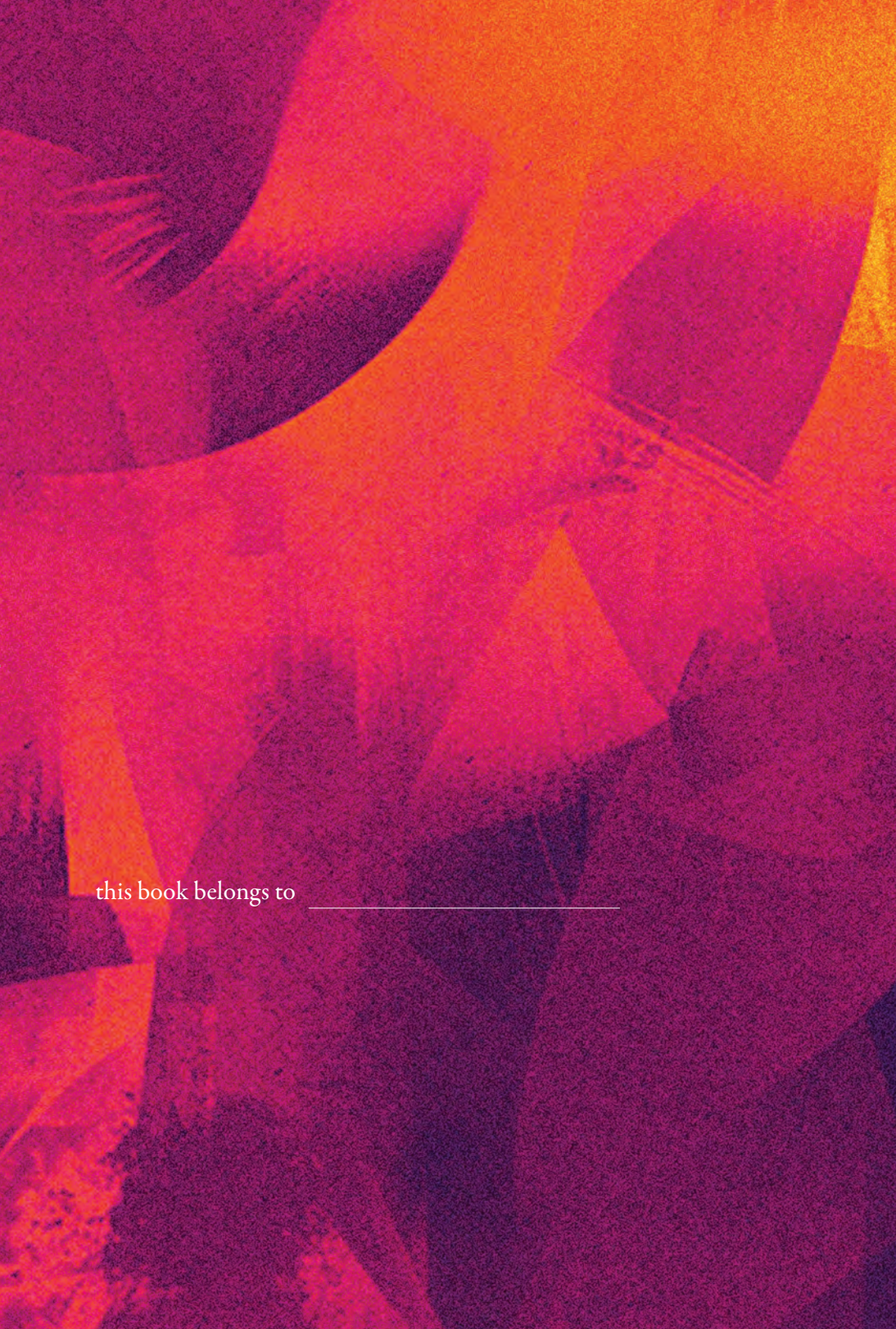




the
Curriculum
THE DISCIPLE'S GUIDE TO THE GOOD LIFE
JOURNAL





this book belongs to _____

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The Curriculum Journal

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the
Curriculum

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT | MATTHEW, CHAPTERS 5-7



Introduction

the sermon on the mount

Standing on a mountain gives perspective. It allows one to see what cannot be seen from the valley where trees and vegetation prevail. The peak provides a unique ability to see the path that's been walked and to dream about where life is heading. It's no coincidence that Jesus' most important teachings took place on the top of a mountain.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gives his manifesto about the art of human flourishing. He joins the other rabbis and sages throughout history and answers life's ultimate question, "How does a person live the good life?" Jesus' answer to that question is so compelling that people have been writing, discussing, and wrestling with his words for over 2,000 years.

With this journal, we'll walk together through these weighty words recorded by Jesus' friend in Matthew 5-7 as we engage Jesus' paradigm for living the blessed life. And, we'll ask how we as a community can live in Jesus' way, heart, and mission today.

Ryan Paulson
Lead Pastor

The Curriculum

how to use this book

The Curriculum Journal is a resource to help you capture and process what God's Word is teaching you through our Curriculum sermon series. It offers a variety of ways to engage beginning with the weekly passage, followed by intentional space to take notes during the message.



On the notes page, you'll notice a special application portion at the bottom entitled "3-2-1". This is a simple method for you to process the message and help others do the same each week.

3-2-1 Growth Challenge!

3 - in a group of three

2 - ask two questions

1 - commit to one act of obedience

The following pages contain the sermon-based questions used by Life Groups throughout the week.

Not in a Life Group?
Scan the QR code or
visit efcc.org/groups to sign up!



Matthew 4:18-25

the curriculum - wk 1

18 While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. **19** And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." **20** Immediately they left their nets and followed him. **21** And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. **22** Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him. **23** And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people. **24** So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, those having seizures, and paralytics, and he healed them. **25** And great crowds followed him from Galilee and the Decapolis, and from Jerusalem and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.

Notes



3-2-1

What is Jesus saying to me?

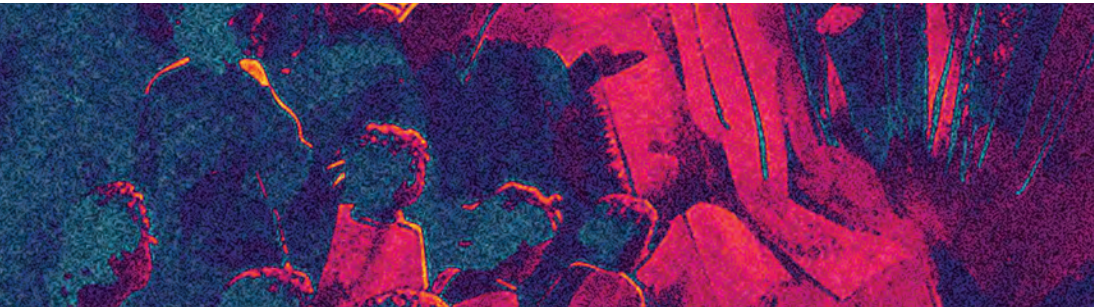
How will I respond?

Group Guide

1. Read Matthew 4:18-25 in multiple translations including The Message paraphrase. What catches your attention?

2. How might the rabbis of the local synagogue have received this message?

3. When you hear the word “follow,” what does that mean to you? Compare that to the devotion shown by these first disciples.

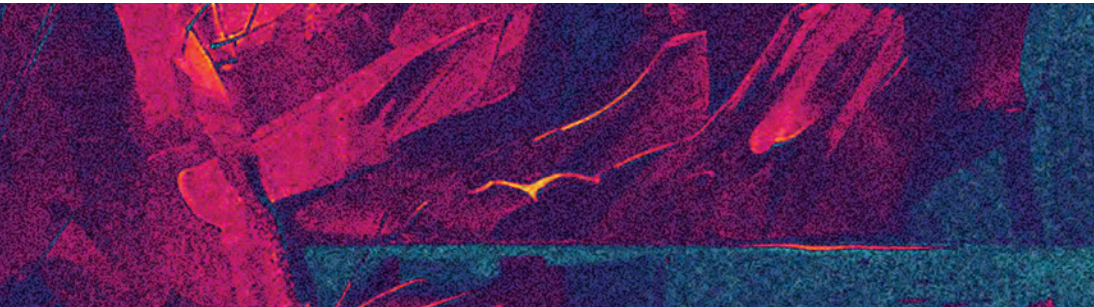


4. Imagine being chosen by Jesus to become His disciple along the shores of the Galilee. How would that have made you feel? You HAVE been chosen as a disciple of Jesus. How does this make you feel?

5. Take some time to reflect on your commitment to daily following Jesus as His disciple. What have you released to the Lord?

6. As a group, brainstorm what “casting a net” looks like in the day-to-day activities of your lives.

7. Are you aware of any “fish” that God might have placed in your life so that you might share the good news of the Kingdom with them? Share their names and pray for them as a group.



Matthew 5:1-12

the curriculum - wk 2

1 Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. **2** And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying: **3** “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. **4** Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. **5** Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. **6** Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. **7** Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. **8** Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. **9** Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. **10** Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. **11** Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. **12** Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

Notes



3-2-1

What is Jesus saying to me?

How will I respond?

Group Guide

- 1. Read Matthew 5:1-12. What catches your attention?*
- 2. Why is this called the Sermon on the Mount?*
- 3. Who is hearing this message? Why is this significant?*
- 4. How would you define the word "blessed" as used in today's culture?*
- 5. How are these ways an invitation to live differently? Which way is most difficult for you?*
- 6. Work together as a group to rephrase these beatitudes in your own words.*
- 7. Jesus said to "Rejoice and be glad" with a promise of reward. Thank God for those who have gone before you following the way of Jesus. Now pray for those who will follow after you and rejoice that the promise is the same for them too.*
- 8. Take a few moments to share ways in which living in the way of Jesus would benefit those you interact with and the world. How would this change your life?*



Matthew 5:13-16

the curriculum - wk 3

13 “You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people’s feet. **14** You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. **15** Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. **16** In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”



Notes



3-2-1

What is Jesus saying to me?

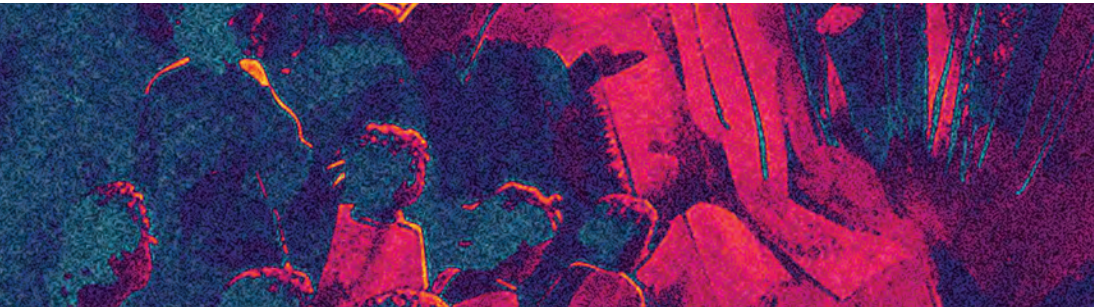
How will I respond?

Group Guide

1. Read Matthew 5:13-16 in multiple translations including The Message paraphrase. What catches your attention?

2. Are there any repetitive phrases in this passage? What is the significance?

3. What is said to bring God glory? How did Jesus model this in the way He lived?

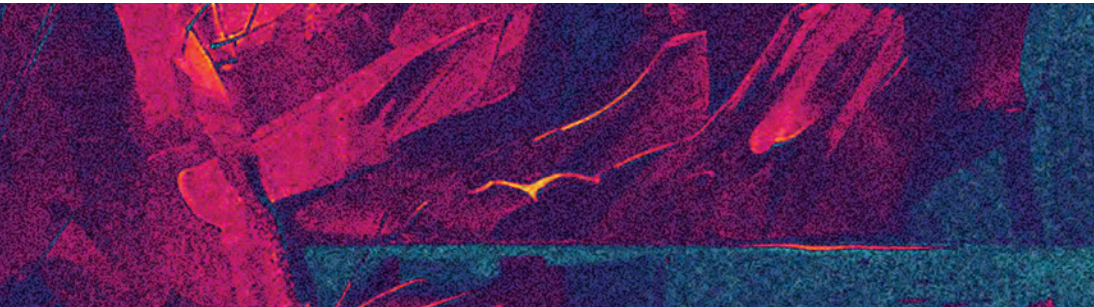


4. How are works shiny? Why is it important that the light not be hidden?

5. Take into consideration the previous verses in the Sermon on the Mount. With that in mind, describe what it means to be useful salt.

6. Salt can be contaminated. Do you see ways you might be contaminated? If so, how?

7. Pick a verse from this passage to meditate on for a few minutes. Briefly share what thoughts are stirred. What actions might you feel encouraged to take?



Matthew 5:17-20

the curriculum - wk 4

17 “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. **18** For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. **19** Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. **20** For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. “

Notes



3-2-1

What is Jesus saying to me?

How will I respond?

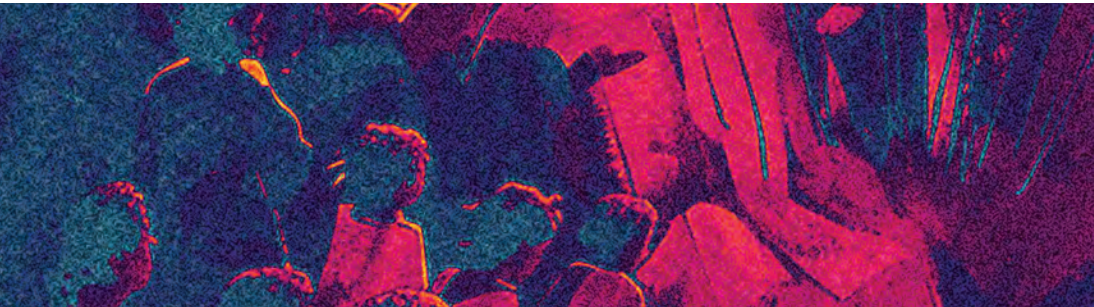
Group Guide

1. Read Matthew 5:17-20 in multiple translations. Now read it in The Message paraphrased version. What do you notice?

2. Read Hebrews 4:15 and Romans 8:1-4. How did Jesus fulfill the law and prophets? When will the law be accomplished?

3. Jesus makes a strong declaration about not setting aside the laws and the Old Testament. Why?

4. How important is it to keep the Commandments?

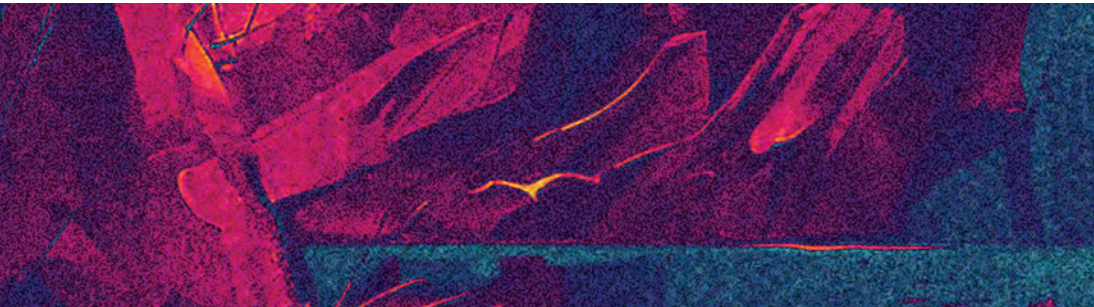


5. *How do we achieve the righteousness that Jesus describes in verse 20? Why is it necessary to enter God's kingdom?*

6. *Using examples from your past, how have you gone about achieving righteousness?*

7. *What parts of Scripture do you find difficult to obey? Now that you've identified those areas, how might you seek help from another to support your desire for obedience?*

8. *Take a few moments of quiet reflection. How might God be using these passages to fulfill something in your life? In contrast, how might He be using it to abolish something? Share with the group.*



Matthew 5:21-26

the curriculum - wk 5

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

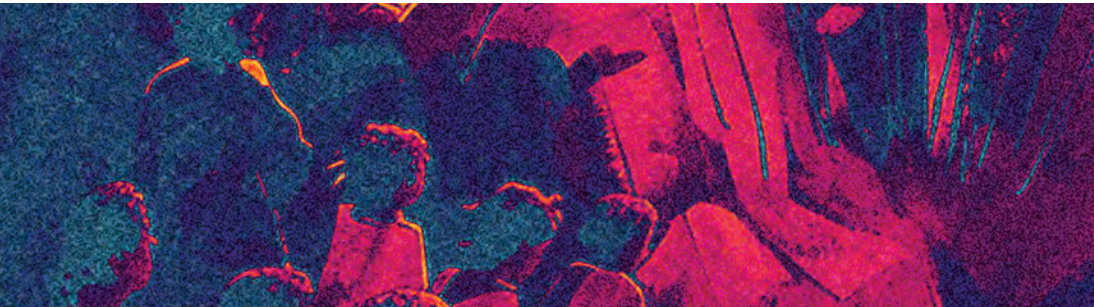
Group Guide

1. Read Matthew 5:21-26 in multiple translations including The Message paraphrase. What catches your attention?

2. Why does Jesus use the words “but I say”?

3. Read 1 John 4:20. How does this relate to this passage?

4. Why does Jesus focus on relational issues?

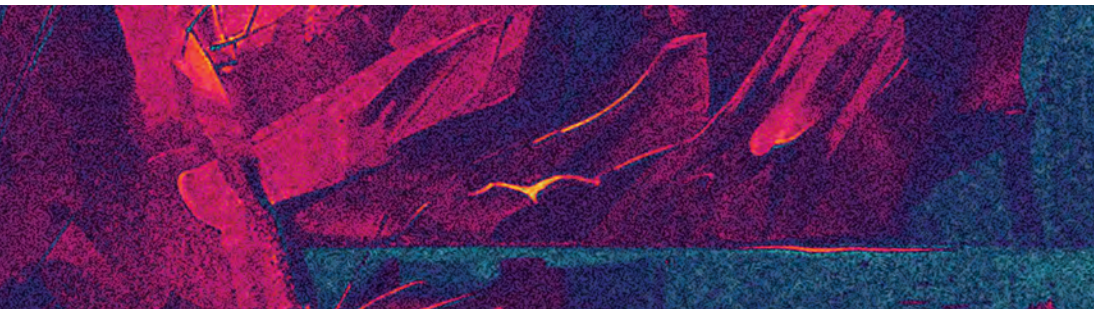


5. How does conflict affect our worship?

6. How did the family in which you were raised express anger? Does this impact the way you express it?

7. What does it look like to obey these instructions of Jesus right now?

8. Is there a relationship that comes to mind that needs mending? Pray for courage for one another to humbly begin the process of reconciliation.



Matthew 5:27-32

the curriculum - wk 6

27 “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ **28** But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. **29** If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. **30** And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell. **31** It was also said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ **32** But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.”

Notes



3-2-1

What is Jesus saying to me?

How will I respond?

Group Guide

- 1. Read Matthew 5:27-32 in multiple translations including The Message paraphrase. What catches your attention?*
- 2. What words are repeated in this passage? Why do you think He does this?*
- 3. Do you think Jesus really meant for a person to cut off the appendages that caused them to sin? Why or why not?*
- 4. Why is Jesus focused on our thought life?*
- 5. How often do you recognize that your thoughts might lead you to sin?*
- 6. Who in your life has modeled faithfulness? How has this impacted you?*
- 7. Jesus focuses on sexual lust, but what other temptations might you need to guard yourself against?*



Matthew 5:33-37

the curriculum - wk 7

33 “Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.’ **34** But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, **35** or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. **36** And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. **37** Let what you say be simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything more than this comes from evil.”



Notes



3-2-1

What is Jesus saying to me?

How will I respond?

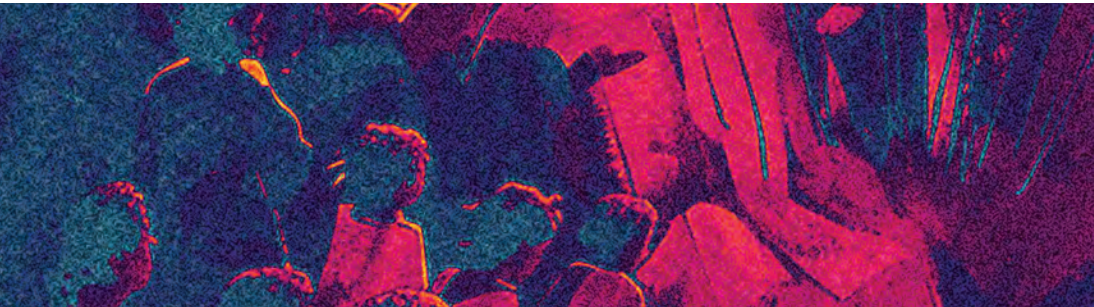
Group Guide

1. Read Matthew 5:33-37 in multiple translations including The Message paraphrase. What catches your attention?

2. Read Exodus 20:7, Leviticus 19:12, Numbers 30:2, and 1 Corinthians 15:33. How do these relate to this passage?

3. What point is Jesus trying to make by referring to the color of our hair?

4. Are you honest 100% of the time? How has dishonesty affected your relationships?

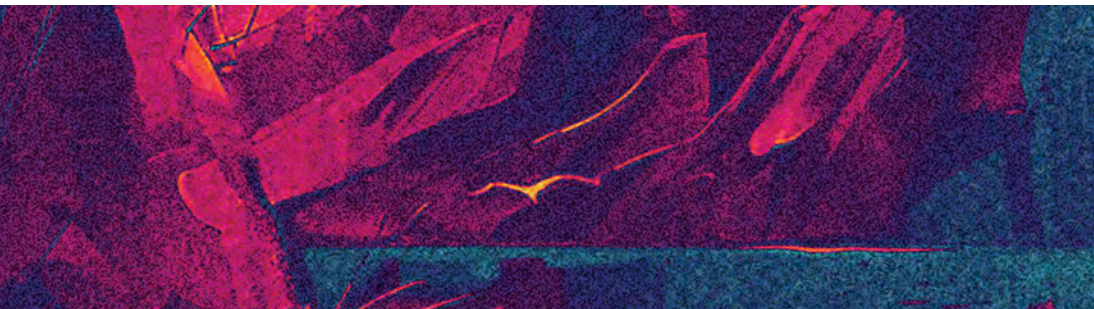


5. *What are some examples of when lying (or intentionally misleading someone) is culturally acceptable? Why is this?*

6. *What other words might you use to justify or “swear” you will do something?*

7. *What steps can you take to align yourself with the message of Jesus in this passage?*

8. *How has God kept His promises to you? Share with the group and thank Him.*



Matthew 5:38-48

the curriculum - wk 8

38 “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ **39** But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. **40** And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. **41** And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. **42** Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you. **43** You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ **44** But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, **45** so that you may be sons of your Father who is 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. **46** For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? **47** And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? **48** You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

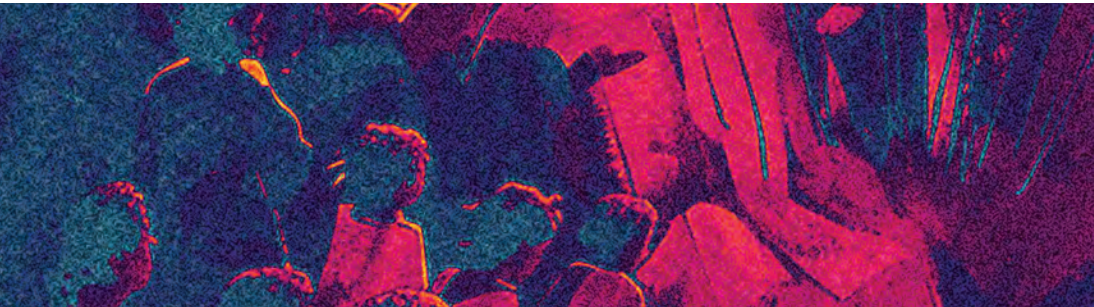
Group Guide

1. Read Matthew 5:38-48 in multiple translations including The Message paraphrase. What catches your attention?

2. Read Leviticus 20:19-20 and Deuteronomy 19:19. How does Jesus transform our understanding of the Law?

3. How did Jesus and the disciples live out verse 44?

4. How hard is it to love your enemies and pray for them?

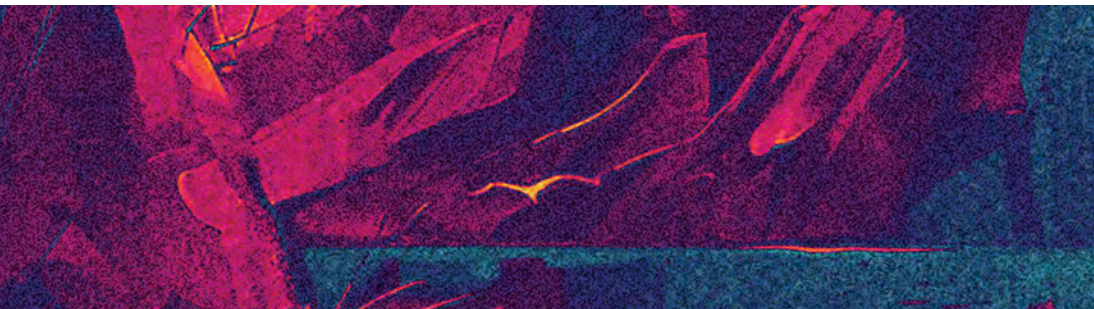


5. *Jesus uses tax collectors as an example. Who are the modern “tax collectors”?*

6. *How would this type of mercy and grace impact others?*

7. *When is it appropriate to give someone “the shirt off your back”? Is there a situation where the Holy Spirit might prompt you toward this type of generosity?*

8. *How does the example of Jesus inspire you to live differently?*



Matthew 6:1-8;19-24

the curriculum - wk 9

1 “Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. **2** Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. **3** But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, **4** so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. **5** And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. **6** But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. **7** And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. **8** Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.”

19 “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, **20** but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. **21** For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. **22** The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, **23** but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! **24** No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.”

Notes



3-2-1

What is Jesus saying to me?

How will I respond?

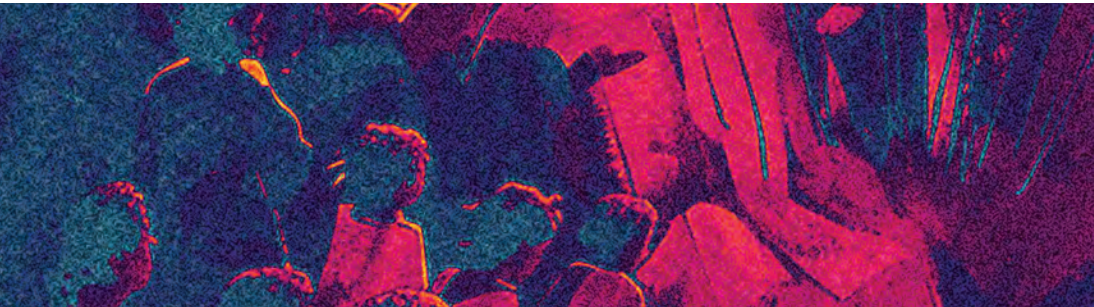
Group Guide

1. Read Matthew 6:1-8;19-24 in multiple translations including The Message paraphrase. What catches your attention?

2. Read Colossians 3:1-2 and 1 Timothy 6:17-19. How do these add to the understanding of this passage?

3. What is being highlighted in these passages as possible ways of religious hypocrisy?

4. What is the purpose of prayer? What are our motives to be? Have you ever fallen prey to alternative purposes/motives?

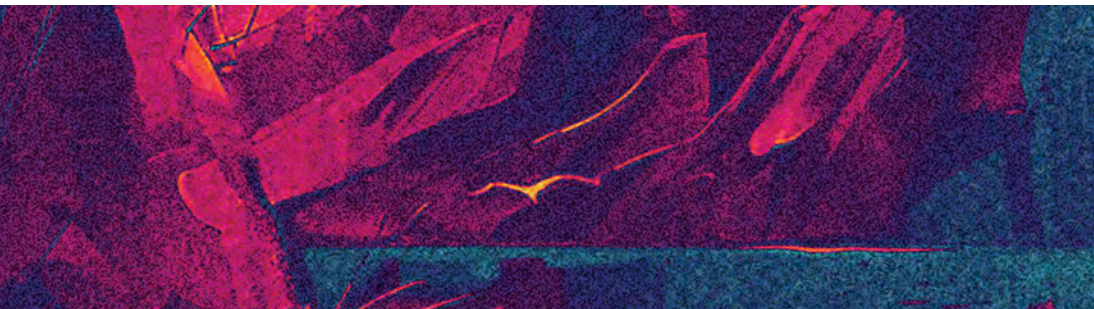


5. *What are “spiritual eyes”? What keeps them healthy? What is the state of your eyes?*

6. *What is meant by “treasures”? Why are they said to be rusty and infiltrated with moths? How does knowing this impact you?*

7. *There is a tension between saving and giving, but God is most concerned with our hearts. How do we save for the future and still worship God with sincerity?*

8. *Take a moment to examine your calendar and bank statements. What kind of treasures are you storing up?*



Matthew 6:16-18

the curriculum - wk 10

16 “And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. **17** But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, **18** that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.



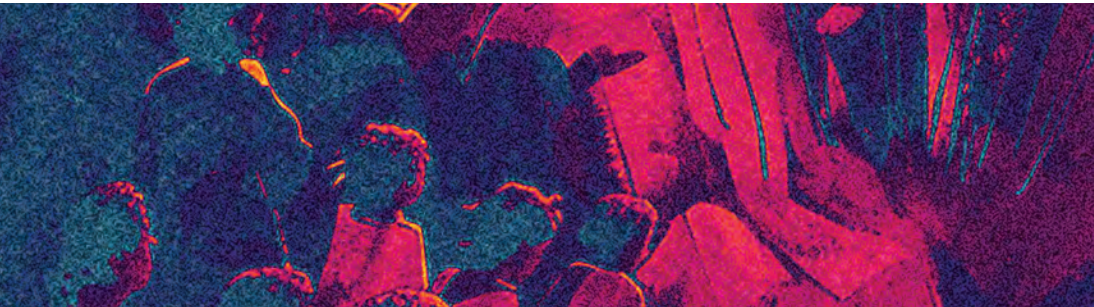
Group Guide

1. Read Matthew 6:16-18 in multiple translations including the New Living Translation (NLT) and EasyEnglish Bible (EASY) versions.

What catches your attention?

2. What is fasting and why do it? What does it demonstrate?

3. Why would Jesus have to teach on this topic and how does it relate to the rest of the Sermon on the Mount?

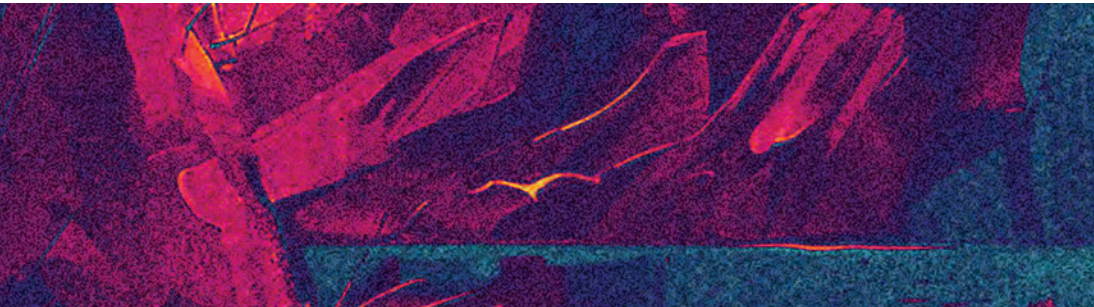


4. Over many years, the Israelites had performed outwardly as they carried out spiritual practices. Where do you see yourself drawn to performance-driven motivations?

5. Have you fasted before? How did it go? Pay attention to your emotions as you consider the idea of fasting. Share how and why you think you felt that way.

6. What do you suppose is meant by a “reward”? Do you desire these rewards?

7. How can you fast in a way this week that brings God glory?



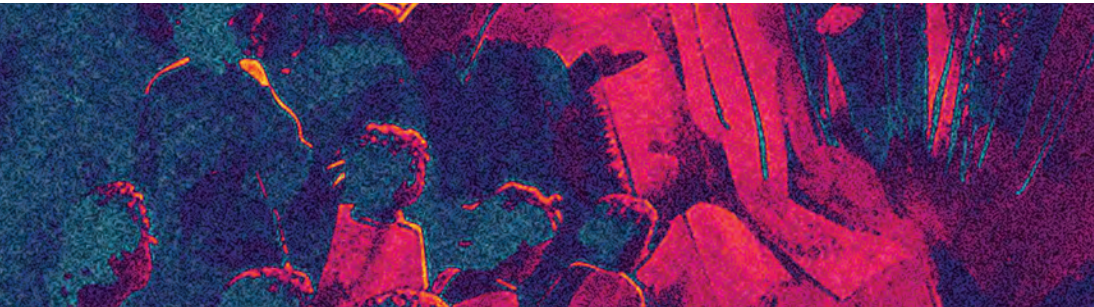
Matthew 6:25-34

the curriculum - wk 11

25 “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious 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? **26** Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? **27** And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? **28** And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, **29** yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. **30** But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? **31** Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ **32** For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. **33** But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. **34** Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”

Group Guide

- 1. Read Matthew 6:25-34 in multiple translations including The Message paraphrase. What catches your attention?*
- 2. Read Romans 8:31-32, James 4:13-15, and 1 Peter 5:7. What do these passages emphasize that relate to the passage in Matthew?*
- 3. What is the point that Jesus is trying to make?*
- 4. Both words “anxious” and “worry” can be translated as “marinate.” How often do you find yourself marinating and on what types of things? Why?*

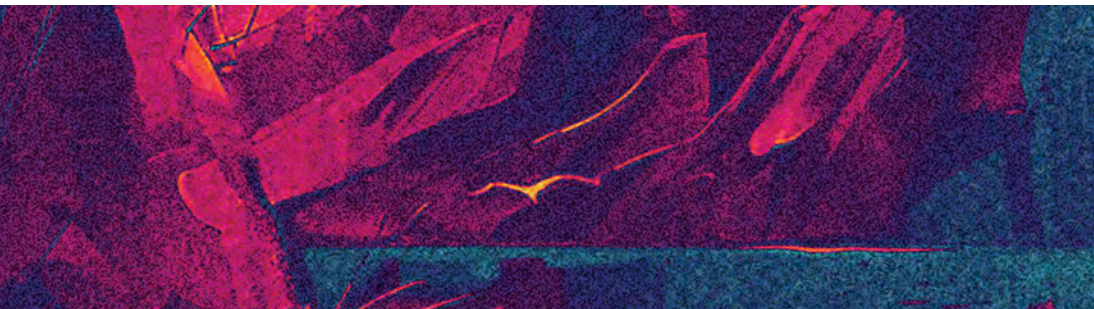


5. List the things in this passage that God cares for. Why do we need this reminder?

6. How does worry impact your heart and mind? How does it impact your relationships?

7. How do you seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness? What would be the impact on yourself and others if you did? Identify what gets in your way. How will you go about making a change this week?

8. Share stories with the group of ways God has provided for you.



Matthew 7:1-12

the curriculum - wk 12

1 “Judge not, that you be not judged. **2** For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. **3** Why do you see the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? **4** Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when there is the log in your own eye? **5** You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye. **6** Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you. **7** Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. **8** For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. **9** Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? **10** Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? **11** If you then, who are 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! **12** So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.”

Notes



3-2-1

What is Jesus saying to me?

How will I respond?

Group Guide

- 1. Read Matthew 7:1-12 in multiple translations including The Message paraphrase. What catches your attention?*
- 2. What style of writing is being used here and why?*
- 3. Verse 1 is one of the most misused verses in the Bible. Why do you think that is?*
- 4. The Israelites considered themselves better and belittled differences. In what ways might that same attitude tend to creep into your spiritual life?*
- 5. There is a difference between speaking to the willing, versus wasting time on the hard-hearted. How do you differentiate between the two?*
- 6. What is the difference between making a judgment and being judgmental? Which are you?*
- 7. In what ways are you blind to your sins? What “logs” are in your eyes? How might you go about removing them?*



Matthew 7:13-19

the curriculum - wk 13

13 “Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. **14** For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few. **15** Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. **16** You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? **17** So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. **18** A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. **19** Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”

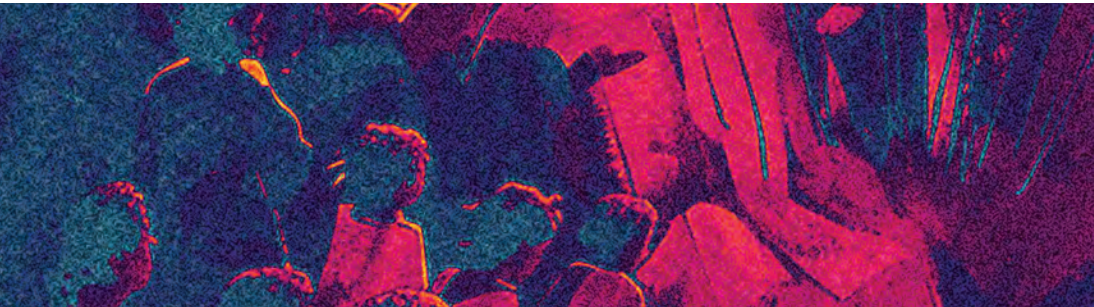
Group Guide

1. Read Matthew 7:13-19 in multiple translations including The Message paraphrase. What catches your attention?

2. What does the narrow gate represent? Why would anyone want to take this harder path?

3. What are the signs of a true prophet versus a false prophet? What are the differences in the way they are treated?

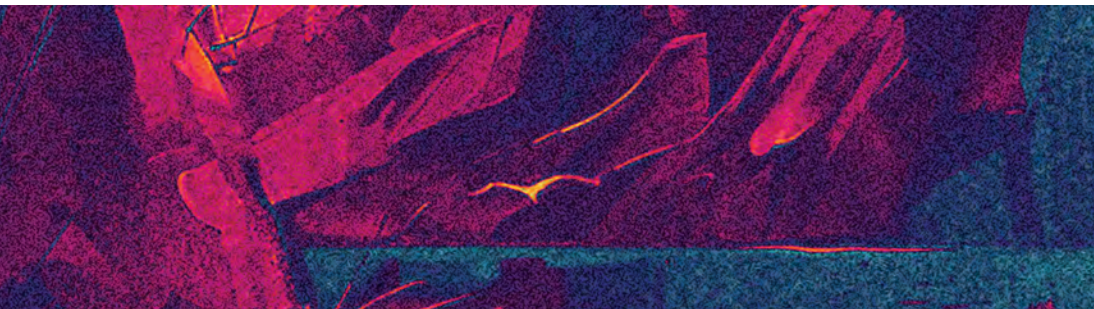
4. What is the purpose of the foundation of a house? Why is it important? How does this apply to your spiritual life?



5. After following Jesus, does life get easier or harder? Share your thoughts and experiences with the group.

6. What kind of fruit would you say is being produced in your life?

7. Reflect on what you've learned studying the Sermon on the Mount. Can you identify changes the Holy Spirit might be asking you to make? What steps can you take this week to apply this passage to your life?



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