisees' teachings on marriage and divorce. It was a widely discussed topic during Jesus' time with many debates on divorce and remarriage.
 - b. The Pharisees' teachings on marriage and divorce:
 - i. They taught that one could obtain a divorce by simply issuing a certificate of divorce. They used Deut. 24:1-4 to justify this stand.

- ii. They took advantage of the law in Deut. 24 and perverted it by focusing on the legality of marriage and neglecting the sanctity of marriage and the marriage covenant (Gen.2:24; Matt.19:4-6).
 - iii. They made marriage and divorce a legal process, teaching that one could divorce for any reason as long as a proper legal procedure was adhered to.
 - iv. As a result, the Pharisees completely missed the heart of God and became casual in their approach towards the sanctity of marriage and the marriage covenant.
- c. The Pharisees were flippant about the issue of marriage and divorce. However, in God's eyes, marriage is NOT just a legal process but also a commitment and a covenantal relationship between a man and a woman.
 - d. Our commitment to covenantal relationships applies to our relationship with God and to any other mutual relationship. We must not minimize marriage and divorce to the level of a "legal process".
 - e. The Pharisees were being legalistic, and focused on rules without relationship. They taught people to focus on standards without commitment and on laws without love.
 - f. Our faith in God is NOT a legal process. When we become legalistic in our relationship with God by focusing on the dos and don'ts, we will lose vibrancy in our hearts.

D. Two Key Components in Establishing a Marriage

1. The Covenant of Marriage – the spiritual dimension with a legal aspect.
 - a. A marriage vow is made between a man and a woman (Matt. 19:4) in the presence of God and with witnesses.
 - b. A church wedding is not just a legal process or a ceremony but the sealing of a covenant between a man and a woman. This covenantal relationship is a commitment in God's eyes.
 - c. Once the covenant is made, it is binding and permanent until one party dies (Rom. 7:2-3). We must take this covenant seriously.
2. The Consummation of Marriage – the physical dimension of marriage in a sexual union (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:5-6).
 - a. Sexual union by itself does not constitute a marriage unless a marriage vow is first exchanged.

- b. The sequence and order is vital. Having sex before taking a marriage vow is called fornication.
3. A legal divorce does not end a marriage in God's eyes because the spiritual and physical bond is NOT broken (Matt. 19:5). This is what Jesus talked about in verse 32 – a marriage does not end in the eyes of God simply through a legal procedure.
4. When one remarries in such instances, one commits adultery.

E. Marriage – A Powerful Picture of our Covenantal Relationship with God

1. The Wedding Vow – Accepting Jesus into our lives
 - a. When we accept the Lord into our lives, a “wedding vow” is exchanged..
 - b. Just as a man proposes to a woman in the Jewish wedding custom, Jesus “proposes” to us, His Bride, by offering us a cup of wine (the cup of the new covenant in His blood). He invites us to receive Him into our lives as Lord and Savior through His redemptive work on the cross.
 - c. When we believe and accept Him, a covenant is thus established between God and us. We are betrothed to Jesus in a covenantal marriage relationship (2 Cor. 11:2).
 - d. The cup that we partake of during the Holy Communion represents the cup of our covenant with God. Whenever we partake of it, we are reminding our divine Bridegroom of this covenant we have made with Him.
2. The Wedding Day – The Second coming of Jesus (Rev. 19:7)
 - a. The consummation of our relationship with our divine Bridegroom takes place at the second coming of Jesus.
 - b. This relationship with God will never end, for both the Bridegroom and the Bride will never die and both will be faithful forever.

F. Matthew 5:33-37 – Temptation to Dishonor our Words or Make False Commitments

1. In this passage, Jesus was NOT teaching about whether one could or could not swear and take an oath. Taking an oath is not disallowed in the Bible.
2. Jesus was highlighting the issue of honoring our words and keeping our commitments.
3. God takes this seriously because it relates to being truthful in our hearts and to the integrity of our character.
4. **Verse 33:** “You have heard that it was said to those of old. You shall not swear falsely but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.”
 - a. Jesus was not quoting any specific law or commandment in this passage.

- b. He was referring to the Pharisees' wrong interpretation or manipulation of several laws:
 - i. Not taking the name of God in vain, i.e. The Third Commandment (Exo. 20:7)
 - ii. Profaning the Name of God (Lev. 19:12)
 - iii. Taking of vows / oaths (Num. 30:2; Deut. 10:20; 23:21-24)

G. The Issue with the Pharisees – the Spirit of Deception

1. The Pharisees manipulated the third commandment and taught that an oath or commitment was only binding if they swore by the name of God. Thus, if the oath or commitment was made without swearing in God's name, they claimed that it was not binding, and that no lie or false commitment was made.
2. At its most basic, they were teaching that, "If one did not swear in God's name, one can break the oath / lie. However, if one swore in God's name, one cannot break the oath / lie." This amounted to manipulating the Third Commandment to teach that one's commitments and words could be in vain as long as God's name was not taken in vain.
3. As a result, the Pharisees developed a new way for making vows. They swore not in the name of God but in other things (heaven, earth, Jerusalem, and even their own heads). They taught that there was an obligation to keep the vow, but it was only dependent on the nature of the object that they swore by (Matt. 23:16).
4. The Pharisees used swearing to evade keeping their words. They viewed swearing as a way to get away from honoring their words and keeping commitments, and justified themselves when they were actually lying.
5. The root issue behind lies, falsehood and manipulation is the spirit of deception.

H. The Heart of the Matter

Verse 34-37: "But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one."

1. Jesus emphasized that the heart of the matter was the honoring of our words and the keeping of our commitments (v. 37).
2. God takes our word seriously. This means that we are bound to what we say. Our word is our bond and we must keep our commitments to both God and people.

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3. Honoring our word and keeping our commitments matter to God as they both reveal the truthfulness of our hearts and the integrity in our character.
 - a. What Truthfulness means:
 - i. Truthfulness is about intending to keep the words that we give and the commitments we make.
 - ii. The opposite of truthfulness is when we give our word but have no intention of keeping it. This is akin to telling a lie or falsehood. The root is the spirit of deception. That is why Jesus said in v.37 “For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.”
 - iii. It is very important to be truthful, i.e. to say what we mean and mean what we say. We must not be casual with our words and commitments to both God and people.
 - iv. Our word is our bond and we are bound by our word. God and others cannot trust us if we do not keep it. Eventually, we ourselves will not know whether we mean what we say.
 - v. This also applies to our prayers. We must mean what we pray. We must take our commitment to God seriously.
 - b. What Integrity means:
 - i. Having integrity means that we acknowledge our failures when we do not honor our word or keep our commitments. This applies to our marriages, our relationships with children and friends, in our workplaces or in ministry etc.
 - ii. We do not lose our integrity when we fail to keep our word. We lose our integrity when we fail to acknowledge our failures. Thus, we must not try to wiggle our way out or justify ourselves by explaining things away.
 - c. Ultimately, honoring our words affects our stand before God (Psa. 15:1-4; 24:3-4). It affects our ability to experience His presence.
 - d. When Jesus said, “But I say to you, do not swear at all...” (v.34), He was NOT forbidding all taking of oaths because:
 - i. The Scriptures teach that taking of oaths is permissible and necessary, e.g. in the case of wedding vows, in a court of law, during a dedication service, taking of office etc.
 - ii. Oath-taking is allowed in legal and serious settings. Jesus testified under oath before the Sanhedrin (Matt. 26:63-64) and Paul took an oath as a witness of God (2 Cor. 1:23; Gal. 1:20; 1 Thes. 2:5, 10; Phil. 1:8).
 - e. Jesus forbade the taking of oaths in personal settings such as over personal conversations, relationships and commitments.
 - f. The heart of the matter is that our word should be sufficient and our word should be our bond. We should not need to take oaths to authenticate our every word in
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every matter, whether big or small, as this would mean that our word counts for nothing and cannot be taken seriously.

I. Conclusion

1. Honoring our word and keeping our commitments in relationships are two important attributes of the kind of people that God is raising up in the Last Days. He is raising up a people who have integrity in their words and deeds. (Psa. 24:3-4).
2. We must honor God's name and not use His name in vain. We are to be truthful to what we say and be a people who honor our commitments, both towards God and people.

IHOP – One Thing Ministries

IHOP – One Thing Ministries

Refusing Retaliation

(Matthew 5:38- 42)

A. Introduction

1. In Matt. 5:21-48, Jesus laid out six hindrances to cultivating the fruits of the Beatitudes. These are six negatives and toxins that war against our souls. They are the areas of defilement most common to man that cause our inner-man to become dull.
2. Jesus calls and warns us to SHUT the doors of our hearts to these six toxins. We are to close the “windows of our souls” to these toxins.
3. These are the six main “battlefronts” of our soul and their spiritual roots:
 - a. Anger – root: a spirit of murder (Matt. 5:21 – 26)
 - b. Adultery – root: a spirit of immorality (Matt. 5:27 – 30)
 - c. Disregard for the sanctity of marriage and disloyalty in any relationship – root: a spirit of treachery (Mal. 2:13 – 17; Matt. 5:31 – 32)
 - d. Manipulation of our Words – root: a spirit of deception (Matt. 5:33 – 37)
 - e. Demand for justice / retaliation – root: a spirit of revenge (Matt. 5:38 – 41)
 - f. Passive love – root: a hardened heart (Matt. 5:42 – 47)
4. Jesus commands us to wage war in these six areas of defilement. We are not to be passive about them or let them fester within our heart. He exhorts us to be intentional, proactive and aggressive in dealing with these areas that war against our souls (1Pet. 2:11).
5. Through these six toxins, Jesus gives us powerful insight into the destructive and deceptive nature of these six hindrances. They will poison our soul if we do not deal with them.
6. Every verse from Matt. 5:21-48 is like a “chisel” that “knocks off” the “stones” on our hearts.
7. The purpose and heart of Jesus in teaching the Sermon on the Mount:
 - a. He gives us vital keys to having a vibrant heart and a spirit that is alive.
 - b. Jesus desires to liberate our hearts by showing us the way to freedom.
 - c. He wants to sharpen our hearts so that we can become true Kingdom people.

B. Temptation to Retaliate (Matt. 5:38-42)

1. This passage addresses the temptation to retaliate and be defensive in response to those who insult or take advantage of us. This is in the context of petty issues, inconveniences and personal rights.
2. Yielding to this temptation causes us to fret easily and causes our hearts to be easily bothered.
3. **Verse 38:** “You have heard that it was said...”
Through contrasting what the religious leaders said about this truth with the real and true meaning of this passage of Scripture, Jesus highlighted that the Pharisees majored on minor things and missed the spirit of the Law, the heart of the matter and the original intent of God in giving the Law. They either minimized the application of the law to something external / superficial, or interpreted the law incorrectly.
4. Jesus addressed a very well-known law in the Old Testament: “An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.” (Exo. 21:24; Lev. 24:20; Deu. 19:21):
 - a. The intent of the law that was given through Moses was for it to be applied in a court system and through the court judges.
 - b. This law was NOT given for personal administration. This means that if someone hits you, it is not right to hit the person back in the same manner.
 - c. The principle behind this law is one of restitution. The punishment must fit the crime, and must neither be too lenient nor too severe. “Punishment” refers to a monetary compensation or a jail-term etc. and not literal mutilation.

C. Four-fold Purpose of the Law

1. Jesus taught the four-fold purpose of the law, “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth”. This law is to be applied in the context of a community, through a court system where:
 - a. Justice is defined in a community setting.
 - b. Personal revenge is restrained, i.e. this law helps to prevent people from taking things into their own hands.
 - c. The innocent will be protected from evildoers. This ensures law and order in society.
 - d. The evildoers will be protected from judges with a wrong spirit, e.g. from giving penalties that are too severe.
2. The primary purpose of this law is to free us from the spirit of revenge. Jesus exhorts us to love one another and to not have a vengeful or begrudging spirit. The Pharisees, however, were teaching the people to act in wrong ways and in the wrong spirit.
3. Two major errors by the Pharisees:
 - a. They taught that the law commanded revenge. However, Jesus emphasized that it was not a command that gave us the right to take revenge. In fact, the Old

Testament speaks against taking revenge and bearing grudges and exhorts us towards loving one another (Lev. 19:18).

- b. They taught that people could administer the law personally and outside the court system. However, Jesus teaches us to resist an evil person by using the court system and not by taking things into our own hands. Similarly, in Lev. 19:18, Moses also exhorted the people not to take the law into their own hands.

D. The Call of Jesus in Matt. 5:38-42

1. In this passage of Scripture, Jesus calls us to live with a liberated heart that is free from the spirit of revenge, defensiveness and entitlement to personal rights. In the face of opposition, Jesus cautions us not to fight back or retaliate.
2. Jesus knows that a “bothered” heart will give rise to retaliation and also choke our hearts. As a result, we will not be able to engage our hearts with God. Thus, Jesus calls us to not be bothered by petty complaints or conflicts.
3. The root of retaliation is the spirit of revenge. Once we yield to the spirit of revenge, we will fight back. Jesus calls us to act in the opposite spirit by refusing retaliation.
4. Key issues in Matt. 5:38-42:
 - a. Jesus teaches us how to liberate our hearts. The context of Matt. 5:38-42 is about responding to petty issues and inconveniences. Jesus is teaching us how to be free from the spirit of retaliation in these cases. He exhorts us to not be easily “bothered” by them.
 - b. This is not about being passive or being a “doormat”. This teaching is often misunderstood and misinterpreted as Jesus calling us to be “doormats” and to be passive when people step on us. However, He was not advocating the rejection of all forms of defense or being passive towards evildoers. In fact, the Bible teaches us about the right to defend ourselves as individuals, families and nations.
 - c. Jesus teaches us how to respond to “evil man”. We are to carry our hearts with the right attitude and respond in the right way and in the right spirit and measure in the context of small matters and petty issues. In this way, we will have a free and liberated heart instead of a burdensome and heavy heart.

E. One main exhortation and Four illustrations of How to walk out Matt. 5:38 - 42

1. Jesus gave one main exhortation through the lens of four illustrations on how to walk out the principles in Matt. 5:38-42.
2. Main exhortation: Resist the spirit of revenge.
Verse 39: “But I tell you not to resist an evil person”

Jesus exhorts us NOT to retaliate, oppose or fight back when faced with situations and people who come against us with an evil heart and motives. This is in the context of small matters and petty issues, where we are likely not in the wrong. Instead, He exhorts us to resist the spirit of revenge.

3. We can only correctly understand the spirit of the law, “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth” and the heart of the matter in this passage through the lens of the four illustrations that Jesus gave us. The contexts of these four illustrations are in the areas of small matters, personal rights, inconveniences and petty issues.
4. Through these four illustrations, Jesus exhorts us to resist the temptation to retaliate or be defensive over petty issue or small matters. He exhorts us to not allow our hearts to be bothered, fretted or defensive, as these negative emotions will choke our hearts.
5. Jesus teaches us how to overcome our tendencies to retaliate and how to operate in the opposite spirit when we are being verbally insulted or abused, taken advantage of (economically) or inconvenienced. He even exhorts us to show grace to the person who insulted us.
6. **First illustration: Verbal Insults**
Verse 39: “But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.”
 - a. Jesus was not referring to being beaten up physically. Instead, he was talking about verbal insults.
 - b. In ancient Jewish understanding, if someone physically slaps another person, he will use his right hand to strike the other person’s left cheek. However, verse 39 states “whoever slaps you on your right cheek”, thus referring to a backhanded slap by someone. This speaks of verbal insult or abuse.
 - c. In response to this, Jesus exhorts us to not return the insult or mention it to others as a means of justifying ourselves. He exhorts us to endure the insult graciously and leave the matter in His hands, knowing that God is in control. Jesus calls us to not be bothered by it or react to it, but to instead operate in the opposite spirit and avoid retaliation in any form (Rom 12:14-20).
7. **Second illustration: Smallness of Attacks**
Verse 40: “If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also.”
 - a. Jesus used a legal example to teach us how to respond to small attacks. In our current day, the average cost of a tunic would be approximately \$50-\$100 while a coat would cost around \$100-\$200. For a person to start a lawsuit over such a trivial amount highlights the smallness of the attack. He was not referring to a major lawsuit by an evil person who wanted to take away our business or home.
 - b. The “attack” would most likely have injured our pride or violated our personal principles. Our human tendency in such cases is to insist on our “rights” and stand on principle.
 - c. However, Jesus exhorts us to operate in the opposite spirit, which is to refuse retaliation and to resist our tendency to be defensive and fight back. It is emotionally draining to fight back and Jesus counsels us not to allow our hearts to be bothered in light of how small the attack is.

- d. This illustration does not apply to more “major attacks” such as attempts by people with evil motives who want to take away our businesses or homes.

8. Third illustration: Inconveniences caused by government, authority and leadership

Verse 41: “And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two.”

- a. In this verse, Jesus was referring to situations that were legal, but that annoyed and inconvenienced us. Specifically, this refers to situations involving government, authority and leadership that are not wrong per se, but simply annoying and inconvenient.
- b. In Jesus’ time, Roman soldiers had the right to force (v.41 “compel”) someone to carry their military gear for a mile. The Roman soldiers have infringed on the person’s own time and personal rights by compelling them to do this extra thing. However, this was within the law of the Roman Empire then and was thus legal.
- c. However, this infringement on our time and personal rights is not unqualified or without limits. As long as the inconvenience does not harm us or overtly take time away from our own work, we should do it.
- d. This inconvenience may also injure our pride, but Jesus exhorts us to operate in the opposite spirit and overcome our tendencies to be bothered, offended, and to retaliate. In such instances, He even exhorts us to go an extra mile with him. (v.41 “... go with him two.”)

9. Fourth illustration: Showing grace to those who insult us

Verse 42: “Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away.”

- a. The “him” in this verse refers to the same person who insulted us.
- b. Jesus exhorts us to not resist or retaliate but to operate in the opposite spirit and show grace to the person by helping him/her. More than simply lending money, we are to extend help to the person who has insulted us.
- c. Thus, this verse is not about doing or giving away anything that people may ask of us. For example, in 2Thes. 3:10, Jesus exhorts us not to give away money unwisely.

10. By elaborating on the law, “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth”, Jesus gives us principles that will liberate our hearts from a spirit of vengeance. Through the four illustrations, Jesus targets our bothered hearts and exhorts us to overcome by operating in the opposite spirit. However, these are principles and not precise “rules” or a complete list of “dos and don’ts.

F. Conclusion

1. Petty issues easily and regularly bother our hearts and our natural tendencies are to act in retaliation.
2. In His mercy, Jesus will let us face real-life situations that mirror the four illustrations. His exposes our bothered hearts through letting us see our own reactions and shows us how we often allow petty issues to weigh our hearts down.
3. Ongoing retaliation will cause us to lose vibrancy in our spirits. If we allow our hearts to be easily insulted or bothered, we will become cynical / skeptical and it will be hard for us to enter into God's love. Jesus exhorts us not to retaliate and to leave the matter in His hands (1Pet. 2:23).
4. We need to repent of our spirit of revenge and overcome it with an opposite spirit. As Jesus is concerned with the state of our inner man, He allows us to face situations in which these negative emotions will surface so that we can deal with them. If we do not, our hearts will be affected and bothered by these small but frequent matters in life.
5. In Luke 10:41, Jesus identified two issues in Martha:
 - a. She was distracted – Martha's issue was not that she served but that she was distracted and stayed distracted. When Jesus corrected Martha, He did not love her any less because she was distracted. Instead, He brought it to light because He wanted her to realize and deal with it. Thus, we can only come out of distractions by being honest and by addressing them.
 - b. Her heart was "bothered" – Martha was also serving with a wrong spirit and thus she thought Mary was the problem ("tell Mary to help me"). In reality, Martha's heart was "bothered" as she served.
6. We can learn how to carry our hearts from King David. In Psa. 37:1-8, he taught us not to fret in the sight of evildoers but to trust in the Lord. David experienced a power transformation in his heart by learning to carry it well. He experienced the liberty and joy which fills a heart that is not easily bothered or insulted.

Passive Love vs. Active Love

(Matthew 5:43 - 48)

A. Introduction

1. In Matt. 5:21-48, Jesus identified six specific temptations that are most common and pervasive to everyone, including believers. Jesus exhorts us to resist these six hindrances that will deter us from growing the eight Beatitudes.
2. These are six negatives and toxins that war against our souls. They are the areas of defilement most common to man that cause our inner-man to become dull.
3. Jesus calls and warns us to SHUT the doors of our hearts and close the “windows of our souls” to these toxins.
4. These are the six main “battlefronts” of our souls and their spiritual roots:
 - a. Anger – root: a spirit of murder (Matt. 5:21 – 26)
 - b. Adultery – root: a spirit of immorality (Matt. 5:27 – 30)
 - c. Disregard for the sanctity of marriage and disloyalty in any relationship – root: a spirit of treachery (Mal. 2:13 – 17; Matt. 5:31 – 32)
 - d. Not honoring our words and commitments – root: a spirit of deception (Matt. 5:33 – 37)
 - e. Demand for justice / retaliation – root: a spirit of revenge (Matt. 5:38 – 41)
 - f. Passive love – root: a hardened heart (Matt. 5:42 – 47)
5. Jesus commands us to wage war in these six areas of defilement. We are not to be passive about them or let them fester within our hearts. He exhorts us to be intentional, proactive and aggressive in dealing with these areas (1Pet. 2:11).
6. Jesus gives us powerful insight into the destructive and deceptive nature of these six hindrances. They will poison our soul if we do not deal with them.
7. Every verse from Matt. 5:21-48 is like a “chisel” that “knocks off” the “stones” on our hearts.
8. The purpose and heart of Jesus in teaching the Sermon on the Mount:
 - a. He gives us vital keys towards having a vibrant heart and a spirit that is alive.
 - b. Jesus desires to liberate our hearts by showing us the way to freedom.
 - c. He wants to sharpen our hearts so that we can become true Kingdom people.

B. Temptation to be Passive Towards our Enemies - Matthew 5:43-48

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.

1. Matt. 5:43-48 is Jesus’ call to resist the temptation to be passive towards our “enemies”, i.e. “those who curse you, hate you, spitefully use you and persecute you”.
2. This passage of Scripture is the pinnacle of, and the highest and most challenging part of the Sermon on the Mount. However, it comes with a great promise in v.45 – “that you may be sons of your Father in heaven”.
3. All of us love the concept of loving our “enemies”. However in reality, very few will embrace and do it. This concept or principle of loving our enemies with a practical action elicits three types of responses:
 - a. Praise – because it seems good and right to do so.
 - b. Mockery / ridicule – because it is unreal, unrealistic and idealistic to love our “enemies”.
 - c. Disregard – because it is perceived as an impossible task.
4. Jesus explains that the key to loving our “enemies” is found in v.44. It is the “doorway” to v.48 - “Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect”. Thus, it opens our hearts up to the realm of the Father, sets us free from the hindrances in our hearts and transforms us into the nature and likeness of God.
5. In the preceding verses (v.38-42), Jesus calls us to resist the temptation to retaliate and be defensive towards our “enemies”. Many are happy or content to not retaliate or resist an evil person.
6. However, Jesus challenges us to go further and higher and to actively love those who insult us. He promises that something in our hearts will change when we love our “enemies” via practical actions. Thus, of the 28 verses in Matt. 5:21-48, v.44 is the most important and most challenging.
7. In v.38-42, Jesus shows us what NOT to do. In v.43-48, Jesus shows us what to do and gives three practical applications as to how to love our “enemies”. To refuse retaliation is the beginning of our victory but it is not complete until we actively love.

C. Verse 43: The Error of the Pharisees

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’

1. In this verse, Jesus focused on and corrected what the Pharisees taught about a famous passage from the Old Testament: “You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord” (Lev. 19:18), and “The stranger who dwells among you shall be to you as one born among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God” (Lev. 19:34).
2. They distorted the God’s commandment by removing some parts and adding major parts:
 - a. The Pharisees removed the words “as yourself”, thus reducing the command to “You shall love your neighbor”.
 - b. They also redefined neighbors to apply only to fellow Jewish people, but not to Gentiles.
 - c. As a result, they limited the scope of the command to only loving people who were similar to them, instead of embracing God’s call to love all, including Gentiles.
 - d. The Pharisees completely missed the heart of God and misinterpreted the Law. It was never God’s intent for Jewish people to ostracize the Gentiles. For example, Isa. 42:1-4 and Matt. 12:15-21 speak of the inclusion of Gentiles in God’s salvation plan.
 - e. Furthermore, they added the command “to hate your enemy” to arrive at their version of the commandment: “You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.” This is completely wrong as there is nowhere in the Bible that teaches us to hate our enemy.
3. As with the Pharisees, we too are often guilty of removing from and adding to the Word of God, as we do not understand the heart and the Spirit of God when He gives a certain law. As a result, we often interpret God’s commandments as a legalistic list of dos and don’ts instead of understanding the heart behind the commandment and God’s original intent.

D. The Original Intent of the Law - Love our enemies proactively

Verse 44: “But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,”

1. “But I say to you...” – Jesus corrected the Pharisee’s wrong interpretation and incomplete quotation of the law.
2. Jesus explained that the original intent of the Law in Lev. 19:18 was “love your enemies”. Jesus also broadens the definition of neighbors to include not just good friends or family members, but also every human being and our “enemies”.

3. More than responding in the opposite spirit (by not retaliating) or being passive (by having sealed lips), Jesus exhorts us to proactively love our “enemies”. He gives three practical things that we can do to love our enemies: through our words, actions / deeds and prayers (v.44).
4. This is the highest and most difficult part in the Sermon on the Mount. It demonstrates the pinnacle and summit of love. Scripture refers to this as “perfect love” (1John 4:18), which we can all aim to cultivate.

E. Our Response / Attitude towards our “enemies”

1. Definition of our “enemies”. This does not refer to Satan but to people who intentionally set out to trouble us. They are people who curse / slander us, say negative things about us and plan to cause us to fail. They are people who speak evil of us and hate us. Our “enemies” can be people we consider our friends, believers, colleagues, Church leaders, neighbors etc.
2. The response / attitude to adopt under these circumstances is to identify and recognize them as “opportunities” from God. If we see them in this way, we will be motivated to respond correctly. We will say “yes” to respond in the three practical ways as laid out by Jesus in v.44.
3. If we respond by loving our enemies proactively, Jesus promises that we will:
 - a. Experience more of God because our capacity to experience God will increase.
 - b. Become like God because our hearts will open up to the realm of the Father and we shall receive the promise to be “sons of our Father” (v.45).
 - c. Overcome hindrances in our hearts because we operate in the opposite spirit and love and bless our enemies instead of reinforcing a bad spirit by complaining or lamenting about them.
4. Jesus did not exhort us to like our enemy but to operate in the opposite spirit by proactively loving them. Love is more than an emotion and a feeling. Love is action. Jesus exhorts us to take the higher way and actively love those who insult us.
5. Jesus promises that if we respond to His exhortation in v.44, we will experience more of God, be transformed in our hearts and receive a reward. We will experience these things in our lives according to the measure that we respond to v.44. There will be an internal change in our hearts in this Age and an eternal reward in the Age-to-come if we respond to v.44.
6. Jesus has given us the “ticket” to the higher realm of God (v.45). V.44 is the “ticket” or “doorway” to the promises in v.45 and v.48. If we recognize this truth and reality, we will view such circumstances as opportunities instead of a pain. Our hearts will be set free and we can press in to live to the fullness of God that has been promised us.
7. We will experience change, transformation and God in our lives in proportion to the measure with which we respond to His exhortation in v.44. God desires us to press in for the fullness that He has for us.

F. Three Practical ways to love our enemies proactively

1. Instead of stopping at not retaliating and being silent (v.38-42), Jesus exhorts us to take things a step further and to love our enemies through our words, actions / deeds and prayers.
 - a. “Bless those who curse you”. Jesus calls us to speak words of blessing about them and to them, and to affirm their virtues.
 - i. In order to affirm their virtues, we have to seek out the good things about those who insult us. This will take us to another dimension. In the process, our heart becomes bigger and we go above the “storm” instead of fighting the “storm”.
 - ii. It is important for us to verbalize these words of blessing because the most influential voice that affects our spirit is our own voice. What we say out loud marks our spirit (Rom. 10:9-10) and determines our path and course of action.
 - iii. When we verbalize negative sentiments, it also marks us. Thus, we should exhort one another to bless our “enemies” instead of reinforcing negativity and sitting around to criticize.
 - b. “Do good to those who hate you”
 - i. Look for practical ways to help our “enemies”. God exhorts us to resist the temptation to be passive towards our “enemies” and respond with active love by helping them.
 - ii. Our natural response would be to sit back and watch when our “enemies” suffer, as we believe they are getting what they deserve. We reason that not rejoicing in their failure is sufficient. However, Jesus calls us to resist this temptation to be passive and respond with active love.
 - iii. At the front-end, we may think it is difficult and hard to bless our “enemies”. However, our heart grows the moment we bless them. The important point is not carrying out the action itself, but the resulting change in our hearts and spirits as we respond by loving our “enemies” proactively. We will feel how God feels. We will be set free, transformed in our hearts and experience more of God.
 - c. “Pray for those who use or persecute you”
 - i. Engage our hearts and pray for our “enemies”. This is different from saying a quick prayer grudgingly, but entails engaging our hearts to pray for them.
 - ii. Be sincere in our prayers and ask God to bless them without attaching conditions to these prayers that are based on our human thinking.
2. Thus, when we begin to proactively love our “enemies”, our hearts grow bigger because we are acting in the opposite spirit and it takes us to another dimension. We go above the “storm” instead of fighting the “storm”.

G. The Great Promise

Verse 45: "...that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust."

1. In v.45, Jesus gives us the reason to love our "enemies" as described in v. 44 – "...that you may be sons of your Father in heaven" (v.45). Jesus makes a big statement by saying that becoming the "sons" of the Father is the result of carrying out v.44.
2. Position-wise, believers are the "sons of the Father" immediately and automatically the moment we receive Jesus (John 1:12-13). What Jesus meant in v.45 was that if we loved this way, we would experience the transforming power of God. Our nature will be changed and we will become more and more like the Father.
3. In Matt. 5:21-41, Jesus calls us to deal with the five temptations of our souls by resisting them. However in the sixth temptation, Jesus exhorts us to not only resist it, but to respond and act proactively. In it, He gives us the great promise that if we respond, our hearts will be opened to the realm of the Father (v.45).

H. Three-fold Result

Verse 45: "that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust."

1. There is a three-fold result if we respond by doing v.44:
 - a. We experience the nature of God's love. God's love transcends natural love, which even tax collectors and evil men have (v.46-47). When we experience God's love, we will bless evil men who do not even care about God. God's love is unique and transcendent. It is a perfect love as described in 1 John 4:18.
 - b. We are transformed in our inner man. Jesus invites us to live and to love in a different realm and v.44 is the doorway to this higher realm of the Father's love (v.45). When we respond by loving our "enemies", we will experience the transforming power of God in our inner man and be "sons" of the Father.
 - c. We are set free from the gravitational pull of "self". Self-preservation / self-centeredness is in our nature and how we usually live our lives. We often become tired, anxious and fret over things because we are pre-occupied with ourselves (Phil. 2:19-21). This gravitational pull to self often causes weariness in our hearts. In v.44, Jesus gives us the vital key to overcome the gravitational pull of self and the tyranny of self-absorption.

I. Five Truths / Principles to Focus on while living out v.44

1. As we pursue obedience to v.44 by loving our enemies, we focus on these five truths / principles:
 - a. Entrust ourselves to God (1Pet. 2:23; Rom. 12:19). We trust and know that God will vindicate us and that no one can stop God's ordained destiny for us.
 - b. See the Big Picture (Gen. 50:20-21). We trust and know that God has a bigger purpose for us, and that He often uses adverse situations and adversaries to refine

us. When we understand this, we will see such circumstances and people as opportunities to grow.

- c. Recognize that it is about our hearts (Prov. 4:23). Scripture exhorts us to guard our hearts with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life. It is important to guard our hearts from a wrong spirit. God wants to give us a big heart so that we can experience more of Him. Each time we act in an opposite spirit, our heart grows.

- d. Our Eternal Reward

Verse 46-47: “For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so?”

In v.46-47, Jesus promises us an eternal reward if we respond by loving our “enemies” proactively (v.44). More importantly, Jesus wants us to understand the value and nature of love. God’s love is unique and transcendent. It transcends the realm of our natural love for our family and friends. He wants us to go higher (v. 48).

- e. Being like God

Verse 48: “Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.”

- i. This verse is in the context of loving our enemies (v.44), which is supernatural. We can be perfect just as our Father in heaven is perfect when we practically and proactively love our “enemies”.
- ii. V.44 is the “doorway” to freedom from the hindrances in our hearts and to being transformed into the nature and likeness of God. It is the “doorway” to v.48 and opens up our hearts to the realm of the Father.
- iii. Alfred Plummer said in his book, Saint Matthew: “To return evil for good is devilish; to return good for good is human; to return good for evil is divine.” We naturally give favors to get favors in return and take revenge on those who cause us trouble. However, Jesus invites us to go higher.

J. The Impact of Living Out v.44

1. Loving our enemies consistently is the most powerful and effective way of showing that God is real to unbelievers (John 13:34-35). The most effective form of evangelism is love. As we love one another (and our enemies) as God has loved us, people will see that God is real.
2. The greatest miracle is not the act of creation or signs and wonders, but the ability for believers to consistently love their enemies. It is the greatest statement that God is real because it takes something “bigger” or transcendent in us to be able to consistently sustain love for our enemies. God’s unique and transcendent love is displayed when we are able and choose to do so.

3. The impact of loving our enemies is eternal. The impact of healings and miracles is temporal and largely external. Unfortunately, we tend to focus on using healing and miracles to win people for Christ. The impact will be greater if we live out v.44 and unbelievers see the love of the Father.

K. CONCLUSION

1. In Rom. 12:14-21, Paul taught the same principle as Matt. 5:43-48 – “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Rom. 12:21). He was referencing Jesus in Matt. 5:44.
2. When we become bitter and offended, start to complain, lament and avoid our enemies etc., we are overcome by evil. When we say “no” and act in the opposite spirit by practically and proactively loving our “enemies” (Matt. 5:44), we overcome evil with good.
3. When we live in this realm of the Father’s divine love, we will have a happy spirit even as we face the storms of life.

The Invitation to a Fasted Lifestyle

(Matthew 6:1 – 21)

A. Introduction

1. The Sermon on the Mount is Jesus' most comprehensive teaching on how to have a vibrant spirit.
2. It is His premier teaching on how to cooperate with God's grace to walk out the Kingdom lifestyle. We do not earn God's grace but we learn to cooperate with God to receive grace to walk out the Kingdom lifestyle.
3. The Sermon-on-the-Mount lifestyle is the pathway to hearts that are free and spirits that are vibrant.
4. In Matthew 5 – 7, Jesus calls us to respond extravagantly to the Sermon on the Mount teaching. He is not calling us to try it out. Instead, Jesus is saying that the only way to sustain vibrancy in our spirits is to live it out.
5. The Sermon on the Mount is the clearest picture of what it means to be true Kingdom people. It is the "litmus test" of God that measures the following:
 - a. Spiritual Maturity – A life that manifests a certain measure of the eight fruits of the Beatitudes.
 - b. Ministry Impact – A ministry that inspires people to walk out the Sermon-on-the-Mount lifestyle.
6. The foundational call of the Sermon on the Mount is to cultivate the eight fruits of the Beatitudes. The eight fruits of the Beatitudes reveal the core reality of true Kingdom people. True Kingdom people would manifest a certain measure of the eight fruits.
7. In **Matt. 5:21-48**, Jesus strategically outlines six "toxins":
 - a. He calls us to resist these six hindrances that will deter us from growing the eight Beatitudes – anger, lust, disloyalty to marriage and relationships, dishonoring our words / commitment, a spirit of retaliation and passive love and mercy.
 - b. These are the six negatives and toxins that war against our souls. They are the areas of defilement most common to man that causes our inner-man to become dull.
 - c. Jesus warns us to SHUT the doors of our hearts to these six toxins. We are to close the "windows of our souls" to them.
 - d. Jesus commands us to wage war in these six areas of defilement. We are not to be passive about them or let them fester within our hearts. He exhorts us to be intentional, proactive and aggressive in dealing with these areas that war against our souls (1Pet. 2:11).

8. In **Matt. 6:1-18**, Jesus describes five “positives” / Kingdom activities that will position our hearts to receive more grace to grow the Beatitudes:
 - a. Jesus calls us to pursue these five “positives”. He exhorts us to open the “window” of our souls to these five “positives” because it is not enough to only resist the six “negatives.” We have to pursue the five “positives” as well.
 - b. Pursuing these five “positives” or Kingdom activities is God’s “channel” to release grace to us:
 1. Do charitable deeds through serving (v.1-4)
 - ii. Do charitable deeds through giving (v.1-4)
 - iii. Pray (v.5-13)
 - iv. Forgive and bless (v.14-15)
 - v. Fast (v.16-18)
 - c. When we set our hearts to pursue these five Kingdom activities, God will give us grace to live out the Kingdom lifestyle. However, doing these activities does not earn us His grace.
 - d. There are more than five Kingdom activities, such as fellowship (Heb. 10:24-25). However, Jesus highlighted these five activities as they are central to the Kingdom lifestyle.
 - e. The uniqueness of these five Kingdom activities is that they are simple, straightforward and accessible to everyone. Anyone is able to do them. This means that there are no educational requirements or theological qualifications, or the need of great wealth or great giftedness, before one can “do” these five Kingdom activities.
 - f. What is remarkable about these five Kingdom activities is that even in their smallness, they matter to God (Heb. 6:10; Mark 12:42-43).
9. The ultimate purpose of these five Kingdom activities is to draw us to interact with God. When we do these five Kingdom activities, we will engage the heart of God. This is the key that changes us and gives us a vibrant spirit.
10. In the process of “doing” these five Kingdom activities, God tenderizes our heart and releases more grace to us. Our heart changes and grows in the process.
11. Living out these five Kingdom activities is the ultimate statement of humility (Jas. 4:6). It is also called the five spiritual disciplines of Christian living.
12. As we set our hearts to “do” them, our hearts are placed before the bonfire of God’s heart. There will be an increase in our capacities to receive and experience more of God.

B. The Big Picture of Matt. 6:1-18

1. In Matt. 6:1-18, Jesus makes four main points and gives five invitations. He is giving us four primary exhortations and inviting us into five fasted lifestyle activities.

2. The four primary exhortations consist of one primary warning, one primary truth, one primary promise and one primary call. All these exhortations address the “doing” of the five Kingdom activities.
3. All five Kingdom activities make up the fasted lifestyle, which entails more than just fasting from food.

C. Primary Warning – Do not draw attention to self

1. Jesus warns us against the hypocrisy of drawing attention to ourselves in our devotion to God. He warns us eight times (v. 1-3, 5-7; 16-17) not to draw attention to ourselves when we “do” these five Kingdom activities. There is nowhere else in the Bible where Jesus emphasized something continuously eight times to highlight its importance.
2. We all have a natural tendency to blow our own “trumpets” and draw attention to ourselves, be it to our devotion, passion, diligence, dedication, generosity etc. We often do so very subtly and do not even realize it.
3. Jesus warns us to not draw attention to ourselves. He exhorts us to do the five Kingdom activities before God’s eyes, as we will lose our reward if we do not do it before the audience of One (v.1, 2, 5, 16).

D. Primary Truth – God sees and He responds

1. The major truth and primary message of Matt. 6 is that God sees and He responds. God sees with great interest and is not passive when we “do” the five Kingdom activities. He is attentive and will respond with extravagance.
2. It is vital for us to have a grasp of this truth and reality that God is watching (in a positive sense), and that He responds. When we lose sight of this truth, we will do less of the five Kingdom activities
3. All the five Kingdom activities are difficult if we are just “doing” them. We must not be caught up with the “doing” but engage our hearts with God. When we know and are reminded that He sees, our resolve will be strengthened and we will be able to stay steady.
4. There are two questions that we should constantly ask ourselves to check our hearts as we “do” the five Kingdom activities:
 - a. Whose eyes are we living before?
 - b. Whose applause do we seek?
5. It is good and normal to affirm and appreciate one another. In fact we should do that. However, when we begin to demand and crave for affirmation and appreciation, our hearts will be offended, disappointed or disillusioned when we do not get them.
6. In Matt. 6, Jesus calls us to make the “shift” to living before the Audience of One. We receive power and transformation occurs in our hearts when we make a “shift” to live before God’s eyes.

7. Paul contrasted two ways of living in Eph. 6:6-8 – before God or before man. When we serve to gain recognition and the applause of man (“eye service” – v.6), we will serve with more diligence and humility when someone is watching. As a result, we often get offended when we are ignored or criticized after we have served.

E. Primary Promise – God will openly reward us

1. As we “do” the five Kingdom activities unto the Lord, before the Audience of One, God promises to reward us in three ways:
 - a. Internal – Our hearts become tenderized. We will feel more of His presence and experience transformation in our hearts.
 - b. External – There will be a change in circumstances around us. There will be an increase in the effectiveness of our ministry and release of finances, favor etc.
 - c. Eternal – We will receive eternal rewards in the Age-to-come.
2. There are about 40 kinds of rewards listed in the Bible – e.g. crown, throne, white robe, resurrected body etc.
3. It is not wrong to want or desire a reward. In fact, Jesus wants us to have confidence in going after God’s reward, especially the eternal rewards.
4. Seeking eternal rewards does not make our motives impure. Jesus taught about seeking eternal rewards more than anyone in the Bible.
5. Here are 44 verses where Jesus taught about seeking eternal rewards - Matt.5:5; 12, 19; 6:4-6, 18-20; 10:41-42; 16:27; 18:4; 19:21, 28-30; 20:16, 27; 22:14; 23:11; 25:21-23; Mark 9:41; 10:21, 42-43; Luke 6:23, 35; 9:48; 12:21, 33; 14:11; 16:11; 18:14, 22; 19:17-19; 22:26-30; Jn. 12:26; Rev. 2:7; 10-11, 17, 26-28; 3:4-5, 9, 11-12, 18, 21; 11:18; 16:5; 19:7-8; 22:12.
6. Not desiring eternal rewards does not make us any nobler. In fact it is simply unbiblical and wrong to teach believers not to seek eternal rewards (Matt. 16:27; Rev. 22:17).
7. There are four reasons for rewards:
 - a. They are expressions of how Jesus feels towards our obedience (Matt. 25:21).
 - b. They are expressions of His remembrance and celebration of our deeds (Heb. 6:10).
 - c. They are expressions of Jesus’ loving nature and the enhancing of our partnership with Him on this earth.
 - d. Jesus takes it personally when we do the five Kingdom activities for Him. When He is moved by our deeds, He rewards us as an expression of His heart towards us.

F. Primary Call – to embrace voluntary weakness

1. The key to experiencing more of God's power is to embrace voluntary weakness. This principle is also called "the Kingdom paradox" – weakness releases God's power. This is the paradox of Paul's life where he experienced more of God's grace and strength in his weakness (2Cor. 12:9).
2. Walking in weakness does not refer to moral weakness but to embracing voluntary weakness.
3. The fullness of God's grace and the power to live godly lives (Titus 2:11-12) is released when we embrace voluntary weakness.

G. The Five Fasted Lifestyle Activities - Matt. 6:1-18

1. Matt. 6:1-18 describes the five fasted-lifestyle activities. The living out of the five Kingdom activities regularly and consistently constitutes a fasted lifestyle.
2. It is wrong to teach that these five fasted-lifestyle activities are optional or just for radical Christians. In Matt. 6:16, Jesus says, "Moreover, WHEN you fast..." and not "IF you fast", showing us that the five Kingdom activities are not optional.
3. There are five things we fast from and five expressions of fasting:
 - a. Five things we fast from – We fast from food, time, energy, money and words.
 - b. Five expressions of fasting:
 - i. **Giving of money** (Matt. 6:1-4)
 - This includes the giving of money to the poor, for works of justice, for the preaching of the gospel, for the advancing of God's kingdom etc.
 - It is the investment of our money to serve the will of God and people.
 - The giving of money is a fasted-lifestyle activity because as we give, we become financially weaker.
 - ii. **Serving** (Matt. 6:1-4)
 - This includes serving the poor, preaching the gospel, doing works of justice etc.
 - It is the investment of our time and energy to serve the will of God and people.
 - Serving is a fasted-lifestyle activity because as we serve, we are fasting from using our time and energy for personal gain or advancement, but instead we use them for the purposes of God.

iii. **Prayer** (Matt. 6: 5-13)

- This includes praying for ourselves, our Church, ministries, nations, the poor etc.
- It is the investment of our time and emotions to serve the will of God and people.
- When we pray, we are fasting from using our time and emotions to seek entertainment for ourselves.
- The reward of prayer is greater intimacy with God and increased effectiveness in ministry.

iv. **Forgive and bless** (Matt. 6:14-15)

- Jesus calls us to forgive and bless our adversaries. Forgiving and blessing are connected. Jesus exhorts us to not only refuse retaliation (passive love), but also bless our “enemies” (active love) (Matt. 5:21-42).
- We fast our words and reputation when we choose not to answer back or be defensive. In the process, we often suffer a reputational loss. Jesus exhorts us to let Him work things out.
- When we choose to forgive and bless, our reward is freedom from bitterness in our hearts. Our hearts also grow when we forgive and bless our adversaries.

v. **Fasting from food** (Matt. 6: 16-18)

- Jesus says “Moreover, when we fast...” This means that fasting is not an option.
- Fasting does not earn us God’s grace or favor. It does not motivate God to love us more. Instead, fasting increases our spiritual capacity to receive and feel more of God – His presence, power and Word. By fasting from physical food, our physical hunger becomes a spiritual hunger for more of God, and our capacity to receive from Him increases.

The Lord's Prayer

(Matthew 6:9 – 13)

A. Introduction

1. In Matt. 6:1-18, Jesus gives us an invitation to live a fasted lifestyle by doing these five Kingdom activities:
 - a. Give financially (v.1-4)
 - b. Serve (v. 1-4)
 - c. Pray (v.5-13)
 - d. Forgive and bless our adversaries (v.14-15)
 - e. Fast (v.16-18)
2. These are not optional but vital pathways to grow the eight fruits of the Beatitudes.
V.2 - "when" you do a charitable deed..." not "if" you do a charitable deed.
V.6 - "when" you pray..." not "if" you pray.
V.17 - "when" you fast..." not "if" you fast.
3. Doing and living out these five kingdom activities will enhance the growth of the Beatitudes in our lives (Matt. 4:3-10). It is the foundational call of the Sermon on the Mount.
4. In Matt. 5:21-48, Jesus calls us to resist six negatives that will "poison" our hearts. He exhorts us to close the "windows" of our souls to these six toxins.
5. In Matt. 6:1-18, Jesus calls us to pursue the five "positives" that will cause us to receive more grace from God. He exhorts us to open the "window" of our soul to these five Kingdom activities.

B. Four Major Exhortations in Matt. 6:1-18

1. In Matt. 6:1-18, Jesus gives us four major exhortations that consist of a primary warning, a primary truth, a primary promise and a primary call:
 - a. Primary Warning – Do not draw attention to our devotion and ourselves when we do these Kingdom activities.
 - b. Primary Truth – God sees and responds! The reality of this truth will spur us to do more and to stay steady.
 - c. Primary Promise – God will reward us internally, externally and eternally.
 - d. Primary Call – Jesus gives us a call to embrace the fasted lifestyle by doing the five Kingdom activities. Embracing this lifestyle in voluntary weakness is key to receiving God's grace and power.

C. Overview of the Lord's Prayer

1. Matt. 6:9-13 is the most important passage in Scripture about prayer because prayer is the primary way through which God releases His grace, power, blessing, favor, finances and opens doors etc.
2. It is one of the MOST REMARKABLE passages of Scripture about prayer because of the One who is teaching it. Jesus is the Divine Chief Intercessor who intercedes day and night before the Father; Jesus is the Man who had the greatest prayer life on earth; Jesus is the greatest Teacher that ever lived. Jesus' prayer life was so rich that it spurred the disciples to want to learn how to pray (Luke 11:1).
3. The Lord's Prayer is the most dynamic teaching on how to pray and how prayer works. It is wisdom to learn about and to embark on a life-long journey to understand this prayer.
4. Many have a merely superficial understanding and view of the Lord's Prayer due to its familiarity. We are taught to recite it as a poem or to sing it as a song, and we are content with reducing this prayer to just that.
5. However, this prayer contains deep treasures that few have searched out. It is filled with glorious truth about prayer, and comes with many implications and applications of prayer. Neglecting the Lord's Prayer is our loss.
6. In four verses in Matt. 6:9-13, Jesus gives us a MODEL of prayer that is based on the whole counsel of God. The glory of this prayer is that it is based on:
 - a. The truth of who God is
 - b. The nature of the Kingdom of God – how the Kingdom operates and functions
7. This prayer covers all the FOUNDATIONAL TRUTHS about God and His Kingdom that are expanded upon throughout the Bible. All the other apostolic prayers in the New Testament are built on and from the Lord's Prayer.
8. "In this manner, therefore, pray..." (Matt. 6:9)
Through this prayer, Jesus makes the CENTRAL THEME of God's Kingdom clear. The principles and priorities of God's Kingdom are clearly laid out in this prayer. Jesus teaches us to model our prayer life based on these principles.

D. Six Principles in the Lord's Prayer - Matt. 6:9-13

1. Jesus lays out six requests in Matt. 6:9-13 that illustrate six principles:
 - a. The first three focus on God's glory – who He is, His Kingdom and His will.
 - b. The last three focus on man's "needs" – spiritual, relational and physical.
2. Each focus is vast and deep, and has many layers of implications and truths.
3. The glory of this prayer is seeing all six principles together and in relation to God as our Father in heaven.

4. All six principles have to be CONSISTENT and REGULAR in our prayer life. We must NOT neglect them.
5. The six requests and principles found in the Lord's Prayer:

	Request	Principle
1	Verse 9: "Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name."	Praying for God's name to be known
2	Verse 10: "Your kingdom come..."	Praying for God's Kingdom to increase here on earth
3	Verse 10: "Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven..."	Praying for God's will to be done in our lives
4	Verse 11: "Give us this day our daily bread..."	Praying for our daily provision
5	Verse 12: "And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors."	Praying for forgiveness
6	Verse 13: "And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one."	Praying for deliverance from the evil one (pre-temptation prayer)

E. Having a correct view of God

1. In this verse, Jesus starts off His teaching on prayer with a strong focus on who God is, more specifically "our Father in heaven".
2. These four words (our Father in heaven) may be short, yet they carry with it much meaning and huge implications. However, we often brush them off or deal with them superficially.
3. "Our Father in heaven" displays two dynamic truths about God in one short phrase. These two truths - "our Father" and "God in heaven" - are brought together in ONE unified Person.
4. This is where we start in order to have a vibrant prayer life. The foundation of our prayer life is a biblical and correct view of God. A strong prayer life begins with understanding the being of God – who God is and His nature.
5. A wrong view of God will affect our prayer life in these ways:
 - a. We think that prayer is boring because we view God as distant. As a result, we endure prayer instead of enjoy prayer. In Luke 18:2-6, Jesus was trying to adjust our view of God so that we can enjoy prayer. Through this parable, Jesus contrasted an unjust judge with our Bridegroom God. He emphasized that we are NOT widows but His Bride. Thus, God loves to hear our prayers.

- b. We misinterpret God's reasons for delaying answers to our prayers. In Matt. 15: 21-28, a Syro-Phoenician woman prayed for Jesus to heal her daughter. When Jesus did not answer her prayer immediately, He was NOT being nasty or harsh but He was leading her to press in deeper.
 - c. Our prayer life will diminish when we have a low view of God. We will pray less because we do not think that our God is "big enough".
6. Therefore, it is VITAL to cultivate our understanding of God according to the Word. We must not be in a hurry to move on from these four words but dwell on this glorious truth of "Our Father in heaven..." "This is the "Mount Everest" of the Knowledge of God. It will take eternity for us to discover who this Father in heaven is.

F. "Our Father in heaven" – Matt. 6:9

1. God is our Father who is tenderhearted towards us. He has great affection for us and wants to be personally involved with us. As a Father:
 - a. He longs for DEEP RELATIONSHIP and PARTNERSHIP with immature people like us. An earthly father can have a deep relationship with his immature 4-year old son, but he may not necessarily desire partnership. God, however, wants both!
 - b. He cares deeply for us. He provides, directs and protects us (Psa. 23) and has great plans for us (Jer. 29:11; Eph.1:3-16). God plans each individual's destiny in great glory and with great detail.
2. Being a Father is NOT just a role or title but the core of His being. "Father" is who He is and NOT just what He does. God thinks, plans, relates and feels like a Father. He is much better than our earthly fathers (Luke 11:11-13).
3. More than just being a Father, He is our Father in heaven. Our Father in heaven is the Transcendent Almighty God who dwells in heaven, who is full of majesty, indescribable in glory and great in power. He is holy.

G. The Glorious Truth of God as our Father in Heaven

1. We need to combine these two dynamic truths – God as our Father and as the Transcendent God in heaven – in our understanding of God. It is easy for us to over-emphasize one aspect and neglect the other. As a result, we do not have a full understanding of who God really is.
2. Both truths about God cannot be separated:
 - a. When we see God only as a tenderhearted Father and see only His kindness, we fail to tremble before His glory. We will relate to Him as a fun and familiar "buddy" with no fear and awe. We may even be flippant with God.
 - b. When we see God only in His heavenly glory, we "de-personalize" God and present Him as majestic but distant, cold, and perhaps even harsh.

3. In Matt. 6:9, Jesus teaches that intimacy with God must be in the context of knowing God in both dimensions – the tenderhearted Father and the glorious God in heaven – so that we can draw near to God with confidence and at the same time stand in awe and tremble in the fear of God.
4. The Jewish view of God is one that sees God as infinitely superior, beyond description and impersonal. God is a divine, distant Being who is to be feared.
5. Thus, Jesus came and emphasized the Fatherhood and Father heart of God. God as our Father is not a new truth in the Old Testament. There are about 15 passages of Scripture in the Old Testament that describe God as our Father.
6. In Matt. 6:9, Jesus elaborated and emphasized the truth of God as our Father. He combined two truths:
 - a. God with the heart of a Father and God with heavenly power.
 - b. God who is personal yet all-powerful.
 - c. The transcendent and superior One who has great tenderness.
 - d. The Most High God who bows low to connect deeply with the broken and weak people.
7. If we grasp this reality of who God is, we will have great confidence to draw near to Him. We will be awestruck and humbled and respond in wholehearted obedience and fear towards God (Deut. 10:12-13). It will also affect the way we pray.

H. A Picture of our Father in Heaven in Rev. 4

1. Rev. 4:1-7 is one of the greatest passages that reveals our Father in heaven:
 - a. John caught a glimpse of the Father in heaven:
 - i. In Rev. 4:3, he saw the Person of God the Father, what He looks like (jasper), how He feels towards us (sardius) and how He deals with us (emerald rainbow).
 - ii. In Rev. 4:4, he saw the people of God. This reveals the desire of God the Father for deep partnership. It is a picture of God sharing the government of heaven with the Redeemed.
 - iii. In Rev. 4:5, he saw the power of God in heaven manifested in lightning, thunderings and voices.
 - b. Rev. 4 is a good passage to focus on when we pray.
2. The word “our” emphasizes God’s call to corporate prayer. There is a need to gather to pray so that together we can pray, “our Father, in heaven”.

I. The First Petition: "...Hallowed be Your name." (Matt. 6:9)

1. The first petition prays for God's name to be hallowed.
2. God's name refers to His Person, character and authority (Ex. 33:18; 1Cor. 2:9-10; Jer. 9:24).
3. God's name is HALLOWED when He is SEEN or UNDERSTOOD and RESPONDED to in a way that He is worthy of. For example:
 - a. When God is seen as holy and majestic, we will respond in awe and reverent fear.
 - b. When God is understood as a Father, we will respond in intimacy as a child of God and draw near to Him in confidence.
4. Eph. 1:17-19 is a PRAYER that is closely connected to this aspect. It is the premier prayer in the Bible, and a foundational prayer of the Lord's Prayer, yet an often neglected one.
5. We should NEVER graduate from this prayer as it sets our heart to pursue the revelation of God in us, to us and through us.
6. This will determine how we pray the rest of the Lord's Prayer and how we pursue and do the works of the Kingdom. It is a prayer that speaks of our desire for the Father to receive the highest place in our lives, hearts, worship and ministry.
7. When we pray this prayer, we ask God to open the eyes of our heart so that we may see and respond appropriately to His greatness. We can also use this verse to pray for God to awaken passion for Jesus as our Bridegroom.

J. The Second Petition: "Your kingdom come!" (Matt. 6:10)

1. The second petition prays for the INCREASE of God's kingdom on earth. This is a prayer for the works of the Kingdom.
2. This prayer is a call for God's people to be a CHANGE-AGENT – to be the salt of the earth and light of the world (Matt.5:16). It consists of two aspects: doing the Great Commission and laboring in intercession.
3. Two things to note about the Kingdom:
 - a. There is a DIFFERENCE between the Kingdom and the Church
 - i. The Kingdom of God is manifested when God's power is revealed and the God's will is established.
 - ii. The Church is a family / community of God's people. It is the vehicle / vessel that God uses to advance His Kingdom.
 - iii. The Kingdom is NOT the Church. It is bigger than the Church. The Church is a part of God's Kingdom.
 - b. Two extreme and unbiblical views of the establishment of the Kingdom:

- i. The increase of God's Kingdom comes only after Jesus returns – this view is untrue. It is a pessimistic and passive view that suggests one does not need to do anything until Jesus returns. However, Jesus calls us to do the Great Commission and advance His Kingdom (Matt. 28:19-20).
 - ii. The world will be fully Christianized and the nations fully transformed (100%) before Jesus returns. This is an optimistic and “gung-ho” view. This view is untrue as we will not complete the Great Commission (the discipling of nations) in this Age, BUT we will fully preach the Gospel of the Kingdom of God to all the nations (Matt. 24:14).
4. The Biblical view of the Kingdom – “The Kingdom of God is here but not yet”.
- a. This is a biblical theological statement about the Kingdom of God. It means that the Kingdom is manifested partly in this Age but fullness will happen only when Jesus returns and when He fully establishes His authority and reign in every sphere.
 - b. Scripture references regarding the Kingdom of God – Matt. 3:1-2; 4:17, 23; 6:10, 33; 10:7; 12:28; 13:11; 16:18-19; 19:12; Mark 4:11, 26; 9:1; Luke 16:16; 17:20-21; 18:16, 29-30; Acts 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 30-31; Rom. 14:17; 1Cor. 4:20

K. The Third Petition: “Your will be done...” (Matt. 6:10)

1. This is about praying for God's WILL to be done in our lives in the areas of personal purity and holiness, personal obedience, wholehearted love and faithfulness to His assignment and call for us.
2. However, we must NOT be more captivated by God's task for us than by walking in purity and obedience in our lives. This is because there is no substitute for personal obedience and purity. We cannot transform others without firstly being personally transformed.
3. This is why the apostolic prayers in the bible are PRIMARILY FOCUSED on praying for the Church and not the lost. When the Church is being transformed, the lost will naturally be attracted to God and want to know Him.

L. The Nature of the Petitions

1. The first three petitions are related to the GLORY of God. The last three petitions are related to PERSONAL needs.
2. It is not wrong or unbiblical to ask or pray for personal needs as the Bible teaches us to do so (e.g. Phil. 4:6-7). We can pray for our personal needs so long as it is NOT the main focus and we are NOT being self-centered in our prayers.
3. The key is to understand why God wants us to pray for our personal needs when He already knows what we need (Matt.6:8).
4. There are TWO PRIMARY REASONS:
 - a. God wants to interact and dialogue with us

- i. They key is about having a RELATIONSHIP with Him. It is NOT about giving God the latest information.
 - ii. We tend to focus on the end-result whereas God focuses on the RELATIONSHIP, PROCESS and INTERACTION.
 - iii. While the end-result is important, God's priority is RELATIONSHIP.
- b. It is an EXPRESSION of our DEPENDENCE on God.

M. The Fourth Petition: "Give us this day our DAILY BREAD." (Matt. 6:11)

1. This is a prayer for DAILY provision, protection and direction.
2. This is a mystery - God knows all our needs BUT He withholds them UNTIL we ask (Isa. 30:18-19; Luke. 11:9-10).
3. The key word is "DAILY". We would often prefer God to give us our "monthly" or "yearly" bread. However, God desires a daily dependence on Him so that it produces dialogue, delight and gratitude towards Him. We see this principle through His daily provision of manna for the Israelites in the wilderness (Exo. 16).

N. The Fifth Petition: "And forgive our debts as we forgive our debtors." (Matt. 6:12)

1. This is a prayer for FORGIVENESS of our sin.
2. We should NOT BE MISTAKEN that there is no need for believers to repent and ask for forgiveness when we sin. The Bible teaches us that there is a requirement to ask for forgiveness and repent when we sin (1 John 1:9; Jas. 4:7-10; 2Cor. 7:8-10).
3. The verse in 1 John 1:19 does NOT refer to unbelievers. It is NOT the sinner's prayer or a prayer for salvation. This verse teaches believers to acknowledge our responsibility when we sin.
4. Sin does not affect our LEGAL STANDING with God as we are legally righteous before Him because of the cross and grace. However, sin "fractures" and strains our RELATIONSHIP with God as it quenches and grieves the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30).
5. We have to differentiate between JUDICIAL FORGIVENESS and RELATIONAL FORGIVENESS:
 - a. Judicial Forgiveness – what we received from God when we repented and accepted Jesus into our lives because of the cross and grace.
 - b. Relational Forgiveness – what we receive from God when we repent from the sins we commit as we work out our salvation. We need to ask for forgiveness and repent when we sin as it affects our fellowship with God. It's NOT about our overall standing with God.

6. "...as we forgive our debtors" - Forgiving our debtors is evidence of our true experience of forgiveness. If we are not able to forgive others, we may not have fully experienced the forgiveness of God (Matt. 18:21-35).

O. The Sixth Petition: "...and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil..." (Matt. 6:13)

1. This petition can be referred to as the Pre-Temptation Prayer. It asks God to keep us from being tempted before the temptations happen and to help us avoid / escape temptations.
2. This prayer is VERY IMPORTANT and yet it is the most neglected. It is especially important for the End-Time generation where temptations and pressures are going to intensify.
3. We need to understand Satan's schemes:
 - a. The Bible tells us that Satan is always looking for an "OPPORTUNE TIME" to cause us to fall. This refers to a TRAP that Satan has set for us (Luke 4:13).
 - b. This "trap" refers not to common temptations but to a "storm of temptations" where three components converge: the heightening of demonic activity, the arousal of lust and the falling into place of circumstances that are optimal for sin.
 - c. In 1 Peter 5:8, Peter warns us about this as he had gone through the "storm of temptations" himself and understood its intensity. His faith did not fail because Jesus prayed for him (Luke 22:31-32) and later came to restore him.
4. Satan wants our faith to fail in these three areas so that we will give up and quit:
 - a. Our faith (2Tim. 4:7)
 - b. Our assignment (like Peter, who nearly quit)
 - c. Our passionate pursuit of God
5. Thus, In Matt. 26:41, Jesus exhorted Peter to pray the Pre-Temptation Prayer, even as He prayed for Peter. In Psa. 19:12-13, David also prayed this prayer.
6. The Pre-Temptation prayer is especially vital for the End-Time generation, as the Day of the Lord will come as a snare to those who are caught up with carousing, drunkenness and the cares of life (Luke 21:34-36).
7. Paul warned us to take heed and to not cling to a false sense of confidence, thinking that we will stand and be ready (1Cor.10:12-13).

P. Concluding verse in the Lord's Prayer: "...For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen." (Matt. 6:13)

1. The Lord's Prayer ends with an AGREEMENT with the worthiness of Jesus to rule and reign (Rev. 5:9-12).

IHOP – One Thing Ministries

The Call to Forgive and Bless our Adversaries

(Matthew 6:14 - 15)

A. Introduction

1. In Matt. 6:14-15, Jesus calls us to FORGIVE and BLESS our adversaries. These two verses are related to Matt. 5:21-26 (resist anger and seek reconciliation) and Matt. 5:43-47 (love and bless our enemies).
2. Matt. 6:12-14 directly ADDRESSES HOW to cultivate and work out relational issues within families (between parents and children and between siblings), marriages (between husband and wife), the Christian community and between friends.
3. It is vital for us to learn to work out relational issues within a community because there will be conflicts. The KEY is to resolve them and not “move on” by avoiding them. This is what the book of Proverbs is about. The 31 chapters teach us HOW to relate with one another.
4. More importantly, our relationships with others AFFECT our personal walk with God. It is thus important to learn how to deal with and resolve relational issues through the way of the Kingdom.

B. Forgive those who “mistreat” us - Matt. 6:14-15

“For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

1. In Matt.6:14-15, Jesus exhorts us to FORGIVE those who “mistreat” us. In it, Jesus gives us the foundational KEYS of how to cultivate relationships and work out relational conflicts.
2. The core reality is that it is normal to face conflict in any relationship. The problem lies in our inability to resolve conflicts via the way of the Kingdom. Most of us have RESIDUES of bitterness in our hearts (of hurt, anger etc) and this will affect our walk with God.
3. Unfortunately for most, the common approach to dealing with conflict is to avoid, retreat and withdraw by not talking about it and simply “moving on” to another church or community. The RESULT of this approach is that we are still affected by negative emotions, pain, unforgiveness, bitterness, anger, sarcasm, an inability to trust etc.

4. Through the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus highlights this WRONG approach to handling conflict because it is NOT the WAY of the Kingdom and NOT the WAY to having vibrant hearts.
5. Instead, Jesus IDENTIFIES FOUR SPECIFIC PRINCIPLES to apply when dealing with people (Matt 5-7). These four principles are the WAY of the Kingdom and KEYS to freedom in our hearts. Applying them will unlock our hearts and help us to live as a community.
6. Jesus identifies these people as our adversaries or “enemies” who cause us pain and trouble. They are not strangers but people whom we know and who may be close and personal to us.
7. It is VITAL for us to learn how to resolve conflict instead of always “moving on” when confronted with a conflict. We will never heal or grow if we avoid dealing with conflicts.
8. The mark of maturity is being able to live in a community. Someone who keeps “moving on” when faced with a conflict NEVER resolves heart issues or finds a community.

C. Applying Kingdom Principles During Relational Conflicts

1. Jesus gives us FOUR PRINCIPLES that we need to apply when we work out relational conflicts with our adversaries:
 - a. Deal with the anger that arises due to the conflict (Matt. 5:21-26):
 - i. The KEY is to quickly seek reconciliation with our adversaries (v. 23-25).
 - ii. Our worship of and relationship with God can be hindered UNTIL we deal with our anger. Our hearts will be locked by anger and unforgiveness if we do not deal with them urgently and immediately.
 - b. Bless and pray for our adversaries (Matt. 5:44-45):
 - i. Most people simply avoid their adversaries. They stay out of further conflict and become passive in the relationship. However, Jesus commands us to PRAY FOR, BLESS and DO GOOD to them. We are to go beyond merely NOT saying negative things about them.
 - ii. Doing these three things will expose the RESIDUES of bitterness in our hearts. God wants us to deal with these residues of bitterness and forgive and bless our adversaries (v. 14:15).
 - iii. This is the ONLY WAY of the Kingdom and the pathway to FREEDOM.
 - c. FULLY FORGIVE those who mistreat us or wrong us (Matt. 6:14- 15).
 - d. Do NOT judge our adversaries (Matt. 7:1-5):
 - i. Instead of judging our adversaries with a wrong spirit, based on wrong information and through wrong processes, we should not be quick to form opinions of others and should learn to give others a benefit of a doubt. These are the ways in which we can judge wrongly:

- With a wrong spirit – We should not talk about our adversaries when we are angry with them, as we are likely to talk about them with a wrong spirit.
 - Based on wrong information – We should seek to understand the whole picture as we may not see the whole truth and all the facts clearly. Where appropriate and possible, clarify the facts in the presence of two or three witnesses.
 - Via wrong processes – We should never talk or gossip with others and excuse ourselves by justifying that we are simply sharing or discussing. Rather, we should talk to our adversaries directly to resolve the issue.
- ii. Jesus taught Matt. 7:1-5 in the context of interpersonal relationships and NOT in the context of discerning the truth, making leadership decisions, confronting sin or correcting someone who is wrong. These verses are also NOT a random or general teaching about prayer.
2. Our natural way of dealing with conflicts in relationships is by avoiding, reacting, retaliating and showing sarcasm or anger. We often wrongly think that by being strong and by retaliating, the other party who caused us offense will change. However, this is NOT the way of the Kingdom.
 3. We should firstly FOCUS on our shortcomings by asking how we ourselves have contributed to the conflict, instead of being quick to point our fingers at the other party.
 4. Therefore, ask God to help us to live out these four principles (Matt. 7:7). We are to deal with our anger, pursue reconciliation, look to our personal faults, fully forgive our adversaries and actively bless them. This is the WAY of the Kingdom.
 5. Matt. 5:45 promises that if we walk in the ways of the Kingdom, our hearts will enter into a greater realm of freedom. We will experience a greater measure of God.

D. Insights and Principles pertaining to interpersonal relationships

1. It is normal for conflict to happen within any community. The KEY is in knowing how to restore injured relationships and in how to move forward. Relationships can be restored if we apply Kingdom principles or practical handles.
2. We want to resolve our relational conflicts because at the end of the day:
 - a. The Kingdom of God is about LOVE (Matt. 22:37-38; 1Tim.1:5). Loving people is an expression of loving God (1John 4:8; 20; 21). Although loving people can sometimes be painful (1Cor. 13:4), one who loves will still choose to love.
 - b. It is about GROWING as a community. There exists no perfect community and we become BETTER PEOPLE through learning to resolve relational conflicts by being loving, gracious, kind and forgiving towards one another.
3. We need to gain insight into and be aware of the principles pertaining to interpersonal relationships in the areas of:
 - a. How a relationship is injured and the signs of such a relationship

- b. How to restore an injured relationship
4. It is especially important for a community to know these principles and apply the following practical handles as there will be definitely be conflicts within it.

E. Indications / Signs of an Injured Relationship

1. A relationship is like a physical body that can be hurt or injured at various levels. For example, it can be slightly wounded or deeply broken.
2. When a relationship is injured, trust is eroded and openness and communication deteriorate at various levels of severity.
3. There are five indications / signs of an injured relationship:
 - a. Awkwardness – we will feel awkward with the person who has caused hurt to us.
 - b. A guarded heart – we will be unwilling to share freely with the person.
 - c. A closed spirit – we will not be open or receptive to the person.
 - d. Strained communication – we will be defensive, critical or sarcastic when we talk to the person or about the person.
 - e. Resisting close proximity – we are unwilling to come close to the person.
4. When we see these indications / signs, they are signals to us that it is TIME to do something and be proactive in restoring the injured relationship. The relationship can be restored by applying Kingdom principles.
5. In restoring injured relationships, the focus is NOT on who is more right or more wrong, or who is more hurt or more responsible. Instead, the focus is on:
 - a. Our hearts – resolving conflicts and restoring injured relationships in the way of the Kingdom will give us free and vibrant hearts.
 - b. LOVE – the one who loves most is the one who wins in God's sight.
 - c. Reconciliation with our fellow brothers and sisters – The Bible appeals to us to restore broken relationships (Gal. 6:1).
6. A relationship is wounded long before it is broken. We should not wait until a relationship is BROKEN before we try to restore it, as it would require much more time and effort. We should restore the relationship as soon as it is injured. for the sake of love, for the sake of our hearts, for the sake of our fellow brothers and sisters, and because we value and treasure relationships.
7. **Proverbs 18:19** - **“A brother OFFENDED is harder to win than a strong city...”**
 - a. The context of this verse is a familiar and close relationship and addresses the RESTORATION of trust and closeness in relationships.

- b. A relationship is wounded if either party carries offense. If we do not proactively do something to restore the injured relationship, the offended party will become a strong city that is fortified and well-guarded.
- c. The point of this verse is that we should not wait until the offense has escalated before addressing it as it will be much harder to restore the relationship then.
- d. Contrary to popular belief and sayings, TIME does not heal injured relationships. Instead, effort and the right approach do.

F. Watching our Words and Speech

1. The most common way a relationship is injured is through words and speech.
2. **Prov. 15:4 - “A wholesome tongue is a tree of life but perverseness in it breaks the spirit.”**
 - a. Scripture refers to words that injure a relationship as “perverse speech”. This does not refer to immoral speech but to speech that carries NEGATIVE TONES. This includes speech that is harsh / blunt, critical, sarcastic, lacking tenderness cutting and curt.
 - b. Our words and speech reveal our hearts and character.
3. **Prov. 18:21 “Death and Life are in the power of the tongue.”**
 - a. Words have power. Thus, we need to be gracious in our speech and choose to speak LIFE and not condemnation.
 - b. As we choose to speak WHOLESOME WORDS, they will give LIFE, INSPIRATION and ENCOURAGEMENT to others.
 - c. The natural and broken state of man has the tendency to tear others down. As a people of God, we are to RESPOND in the opposite spirit and speak words of EDIFICATION with grace, gentleness and kindness.
4. **Eph. 4:29a “Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth...”**
 - a. Words are like double-edged swords. They can edify but also destroy. This verse refers to words that are harsh, critical and negative.
 - b. We need respond to God’s word by watching our words and the tone of our words. We should not justify ourselves by saying that this is the way that we naturally talk and thus, it is acceptable.
5. **Eph. 4: 29b “...but what is good for NECESSARY edification that it may IMPART GRACE to the hearers...”**
 - a. This verse exhorts us to speak words with the INTENTION to EDIFY and BUILD UP at appropriate times and in appropriate measures. It exhorts us to speak words that will IMPART GRACE to those who hear, and inspire and empower them to LOVE God, OBEY Him and REPENT.

- b. While there are times when correction needs to take place, we have to speak these “negatives” with a positive spirit that brings hope, enlightenment and the provision of a way out, instead of in a tone that crushes the person’s spirit.
 - c. We often speak using negative tones when we are frustrated or hurt. This results in the venting of frustrations or the judging of others.
6. **Matt. 7:1-4** does not forbid us from judging, but commands that we should not judge in the wrong ways.
- a. This passage conveys that a critical spirit and the inability to speak KIND and GRACIOUS words reveal the condition of our hearts.
 - b. God desires that we see the deficiencies in our own hearts first. If we fail to do so, we will always tear down and not build one another up.
 - c. Within a community, we should be determined and committed to NOT speak perverse and corrupt words. Speaking kind and gracious words should be normal. When we fail to do so and instead speak perversely, we need to admit that it is sin and is wrong in God’s sight.
7. The verses in **Prov. 15:1-4, 28** give us powerful teachings on HOW to speak and relate with one another in the context of interpersonal conflicts:
- a. **Verse 1: “A soft answer turns away wrath...”**
When faced with a conflict, we have the natural tendency to react and be harsh in our tones and words. However, a harsh word will never solve the problem but will instead stir up negative emotions and cause tensions to escalate. On the contrary, a gentle word or response often de-escalates tension.
 - b. **Verse 2: “the tongue of the wise uses knowledge rightly, but the mouth of fools pours forth foolishness.”**
Our words can put down or edify others. We need to be aware of whether our speech provokes and stirs up anger or whether it builds others up.
 - c. **Verse 28: “the heart of the righteous STUDIES how to answer...”**
A mature person learns how to speak carefully with grace, gentleness, kindness and the intention to EDIFY.

G. Four vital points in communication during interpersonal conflicts

1. There are four vital points to take note of when we seek to voice our concerns in the process of restoring relationships:
 - a. Tone of Voice – This is one of the MOST IMPORTANT things in the restoration of a relationship. There are three “DON’Ts” to look out for:
 - i. A Negative Tone
We often speak with a negative tone when we are angry, defensive, impatient or emotional. It is expressed through in our words, body language and facial expressions. Speaking with a negative tone is DISASTROUS when resolving a conflict. Instead, both parties should learn to manage their emotions and speak with a calm and sincere tone even if what each party says is negative.

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- ii. A Sarcastic Tone
Sarcasm is a deadly poison in any relationship. It is a major toxin that can kill a relationship and a major hindrance to clear communication. Having a sarcastic spirit stops us from speaking from our hearts and also hinders others from hearing what we want to say. Most of all, it is a major quencher of the Holy Spirit (1Thes. 5:19).
 - iii. A Condescending Tone
A condescending tone or “talk down” mentality will cause greater negativity in any relationship. Both parties must restrain themselves from thinking that they know better or that they are always right and seek first to listen and understand where the other is coming from.
- b. Timing of Communication
 - i. It is important to find a right and appropriate time to talk. This is best when both parties have calmed down and are able to deal with issues objectively. Both parties also need to learn to withhold their emotions and separate them from the issue at hand.
 - ii. It is unwise to talk when either party is on the run / in a hurry or still agitated and angry.
 - c. Having a Right Spirit
 - i. Before seeking reconciliation, it is good practice for each party to check their own intentions and hearts first (Matt. 7:5).
 - ii. Both parties should never approach the process with an “I want to win mentality” or with a vindictive spirit.
 - d. Balance in communication
 - i. There needs to be a balance of positive and negative statements in the restoration process, and not simply statements of correction. We should not drive a ten-tonne truck of correction over a relational bridge that can only bear five tonnes.
 - ii. Both parties need to learn to see the GREATNESS in the other’s heart. These include seeds of virtues that are present, their SINCERITY and what they are reaching for in God even in their weakness. Both parties can ask God to help them see the other for WHO THEY ARE in Christ and for His destiny for them.
 - iii. Just as God sees the SINCERITY in our hearts and calls forth the un-budded virtues in our heart (Song 4:1-5), we need to learn to call forth the CRY / POTENTIAL of the other person’s heart.
2. It is difficult for a party to give feedback when the other is being defensive or sensitive. While the person who corrects or voices concerns needs to take note of these four vital points in communication, the one who receives the correction must not be sensitive or defensive.
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H. Other pointers to note in the restoration of a relationship

1. Ask the LORD for insight on how you have contributed to the wounded relationship (Gal. 6:1) - It often takes two hands to clap and thus it is rare for one person to be 100% wrong while the other is not wrong at all.
2. Confess the part that you played in contributing to the wounded relationship
This confession is our “love offering” or debt of love that we owe one another (Rom.13:8).
 - a. When we confess, we should take responsibility for the offense (e.g. “I repent BECAUSE I’ve sinned against you.”).
 - b. We must not be insincere and confess in a way that implies that the other person is simply being sensitive (e.g. “I am sorry IF I have offended you.”)
3. Ask for the person’s intention before making a negative statement about the error - In doing so, we are giving the other person the benefit of doubt and a chance to clarify instead of making a quick judgment on our part.
4. Tell them how you feel – Instead of starting by pointing out their mistake, we can start by telling them HOW we feel when we heard the statement,.
5. Appeal with a spirit of gentleness instead of correction (Gal. 6:1).
6. Learn to listen – Give the other party an opportunity to clarify. Seek to listen and understand, as there are always two sides to the story. Listen to the unspoken words, pains, fear, insecurity etc.
7. Learn to speak the TRUTH with restraint and at the right time – Understand that truth includes not only a person’s failure, but also their virtues. Speaking at the right time is vital. God doesn’t tell us the whole truth about our shortcomings immediately because it will overwhelm and crush us.
8. Watch out for a COMPLAINING SPIRIT – Complaining will drain any relationship and cause it to deteriorate and BREAK DOWN (Prov. 19:13; 21:9, 19).
9. Get an arbitrator / middle-man - When resolving conflicts, it can be very helpful for a third party to come in and provide an objective and unbiased view of the issue.
10. Do not major on the minor and minor on the major (Matt. 23:24) – A gnat refers to a small matter / issue, while a camel refers to a larger issue.
11. Read the Book of Proverbs. These 31 chapters contain much wisdom that teaches us HOW to relate with one another.

I. Conclusion

1. We should set our hearts to approach any relationship with godly wisdom (James 3:13:17).
2. We need to be sincere and willing to deal with issues, without any form of hypocrisy (Rom. 12:9-21):
 - a. Be willing to give in or overlook the faults of others;
 - b. Be willing to listen first instead of insisting that one party is right or wrong.
3. We need to be full of mercy and show mercy and kindness to those who have wronged us.

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The Kingdom Principle in Receiving the Father's Reward

(Matthew 6:4)

A. Introduction

1. In Matt. 6:1-18, Jesus gives us an invitation to live a fasted lifestyle by doing five specific Kingdom activities that will enhance our ability to GROW the eight fruits of the Beatitudes:
 - a. Give financially (v.1-4)
 - b. Serve (v. 1-4)
 - c. Pray (v.5-13)
 - d. Forgive and bless our adversaries (v.14-15)
 - e. Fast (v.16-18)
2. These are NOT optional but are vital pathways to sustain and grow the eight fruits of the Beatitudes.

V.2 - "when" you do a charitable deed..." not "if" you do a charitable deed.
V.6 - "when" you pray..." not "if" you pray.
V.17 - "when" you fast..." not "if" you fast.
3. Doing and living out these five kingdom activities will enhance the growth of the Beatitudes in our lives (Matt. 4:3-10). It is the foundational call of the Sermon on the Mount.
4. Jesus is inviting us to say "yes" to this call as it is KEY to growing the Beatitudes and having a vibrant spirit.
5. In Matt. 5:21-48, Jesus calls us to resist six "negatives" that will "poison" our hearts. He exhorts us to close the "windows" of our souls to these six toxins.
6. In Matt. 6:1-18, Jesus calls us to pursue the five "positives" that will cause us to receive more grace from God. He exhorts us to open the "window" of our soul through doing these five Kingdom activities.

B. Overview of Matt. 6

1. Matt. 6:1-18
 - a. Jesus makes four main points and gives five invitations in this passage. He gives us four primary exhortations and invites us into five fasted lifestyle activities. The four primary exhortations consist of the following:
 - i. Primary Truth – God sees and responds
 - ii. Primary Promise – God will openly reward us

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- iii. Primary Call – Embrace voluntary weakness
 - iv. Primary Warning – Do not draw attention to our devotion and ourselves
 - b. The key to experiencing more of God’s power is to embrace voluntary weakness. This principle is also called “the Kingdom paradox”, where man’s weakness releases God’s power. This is the paradox of Paul’s life where he experienced more of God’s grace and strength in his weakness (2Cor. 12:9).
2. Matt. 6:9-13
- a. This passage is about the LORD’S PRAYER. It is the most powerful and comprehensive teaching on PRAYER by the GREATEST Intercessor and Teacher.
 - b. Jesus’ prayer life was so rich that it spurred the disciples to want to learn how to pray (Luke 11:1).
 - c. The Lord’s Prayer is the most dynamic teaching on how to pray and how prayer works. It is wisdom to learn about and to embark on a life-long journey to understand this prayer.
3. Matt. 6:14-15
- a. This passage is about blessing and forgiving our “enemies”. In it, Jesus gives us practical principles and handles in cultivating relationships and working out relational conflicts.
 - b. More than just learning about these handles, we should apply them as we seek to resolve conflicts among ourselves. The one who loves and forgives the most is the one who benefits the most. It is about our HEARTS and about LOVE that is shown through loving others.

C. Receiving the Father’s Reward – Matt. 6:4

- 1. In this verse, Jesus is teaching about RECEIVING the Father’s Reward:
 - a. It is specifically related to the giving of money and the receiving of money from the Father.
 - b. Jesus SPECIFICALLY HIGHLIGHTED how we are to receive money as a reward from the Father.
 - c. We need to recognize that talking about money and receiving money from God is NOT UNSPIRITUAL. Money / finance is a much-emphasized subject in the Bible:
 - i. Jesus talked more about money than any other subject, except love and righteousness. He talked more about money than subjects like heaven / hell.
 - ii. Out of 38 parables that Jesus taught, 16 were related to money.
 - iii. About 288 verses in the Gospels have to do with money or material possessions. This is about 1 out of every 10 verses in the Gospels.

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- iv. Also, the rest of the Bible has much to say about money. It contains principles related to the managing, saving, investing and multiplying of money. There are about 2350 references in the whole Bible related to money.
 - d. The issue of money is one of the MOST IMPORTANT and PROMINENT THEMES in the Bible. In Matt. Matt 6 is one chapter in the entire four Gospels that talks the most about money:
 - i. Matt.6:1-4 –giving and receiving money
 - ii. Matt. 6:19-21 – how to use money
 - iii. Matt. 6:24 – loving money as one major hindrance to loving God
 - iv. Matt. 6:25-34 – overcoming the fear of the lack of money
 2. It is IMPORTANT for us to have a CORRECT BIBLICAL PARADIGM of money. Having a biblical paradigm of money goes beyond tithing. It is more than giving and receiving money.
 3. One powerful and biblical way of encountering God is when we give money. Giving money is more than a form or simply doing something outwardly. It's about ENGAGING and ENCOUNTERING God. It will exhilarate our hearts when we focus on how God responds to us when we give.
 4. There is a powerful and dynamic interaction with God when we give money – God sees and He responds (v.4). He often answers in a specific way that corresponds to the amount we gave and the time we took in the process of giving.
 5. When we focus on the PROCESS of interacting with God, we will encounter God – He is real, He sees and He responds. As a result, our confidence in Him will increase and we can trust Him in all things.
 6. It is VITAL for us to know the biblical paradigm about money and WALK it out especially in light of the times we are living in, where there will be financial shakings. God is bringing about a divine shift in money / finance.

D. The Biblical Principle of Giving Money

1. In Matt. 6:1-4, Jesus is teaching the BIBLICAL PRINCIPLE of GIVING MONEY and God BLESSING us financially in return.
2. Prosperity is NOT WRONG nor unbiblical; it is how we deal with prosperity. God desires to bless us financially. The ISSUE / KEY is that we need to understand the biblical principal of finance and prosperity – how it works and how to walk out this principle.
3. In Matt. 6, Jesus basically EMPHASIZED two main themes:
 - a. God desires to supernaturally bless, provide and multiply our financial power.
 - i. Jesus is NOT teaching a new truth. Rather, He is validating an OT promise and doctrine (Deut. 8:18; 28).

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- ii. Jesus is NOT emphasizing the desire for more but His FOCUS is on the DYNAMIC INTERACTION with God. For example, in v.4 “when you do the charitable deeds... your Father SEES in secret...”
 - b. We need to TAKE HEED of the dangers of GREED and COVETOUSNESS.
 - i. Prosperity is from God and is a blessing. Money is NEUTRAL. While God desires to increase our finance, we need to beware of its dangers. Thus, Jesus warns us to take heed.
 - ii. We need to understand the issue of our hearts, and how self-indulgence, greed and covetousness can creep in.
 - 4. Paul elaborated on the issue of money in 1Tim. 6:6-10, pointing out that money is NOT evil but that the love of money is. In it, he brought out three truths:
 - a. The FOCUS of our life should be pursuing godly character and godly contentment.
 - b. The PURPOSE of life is more than food and clothing (Matt. 6:33).
 - c. God blesses us with PROSPERITY for TWO PRIMARY REASONS: to give us a dynamic interaction with His heart and to participate with Him in advancing the Kingdom.
 - 5. The Biblical principle of finance / money can be summarized in this way:
 - a. Poverty is a curse
 - b. Money is a tool
 - c. Giving is a virtue
 - 6. Poverty is NOT a virtue. The first fruit of the Beatitude is not calling us to embrace material poverty, but to acknowledge our own spiritual lack. “Blessed are those who are poor in the spirit...” In fact, poverty is a curse. We should NOT embrace a mentality or lifestyle of poverty.
 - 7. Biblical prosperity is about believing and asking God for money for the advancement of His Kingdom through the preaching of the Gospel and the works of ministry. It is not for ourselves but for His Kingdom.
 - 8. As a believer, we are to live a simple lifestyle and give EXTRAVAGANTLY to God for the works of the Kingdom.
 - 9. Living a simple lifestyle is not defined by the size of our house or the amount of possessions we have, or whether we drive a car etc. The more important thing is that pursuing material things MUST NOT be the MAIN FOCUS of our lives. We need to know the boundaries of living within our means.
 - 10. In LIVING EXTRAVAGANTLY for God and a SIMPLE LIFESTYLE for ourselves, we do NOT accumulate wealth but live a lifestyle of GIVING and GENEROSITY in blessing others.
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11. More than what we see on the outside, living a simple lifestyle for God is about our hearts. We live simply so that we can pursue God wholeheartedly and give extravagantly to Him. It's not about gaining more material possessions but about having a BIGGER HEART.
12. The purpose of prosperity and money is to INCREASE our love for God and for the advancement of His Kingdom. Prosperity and money are NOT for acquiring more material possessions for ourselves.

E. The Kingdom Paradigm of Prosperity

1. The Kingdom paradigm of prosperity is that we will have NO LACK (Psa. 23:1). It is about having ENOUGH MONEY to meet our needs, such as food, clothing and shelter. It is about having ENOUGH MONEY to bless others and to INVEST in the works of the Kingdom.
2. Thus, the Kingdom paradigm of prosperity is that we will have no lack and be able to sow into other's lives and into the Kingdom of God.
3. **Deut. 8:18** gives us a powerful BIBLICAL PARADIGM of KINGDOM FINANCE or the COVENANT PARADIGM of FINANCE. It presents the two-fold paradigm of Kingdom Finance:
 - a. God desires to SUPERNATURALLY bless us with wealth – this is the Biblical Principle of finance. There are two ways of increasing / multiplying wealth:
 - i. Through natural means and principles such as investing and wise management of funds. This is biblical and not wrong.
 - ii. The supernatural dimension and process This goes beyond natural processes where God supernaturally releases finance to us. He desires to give us SUPERNATURAL WEALTH through supernatural ways. For example:
 - Joseph was poor but became the second most powerful man in Egypt. He controlled all the wealth of Egypt and it was God who supernaturally brought Joseph to his position in Egypt.
 - David was a poor shepherd boy who became the wealthiest in his generation. He gave billions of dollars to the building of the House of God.
 - b. The REASON for increasing wealth is to bring people into a covenantal relationship with God. "...that He may establish His covenant..." (Deut. 8:18).
 - i. Establishing His covenant refers to the preaching of the Gospel, doing the Works of the Great Commission such as feeding the poor, building the House of Prayer etc. to advance the Kingdom of God, so that many would be brought into covenantal relationship with God.
 - ii. The Covenant Paradigm. Thus, when we see prosperity, we should see souls and not what we can get for ourselves. Financial blessings are for bringing souls into the Kingdom of God. When we have this correct paradigm, desiring prosperity is NOT greed or self-indulgence.

4. God desires to bless us and prosper us financially. It is a biblical NT doctrine. “I pray that you PROSPER in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers.” 3 John 2.
 - a. It is a non-issue that God wants to bless us with prosperity. However, we need to beware of the DANGER and VULNERABILITY of our hearts. Our hearts can be moved and tempted by the abundance of wealth.
 - b. God is looking for the “Josephs”, “Davids” and “Daniels” to partner with Him as “vessels of supply”. In handling money, there are two KEYS to take note of:
 - i. We need to GROW our heart and character in proportion to our increase of wealth.
 - ii. We need to UNDERSTAND WHY God blesses us with prosperity.
5. It is VITAL for people to understand the Kingdom paradigm of prosperity because there is going to be FINANCIAL SHAKING (Hag. 2:6-9). We need to know how to operate in the supernatural dimension of the release of wealth.
6. There will be a DIVINE SHIFT of FINANCES (Hag. 2:8) and God is raising up the “Josephs”, “Esthers” and “Davids” who understand and walk out the Kingdom paradigm of prosperity.

F. Reminder and Exhortation when dealing with prosperity

1. Watch out for GREED, COVETOUSNESS and SELF-INDULGENCE. Jesus emphasized this when He talked about money, yet we talk the least about this. Instead, our emphasis is usually on HOW to get wealth and HOW to prosper.
2. We need to see the GIVING of money as more than just a TECHNICALITY or something that we “do” just because we are Christian for the funding of works.
3. There is a RELATIONAL ASPECT to it that involves EMOTIONAL DYNAMICS and establishing CONFIDENCE in God:
 - a. Relational aspect. The giving of money is an expression of our love towards God. “Loving God with all our STRENGTH” (Matt. 22:37; Mark 12:30) refers to loving God with our RESOURCES, i.e. time and money etc. We give because we love Him. In Matt.6:24, Jesus linked money to the pursuit of God.
 - b. Emotional Dynamics and establishing confidence in God:
 - i. When we give away a certain amount of money as an expression of love towards God, we “lose control” of our finances and become financially weaker. However, the reason we give is because we love God. We give because it matters to God that we give to people whom He loves.
 - ii. There is a process of struggling and asking ourselves questions when we give away money, especially when we need the money.
 - iii. When we respond to God in giving, we realize that He will see our act of love towards Him and that He will return it and respond to us, though it may not be immediate.

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- iv. This process of struggling and asking questions leads us to asking:
 - Why do I give?
 - Will I give faithfully IF there is a TIME DELAY, i.e. God doesn't respond immediately?
 - v. As a result, we will grow through this WRESTLING PROCESS as it reveals and purifies our heart and motives. It also helps us to overcome the fear of lack and covetousness. Most of us do not give extravagantly because we fear lack, we want more and we lean towards SELF-PRESERVATION.
 - c. The REALITY / TRUTH is that God will REPAY us much more extravagantly beyond what we give. He will surely BLESS us in return. He may NOT be "on time" but He is NEVER late.
 - d. **Luke 6:38** "GIVE, and it will be given to you". God will give back to us but we have to GIVE first. He will repay us when we ACTUALLY give and not when we just think about giving.
 - e. "...good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over...". Our giving to others and God giving back to us is like the filling up of a container. This means that God will give back to us and it will run over / overflow when we give as our act of loving Him and loving the people whom He loves.
 - f. "For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you." There is a cause and effect in giving to and receiving from God. We have to first give. The "ball" is in our court. We have a significant role in determining what comes back to us.
 - g. In **Mal. 3:10-11**, God promised to supernaturally provide financially. The context of this passage is about God rebuking His people for NOT tithing, which is the basic requirement. It is the ONLY TIME in the Bible when God calls us to test Him and whether He will give back extravagantly to us. The principle of receiving from God is that we must first give "NOW" and not later or after ("... try me now in this.")

G. Five Biblical Principles of Finance

1. Here are the five biblical principles of finance:
 - a. Giving money is AN EXPRESSION of our love for God (Mark 12:30).
 - b. Give out of our sacrifice to God (Luke 21:1-4). It is NOT about the amount that we give but the SIZE of our sacrifice. When we give, are we giving out of our abundance or our leftovers? Or are we giving in a way that is a sacrifice to us?
 - c. God OPENLY REWARDS those who give sacrificially for the Kingdom by blessing them financially in return (Matt. 6:4). It is NOT unbiblical for God to bless us financially as we give. It is His way to show us the Father's appreciation of what we did out of love for Him. As we give in secret, God will openly reward us in an obvious way that people can notice – both in this Age and in Eternity (v.20).

- d. We will have a FINANCIAL POWER ENCOUNTER where God's power and reality is EXPERIENCED. When we give sacrificially to God, He sees and responds enthusiastically. He will then bless us in proportion to the measure that we give and even more extravagantly (Luke 6:38).
 - e. Financial strength is not PRIMARILY used for our personal comfort. INVEST into the Kingdom as an eternal investment. Give to what matters to God's heart, for example to the poor and to Israel.
2. In summary, these principles teach us to give EXTRAVAGANTLY to God and live SIMPLY for ourselves.
 3. As we seek to embrace these biblical principles, we will experience supernatural financial encounters. It will change the WAY we process life.
 4. We will realize that life does not revolve around money – we will not worry about our needs or money nor will we make decisions based on money. Instead, we will experience the reality of God in our lives and have confidence in Him.
 5. As a result, we will have NO FEAR of lack. Even when we are in need of money, we GIVE.

H. Principles on Tithing

1. Giving a tenth of our income to God is a minimum requirement. Many ask if this amount should take into account income taxes, be based on a gross or net amount etc. We should not be calculative with God in terms of money and simply give cheerfully to God.
2. Tithing does NOT mean that God only owns a tenth of our income. All our income – a hundred per cent of it – belongs to God. Through tithing to God, we are demonstrating our gratitude towards Him.
3. When we tithe a tenth of our income, how we use the rest of the ninety per cent, which also belongs to God, is a test of our stewardship of money. God will JUDGE us on how we use the remainder of the money.
4. The Purpose of Tithing:
 - a. Tithing declares that God is the LORD over all our money and He is the source of our money.
 - b. Tithe to the place where you receive your spiritual food. The Neh. 13:5-12 principle points us to the place to tithe to. "Storehouse" speaks of the place where we are "fed" and blessed spiritually, and is usually the local church or ministry etc.
 - c. Tithing is the MINIMUM REQUIREMENT. It is the floor of our giving and NOT the ceiling of our giving.

I. Conclusion

1. Matt. 6:1-4 is more than about tithing. God will respond to us as we take steps of faith and give beyond our tithes.

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The Call to Fasting

(Matthew 6:16-18)

A. Introduction

1. Jesus CALLS and INVITES New Testament (NT) believers to Fast as a part of normal Christian lifestyle. Fasting is NOT an OPTIONAL DISCIPLINE for NT believers, and has not become obsolete in the New Covenant (Acts 13:2-3; Acts 14:23; 1Cor. 7:5).
2. In Matt. 6:16, Jesus says, “Moreover, when you fast,...”. Jesus did not say “IF” you fast but WHEN you fast, implying that fasting is a REGULAR PART of the Christian lifestyle.
3. In Jesus’ exhortation to us in Rev.2:7, He calls us to hear what the Spirit is saying and doing to prepare the Church in the last days.
 - a. There are many “things” the Spirit is emphasizing to the Church as we enter into the days ahead.
 - b. The Church is entering into a time where we will see the greatest revival as well as experience the most intense pressure as prophesied by Isaiah in Isa. 60:1-2.
 - c. One of the Words of the Spirit to the Church in this time is a call to return to fasting and to cultivate a fasted lifestyle (Joel 2:12; Matt. 6:1-4). It is one of the “requirements” in order to release the End-Time Revival. A fasted lifestyle will be one of the trademarks of the End-Time wholehearted Church.
4. Why is fasting so important? We need to understand the power of fasting:
 - a. Fasting POSITIONS our heart to receive more from the Holy Spirit
 - b. Fasting is one of the MAJOR KEYS in the Church’s cooperation with God. It acts as an agent of change as power is released which changes circumstances in history.
5. “Therefore take heed how you hear. For whoever has, to him more will be given; and whoever does not have, even what he seems to have will be taken from him.” Luke 8:18
 - a. This verse records a tremendous statement by Jesus on the issue of our response. Correspondingly, Mark 4:24-25 also talks about the principle of receiving according to the measure of our response to God.
 - b. It is one of the foundational principles of the Kingdom of God.
 - c. It teaches us that EVERYONE in the Kingdom RECEIVES from God according to the MEASURE that we respond.
 - d. We DO NOT EARN what we receive from God.

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- e. God desires to give us more, yet He can only give to the extent of our heart's response / desire. What we receive from God is correlated to our desire and response to Him.
 - f. Through this verse, Jesus teaches that the measure of what we receive from Him is dependent on the measure of our response.
 - i. If we are content with what we have, that will be our ceiling.
 - ii. If we hunger and contend for more, God will release more accordingly.
 - iii. Fasting and Prayer are measures of our response to God.
6. Fasting is not about convincing God or about "twisting God's arm". Rather, God is trying to convince us that there is more.
7. Fasting does NOT change the heart or mind of God, but fasting changes our heart!
8. In this teaching, we will address five things about Fasting:
- a. The Biblical Call and Principles of Fasting
 - b. What does the Old Testament (OT) say about Fasting?
 - c. What does the NT say about Fasting?
 - d. The Purpose of Fasting and our Focus when we fast
 - e. The Benefits of Fasting
 - f. Three Qualifiers about Fasting

B. The Biblical Call and Principles of Fasting

1. Fasting is a part of normal Christian lifestyle.
 - a. It is "Christianity 101". Fasting is not radical Christianity.
 - b. In Matt. 6:16, Jesus says, "Moreover, when you fast,...". Jesus did not say "IF" you fast but WHEN you fast, clearly implying that fasting is not an option for NT believers.
 2. Fasting is about connecting with God and NOT about impressing people.

"...so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly." Matt. 6:18

 - a. In Matt. 6:16-18, Jesus exhorts us to fast in secret. Fasting in secret means to NOT draw attention to ourselves or to our dedication.
 - b. This verse tells us that the Father will reward us when we fast.
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- c. This proclamation tells us the importance of fasting. God rewards us in three distinct ways:
 - i. Externally – We experience an increase in favor, blessing and anointing in life and ministry, a change in circumstances etc.
 - ii. Internally – Our hearts becomes open and tenderized and we are able to receive more from God in a faster and deeper way.
 - iii. Eternally – We receive rewards beyond this Age.
 - 3. Fasting POSITIONS our heart to receive from God
 - a. It increases our spiritual capacity to receive more from God. This capacity is a spiritual hunger that is cultivated through our physical hunger for food.
 - b. Fasting is a catalyst that increases the depth and measure that we receive from God. We will experience an increase in both our capacity to receive from God as well as a heart that is tenderized by God. We also receive a greater measure of revelation at a faster pace resulting in a deeper impact.
 - 4. Fasting operates on the principle of “spiritual exchange”
 - a. We restrain from our physical pleasure to enhance our spiritual pleasure.
 - b. We abstain from physical food to “feast” on spiritual food (i.e. Word, revelation, encounter)
 - c. Fasting creates a “spiritual hunger” through “physical hunger”. This is the principle of creating physical hunger to receive more spiritually (Matt. 6:6). Most of us are so full with the pleasures of the world that we often have very little or no capacity to receive more from God.
 - 5. Fasting is about the grace of God (2 Pet. 1:2; 3:18)
 - a. No one is born to fast nor is good at fasting naturally. In fact, we are born to eat. However, God gives us grace to fast.
 - b. Having the grace to fast does not mean that we will not feel hungry or weak when we fast. Having the grace to fast means that our resolve to fast, and ability to continue to fast, is greater than our desire to quit fasting.
 - 6. There are two wrong paradigms about fasting
 - a. Wrong Paradigm #1 – Fasting helps us earn God’s favor. This is not true because:
 - i. Fasting does NOT help us earn God’s favor. It is not about convincing God to bless us for God has already decided to bless us.
 - ii. Fasting is not about moving the heart of God. Rather, our heart moves when we fast. This is because when we fast, we are positioning our heart to receive from God.
 - b. Wrong Paradigm #2 – The increase in our depth and the measure that we receive from God comes right after the fast. This is not true because:
 - i. Growth in the things of God is often incremental and progressive. The increase may not come immediately after the fast.
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- ii. The increase we receive through fasting often comes years later. We are not to measure the increase by weeks or months but by years. Thus, stay faithful and consistent in fasting regularly (e.g. 2-3 days a week) and plan for longer fasts periodically. Through this fasted lifestyle, we will receive the increase and see a difference after many years.
7. Many great men of God and revivalists lived out a lifestyle of regular fasting:
- a. People like John Wesley, George Whitefield, Jonathan Edwards, John G. Lake, Charles Finney etc. lived out a fasted lifestyle. John Wesley fasted two days a week and insisted that everyone on his leadership team did the same.
 - b. In the NT, John the Baptist's disciples, Jesus and the NT disciples fasted (Acts 13:1-3; Acts 14:23; 1Cor. 7:5).

C. What does the OT and NT say about Fasting?

1. In the OT, Isaiah 58 contains the MOST CONCISE and COMPREHENSIVE STATEMENT about fasting in the Bible. It tells us why we fast and the goal of fasting.
2. There are eight things about fasting found in Isaiah 58:
 - a. "To loose the bonds of wickedness" (v.6) – This refers to fasting to push back the darkness in our lives and in society.
 - b. "To undo the heavy burdens" (v.6) – This refers to fasting to be free from spiritual burden and oppression.
 - c. "To let the oppressed go free and break every yoke" (v.6) – This refers to fasting for JUSTICE to prevail.
 - d. "To share your bread with the hungry" (v.7) – This refers to fasting for the poor and downcast.
 - e. "Your light shall break forth like the morning" (v.8) – This refers to fasting to receive the light of revelation from God.
 - f. "Your healing shall spring forth speedily" (v.8) – This refers to fasting for emotional and physical healing.
 - g. "Your righteousness shall go before you and glory of God shall be your rear guard" (v.8) – This refers to fasting to release the righteousness and glory of God.
 - h. "Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; You shall cry, and He will say, 'Here I am.'" (v.9) – This refers to fasting to release the PRESENCE of God.
3. Fasting is not mentioned much in the NT except by Jesus. There are four passages of Scripture about fasting in the NT (Matt. 6:16-18; 9:14-15; Mark 2:18-20; Luke 5:33-35).
4. In the OT, fasting is primarily about seeking God for direction, for fulfillment of God's promises and to divert a coming crisis etc.

5. In the NT, Jesus introduced an ENTIRELY NEW PERSPECTIVE and PARADIGM of fasting, which is called the “Bridegroom Fast” (Matt.9:14-15). This is not a theological term. It simply describes the type of fast that Jesus is referring to.
 - a. This is a fast that is done out of our DESIRE to connect with God and to encounter Him.
 - b. This fast is MOTIVATED by a DESIRE for more of Jesus and for greater intimacy with His heart.
 - c. It is not fasting for more power and blessing though asking for these are not unbiblical.
6. Jesus introduced the “Bridegroom Fast” in His conversation with John’s disciples in Matt.9:14-15 when John’s disciples came to Jesus with a sincere question about fasting.

"Then the disciples of John came to Him, saying, “WHY do we and the Pharisees fast OFTEN, but Your disciples do not fast?”" (Matt. 9:14)

- a. John’s disciples were confused and troubled by the lack of fasting in Jesus’ disciples. They were taught by John about the importance of fasting and that fasting was correlated to devotion, dedication and wholeheartedness to God.
- b. In v.15, Jesus answered John’s disciples with a question:

"And Jesus said to them, “Can the friends of the Bridegroom mourn as long as the Bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.”" (Matt. 9:15)

 - i. In this verse, Jesus introduced a new paradigm of fasting, which is the “Bridegroom Fast”. This fasting is out of a YEARNING, LONGING and DESIRE for more of Jesus.
 - ii. Jesus connected MOURNING for a Bridegroom with FASTING, pointing to Himself as the Bridegroom and His disciples as friends of the Bridegroom.
 - iii. “Can the friends of the Bridegroom mourn as long as the Bridegroom is with them?”
 Jesus referred to Himself as the Bridegroom-God, who was walking intimately with His disciples and revealing His heart and love to them. His disciples did not need to mourn and fast as they were enjoying His presence, love and closeness while He was with them in the flesh.
 - iv. “But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.”
 Jesus referred to a time when He would no longer be with His disciples and their yearning and longing for His NEARNESS would cause them to fast.
- c. The “Bridegroom Fast” is about:
 - i. Being close to God and encountering more of Him.
 - ii. Fasting for the nearness and intimacy of our Bridegroom. It is about asking the Holy Spirit to release revelation of the reality of His heart to us.

- iii. Primarily centered on our DESIRE for more of God. It speaks of a “mourning heart” that is fiercely discontent and desperately hungry for God.
- iv. A two-fold focus to understand and experience God’s desire and passion for us as well as to awaken of desire and passion for God.

D. Seven Focuses When We Fast

1. It is important to set a focus when we fast because fasting without a focus is really dieting. That’s why fasting and praying come together. Fasting positions our heart and prayer set the focus of our fasting. There are seven focuses when we fast:
 - a. Setting our Heart to Seek God (Dan. 9:3; 10:12):
 - i. We must be intentional and not casual about setting our heart to seek God because there will be many reasons to quit. For example, Daniel intentionally set aside time to seek God.
 - ii. On the other hand, we must not feel condemned if we come short of our resolve to fast. We should just “press the delete button” when we fail and jump right back into it.
 - b. Confess our sin (Dan.9:20; Psa. 139:23, 24). While our hearts are still receptive, tender and open, it is the best time to search our hearts and “do business” with God, dealing with issues such as money, our attitudes, words, lust, struggles etc.
 - c. Tarry for the fulfillment of God’s promises, for ourselves on a personal level, for the ministry, for our nation and for this generation. God’s prophetic promises are often invitations and NOT guaranteed. We must contend for their fulfillment (Dan. 9:1-3; 10:1-4; 1Tim. 2:18).
 - d. To stop a crisis. This refers to fasting to seek God for mercy to stop a personal crisis or a national crisis. E.g. Hannah (1Sam. 1:7); Joel’s call to fast to avert God’s judgment (Joel 1:18; 2:1-17); a fast called by King of Nineveh (Jonah 3:3-9).
 - e. For a greater release of God’s power (Matt. 17:15-21; Joel 2:28-32, which is a result of God’s call to fast and pray in Joel 2:12-17).

Note: Fasting does not earn us greater spiritual authority. Rather, we fast more to tenderize our hearts and thus causes us to be more in agreement with God.
 - f. For Direction. This refers to fasting to seek direction for our personal call, ministry, nation etc. (Acts 13:1-2; 14:23)
 - g. For Greater Revelation and Understanding of God, His Heart and His Plan (Dan. 9:22-23; 10:12-14; Jer. 9:23-24; 23:20)

E. Four Benefits of Fasting

1. It tenderizes our heart to receive and experience more of God.
2. It changes our desires and we desire more of the things of God (Hab. 1:9).
3. It increases our understanding of the Word and the heart of God.
4. It strengthens our identity in God.

F. Three Qualifiers about Fasting

1. We need to understand and balance the Paradox of Fasting:
 - a. There is always a tension between feeling desperate or grateful. On one hand, we are grateful for all that God has done for us, yet we are desperate for more.
 - b. Some have a mindset of being desperate only and not grateful. This is a NEGATIVE mindset that focuses only on what is not happening. We should be grateful even for small breakthroughs.
 - c. We can also get COMPLACENT if we are being grateful but not desperate for more of God. While it is good to be grateful to God for all that He has done, adopting this mindset prevents us from realizing that God has much more for us. We must not be content in what we have in God.
2. Fasting is voluntary and cannot be forced or made mandatory. All Christian disciplines are not mandatory, yet John Wesley strongly advocated that fasting should be part of a believer's core values and lifestyle.
3. Children should participate in fasting but NOT from food. Children can participate in fasting by abstaining from things such as watching TV programmes, movies, iPhone games, or foods such as sweet drinks and chocolates etc. This also applies to people who may not be physically strong such as those who are sick or the elderly. They should not abstain from food and need to be wise in the kind of fast they embark on.

IHOP – One Thing Ministries

Living with an Eternal Perspective

(Matthew 6:19 – 24)

A. Introduction

1. Matt. 6:19-24 is one of the MOST SIGNIFICANT PASSAGES of Scripture related to our DESTINY and FUTURE – specifically our Eternal Destiny.
2. It is a call to live with an Eternal Perspective, in terms of HOW we use our TIME and MONEY. It is a powerful passage of Scripture that teaches us HOW to live with an Eternal Perspective.
3. In Matt. 6:19-24, Jesus defined TRUE KINGDOM PEOPLE as those who live NOT for this Age but for the Age-to-come (Heb. 11:13-16; Phil. 3:20).
4. Jesus taught Matt.6:19-24 in the CONTEXT of money and time. How we VIEW and USE money and time, and HOW MUCH CONCERN we have for them reveal our heart and focus, and whether we are living with an eternal perspective.
5. In Matt. 6:25-33, Jesus highlighted that money was a potential HINDRANCE to our wholehearted pursuit of God. Therefore, Jesus spoke three times about money in Matthew 6:
 - a. Verse 4 – He promised that the Father would reward us when we give.
 - b. Verses 25-33 – He addressed the FEAR and ANXIETY related to the lack of money that are often major hindrances in our pursuit of God.
 - c. Verses 19-24 – Jesus warned us of COVETOUSNESS concerning money, and how it affects our spiritual life and vibrancy in our heart.
6. Having money is NOT wrong, as long as we do not love or hoard it. The issue of money is often related to these two areas:
 - a. Covetousness – This means we have a lust for more money and never seem to have enough. Covetousness applies to both the RICH and POOR. The poor want more; the rich want even more.
 - b. Stewardship – How we plan to use and manage our money is determined by why we want to have money and how we view money.
7. The lure of materialism is STRONG but often subtle, especially in the western world. We must not assume that we do not struggle with it.
8. The fear of lack and covetousness are the two major temptations / giants related to money. The KEY to overcoming these two major giants is to operate in the OPPOSITE

SPIRIT by GIVING in faith and in generosity. When we give in faith, we overcome the spirit of fear. When we give in generosity, we overcome covetousness.

9. When we give, God responds to us in four different ways. However, He only responds after we give (Luke 6:38 and Mal. 3:10).

B. Matt.6:19-24 – How to Use Money and Time in light of an Eternal Perspective

1. This passage is the Most Significant Passage of Scripture on using our money and time in light of Eternity. In this passage, Jesus started off by giving two commands. These two exhortations are both negative and positive in nature:
 - a. In verse 19, Jesus exhorts us NOT to lay up TREASURES on earth in verse 19. This is a negative command.
“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal;” (Matt. 6:19)
 - b. Then in the next verse, Jesus gives a positive command. He exhorts us to lay up TREASURES in heaven instead.
“but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.” (Matt. 6:20)
 2. In verse 22, Jesus tells us that the way we walk out these two commands will affect or impact our spiritual life.
“The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light.” (Matt. 6:22)
 - a. The INCREASE or DECREASE of light in our heart, or our spiritual vibrancy, is AFFECTED by how we walk out these two commands.
 - b. Managing money can often drain us emotionally. This is subtle and we often don't realize it.
 3. Jesus also warned in verse 24 that we can only have one chief loyalty. We cannot be loyal to both God and money. One has to yield to the other:
“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”
 - a. Loyalty to God is synonymous to laying up treasures in heaven.
 - b. Loyalty to money is synonymous to laying up treasures on earth.
 4. All five verses in Matt. 6:19-24 are to be read and understood together. They are all linked and inter-connected. They are in the context of acquiring treasures.
 5. This is an important passage about living for eternity. Jesus is URGING us to live with an Eternal Perspective:
 - a. He wants us to ANCHOR our heart in the reality of Eternity.
 - b. This is more than theory or poetry, but it is REAL.
 - c. The early Apostles lived in such a manner (2 Cor. 4:16-21).
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C. Eight Principles on Using Money in Light of Eternity**1. Principle #1: The use of money is one MAJOR WAY we express our LOYAL LOVE to God (v. 24)**

- a. Jesus defined LOYAL LOVE in terms of how we view and use money.
- b. It is common for us to express love to God in terms of service and outreach etc.
- c. Jesus made a very strong connection between HOW we view or use money and our love for God. Here are some questions to reflect upon:
 - i. Is money the most important thing to us?
 - ii. Do we trust in money? Does the issue of money affect our decision to obey God?
 - iii. Do we use money primarily for ourselves?
 - iv. Do we use money to express our love for God?
- d. Our giving to God is NOT about the size of our giving but the size of our sacrifice. Is our giving out of our abundance or out of sacrifice? (Luke 21:3-4)

2. Principle #2: Do not lay up for yourselves TREASURES on earth (v.19)

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal;” (Matt. 9:19)

- a. This is a negative command. Jesus calls us to avoid pursuing treasures on earth.
- b. It is our human / natural inclination to go after earthly possessions. Jesus is warning us that this is NOT what matters eternally, because our earthly possessions will not last in Eternity.
- c. The KEY is how we interpret TREASURE on earth. It is more than just money. Treasure on earth is ANYTHING that a person views / thinks of as his/her wealth. It is what a person sees as valuable. It could be money, material possession, status, position, reputation etc.
- d. The KEY INDICATOR of whether we lay up treasure on earth is what we do with most of our TIME and MONEY. How we INVEST our time and money reveals whether we lay up treasure here on earth. For example, if someone has more time and money, would they invest in their own comfort, possession, influence and reputation, or in developing their relationship with God and helping others to grow in Jesus?
- e. What is the MAIN DREAM of our heart? We can have many dreams, but everyone has a dream that is of primary importance in their heart? Many love Jesus but are captivated and consumed by their own earthly pursuits FIRST. This is often seen in an attitude of, “I will give more and serve more, AFTER I have settled all these other things.”
- f. What we think about most, talk about most, dream about most and love to have most are things that we treasure.

- g. Jesus is not calling us to refuse owning possessions and property, saving or buying insurance etc. Instead, He is calling us to not make earthly possessions our primary pursuit and treasure. He is calling us to not live for earthly treasures but for eternity because that is what lasts and matters.
- h. The Bible teaches us to be WISE and PRUDENT in planning, saving and investing. The issue that Jesus warns us about is covetousness, which is the lust for earthly possessions. It is a major stumbling block in our walk with God and will affect our hearts.
- i. In Luke 12:15-21, Jesus warned us NOT to “treasure” our possessions and described those who sought to accumulate earthly possessions as FOOLS (v20). He warned us against thinking that life is primarily about money (Matt. 6:25). Instead, it is about being RICH towards God.
- j. In Mark 4:18-19, Jesus warned us to guard against the deceitfulness of riches, which will CHOKe and DULL our hearts and spirits. In Mark 7:21-23, Jesus warned that preoccupation with earthly possessions would DEFILE our spirit.
- k. 1Tim. 6:9-10 is the most searching passage of Scripture concerning COVETOUSNESS and is a terrifying passage:
"But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."
- l. We must not assume we are immune to the temptation of money. Most do not think that they struggle with covetousness. However, it is important to SEARCH our hearts for covetousness is often SUBTLE but pervasive.

3. Principle #3: To lay up for ourselves TREASURES in heaven (v.20)

"but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroy and where thieves do not break in and steal." (Matt.6:20)

- a. This is an exciting command where Jesus taught us how to use or invest money in exchange for heavenly treasures (v.20). This is the best thing to do because heavenly treasures last FOREVER. All things on earth will fade away but heavenly treasures never fade away or diminish (Jas. 12:11). Our lives here on earth are but for a moment, but we will live forever in an eternal realm of endless glory in Eternity.
- b. Thus Jesus exhorts us to be wise and invest as much time and money in the Kingdom in order to REAP an eternal reward.
- c. In Luke 12:33 and 18:22, Jesus called us to gain treasures in heaven. We can ask the Holy Spirit for wisdom in investing our time and money in order to store up treasure in heaven (Luke 6:32).

4. Principle #4: GIVING is the KEY to acquiring an ETERNAL and INCORRUPTIBLE INHERITANCE (v.20)

“but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.” (Matt.6:20)

- a. This is a powerful Kingdom Paradigm of Finance. The money that we keep is actually NOT our own. Only money that we give away is ours forever. This is the PARADOX of money – the money we give away will be credited to our eternal account (Phil.4:17).
- b. It is not unbiblical to use money for ourselves now. However, what we use for ourselves now and what we keep will not have an eternal impact, and cannot go “past the grave” (Job 1:21). However, if we give for / to God, it transcends the grave and has an impact in Eternity (1 Pet. 1:4; Matt. 19:27-28; Phil. 4:17).
- c. Charles Studd, one of the "Cambridge Seven" who offered himself to Hudson Taylor for missionary service in the China Inland Mission, is best remembered by many for this memorable verse in one of his poems: "Only one life 'twill soon be past, only what's done for Christ will last".

5. Principle #5: Our hearts and emotions are closely connected to HOW we view and use money (v.21)

“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Matt.6:21)

- a. There is an EMOTIONAL CORRELATION and HEART CONNECTION between our hearts and money. Our hearts and emotions will follow what we invest our time and money in. It will either increase or decrease our heart for God.
- b. If we invest in giving our money to God, our hearts and emotions towards God will increase.

6. Principle #6: Our vibrancy in the heart / spirit is impacted by where we SET our heart (v.22)

“The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light.” (Matt.6:22)

- a. The setting of our hearts will affect our spiritual capacity to experience and receive more. It also affects the vibrancy of our spirits.
- b. “The lamp of the body is the eye.” (v.22) The SOURCE of light is the eye. It is from our eyes that we set our focus.
- c. “If therefore your eye is good,” (v.22) Having a good eye speaks of our PRIMARY FOCUS. The context here is v.19-20 where the primary focus of our lives is the setting of our hearts to live for treasures in heaven.
- d. “your whole body will be full of light.” (v.22) If we have that primary focus in place, the result of this focus is an INCREASE in our spiritual capacity and vibrancy in our spirits.
 - i. We will experience more of God
 - ii. We will understand more of His Truth

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- iii. We will receive a greater measure of His Love.
 - e. If we live with a mindset of pursuing treasures in heaven as a PRIMARY PURSUIT, our heart and spirit will increase in vibrancy.
- 7. Principle #7 – We can lose vibrancy in our hearts by having a wrong focus (v.23)**
“But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness” (Matt.6:23)
- a. Having “bad eyes” is the opposite of “good eyes”. This means we neglect the values of the Sermon on the Mount and make decisions primarily to enhance our treasures on earth.
 - b. Jesus makes it clear in this verse that we can lose the vibrancy in our spirit by focusing on the wrong thing. The light in our heart can be lost, diminished and even replaced by darkness.
 - c. Jesus was referring to BELIEVERS. He warns us that we can lose our zeal and vibrancy if we have a wrong focus (“bad eyes”). Accumulating earthly treasures as though they will last forever is a wrong focus for believers.
- 8. Principle #8 – It is impossible to serve both God and money (v.24)**
“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.” (Matt.6:24)
- a. Jesus used the word “SERVE” in verse 24 in the context of a bondsman or slave serving a master. This means that this cannot be an occasional act of obedience and loyalty.
 - b. When we serve God, it cannot be half-hearted or in a “compartmentalized” fashion where we only serve Him occasionally or when we are free. This attitude and service towards God is what Scripture calls “double-mindedness” (Jas. 4:7-8). God wants our all.
- D. Conclusion**
1. Choose to live a SIMPLE LIFESTYLE. Choose to live simply for ourselves and give extravagantly to God.
 2. Paul himself embraced a simple lifestyle and also exhorted Timothy to do the same (1Tim. 6:8; Phil. 4:11-13).
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Overcoming Fear and Anxiety

(Matthew 6:25 – 34)

A. Introduction

1. Matt. 6:25-34 is a FAMILIAR and OFTEN QUOTED passage of Scripture. It is an IMPORTANT passage of Scripture that exhorts us to specifically:
 - a. PURSUE wholeheartedness for God;
 - b. Walk out the Sermon-on-the-Mount lifestyle;
 - c. Cultivate the eight Beatitudes;
 - d. Become TRUE KINGDOM PEOPLE;
 - e. Be God's vessels in transforming the world.
2. Matt. 6:19-24 and Matt. 6:25-34 are connected and linked. The word "therefore" in verse 25 points to the connection. Both passages of Scripture address the issue of HOW to walk out the Sermon-on-the-Mount lifestyle in relation to money.
3. In Matt. 6:19-34, Jesus highlighted two main hindrances that deter us from and affect us as we pursue wholeheartedness. He then gave us the KEY to overcome these two main hindrances.
4. In Matt. 6:19-24, Jesus addressed the issue of COVETOUSNESS, which is the lust for more money, better positions, or material possessions and making the pursuit of these things as the PRIMARY FOCUS of our lives.
5. Jesus gave us three TRUTHS / REALITIES to overcoming COVETOUSNESS:
 - a. Live with an Eternal Perspective. We need to know what matters to God and what lasts eternally (v.19-20).
 - b. How we SET our hearts and what we focus on affects our spiritual life and the VIBRANCY in our hearts (v. 22-23).
 - c. We should not be deceived into thinking that we can pursue BOTH at the same time (v. 24).
 - i. We cannot have the best of both worlds. We have to choose because we can only be LOYAL to one.
 - ii. It is a Kingdom Principle that we cannot be wholehearted for two things:
 - One Thing – Psa. 27:4 exhorts us to give PRIORITY to ONE MAIN PURSUIT in our lives.

- Undivided heart – Psa. 86:11 talks about having an undivided heart to walk in God's ways.
- Double-mindedness – James 1:8; 4:8 tells us that a person who is double-minded is unstable in all his ways and he/she will not receive anything from the Lord.

B. Three Main Exhortations of Jesus to Overcome Covetousness

1. There are three main exhortations of Jesus to overcome covetousness:
 - a. Choose the PRIMARY TREASURE in our life (v.19-20)
 - b. Choose the PRIMARY LIFESTYLE (v. 22-23)
 - c. Choose the PRIMARY MASTER (v. 24)
2. We need to learn to make the correct DECISIONS as they will affect our walk with God.
3. Our decisions in these areas will help us to overcome covetousness. Our decisions, especially in the areas of choosing our spouse, career and goals in life, will bring us either closer to God or further away from Him.

C. Matthew 6:25-34 – Overview

1. In Matthew 6:25-34, Jesus addresses the SECOND HINDRANCE that will deter us from our wholehearted pursuit of God, which is the FEAR and ANXIETY over our needs and lack of money or daily provision.
2. Jesus is neither saying that money is unimportant nor is He saying that meeting our basic / essential needs is unimportant. Jesus is not impractical.
3. "For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things" (v. 32) – Jesus understands that our needs have to be met. He means that whilst money is necessary and important, it is NOT the most important. He recognizes that we do need money for our daily lives, even as we walk out the Sermon-on-the-Mount lifestyle and do the works of the Kingdom.
4. In Matt. 6:25-34, Jesus is pointing out how FEAR and ANXIETY over the lack of money can be a major hindrance that AFFECTS our wholehearted pursuit of God. The issue of money often holds us back from pursuing God wholeheartedly.
5. Jesus gives us four TRUTHS / REALITIES to overcome FEAR and ANXIETY. We need to ANCHOR our lives in these truths. These are four realities that grant us confidence to run after God wholeheartedly.
6. In Matthew 6:33, Jesus then concludes by giving us the ULTIMATE PURPOSE and NUMBER ONE PRIORITY in life.

7. The whole passage is laden with eight profound and important questions in six verses: v. 25, 26, 27, 28, 30 and 31.
 - a. It is vital for us to ANSWER all these eight questions correctly in accordance to the Word.
 - b. God wants us to wrestle with these eight questions and ponder over them.
 - c. Deriving the CORRECT ANSWER will set us free from FEAR and ANXIETY and help us set the RIGHT FOCUS and PRIORITY in life.
8. The KEY word in Matt. 6:25-34 is WORRY. It occurs six times in verses 25, 27, 28, 31 and twice in verse 34. Worry affects us emotionally, physically and spiritually. It is also the main cause for many illnesses.

D. Matt.6:25 – How We View the Three Primary Essentials in Life

“Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?”

1. In this verse, Jesus lays out the MAIN ISSUE that He is addressing. There are three things He refers to as He highlights the main issue, which is how we view the THREE basic needs in life – food, drink, and clothing.
2. Paul affirmed these three basic needs in 1 Tim.6:6-8. Biblically, God promises that He will take care of us in these three areas, in addition to providing for our housing and shelter. Paul exhorts us to be content when we have these basic needs met.
3. Do not worry
 - a. Jesus exhorts us not to be preoccupied with what we will eat, drink and wear.
 - b. He urges us not to be anxious over all these because God knows that we need all these things (v. 32) and assures us that He will provide (v. 33).
 - c. When Jesus exhorts us not to worry, He does not mean that we do not need to plan or set goals and have a vision in life. In fact, it is biblical to plan, but not out of fear and anxiety.
4. The Ultimate Question
 - a. In verse 24, Jesus asks the FIRST QUESTION that sets our focus in life: “Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?”
 - b. Through this verse, Jesus exhorts us that life is more than all these things – our need for food, drink, and clothing. In our context, these things could also refer to the things we pursue, such as money, cars, houses, careers etc.
5. In Eternity, what matters is knowing and enjoying God. While having the essentials in life is not unimportant, we should not be fixated on them. Jesus exhorts us to pursue loftier and higher goals in life - our walk with God, fulfilling His call and mandate for us, pursuing vibrancy in our spirit etc.

E. Four Truths / Realities to overcome fear and anxiety

In Matt. 6:26-34, Jesus then gives FOUR TRUTHS / REALITIES that will set us free from worry. These are vital principles that can also be applied to other areas in our lives. They are keys to overcoming and to strengthening our resolve to pursue God and NOT succumb to fear / anxiety. It is vital for our hearts to CONNECT with these four realities:

1. We are VALUABLE to God

- a. We are important and precious to God, and far more valuable than the rest of creation.
- b. It is vital for us to know this TRUTH. We need to know WHO we are in God's eyes. Worry is the result of NOT grasping this REALITY that we are valuable to God. Worry also blinds us from seeing this reality.
- c. If we are valuable to God, we can be assured that God will take care of us, protect and guide us (Deut. 1:30; Rom. 8:31-39).
- d. In verses 26, 28, 29 and 30, Jesus used two illustrations to prove this truth:
 - i. Verse 26 – God takes care of the birds. In this verse, God deals with the issue of food and drink.
 - Birds work hard as they search for food but they still depend on God to PROVIDE.
 - By comparing us with birds that busy themselves searching for food and that are TEMPORAL, God is emphasizing that He will take care of us as we are not only precious to Him, but also ETERNAL beings.
 - ii. Verses 28, 29, and 30 – God takes care of the flowers of the field. In this verse, God deals with the issue of clothing. He uses the illustration of the flowers of the field to demonstrate His tender care and provision of clothing for us.
 - Jesus exhorts us “to consider” the lilies of the field. He wants us to learn from the variety of beautiful wildflowers. They neither TOIL nor SPIN. They do not cultivate their own beauty nor labor to make themselves beautiful. They also have short life-spans.
 - Jesus was making a point that if God gives such EXTRAVAGANT CARE to perishable flowers that have no ability or longevity, how much more EXTRAVAGANT will He be towards us whom He values more.
- e. In both illustrations, God emphasizes His care for His creation throughout history (e.g. the birds, flowers of the field), and poses us a rhetorical question – if we can see that He cares for His creation, would He not also care for us and be more EXTRAVAGANT towards us, who are more precious and valuable than the rest of creation?
- f. Qualifier: Jesus is neither advocating that we do not need to work nor is He endorsing laziness. It is a biblical requirement to work. We need to understand the role and natural processes involved in bringing food to the table (2 Thes. 3:10). For example, the farmer sows seed, while God sends the sun and the rain and

causes the seed to grow. The farmer has to then do the work of bringing in the harvest. God will not do our part and neither can we do God's part.

- g. In verse 30, Jesus sums up His illustrations with a QUESTION: "O you of little faith?" He highlights the little confidence that we have in God and the lack of insight that we have about God, resulting in our little faith in God and our inability to TRUST Him.
2. Worrying does not add anything to us (v. 27)
 - a. Jesus exhorts us not to worry as we do not benefit or acquire more food or clothing through worry.
 - b. Worrying does not enhance our life in any way. In fact, it saps our energy and affects our relationship with God and with one another.
 - c. We should not PRE-EMPT negative scenarios and thus be weighed down by them.
 - d. Verse 27: "Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?" (NKJV). In other versions, it reads as "...a single hour to his life?" (NASB, NIV); "...a single hour to his span of life?"(ESV)
 - i. The cubit is a unit of measure. It is about the span of a man's hand.
 - ii. The Greek word for stature is *helikia*. It means to measure one's life-span or height. Stature in verse 27 likely refers to the length of our life. Through this verse, Jesus tells us that worrying will not extend our life but will more likely shorten it.
 - e. The KEY to overcoming worry is to have a heart of THANKSGIVING (1Thes.5:16, 18; Phil. 4:4), of SURRENDER to the Lord (1Pet.5:7) and to TRUST in Him (Prov. 3:5-6).
 - f. There will always be things that cause us to worry. God did not promise that there would be no trouble in our lives. However, our attitude towards "tomorrow's worry" should be in accordance with verse 34, "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."
 - g. It would be a "double jeopardy" to worry about both today and tomorrow.
 3. God knows all our needs (v.32)
 - a. The reality that "God sees" is a major emphasis in Matt. 6. It is repeated four times in verses 4, 6, 18 and 32.
 - b. Knowing this reality is most important in overcoming FEAR, WORRY and other similar emotions. A thousand problems, worries and concerns are solved when we connect with this REALITY that God sees and knows (Isa. 40:27; Psa. 121:4).
 - c. The BIGGEST CAUSE for FEAR, ANXIETY and WORRY is the loss of awareness that God sees and knows.

- d. Worry and anxiety are primarily a result of putting our confidence in the wrong things. We often imagine negative scenarios and forecasts or listen to negative words from others instead of trusting in God's Word (Phil. 4:6-7; Heb. 13:5; 1 Pet. 5:7).
4. God gives us ONLY sufficient grace for today (v. 34)
 - a. We should not run ahead of God and worry about tomorrow. Jesus exhorts us to wait until the next day to decide how we feel about it.
 - b. The KEY is to know that there will be GRACE for tomorrow when we get there. God only promises to provide for us on a DAILY BASIS (Matt. 6:11). God gives us each day our daily bread because He wants us to DEPEND on Him and to constantly be in communion with Him.
 - c. "Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."(v.34) – Jesus never promised us a life free from trouble, pressure, persecution and suffering. However, He wants us to know that He will give us grace to overcome (avoid, endure, or change). He exhorts us to not allow our hearts to be troubled or weighed down by worry (John 14:1). Storms of life will come but we must not allow these storms to affect our heart (Matt. 8:23-26).

F. Matt. 6:33 – The Ultimate Purpose and Pursuit of Believers

1. Jesus concluded His exhortation by DECLARING a BELIEVER'S ULTIMATE PURPOSE AND PURSUIT in Matt. 6:33. This is the KEY POINT and HIGHLIGHT of the entire passage.
2. As believers, we are to SEEK two things:
 - a. God's Kingship

There is a two-fold aspect to seeking God's Kingship:

 - i. The King – We are to know the King and submit to His kingship over our lives, and become people who are subjects of His Kingdom.
 - ii. His Kingdom – We are to also "promote" and proclaim the fame of the King by advancing His Kingdom.
 - b. God's Righteousness

There is also a two-fold aspect to seeking God's Righteousness:

 - i. Personal righteousness – We seek to grow in righteousness and live righteously (e.g. the Sermon-on-the-Mount lifestyle)
 - ii. Spreading righteousness in every sphere of influence – We are called to be the salt of the earth and light of the world, influencing and transforming spheres of society under Christ's leadership.
 - c. Our attitude and approach in seeking God's Kingdom and His Righteousness is not passive and casual. Instead, it should be our TOP PRIORITY because the KEY is to seek FIRST God's Kingdom and His Righteousness (Matt. 6:33). This means to invest our time and energy such that it is the number one priority in our lives.

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- d. Seeking God and His Righteousness should be the DISTINCTIVE LIFESTYLE of a BELIEVER.

G. What Matt 6:25-34 Does Not Imply

1. We are NOT promised freedom from work, responsibility, trouble, abundant provision etc. Instead, we are promised freedom from worry and lack of daily needs.
2. There are Three Principles related to living by faith:
 - a. We are to work in order to earn our living and NOT idly claim to trust God (2Thes. 3:10)
 - b. We are NOT exempted from the responsibility of helping others.
 - c. We are NOT promised freedom from trouble and persecution.
3. "...rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God." (1Pet. 3:4).
God exhorts us to adorn ourselves with a gentle and quiet spirit. This speaks of a heart that is freed from the dominion of anxiety. It is the posture of the heart that is PRECIOUS to God.
4. "You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You." (Isa. 26:3)
A person at peace is one who sets his / her heart on God. The fruit of peace is the RESULT of loyal love and trust in God (Matt. 6:24; 6:33; Isa. 26:3).
5. Make Matt. 6:33 the vision of our lives.
"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."

IHOP – One Thing Ministries

To Judge or Not to Judge?

(Matthew 7:1-6)

A. Introduction to Matthew 7

1. This chapter addresses the RELATIONAL DYNAMICS that we will encounter in our process of living out the Sermon-on-the-Mount lifestyle.
2. Jesus is teaching us HOW TO CARRY OUR HEART while walking out the Sermon-on-the-Mount lifestyle.
3. Matthew 7 is like the "WISDOM CHAPTER" of the Sermon on the Mount. In it, Jesus teaches us:
 - a. How to stay focused in the midst of self-righteousness, distraction and criticism / opposition (Matt. 7:1-12).
 - b. How to make CORRECT DECISIONS in order to stay on this NARROW PATH (Matt.7:13-14) and how to exercise DISCERNMENT when we encounter FALSE MESSAGES (Matt. 7:15-23).
4. Jesus concluded His whole Sermon on the Mount with v. 24-27:
 - a. It is WISDOM to live our lives according to the Sermon on the Mount lifestyle. Jesus likened it to building a house on the ROCK. There will surely be storms of life that come our way as well as the eschatological storm for those who live in this generation.
 - b. Those who walk in this lifestyle will WITHSTAND these "storms".

B. Brief Review of the Sermon on the Mount

1. **Matt. 5:1-10** – The eight fruits of the Beatitudes:
 - a. These verses provide the clearest description and picture of what it means to be TRUE KINGDOM PEOPLE.
 - b. The foundational call of the Sermon on the Mount is to cultivate the Beatitudes.
2. **Matt. 5:11-20** – The RESULT of having the FRUITS of Beatitudes in our lives:
 - a. The world will persecute us (Matt. 5:11-12);
 - b. We will be the SALT of the earth and LIGHT of the world (Matt. 5:13-16);
 - c. We will be great in the sight of God (Matt. 5:17-20).
3. **Matt. 5:21–6:18** – Jesus teaches us HOW to cultivate the eight fruits of the Beatitudes:
 - a. Matt. 5:21-48 – These verses call us to RESIST the six negatives / toxins. Jesus exhorts us to close the "window of our soul" to these six hindrances.

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- b. Matt. 6:1-18 – These verses call us to PURSUE the five kingdom lifestyle activities. Jesus exhorts us to open the “window of our soul” to the five kingdom disciplines and cultivate a FASTED LIFESTYLE.
4. **Matt. 6:19-39:**
- a. Jesus exhorts us to SET the right focus and live with an eternal perspective.
 - b. He warns us about the issue of money, which is the primary hindrance to a wholehearted pursuit of the Sermon-on-the-Mount lifestyle.
 - c. He assures us that God will take care of us when we seek first His kingdom and His righteousness.
5. **Matt. 6:33** – This verse is the SUMMARY and CRESCENDO of Jesus’ entire teaching in Matt. 5 and 6. It is the HIGHEST and ABSOLUTE PRIORITY of our faith and the answer to Jesus’ profound philosophical question in v. 25, “Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?” His ANSWER in v. 33 teaches us that life is all about:
- a. Connecting with and encountering God;
 - b. Living for God;
 - c. Expanding His Kingdom;
 - d. Walking in righteousness;
 - e. Being His salt and light in spreading the righteous reign of this King on this earth.
6. **Matt. 7** – Jesus then addresses the RELATIONAL DYNAMICS and CHALLENGES that we will face as a result of seeking to walk out the Sermon-on-the-Mount lifestyle. There will be both positive and negative aspects.

C. Carrying our Hearts (Matt. 7:1-6)

- 1. Jesus is dealing with the issue of JUDGMENTALISM as we wholeheartedly pursue God. It will occur in two general ways:
 - a. **V. 1-5** – We will judge others out of self-righteousness, seeing them as pursuing God with less intensity than us.
 - b. **V. 6** – We will be judged by others who oppose this kind of lifestyle.
- 2. Through it, Jesus warns us against these HINDRANCES:
 - a. The tendency to be caught up in a CRITICAL AND JUDGMENTAL SPIRIT because of self-righteousness. Such an attitude will distract us from wholehearted pursuit of God.
 - b. The tendency to be affected by people who CRITICISE us, which can discourage us.

- c. Jesus exhorts us to not give in to either of the above and instead stay focused on pursuing the Sermon-on-the-Mount Lifestyle.
3. Jesus is primarily teaching us HOW TO CARRY OUR HEART as this will help us to not be hindered by the spirit of judgmentalism, whether by us or against us.
4. In this passage, Jesus teaches us HOW to judge and HOW to respond to those whose values differ from us:
 - a. V.1-5 deals specifically with those who are close enough to us that we are able to see the speck in their eyes.
 - b. V. 6 deals specifically with those who oppose us.

D. Matt. 7:1 – “Judge not, that you be not judged.”

1. This is one of the most quoted verses in the New Testament, and yet is also one of the most misunderstood verses.
2. Many take this verse to mean that we should not judge. However, to correctly interpret and understand this verse, we need to know its context and also compare it with the whole counsel of Scripture.
3. Matt. 7:1 is in the context of walking out the Sermon-on-the-Mount lifestyle. In this verse, Jesus warns us of having a judgmental spirit as we seek to live out the Sermon-on-the-Mount lifestyle. He is NOT saying that we should not and cannot judge. However, when we judge, we must do so in the right way, through the right process, in the right spirit and with the right information.
4. In fact throughout the whole of Chapter 7, Jesus exhorts us to judge:
 - v.5 “...**First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.**”
 - a. It is not that we cannot judge, but we must do so in the RIGHT and BIBILICAL WAY.
 - b. **V. 6** – Jesus asks us to recognize (or “judge”) the “dogs” and “pigs”.
 - c. **V. 15** – Jesus asks us to discern between (or “judge”) false prophets and messages and true ones.
 - d. We CAN judge and in fact, we must judge, but with the right spirit, using the right process and with the right information.

E. Biblical Definition of “Judging”

1. We often associate “judging” with being CRITICAL or JUDGMENTAL. The biblical definition of “judging” is to EVALUATE what is right or wrong, good or bad, a truth or a lie, harmful or not harmful etc.
2. Judging is absolutely necessary:

- a. Jesus does NOT forbid us from judging. Rather, we should not judge with the wrong spirit. In fact, the bible exhorts us to judge in a biblical and right way.
- b. In John 7:24, Jesus commands us to judge but with the right spirit and process. We should not judge with our human opinion or with a critical spirit.
3. We need to be able to judge for the following reasons:
 - a. Many verses in the Bible, both in the OT and NT, command us to judge – Matt. 18:15-18; 1Cor. 5:1-11; 2Cor. 11:12-15; Eph. 5:11; 1Thes. 5:14, 21; 2Thes. 3:6-14; 1Tim.5:19-20; 2Tim. 4:2; Titus 1:10-13; 2:15; 3:10-11; 1John 4:1; Rev. 2:2; 2:14-15, 20.
 - b. We need to DECLARE and EVALUATE what is right and wrong so that others can be led correctly and protected.
 - c. Throughout the bible, we see that when righteous judgment was neglected or had decreased, sin increased in the family, people of God and society.
 - d. We must not be naïve nor simplistic. Judging DOES NOT MEAN THAT WE ARE NOT GRACIOUS AND KIND.
4. Judging is one of the MOST CONTROVERSIAL SUBJECTS in society and the Church today, with many lacking understanding in this subject.
5. More and more, the world – and even believers – is advocating “TOLERANCE” and “ACCEPTANCE”, and that any form of saying what is right and what is wrong when it comes to the way a person is living constitutes being judgmental. The Church is “intimidated” and refrains from judging because we confuse righteous judgment with being judgmental.
6. The prevalent view today is that people should be allowed to walk in absolute freedom without boundaries of any sort in the name of tolerance and acceptance. The problem with this view is that it combines two different values. It combines the value of HUMAN DIGNITY and ACCEPTANCE with the freedom to sin without restrain.
7. As a result of this view, believers are intimidated as we have no proper understanding of judgment – what it is, and what it isn't.

F. The Purpose of Judgment

1. Judgment removes all that hinders love. It is thus an expression of God's mercy.
2. Judgment AFFIRMS what is right and true. It EXPOSES what is wrong and bad and REMOVES what is harmful. Thus we need to judge what is right and wrong.
3. In Eph. 4:15, speaking the truth in love requires us to judge, but with the right spirit. The result is that we may mature as believers.

4. It is CHRISTLIKE to judge. Three times in Rev. 2:2, 14, 20, Jesus AFFIRMS leaders who judge and REBUKES leaders who failed to judge. He called leaders who judged as being faithful.
5. Paul judged as part of his ministry. In his Epistles, he regularly exposed what he saw as wrong in the early churches: 1Cor. 5:1-5 (immorality); 2Cor. 11:12-13 (false apostles and teachers) and 2Thes. 3:6-4 (disorders, idleness / laziness).
6. It is WRONG to teach that Jesus does not want us to judge. The ISSUE is to judge TENDERLY, MOTIVATED by love and with the RIGHT PROCESS.

G. Matt. 7:2

“For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.”

1. Jesus exhorts us to use the RIGHT MEASURES and RIGHT STANDARDS to judge and not judge with a critical spirit or in a harsh way.
2. He warns us of the consequences of our actions:
 - a. Whatever STANDARD and MEASURE we use will be used back on us, both in this Age and at the Judgment seat of Christ. Gal. 6:7-8 shows us this PRINCIPLE of SOWING and REAPING.
 - b. However, this does not mean that we lower God’s standard. It is more about NOT being harsh or critical when we judge.
 - c. This, however, also does not mean that we will not face criticism in the event that we do speak the truth in love.

H. Matt. 7:3-5

“And why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me remove the speck from your eye’; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.”

1. In these verses, Jesus teaches us HOW to RESPOND to the faults of others. He is teaching us HOW to judge in a biblical and correct way.
2. These verses specifically refer to those who are close to us. In verses 3, 4 and 5, the word “brother” is mentioned three times, referring to someone who is in close enough proximity for us to see the speck in their eye.
3. Jesus gives us the RIGHT WAY of “correcting” our brothers in the right spirit, with the right information and using the right process.
4. Jesus laid out three main principles to this process:
 - a. RIGHT SPIRIT and CORRECT MOTIVES

v.3 “And why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?”i. “Look”

This means that we have a tendency to focus on the faults of others first and are inclined towards having a CRITICAL and JUDGMENTAL SPIRIT. This manifests in various ways, such as our tendency to hear a SERMON not for ourselves but for others.

ii. “Consider the plank”

This means that we should think long and hard and evaluate our own heart and motives first. We need to first see if there are areas of PRIDE, SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS and COMPROMISE within ourselves.

b. RIGHT INFORMATION**v.4 “Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me remove the speck from your eye’; and look, a plank is in your own eye?”**i. We are not able to CLEARLY, OBJECTIVELY and ACCURATELY see until we remove the “plank” from our own eyes.

ii. Also, we are not able to judge others until we have the full picture and sufficient information (Prov. 18:13-17). Thus, we should not be quick to jump to conclusions but instead give others the benefit of a doubt first.

c. RIGHT PROCESS and SEQUENCE**v.5 “Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.”**i. Jesus NEVER said that we should not judge. Rather, it’s the issue of the right PROCESS and SEQUENCE.ii. “Hypocrite” refers to people who lack the SINCERITY in pursuing godliness.iii. We are not to be more zealous in confronting someone else’s sin than in dealing with our own hearts before God. Zealousness for righteousness BEGINS with ourselves.iv. “Remove the plank”

We need to FIRSTLY address the “plank” and deal with the bigger issues in our own lives.

v. “Remove the speck”

After first dealing with the “plank” in our own eyes, the RESULT is that we can have a heart of humility, tenderness, sensitivity and insight. THEN we are able to help our brother more effectively and with patience and love.

vi. When our eyes are “blocked by the plank”, we cause hurt to others. We poke at their “eyes” instead of helping to remove the speck from their eyes.

I. Some Biblical Principles to Correcting Brothers- / Sisters-in-Christ

1. Approach them in HUMILITY and LOVE (Eph. 4: 15);
2. Take time and effort to gather all the information and see the whole picture first (Prov. 18:13, 17; Jas.1:19);
3. Be GENTLE and TENDER (Gal. 6:1; Prov. 15:1);
4. Be PATIENT (Rev. 2:21);
5. CONFIDENTIALITY (1 Pet. 4:8; Prov. 11:13; 17:9)
If a third party is NOT a part of the solution, there is no need to share the information with them. The fundamental principle in RESTORATION is to go alone and speak to the brother / sister face-to-face (Matt. 18:15).

J. Matt. 7:6

v.6 “Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces.”

1. Jesus teaches us HOW to carry our hearts in the face of those who oppose us or who are unreceptive to the truth.
2. “Pearls” refer to truths that are holy, precious and valuable. In this context, these truths refer to the Sermon-on-the-Mount lifestyle.
3. “Dogs and Swine” refer to people who do not value these truths. Jesus described how they will resist and oppose us:
 - a. At the initial stage, they will “trample” on these truths, meaning that they will not appreciate or receive it.
 - b. At the next stage, they will “tear” us apart, meaning that they will DISCREDIT, CRITICIZE, OPPOSE and SLANDER us.
4. Jesus advises us to be aware that there will be criticism and opposition. He exhorts us to not be affected and to stay focused.
5. We should also not force the Sermon-on-the-Mount lifestyle down people’s throats. Like Paul, there is a time to move on after speaking and sharing on these truths (Acts 13:46; 18:6; 19:9). The important KEY is prayer (V. 7-11).

IHOP – One Thing Ministries

Grace to walk out the Sermon-on-the-Mount Lifestyle

(Matthew 7:7-14)

A. Introduction and Overview

1. In Matt. 7, Jesus addresses the challenges that we will face as we seek to walk out the Sermon-on-the-Mount lifestyle in Matt. 5-6.
 - a. In Matt.7:1-6, Jesus addresses the RELATIONAL DYNAMICS and CONFLICTS that we will encounter and teaches us HOW to carry our heart.
 - i. There will be conflicts with others due to differences in values, pursuits, intensity in pursuits.
 - ii. We may become CRITICAL of people and also be CRITICIZED by people
 - iii. Jesus doesn't want us to be DISTRACTED, AFFECTED, and PREOCCUPIED by these relational tensions but to STAY FOCUSED and MAINTAIN the pursuit of this Kingdom lifestyle.
 - b. In Matt.7:13-14, Jesus FOREWARNS us that this path will NOT be easy but difficult. However, it leads us to LIFE and is KEY to having a vibrant heart. Thus, we must not choose the easy way out.
 - c. In Matt.7:15-25, Jesus EXHORTS us to JUDGE and DISCERN MESSAGES and MESSENGERS because there will be FALSE MESSAGES and FALSE MESSENGERS.
 - d. In Matt.7:24-29, Jesus CONCLUDES the teaching by saying that it is WISDOM to build our lives on the Sermon-on-the-Mount lifestyle because storms will come and only those who live this lifestyle can stand.

B. Matt. 7:7-14 – Seeking God's Help in walking out the Sermon-on-the-Mount Lifestyle

1. In Matt. 7:7-14, Jesus exhorts us to PERSEVERE IN PRAYER. Jesus is NOT just teaching on the PRINCIPLE of prayer. The teaching on prayer in these verses is in the CONTEXT of walking out the Sermon-on-the-Mount lifestyle as laid out in Matt. 7:1-6 and 13-14.
2. The word "therefore" in v.12 CONNECTS the teaching of prayer in v.7-11 to the relational dynamics in v.1-6 and the challenges laid out in v.13-14.
3. Thus Jesus is exhorting us that if we would persevere in PRAYER – to keep asking, seeking and knocking – we would experience BREAKTHROUGHS in:

- a. Our HEART – We can walk out Matt. 6:33 and seek His Kingdom and righteousness, and also trust God.
 - b. Our RELATIONSHIPS with people in Matt. 7:1-6 – We will have the ability to love those who oppose us (v.12).
 - c. OVERCOMING DIFFICULTIES in Matt. 7:13-14 – We will enter through the narrow gate that leads to life.
4. Jesus did not suddenly change to a different context in Matt. 7. The messages in Matt. 6:33; 7:1-6, 13-4 are linked and related. In fact the PREMISE of the exhortation in v.7-11 is as follows:
- a. Persevering prayer is the KEY to walking out the Sermon-on-the-Mount lifestyle.
 - b. We are NOT to trust or rely on our natural strength to walk out the Sermon-on-the-Mount lifestyle but to continually seek God for grace to sustain the PURSUIITS.
5. Therefore as a House of Prayer, a forerunner ministry and as forerunners, prayer and preparing the way of the Lord's return FUNCTION and OPERATE together.
- a. Living a prayerful and fasted lifestyle is not an option. It EMPOWERS a forerunner to live out the message and be effective as a messenger.
 - b. Isaiah 40 is a key passage about forerunners. WAITING upon the Lord in the place of prayer is vital in the preparation of forerunners (Isa. 40:30-31).

C. Matt.7-8 – Wholehearted Pursuit of God Requires Persevering Prayer

1. In Matt. 7-11, Jesus gives us the KEY to walking out the Sermon-on-the-Mount lifestyle. In v.7-8, Jesus tells us that our wholehearted pursuit of God REQUIRES persistent asking, seeking and knocking. It is not an option.
2. Overview of v.7-11
 - a. V.7 – Jesus tells us WHAT to pray for;
 - b. V.8 – Jesus exhorts us to seek God with PERSEVERANCE;
 - c. V.9-11 – Jesus encourages us to come to God with CONFIDENCE.
3. V.7 – WHAT to pray for
“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.”
 - a. We are to ASK God for:
 - i. Grace to walk out the Sermon-on-the-Mount Lifestyle (Zec. 4:6-8);
 - ii. Greater breakthrough in our hearts and for more love towards people (Matt. 6:33;7:1-6; 12);
 - iii. Greater resolve not to quit in the midst of difficulty (Matt. 7:13-14).

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- iv. A greater experience of God. We will have to walk in the tension of being thankful for what God has given us yet desperate for more, grateful to Him yet dissatisfied as we have not attained fullness, and enjoy our walk with Him yet mourn for a deeper experience.
- b. We are to SEEK God for:
- i. WISDOM on HOW to walk out the Sermon-on-the-Mount lifestyle. This includes resolving tensions by the Holy Spirit's guidance, through the Word and through godly advice (Col. 1:9-12).
- c. "Knock" implies a CLOSED DOOR or an OBSTACLE. To "KNOCK", we ask God to:
- i. Help us OVERCOME obstacles that may hinder us in living out the Sermon-on-the-Mount lifestyle, for example:
- Demonic opposition
 - Spiritual obstacles
 - Relational conflicts – e.g. with family, friends etc.
 - Financial struggles
4. V. 8 – Seeking God with PERSEVERANCE
- "For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened."**
- a. The three verbs "ask, seek and knock" are all in PRESENT CONTINUOUS TENSE.
- b. Thus, Jesus is exhorting us:
- i. To keep on asking, keep on seeking and keep on knocking;
- ii. To not stop but to stay focused, pressing in UNTIL the breakthrough comes;
- iii. To persevere when:
- There are delays.
 - We face setbacks or feel disappointed.
 - We received initial breakthroughs, because there are more breakthroughs to come.
- c. Seeking God with perseverance means we must NOT be CASUAL as we ask. It means being intentional and takes more than just a little effort to persevere.
- d. Persevering prayer is vital because God gives to us based on our level of HUNGER and DESIRE (Matt. 5:6; 15:21-28). If we press in, He will give us more (Jer. 29:13; Prov. 2:4-5).
- e. In our human nature, what we can live without, we will go without. Thus in the Epistles, Paul exhorts us to pray with all perseverance (Eph. 6:18; Rom. 15:30; Col. 4:12).
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- f. Persevering in prayer is the RESULT of being poor in the Spirit (Matt. 5:3). We need to recognize that:
 - i. We can have more in God;
 - ii. We are UNABLE to walk out the Sermon-on-the-Mount lifestyle by our own strength.

D. Matt. 7:9-11 - Seeking God with Confidence

1. While perseverance in prayer is ESSENTIAL, CONFIDENCE in God when we come before Him is CRITICAL.
2. Thus it is vital to have a correct and biblical view of who God is because:
 - a. We will not go before Him if we have the wrong view of Him;
 - b. We will not ask Him if we have wrong ideas of Him.
3. In v.9-11, Jesus gives us a PROPER and BIBLICAL view of the Father, who is gracious, generous, kind, extravagant and tender. When we have this correct view of God, we can have confidence to come before Him (Eph. 3:12; Heb. 4:16).
4. **Verse 9 - "Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone?"**
 - a. Jesus compares man with God in the context of prayer – where we ask of our earthly father versus asking of our heavenly Father.
 - b. Jesus wants us to have CONFIDENCE in asking the Father because He is willing to bless and is full of goodness toward us.
5. **Verse 10 - "Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent?"**
 - a. In this verse, there is no status being mentioned.
 - b. Jesus implies that God is not a respecter of persons and is kind to all His children.
 - c. v.10 "if he asks..." – God wants us to ask Him. He is our heavenly Father who give good gifts to those who ask.
6. **Verse 11 - "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!"**
 - a. Again, Jesus compares man to God as He compares our earthly fathers with our heavenly Father. All men, like our earthly fathers, are imperfect in love and broken people. However, God is perfect and His love for us is perfect.
 - b. Thus, if imperfect earthly fathers will NOT withhold good gifts to their children, HOW MUCH MORE will our Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him! God will be so much more extravagant, generous and kind when we ask.

7. Thus, we can have CONFIDENCE to approach and ask God. He will bless us with what is GOOD (Jer. 29:11; Rom. 8:32).

E. Why God wants us to Pray

1. God is NOT unwilling to give (Matt.7:11). He is neither unaware nor unconcerned about us. He knows what we need even before we ask of Him in prayer (Matt.6:8; Psa. 56:8).
2. God wants us to pray because He wants an intimate relationship with us.
 - a. He is using prayer to draw us into a deeper relationship with Himself.
 - b. He is using prayer to produce dependence, gratitude, humility, love and partnership in our relationship with Him.
3. It remains an UNBELIEVABLE fact that an all-sufficient and all-powerful God wants a relationship with and wants to partner weak and broken people like us. An all-knowing and all-wise God actually wants to have conversations with us. Isa. 30:18-19 tells us that God will WAIT for us to ask.
4. When we have an abiding relationship with God, He will naturally bless us because we will ask what is in accordance with His will. However, God's TOP PRIORITY is to have a RELATIONSHIP with us (John 15:5, 7).

F. Matt. 7:12 – The Ultimate Measure of Breakthrough in our Relationships

"Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets."

1. Jesus concludes His teaching on prayer by giving a Kingdom Principle for breakthroughs in our relationships with people.
 - a. This principle is given as a measurement for breakthrough as well as a practical application towards breakthrough.
 - b. The word "therefore" connects v.12 to v.1-6, showing us that the issue is about relating with people.
 - c. Jesus teaches us to treat and relate with people in the way we want to be treated and related with. This is the Kingdom Principle and that is HOW Kingdom People should relate with others.
2. In our natural self, we often treat and relate with people in the same way and measure that others treat or relate with us. For example, we return slander for slander and at best relate to them with coldness.
3. However, Jesus exhorts us to "go higher":
 - a. Our actions should NOT be determined by how others treat us;
 - b. Instead, our actions should be determined by HOW we desire them to treat us (v.12), and by HOW graciously the Father treats us (v.11).

4. The ultimate measure of breakthrough in our relationships with people is to live out Matt. 7:12 – “Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.”
5. The ESSENCE of this principle is about loving people, “for this is the Law and the Prophets” (Matt. 22:39-40; Rom. 13:8). Love fulfils all the Law and the Prophets in the OT.
6. True spirituality is NOT only about being devout and devoted to God, but it is also about being kind and loving to people. Some speak like an angel when talking to God but are harsh and unkind when talking to people who bother them. We need to WATCH our WHAT WE SAY and HOW WE SAY IT.

G. Matt.7:13-14 – Exhortation to Enter by the Narrow Gate that leads to life

“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.”

1. In this passage, Jesus gives us a SEARCHING, SERIOUS and WEIGHTY exhortation about seeking to walk out the Sermon-on-the-Mount lifestyle. It is connected to Matt. 7:7-8.
2. In Matt. 7:13-14, Jesus is conveying three things:
 - a. There are two different ways to walk – the NARROW WAY or the BROAD WAY.
 - b. The way of the Kingdom is narrow and will not be easy. However we must not choose the easy way out but determine to make the right decision.
 - c. Walking in the narrow way can only be sustained by continuous ASKING, SEEKING and KNOCKING. Prayer is the KEY.
3. In verse 13, Jesus warned that there are two different ways:
 - a. The Narrow Gate
This refers to an unpopular message and a difficult path. It is difficult on our flesh because it often requires self-denial to walk in it. It may also seem difficult because our mind is un-renewed (Rom.12:2; Matt. 16:23-24). However, it is good for our spirit.
 - b. The Wide Gate
This refers to a popular message and an easy path. This gate is easy and serves the flesh. However it is unedifying to our spirit.
4. Unfortunately, many will choose the wide gate because it is popular, easy to the ear and seems effortless (2Tim. 4:304). Few will find the gate that leads to life because it is narrow and difficult. Many will choose the EASY WAY out.
5. We must be clear that Jesus never promised us that things in life will be easy or effortless. However, He promised us GRACE to walk and live out the Sermon-on-the-Mount lifestyle.

H. Luke 13:24 – Strive to Enter the Narrow Gate

1. Jesus exhorts us to STRIVE and to EXERT EFFORT in order to enter the narrow gate.
2. It is WRONG to teach the following:
 - a. Anything that requires effort and energy is not the true gospel;
 - b. When we “strive” for anything of God, it equates to legalism and is not of the grace of God;
 - c. Living by grace is effortless.
3. The Bible teaches us to STRIVE. Here are some biblical concepts related to striving:
 - a. Contend for our faith (Jude 3);
 - b. Press on to win the prize (Phil. 3:12);
 - c. Lay hold (Phil.3:12);
 - d. Labor (Col.1:29);
 - e. Fight (2Tim.4:7).
4. The KEY is to know WHEN to strive and WHEN NOT to strive and knowing WHAT to strive for and WHAT NOT to strive for:
 - a. Wrong striving:
 - i. Striving to earn God’s love, acceptance, forgiveness, which Jesus has purchased on the cross for us;
 - ii. Striving to establish God’s ministry for us based on our own human effort instead of leaning on God’s timing and agenda.
 - b. Biblical striving:
 - i. Striving to OBEY God (Luke 13:24; Acts 24:16; Heb.12:4);
 - ii. Laboring in ministry (Col.1:29);
 - iii. Laboring in prayer (Rom. 15:30);
 - iv. Entering into unity with one another (Phil. 1:27);
 - v. Entering into rest (Heb.4:11);
 - vi. Pressing on for more of God (Phil.3:12-15).

I. The Biblical Definition of Striving

1. Striving is about positioning ourselves in AGREEMENT with God, with effort in an intentional and deliberate way. It is the setting of our hearts with focus and diligence to agree with God.
2. The opposite of REST is not diligence but restlessness, anxiety, turmoil, and living in fear and insecurity.
3. Many of us may think that striving is being legalistic or religious. Legalism is of the religious spirit as much as liberalism and “hyper-grace”.
4. The KEY is to know when to RESIST striving and when to EMBRACE striving. Error in knowing when to do what will lead to either LEGALISM or COMPROMISE.
5. It would be naïve and unbiblical to believe that our sins will automatically disappear without us doing anything. In Matt. 5:21-26, by figuratively asking us to “cut off our hand” and to “pluck out our eye”, Jesus calls us to take RADICAL ACTION when we sin.

J. Matt. 11:29-30 and Matt. 7:13-14 – The Narrow Way and the Easy Yoke

“Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.” (Matt. 11:29-30)

1. A common question that arises is this: “Is it the narrow way (Matt. 7:13-14) or is it the easy yoke (Matt. 11:29-30)?”
2. The answer is that they are not mutually exclusive. It is BOTH the narrow way AND the easy yoke.
3. Jesus did not contradict Himself in these verses. These two verses have very different focuses:
 - a. Matt:11:29-30:
 - i. The word “REST” in this verse does not refer to rest for our physical bodies but spiritual rest for our heart and soul.
 - ii. Taking on Jesus’ yoke is NOT about receiving forgiveness and love but about embracing MEEKNESS as our lifestyle.
 - iii. Many have a heavy yoke because we are striving for honor, entitlement, recognition, and position etc. Striving for these wrong things will often result in rejection, fear, insecurity, anxiety, and turmoil etc.
 - iv. Jesus exhorts us to EMBRACE meekness by denying our flesh and having no personal agenda. Jesus exhorts us to be abandoned to God and strive for things of the spirit.
4. Denying ourselves is NOT what causes vibrancy in our spirit. CONNECTING to the Holy Spirit is the KEY. We need to deny ourselves because very often, our flesh becomes a hindrance to connecting with God (Heb. 12:1-2).

5. What is difficult to our flesh is often an easy yoke to our spirit and heart. Conversely, what is easy to our flesh is often difficult to our spirit and heart.
6. It is thus impossible to seek for an “easy path” for our flesh that is also “easy” for our spirit.
7. May we say yes to Matt.7:13-14 and ask God for grace to walk it out.

IHOP – One Thing Ministries

IHOP – One Thing Ministries

Wisdom to walk out the Sermon-on-the-Mount Lifestyle

(Matthew 7:15–29)

A. Introduction

1. The Sermon on the Mount is a vital message for the Church of Jesus Christ. It is the clearest description of what it means to be TRUE KINGDOM PEOPLE.
2. The CORE MESSAGE of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7) calls believers to cultivate the eight fruits of the Beatitudes. We should disciple believers according to Matt. 5-7.
3. The context of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7) is CENTERED around the Beatitudes. (Matt. 5:1-10)
4. Matt. 5:13-16 talks about being the salt of the earth and light of the world. This is the RESULT of having the fruits of the Beatitudes in our life.
5. In Matt. 5:19, Jesus tells us HOW TO BE GREAT in the Kingdom. Jesus defines what it means to be great, which is to teach and live out the Sermon-on-the-Mount lifestyle.
6. Matt. 6:33 is the CORE THEME of the Sermon on the Mount and reveals the HIGHEST PRIORITY of every believer:
 - a. Know the King;
 - b. Advance His Kingdom;
 - c. Live a life of righteousness;
 - d. Spread the righteousness of God.
7. Throughout Matt. 5-7, Jesus teaches us HOW to cultivate and walk out the Sermon-on-the-Mount lifestyle.
8. In Matt. 7:15-29, Jesus is CONCLUDING His Sermon on the Mount. He SUMS UP His greatest teaching on earth with THREE SOBERING PASSAGES of Scripture, which consist of TWO WARNINGS and ONE EXHORTATION:
 - a. Warning #1
In Matt. 7:15-20, Jesus warns us to BEWARE of FALSE MESSAGES and FALSE MESSENGERS.
 - i. He warns us that many will seek to counterfeit the TRUE MESSAGE found in Matt. 5-7.

ii. Thus, Jesus warns us to WATCH OUT for false messages and false messengers because the messages are DESTRUCTIVE and the messengers are DECEPTIVE. Thus, Jesus is calling us to cultivate DISCERNMENT and JUDGE the messenger.

b. Warning #2

In Matt. 7:21-23, Jesus warns us to "CHECK" or "EVALUATE" the sincerity and genuineness of our faith.

i. The EVIDENCE of TRUE KINGDOM PEOPLE is to manifest the fruits of the Beatitudes in our lives. We may not be fully mature, but should manifest them in a certain measure and to a certain degree.

ii. Having the fruits of Beatitudes does not earn us our salvation. Rather, having the fruits is evidence of genuine faith.

iii. Salvation is not merely saying the "sinner's prayer". The fruit of salvation, such as repentance and transformation, must be evident in our lives.

iv. In verse 23, Jesus made a most shocking and terrifying statement, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!"

v. This warning should primarily be applied to ourselves. We should not judge the SINCERITY of another's salvation but we should "evaluate" our own faith in the Lord. In 2Cor. 14:5-6, Paul exhorted the Corinthians to examine their faith.

c. Exhortation

In Matt.7:24-29, Jesus exhorts us to build our lives according to the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus calls it WISDOM to pursue the Sermon-on-the-Mount lifestyle.

B. Matt.7:13-14

"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it."

1. Jesus gives us a WEIGHTY but IMPORTANT exhortation in Matt. 7:13-14. We are WISE if we take heed of it.

2. He proclaims that believers will pursue the Kingdom lifestyle (i.e. Matt. 6:33) in two different ways – the narrow way and the broad way.

3. Jesus is NOT comparing believers with non-believers. He is pointing out that believers will pursue the Kingdom in different "ways":

a. The true and authentic "narrow" way – This is based on the True Kingdom Message

b. The distorted and partial "broad" way – This is based on a Distorted Kingdom Message

4. In verse 13, Jesus exhorts us to “enter by the NARROW GATE” and not choose the easy way out.
5. Jesus continues warning us against the alternative way in verse 14, which is the broad way. The result is clear and obvious – the broad way will eventually lead to a downfall in our faith. Thus Jesus warns us not to choose this easy way.
6. Unfortunately, many still choose the broad way: “...and there are many who go in by it.” (Matt. 7:13). This is a scary reality. Many will choose the wide gate as it is popular and easy.
7. Jesus NEVER promised us that pursuing the true Kingdom lifestyle will be easy but He promises that there will be GRACE. The Kingdom way is not necessarily easy but the fruit and reward are worth it.
8. We should SETTLE and ACCEPT, once and for all, the reality that pursuing the Kingdom lifestyle will be “difficult”. Instead of lamenting, complaining, and looking for “short-cuts”, we should focus on the GLORIOUS RESULT.
9. Jesus says in Matt. 7:14, “because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life...” The glorious result of pursuing the Kingdom lifestyle is having vibrancy in our spirits and experiencing the FULLNESS of life (John 10:10).
10. However, Jesus concludes with the sobering declaration that “...there are FEW who find it” (Matt. 7:14). We need to determine to be one of the few and to NOT choose the easy way out.

C. The True Message vs. the Distorted Message

1. There are two types of messages to look out for – the TRUE MESSAGE and the DISTORTED MESSAGE. These two messages are similar in many aspects and yet are opposite in some fundamental aspects.
2. The True Message:
 - a. Proclaims the BLESSINGS and PROMISES of God in Christ, yet there are “REQUIREMENTS” of God to walk in them. For example, God will bless us but we need to deny our fleshly desires, deal with sin, lead a disciplined lifestyle of prayer and reading God’s Word and walk in obedience and repentance etc.
 - b. Contains “boundaries” or “restrictions” defined by God according to the Bible. Most importantly, there are “requirements” for us to cultivate, strengthen, deny, resist, strive towards etc. These requirements are often NOT instant or effortless.
 - c. Is often difficult on the flesh yet easy on the heart and spirit when we try to live it out.
3. The Distorted Message:
 - a. Is not necessarily completely false. However it presents only partial truth and is thus distorted.

- b. Often only emphasizes the BLESSINGS and PROMISES of God while totally IGNORING the “requirements” and the need for repentance.
 - c. Primarily gives too much room for TOLERANCE and PERMISSIVENESS without confronting COMPROMISE.
4. The MAJOR DIFFERENCE between the True Message and the Distorted Message is found in the MAIN FOCUS of the teaching. The former focuses on the NARROW WAY while the latter focuses on the BROAD WAY:
- a. NARROW WAY
 - i. The True Message focuses on growing in holiness, maturity, love and obedience.
 - ii. Its PRIMARY FOCUS is on our relationship and walk with God.
 - b. BROAD WAY
 - i. The Distorted Message focuses only on things such as forgiveness, blessings, freedom, prosperity, easier circumstances and a better life.
 - ii. Its PRIMARY FOCUS is human and NEED-CENTRIC. It is not entirely wrong because God forgives us and wants to bless us, but this is not the core message of the Kingdom (Matt. 6:33).
 - iii. The Distorted Message will produce a lifestyle of CONFIDENCE in compromise and sin. In other words, we become comfortable living in compromise and sin.
5. When we fail to preach and teach about God’s “requirements”, the consequences of sin and the warnings found in the Bible, and focus only on blessings and promises, it is DESTRUCTIVE to our faith. The end result is DISASTROUS (1Cor.6:9-10).
6. The narrow way is NOT about attaining perfect obedience and living without sin but about the SINCERITY and INTENTION to obey God. When we are NOT grieved or troubled by our sins, we should be alarmed and seek to do something about it.

D. Watch Out for False Messengers and False Messages (Matt.7:15)

“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.”

1. In Matt. 7:15-23, Jesus concludes His teaching by giving us two warnings (v.15-20 and v.21-23) and one exhortation. In verse 15, Jesus warned us to WATCH OUT for false messengers and false messages.
2. Jesus warns us that there will be false messengers and messages. It is especially VITAL in these Last Days. Many End-Time prophecies warn of false messengers and false messages (Matt. 24:4-5; 2Pet. 2:1-3; 2Tim. 4:3-4).
3. Jesus warns us to NOT be naïve and quick to embrace everything. In fact, He exhorts us to JUDGE and DISCERN the messages and the messengers because they will bring harm to the body of Christ.

4. In judging and discerning the messengers, we must not simply look at outward appearance and be IMPRESSED by the charm, charisma, eloquence, popularity or size of their ministry and anointing etc. Instead, we are to judge them and the message they preach by their FRUIT:
 - a. Their lives – do they manifest the fruits of the Beatitudes?
 - b. The result of their ministry and message – do they produce the Sermon-on-the-Mount kind of people?
 - c. The focus of their ministry – does the message they preach inspire people to the Matt. 6:33 lifestyle?
5. “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing..”
 - a. Jesus warns us NOT to be impressed by their OUTWARD APPEARANCE.
 - b. They also appear to be “one of us” as they come in “sheep’s clothing” and seem “harmless”. Jude 4 warns us that such false prophets have infiltrated the Church, so we need to be WISE and DISCERNING.
 - c. Outwardly the false messengers are NOT vicious, mean, hostile people and they appear “harmless”. Their message seems “harmless” and correct to a certain extent.
6. “...but inwardly they are ravenous wolves”
 - a. Ravenous wolves are dangerous and destructive, seek to bring harm and have impure motives / agendas. They are the total opposite of what a “good shepherd” should be (John 10:10-13).
 - b. Wolves devour while shepherds protect, provide and guide. The goal of a good shepherd is found in John 10:10, and it is to give LIFE to his flock.
 - c. We are to DISCERN and JUDGE the message and the messenger at a deeper level than just based on superficial appearance.

E. How to Judge and Discern

Verse 16 “You will know them by their fruits.”

Verse 20 “... you will know them.”

1. We can judge and discern false messengers by their WORDS, WALK and WORK:
 - a. Words
What they PREACH needs to be CONSISTENT with and based on the Word of God (Heb.5:12-14).
 - b. Walk
How they LIVE and their lives have to reveal Christ, the fruit of the Spirit, and the fruits of the Beatitudes (1 Cor.11:1)

- c. Work
The RESULT of their ministries should POINT people to Christ and produce TRUE KINGDOM people (Col.1:28-29; Jn. 3:29)
2. We are to judge and discern according to these criteria and NOT be impressed by the size of their ministry, their popularity or anointing.
3. Scripture REQUIRES us to point out false messages and take a stand against wrong teachings and doctrines:
 - a. Matt. 18:15-17; 1Cor. 5:1-11; 2Cor. 11:12-15; 1Thes. 5:14, 21; 2Thes. 3:6-14
 - b. In Rev. 2:14-16, Jesus rebuked the Church of Pergamos for NOT confronting the doctrine of Balaam and the Nicolaitans. In Rev. 2:20, Jesus rebuked the Church of Thyatira for NOT confronting the teaching of Jezebel.
 - c. When we confront these false messages, the key is to address them with HUMILITY and LOVE, in the RIGHT SPIRIT and with the correct PROCESS. It must not be accusation or slander.

F. Evaluate the Sincerity and Genuineness of our Faith (Matt. 7:21-23)

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’

1. In these verses, Jesus gives us the SECOND WARNING. From exhorting us to DISCERN and IDENTIFY false messages and messengers, Jesus then cautions us against making FALSE CONFESSIONS.
2. Jesus is calling us to “evaluate” ourselves:
 - a. He has laid down EVIDENCE of the True Kingdom people in His teaching on the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus calls us to evaluate if our confession of faith is real and genuine.
 - b. The test of a True Kingdom people is that they will be living out the Sermon-on-the-Mount lifestyle and manifesting the fruits of the Beatitudes to a certain degree.
3. Verse 21 - “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven...”
 - a. In this verse, Jesus does NOT refer to unbelievers but to believers. He is describing people who seem to be ENTHUSIASTIC about Jesus because they called Jesus, “Lord, Lord...”
 - b. This double phrase, “Lord, Lord...” indicates their association with Jesus.
 - c. To them and on the surface, their verbal confession, enthusiasm about Jesus and their public and bold profession of allegiance to Jesus is sufficient EVIDENCE of being Kingdom People.

- d. However, Jesus says that “NOT everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven... BUT he who does the will of My Father in heaven.”
 - e. Jesus makes the point that the evidence and fruit of True Kingdom people is not primarily in doing the work of God or service and ministry, but in pursuing obedience, holiness and living the Sermon-on-the-Mount lifestyle in their hearts and lives. The evidence and fruit are that they will reveal a certain measure of the fruits of the Beatitudes.
4. Seeking to be HOLY and OBEDIENT to God does not earn our salvation. Rather, it is the EVIDENCE of our faith and proves that it is genuine and real. The EXPRESSION and FRUIT of our faith is obedience, holiness and walking out the Sermon-on-the-Mount lifestyle.
 5. Salvation by works alone is WRONG (Eph.2:8-9). On the other hand, salvation without works is also wrong (James 2:14-17):
 - a. To exalt works that earn salvation UNDERMINES the grace of God.
 - b. To EXCLUDE good works as UNNECESSARY is to deny the life-empowering and transforming power of grace (Titus 2:11-13; Matt. 7:17).
 6. Verse 22 – “Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’”
 - a. “Many” here refers to those who boldly and publicly professed their allegiance to Jesus. They have powerful and anointed ministries that “cast out demons” and do “many wonders”..
 - b. However, as Jesus pointed out in the next verse, these are NOT real evidence of our faith.
 7. Verse 23 – “And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’”
 - a. This is a MOST TERRIFYING AND SHOCKING STATEMENT made by Jesus.
 - b. These people are those who PROFESS the name of Jesus and PERFORM supernatural signs and wonders. Yet, they are not true believers and do not enter into the Kingdom of God.

G. The Evidence of a True, Real and Genuine Believer

1. A true, real and genuine believer sincerely seeks to OBEY God and sincerely seeks to live a life of holiness and righteousness in this Age. He / She is one who seeks to do the will of God. (Matt.7:21)
2. The real evidence of this life pursuit is the fruit of the Beatitudes.
3. We must be alarmed IF we have no concern about our obedience to God, our holiness, or our relationship with God.

4. We must be alarmed IF SIN and COMPROMISE do not trouble or bother us.
5. When Jesus calls them, “you who practice lawlessness...” He does NOT refer to those who commit mass murder or are serious criminals. He refers to those who are in this state:
 - a. They have NO CARE for obedience and holiness;
 - b. Their hearts are not troubled even though they live in sin and compromise;
 - c. They embrace a lifestyle of disobedience and ungodliness.
6. What disqualifies them from the Kingdom of God is not the sin in their lives, but their ATTITUDE toward sin. They have no real repentance and there is no real transformation. Their lack of concern for obedience and holiness is the EVIDENCE of their lack of a REAL RELATIONSHIP with Jesus (1Cor.6:9-10).
7. Verse 22 reveals a scary reality, that “many will say to Me in that day...” It will not be an isolated case, but will apply to many. God needs His people to be faithful witnesses and preach His Word to WARN MANY against a falsely professing and confessing their faith.

H. The Most Important Exhortation in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt.7:24:27)

1. The final four verses of the Sermon on the Mount is the crescendo of the entire teaching. It contains the most important exhortation.
2. Jesus challenges us to live out the Sermon-on-the-Mount lifestyle and build our lives according to the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus calls this WISDOM.
3. Verse 24 says, “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...”. More than simply hearing the message, we need to RESPOND. We need to ask God for grace to WALK it out.
4. In verses 25 and 27, Jesus promises that “STORMS” will come. There are three kinds of storms:
 - a. The Storms of Life – the pressures, stress, challenges and tensions etc. that are a part of life (1 Cor. 4:8-9);
 - b. Eschatological storms – the pressures that everyone will face in the End Times (Joel 2:11);
 - c. The Storm of the Judgment Seat – the evaluation of our life at the Judgment Seat of Christ (1Cor. 3:10-15; 2Cor.5:9-11).
5. All of us will face the same “storms” (Matt. 7:25, 27). Some will stand while some will fall. The KEY to whether we will stand or fall is the KIND OF FOUNDATION that we build upon.

6. Authentic faith and character is evident and manifested when “storms” come. Often, “storms” TEST and REVEAL who we are and where we stand. They reveal our hearts and our deficiencies.
7. “Storms” help us see where we stand if we were to face the JUDGMENT SEAT today.

I. Conclusion

1. In Matt. 5:19, Jesus views those who seek to live this message and teach it as GREAT in His sight. In Matt. 7:24, He commends those who BUILD their lives on the Sermon on the Mount as WISE in the sight of God.
2. We need to decide between the narrow and broad way for ourselves and press in to live out, understand and preach this message.

IHOP – One Thing Ministries

About IHOP – One Thing Ministries

The Heart of our Vision

*“John the Baptist said...the friend of the Bridegroom...rejoices because of the Bridegroom’s voice.”
(John 3:29)*

“Anna...did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day...and she spoke of Jesus to all...” (Luke 2:37 – 38)

“Pray that the Lord of the Harvest would send out laborers into His Harvest... therefore go to all nations and make disciples.” (Matthew 9:38; 28:19)

“...for My House shall be called a House of prayer for all nations.” (Isaiah 56:7)

Our Mission and Mandate

At the International House of Prayer – One Thing Ministries, we are committed to Prayer with Worship, the Prophetic and the Great Commission.

We embrace and seek to live out the following four heart standards (embodied in the acronym “IHOP”), in order to be a people who will partner with God in these Last Days:

- **Intercession:** a people of prayer, expressed corporately through night and day prayer and worship;
- **Holiness:** a people who have set ourselves apart for intimacy with God, and who live out the Sermon on the Mount lifestyle;
- **Offering:** a people who give extravagantly to God for the advancement of His Kingdom, and who live a fasted lifestyle (ie. living simply for ourselves);
- **Prophetic:** a people who stand boldly in faith, move in the power of God and have confidence in His provision, protection and direction.

As a **missions base**, we seek to equip and send missionaries as dedicated intercessors and evangelists with a forerunner spirit who will labour to see revival and a great harvest all over Asia.

The **heart of our missions base** is 24/7 worship and prayer; thus, we seek to establish a 24/7 House of Prayer in Singapore – a perpetual sacred assembly gathering corporately to fast and pray in the spirit of the Tabernacle of David.

Two historical figures from the Bible who inspire us are Anna, the first evangelist and forerunner in the New Testament, and King David from the Old Testament. Anna prayed and fasted for over sixty years before Jesus’ first coming (Luke 2:37), and King David organized and paid 4,000 musicians and 288 singers to worship God night and day (1 Chron. 23:1 – 25:31).

Our **mandate** is to train believers, from this place of night and day prayer, to love Jesus and people wholeheartedly as they go forth to preach the Word, heal the sick, serve the poor, plant Houses of Prayer and proclaim the return of Jesus across the earth.

THE CALL AND INVITATION TO BUILD THE HOUSE OF PRAYER

My heart burns as I invite you to partner in the vision that the LORD gave us to equip people from all over the world to live lives overflowing with passion for Jesus and compassion for people. John the Baptist described himself as a “friend of the Bridegroom” as he prepared the people for the first coming of the LORD. Today, the Holy Spirit is raising up “friends of the Bridegroom” type ministries like John, with the “forerunner spirit” to prepare His Bride for Jesus’ Second Coming.

After being a pastor for more than 15 years, my ministry has changed significantly. I now devote all my energy to establish a ministry that embraces fervent intercessory prayer and worship with daily fasting as a foundation for effective outreach and world evangelization. I deeply believe that unceasing intercession, worship and fasting are the vital keys to the completion of the Great Commission.

One Thing Ministries is committed to Prayer (i.e. intercession, worship, healing, prophecy, etc.), Fasting (i.e. covering 365 days a year), the Forerunner Spirit (i.e. preparing the Church as a Bride for the unique dynamics in the End-Times), and the Great Commission (i.e. proclaiming Jesus to all nations). We are consumed with the mandate to train believers to love Jesus and others wholeheartedly as they go forth to preach the Word, heal the sick, serve the poor and plant Houses of Prayer across Asia.

However, at the heart of our ministries is the 24-hour a day prayer with worship. Our original inspiration came from Anna in Luke 2:37 – 38, the first evangelist and forerunner in the New Testament who prayed and fasted for 60 years before Jesus’ first coming. We were also inspired by King David, who organized 4,000 musicians and 288 singers to worship God 24 hours a day (1 Chron. 23 – 25).

On September 6, 2003, I gathered together a few people with the burden to establish a House of Prayer in the spirit of the tabernacle of David. We know that it is the heart of God to establish a House of Prayer where “the fire on the altar shall never go out” in the land of Singapore. We trusted that people would come from all over the island – musicians, worship leaders and singers would come; finances would be provided; etc.

In 1722, an “Intercessory Missions Base” was established Germany by Count Nicholas Ludwig Von Zinzendorf. They named their settlement Herrnhut, which means “The Watch of the LORD” and they began prayer meetings that continued 24 hours a day for over 100 years resulting in the first Protestant missions movement in history known as the Moravians. To this we say, “Yes LORD, do this in Singapore even in our day!”

Leviticus 6:13 says that “the fire must be kept burning on the altar continuously; it must not go out.” It is our goal also to keep the fire burning that it may never go out! **We are calling out to all the worship leaders, musicians, singers, intercessors**, etc. who have the heart to establish this House for the LORD to join us to keep this fire burning continuously!

“So the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and worked on the house of the LORD of hosts, their God.” (Haggai 1:14)

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