



Discussion Guide



THE WELL
KINGSBURG

Week 1 - True Blessing

Overview and The Beatitudes

Understanding the Sermon on the Mount begins with understanding the “Kingdom of God.” The Kingdom of God exists wherever we find the Rule and Reign of God. This is exactly what our first parents, Adam and Eve, rejected as recorded in Genesis chapter 3. Instead of submitting to the authority of God’s Rule and Reign, they chose to be a law and an authority unto themselves. And that’s where the whole mess began.

One of the reasons Jesus came into the world was to demonstrate perfect submission to the authority of the Father. His *Sermon on the Mount* gives us a portrait of what Kingdom life looks like—a lived lived under the Rule and Reign of our Father in Heaven. As Jesus submitted to the authority of the Father, we are now called to submit to the authority of Jesus, our King. The Sermon on the Mount teaches us what life looks like in the Kingdom over which Jesus Rules and Reigns.

Read Matthew 5:1-12 and then discuss the following questions.

- What does “blessedness” or “complete and total happiness” look like in the eyes of the world? How have you pursued happiness apart from God? How did such a pursuit show itself to be empty and ultimately fruitless? How does the world’s idea of happiness compare to Jesus’ idea of happiness (or *blessedness*)?
- Those who are *Poor in Spirit* are those who have come to the end of themselves and look to God alone for their hope and help. Why do we have to come to the end of ourselves before we can truly follow God? Has God brought you to the end of yourself? If so, how? If not, why not?
- We are called to *hunger and thirst for righteousness*. Our ultimate satisfaction should be found in seeking righteousness, which means to pursue God as our only source of fulfillment. What else in this world have you sought to fulfill you? Why did it fail to deliver true satisfaction? What keeps you from pursuing God as the only true source of fulfillment?
- According to Jesus, the Merciful will be shown mercy. Why is it so hard to show mercy to people who have wronged us? Why does Jesus teach that we must show mercy to even the worst of sinners?

- *The Pure in Heart* are those who are singularly devoted to Jesus Christ. What competes for your affections and attention and distracts you from wholehearted devotion to Jesus in everything you do?
- Those who live under the Rule and Reign of Jesus are called to be peacemakers. What message does it send to the world when Christians can't even get along with each other? How can you pursue peacemaking in every area of your life?
- According to Jesus, those who follow him should expect to be persecuted. What does it mean to be persecuted? Have you experienced persecution in your life? If so, how did you respond to it? If not, why do you think you have not been persecuted?

Week 2 - True Influence

Salt and Light

This week we will be looking at Jesus' teaching on what having true influence as a follower of the King looks like. Christ asserts that we are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. As salt we preserve and flavor a rotting and insipid world. As light we are to lift the brightness of Christ up with confidence and allow him to shine through us to reveal the darkness of our world. Jesus reveals to us that the ultimate purpose of our influence is to be distinct to the people around us so that they would encounter the love of Christ and give glory to God.

- Jesus calls us to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. To do this Jesus the King must first be salt and light in our lives. How do you see Jesus preserving and flavoring your life? How do you see Jesus shining into your life exposing darkness and revealing sin, hurts and hang ups that prevent you from fully following Him?
- Read Matthew 5:13
We discussed two functions of salt in the ancient world. Salt was first a preservative intended to stop the decaying process and then as flavor agent further enhancing the good that is already present. Where do you see the need for preservation and flavoring in your families, neighborhoods, workplace, and community? How do you feel Jesus is calling you to engage and influence these areas for His glory?
- Read Matthew 5:14-15
Here we see our influence described as light. Light reveals and exposes darkness most effectively if it is elevated and put on display where people are able to see it. How do you elevate the light of Christ shining in and through you in your life? What are the things that might act as baskets that cover or obscure the light, inhibiting Jesus from shining through you?
- Read Matthew 5:16
Jesus teaches that the purpose of our influence is to expose others to the love of Jesus so that they would give glory to God. How do you see Jesus using you to show God to the people in your life? What areas of your life are distinct and different from the world around you? Where in your life is it challenging to be distinct and different?

Week 3 - True Authority

"But I Say..."

Pray and then read through Matthew 5:17-37, using the following discussion questions to guide your conversations:

- When you think of authority. What comes to mind? Do you have a negative reaction or a positive reaction?
- How might you have allowed tradition to overshadow the commandments of God (Refer to Matthew 15:1-9)?
- Do some of the struggles that Jesus mentions concerning anger, and lust, and oaths, resonate with you? How do you suppose the Gospel has helped to reshape your heart and your thoughts surrounding such issues?
- Do you find humble submission to the true authority of Christ difficult? If so, in what ways?
- When was the last time you rested in the authority of Christ, and found hope and joy in the authority of His truth and grace?

Week 4 - True Love

"Be perfect..."

Pray and then read through Matthew 5:38-48 then use the questions below to guide your discussion of the text.

- **Jesus** - what do I learn about Jesus from this text?
 - Why didn't Jesus retaliate against those who hated him and harmed him?
 - Who are God's enemies? James 4:4 says that those who are friends with the world are enemies of God. How does God treat his enemies?
 - Romans 5:8 says "but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

- **Repent** - what attitudes or actions do I need to repent of?
 - Have you sought to retaliate against someone who harmed you? How did that work out?
 - Have you been a crusader for justice for your rights? In what areas?
 - Who are your enemies? How have you hated your enemies?

- **Correct** - what beliefs do I hold dear that may need to be challenged?
 - In what ways do we try to justify our hatred of our enemies?
 - Why is it so hard to love our enemies?
 - Who might consider you to be their enemy?

- **Follow** - how can I follow Jesus in this area of my life?
 - What areas in my life do I need to stop retaliating and seek reconciliation instead?
 - What are some practical ways I can begin to love my enemies as Jesus has loved me?

Week 5 - True Righteousness

Depending on our Father; Living for others.

Pray and then read through Matthew 6:1-18 then use the questions below to guide your discussion of the text.

● Giving

- How did Jesus demonstrate perfect giving in his life on earth?
- Why does Jesus challenge his followers to give secretly in contrast to the hypocrites?
- How is righteous giving an expression of our dependence on God? Why is it important?

● Fasting

- Fasting in Hebrew culture was typically done by skipping breakfast and lunch. It wasn't extreme, but it was somewhat frequent. Why do you think fasting has fallen "out of fashion" in our day and culture?
- How does skipping a meal help to reorient our desires toward his Kingdom values?
- How is righteous fasting an expression of our dependence on God? Why is it important?

● Prayer

- Jesus says "when you pray," assuming this is something his disciples will do naturally. What prevents us from praying regularly and frequently?
- When did Jesus pray? What can we learn from his example?
- How does *The Lord's Prayer* help us learn to pray?
- What does *The Lord's Prayer* teach us about God?
- What does *The Lord's Prayer* teach us about community?
- How is righteous prayer an expression of our dependence on God? Why is it important?

Week 6 - True Treasure

Finding our security in treasuring Christ, not the treasures of the world.

Everyone seeks after something. In a world that seeks after money and possessions, for the sake of security and stature, we find Jesus redirecting our vision and our motivation towards Heaven—where true and life-giving treasure is ultimately found.

- False Treasure
 - What are some of the temporary things of this world in which you find yourself seeking after, and putting before God?
 - Would you say that your life is marked by selfishness and covetousness, or by generosity and selflessness?
 - What are some ways that these worldly treasures have driven or ruled over your life?
- Faithless-driven Anxiety
 - How often do you find yourself becoming overly anxious? Does this anxiety lead you to pray and to trust in God, or to more worry and anxiety?
 - Why do you doubt God's provision for your life? Where do you think that stems from?
- True Treasure
 - What are some ways in which you've been laying up for yourself 'treasures in Heaven'?
 - Why should we see Christ as the truest treasure of all?
 - What are some ways that we can, as the body of Christ, share our treasure in Christ with others, rather than bury it in the sand? (See Matthew 25:14-30)

Week 7 - True Discernment

Living together with wisdom and grace

Read Matthew 7:1-12 and then use the following questions to guide your group discussion.

The Ultimate Principle of Discernment

- *Read Matthew 7:12 again. This verse is the “pocket-knife” tool that every Christian needs to always have at the ready. When you find yourself in a situation that requires discernment, this verse is the place to start. As Jesus says, “this is the Law and the Prophets” in sum.*
- How do you wish that others would treat you when you are at your best? How about when you are at your worst?
- Why is it so easy to assume the best about ourselves, but so easy to assume the worst in others?

Discernment in relation to ourselves

- What are some ways you have been judged by others? How did that impact or affect you emotionally, mentally and spiritually?
- What are some ways you have struggled with a judgmental spirit toward others in your life (family, job, church)?
- Is Jesus telling us to never call out evil, sin or wrongdoing? Why or why not?
- Why is a judgmental spirit so toxic to the church?
- Read Psalm 139:23-24. How can David’s prayer affect our attitudes toward others?
- How can we lovingly correct one another while avoiding a spirit of judgment? Or should we even try (see Proverbs 27:6; Galatians 6:1-2; James 5:19-20)?

Discernment in relationship to others

- Have you ever tried to provide guidance or correction to someone, only to have them turn and attack you? How did you go about communicating with them? What could you have done differently to either avoid or improve the situation?
- Read Proverbs 26:4-5. Assuming the Bible cannot contradict itself (!), how can we know when verse 4 applies and when verse 5 applies instead?

Discernment in relationship to God

- Why do we need to recognize and accept our standing before God before we can have a proper relationship with other people?

- If God is a good Father, why don't we ask him for what we desire and need?

Week 8 - True Relationship

Does He know me?

Read Matthew 7:13-23 and then use the following questions to guide your group discussion.

1. We all have some sort of "Jesus Story", what is yours? Who do you say Jesus is?
2. Jesus gives us a warning to beware of false teachers and prophets—"wolves in sheep's clothing". What are some of the wolves in sheep's clothing that are present in our world today? What can we do to guard against being distracted or led astray by their message?
3. Jesus tells us that we will be able to identify true relationship with him based on the "fruit" which we produce. How is your fruit? What are the things in your life that are a product of your relationship with Jesus? In what aspects of your life do you feel Jesus encouraging you to grow? Are there any aspects of your life that might be unhealthy that Jesus may want to remove or that he may be asking you to let go of?
4. What are some steps or actions you can take to continue to develop and deepen your relationship with Jesus? What might be the potential "fruit" of these actions? How can these actions influence others in your life, your family, neighbors, or coworkers?

Week 9 - The True Foundation

Building on the Rock

Read Matthew 7:24-29 and then use the following questions to guide your group discussion.

1. What does it mean to “hear” the Word of Jesus? How do you hear his Word in your life? What does your discipline (or lack thereof) in reading the scriptures say about whether or not you are hearing Jesus?
2. Jesus teaches us his Word for us to follow, but the world also presents us with a “word” of its own. What other “words” from our culture or community compete for our attention and affections?
3. What Words of Jesus have you heard from his Sermon on the Mount that you find difficult to do and obey? Why can we have difficulty doing what he says in our lives? Why is it so important that we see to obey his instructions?
4. Verse 28 says The crowds were astonished at the teaching of Jesus, but it doesn’t say they obeyed his teaching. We face the same risk as we come to the end of this series. Have we heard Jesus? Yes. But the question now is, will we do what he says? What areas of the Sermon on the Mount have challenged you? How can you pray and what adjustments do you need to make in your life to begin to follow Jesus in every area that he speaks to in your life?
5. Who will you ask to support, encourage and pray for you as you seek to follow Jesus in specific areas that he speaks to in his Sermon on the Mount?