

# The Sermon On The Mount

The most famous sermon ever delivered in human history!



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# Table of Contents

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>Introduction .....</b>   | <b>4</b>  |
| Outline of the Sermon on the Mount .....                                | 4         |
| <b>Kingdom Attitudes: Poor in Spirit.....</b>                           | <b>5</b>  |
| Sermon Outline: Kingdom Attitude # 1 "Poor In Spirit" .....             | 7         |
| Small Group Discussion Outline: Poor in Spirit .....                    | 9         |
| <b>Blessed are those who Mourn .....</b>                                | <b>11</b> |
| Sermon Outline: Blessed Are Those Who Mourn.....                        | 13        |
| Small Group Discussion Outline: Blessed Are Those Who Mourn .....       | 15        |
| <b>Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness .....</b>                        | <b>16</b> |
| Sermon Outline: "Those Who Hunger and Thirst" .....                     | 18        |
| Small Group Discussion Outline: Hunger & Thirst for Righteousness ..... | 20        |
| <b>Blessed Are The Merciful .....</b>                                   | <b>22</b> |
| Sermon Outline: "Blessed Are The Merciful" .....                        | 24        |
| Small Group Discussion Outline: "Blessed Are The Merciful".....         | 26        |
| <b>Blessed Are The Pure In Heart.....</b>                               | <b>28</b> |
| Sermon Outline " Blessed Are The Pure In Heart" .....                   | 30        |
| Small Group Discussion Outline: "The Pure In Heart" .....               | 32        |
| <b>Blessed Are The Peacemakers .....</b>                                | <b>34</b> |
| Sermon Outline: "Blessed Are The Peacemakers".....                      | 36        |
| Small Group Discussion Outline: "The Peacemakers" .....                 | 38        |
| <b>The Persecuted Righteous .....</b>                                   | <b>40</b> |
| Sermon Outline: "Blessed Are The Persecuted Righteous".....             | 42        |
| Small Group Discussion Outline: "The Persecuted Righteous" .....        | 44        |
| <b>Salt and Light .....</b>   | <b>46</b> |
| Sermon Outline: "Salt of the Earth / Light of the World" .....          | 48        |
| Small Group Discussion Outline: "Salt and Light".....                   | 50        |
| <b>The Righteousness of the Kingdom.....</b>                            | <b>52</b> |
| Sermon Outline: "The Righteousness of the Kingdom" .....                | 54        |
| Small Discussion Outline: "Righteousness of the Kingdom" .....          | 56        |
| <b>The Righteousness of the Kingdom: Murder.....</b>                    | <b>58</b> |
| Sermon Outline: "Righteousness of the Kingdom: Murder" .....            | 60        |
| Small Group Discussion Outline: Murder.....                             | 62        |
| <b>Kingdom Righteousness: Adultery .....</b>                            | <b>64</b> |
| Sermon Outline: "The Righteousness of the Kingdom: Adultery" .....      | 66        |
| Small Group Discussion Outline: Adultery.....                           | 68        |
| <b>Kingdom Righteousness: Divorce.....</b>                              | <b>70</b> |
| Sermon Outline: Righteousness of the Kingdom: Divorce.....              | 71        |
| Small Group Discussion Outline: Divorce.....                            | 73        |
| <b>Kingdom Righteousness: Oaths.....</b>                                | <b>75</b> |
| Sermon Outline: The Righteousness of the Kingdom: Oaths .....           | 77        |
| Small Group Discussion Outline: Oaths .....                             | 79        |
| <b>Kingdom Righteousness: Revenge.....</b>                              | <b>81</b> |
| Sermon Outline: The Righteousness of the Kingdom: Revenge.....          | 81        |

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| Small Group Discussion Outline: Revenge.....                           | 83         |
| <b>Kingdom Righteousness: Love .....</b>                               | <b>86</b>  |
| Sermon Outline: The Righteousness of the Kingdom: Love .....           | 88         |
| Small Group Discussion Outline: Love .....                             | 90         |
| <b>Kingdom Righteousness: Acts of Righteousness .....</b>              | <b>92</b>  |
| Sermon Outline: Kingdom Righteousness: Acts of Righteousness .....     | 94         |
| Small Group Discussion Outline: Acts of Righteousness .....            | 96         |
| <b>Kingdom Righteousness: Values &amp; Worry .....</b>                 | <b>98</b>  |
| Sermon Outline: Righteousness of the Kingdom: Values and Worry.....    | 100        |
| Small Group Discussion Outline: Values & Worry .....                   | 102        |
| <b>Kingdom Righteousness: Judging .....</b>                            | <b>104</b> |
| Sermon Outline: The Righteousness of the Kingdom: Judging .....        | 106        |
| Small Group Discussion Outline: Judging .....                          | 108        |
| <b>Kingdom Entry: Ask, Seek, Knock.....</b>                            | <b>110</b> |
| Sermon Outline: Kingdom Entry - Ask, Seek, Knock.....                  | 112        |
| Small Group Discussion Outline: Kingdom Entry - Ask, Seek, Knock ..... | 114        |
| <b>Kingdom Entry - Narrow or Broad Way? .....</b>                      | <b>116</b> |
| Sermon Outline: Kingdom Entry: Narrow or Broad Way.....                | 118        |
| Small Group Discussion Outline: Narrow & Broad Way .....               | 120        |
| <b>Kingdom Entry - Beware of False Prophets.....</b>                   | <b>122</b> |
| Sermon Outline: Kingdom Entry - Beware of False Prophets .....         | 124        |
| Small Group Discussion Outline: False Prophets.....                    | 126        |
| <b>Kingdom Entry - Obedience .....</b>                                 | <b>128</b> |
| Sermon Outline: Kingdom Entry - Obedience.....                         | 130        |
| Small Group Discussion Outline: Kingdom Entry - Obedience .....        | 132        |
| <b>Test Over The Sermon On The Mount .....</b>                         | <b>134</b> |

## **Introduction**

The Sermon on the Mount is the most powerful and penetrating sermon ever preached in human history. It deals with every aspect of the human heart and condition. I hope this brief study will encourage deeper study for you as you complete it.

### ***Outline of the Sermon on the Mount***

The sermon divides itself into three distinct sections.

- I. Kingdom Attitudes (Matthew 5:1-19)
- II. Kingdom Righteousness (Matthew 5:20 – 7:6)
- III. Kingdom Entry (Matthew 7:7 – 27)

When you read Matthew 7:28-29 you'll see that the crowds were absolutely amazed when Jesus completed this sermon. We should also be amazed! Hope you are!

# Kingdom Attitudes: Poor in Spirit

By Greg King

*"The Kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man bought it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field" (Matthew 13:44).*

What kind of attitude do you have? I'm not talking about your moods, and I'm not talking about your intellectual capacity. What kind of attitude do you have? In this article we'll be looking at "Kingdom Attitudes". How do you know if you have the attitude of the Kingdom? There are several attitude indicators by which you can measure yourself.

## Poor in Spirit

*"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3).* In His greatest and most popular sermon, Jesus gave the heart of Kingdom Attitudes. Poor in spirit is not low self esteem nor is it religious piety. It is the realization, that without God, you are spiritually bankrupt, NSF, broke, overdraft.

Poor in spirit is the opposite of being confident in your own righteousness. *"To some who were confident in their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable: 'Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men - robbers, evildoers, adulterers - or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God have mercy on me a sinner.' I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted'" (Luke 18:1-14).*

The poor in spirit Kingdom attitude realizes its poverty before the Almighty. The tax collecting, sinner didn't pray about himself as did the self righteous, synagogue attending, Pharisee. Instead, he stood at a distance, head bowed, heart crushed, in spiritual poverty. He was an affluent poor man! Blessed! Kingdom heart!

Then there is the story of the New Testament Yuppie Boomer! Italian suit, balanced portfolio of mutual funds, chauffeured limousine chariot, white Arabian horses. *"Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?"... If you want to enter life, obey the commandments."... "All these things I have kept... What do I still lack" (Matthew 19:16-21)?*

What do YOU still lack? How would you have answered this young Yuppie from Suburbia Jerusalem? Wow, great, sign up for the kingdom, you're just the qualify person we've been looking for! Nice dresser, respectable in the community, financially stable and prudent, lots of wisdom. Boy, look at the kind of people we'll attract with this fella in here! And to top it all off, he was morally impeccable! Didn't drink, didn't smoke, didn't run around with wild women! Honest as the day is long! And

wow, what a family life! He honors his mom & dad. Certainly this guy is guaranteed a place in the kingdom.

But wait. Listen to the silence as Jesus answers this man, who is looking at the ground, not in humility, but admiring his wing tipped sandals from Hanover PA! There's nothing YOU can do, replies Jesus, but there's an attitude you must demonstrate.

*"If you want to be perfect (complete, mature), go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven, THEN come and follow me..." (Matthew 19:16-21).*

This fellow drove away sorrowful back to the burbs because he didn't have a kingdom attitude. He thought he could enter the kingdom by performance rather than poverty of spirit. Religious, yes. Righteous, no. Just like the Pharisee who boasted of how good HE was and *not like those people.*

## How Do You Know If You're Poor In Spirit?

Do you think you're a pretty good person because you come to church? *"I attend Bible class, and worship, and Lord, I come Sunday night and Wednesday night too!" " All these things I have done since my youth." " I write my tax deductible contribution check, and I help our God's Love homeless shelter sometimes." "I'm not like the adulterers, the child abusers, the homosexuals, especially not them!"* What do YOU still lack? ***"Blessed are the poor in spirit."***

All your life you've been rewarded by performance, by what YOU DO! Jesus is looking, not at what you DO, but what you realize you CANNOT DO. You cannot perform your way to heaven. In order to be in God's kingdom, it requires the kingdom attitude of poverty of spirit.

You see, the kingdom of heaven makes no earthly sense. Give a man religion without reminding him of his moral and spiritual filth; the result will be arrogance in a three piece suit. But, show a man his puny moral effort before the Holiness of The Almighty, you will have a man poor in spirit. The Kingdom will be a treasure worth selling out for.

## **Sermon Outline: Kingdom Attitude # 1 "Poor In Spirit"**

Purpose: to convince Christians of the need of being poor in spirit, rather than just being religious as a requirement of the kingdom attitudes.

### **Introduction:**

**AC:** Do YOU Have a kingdom attitude? If so, tell me what it is. How can someone else know and have one too?

**NEED:** Kingdom attitudes are often misunderstood, mostly by religious people.

That's why the Pharisees and Scribes killed Jesus then...

That's why religious people today would kill him all over again.

The Kingdom of Heaven makes no earthly sense, and attitudes that govern people in the kingdom make some people very uncomfortable, especially religious people.

A. Matthew 5:1-12 lists several kingdom attitudes that we're going to look at in the next few weeks. Today we're going to look at the first of the Kingdom attitudes, and we'll meet three men who will help us understand that kingdom attitude.

**CI: BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT, THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM..**

### **I. What is Poor In Spirit?**

A. Poor: is not low self esteem, nor is it religious piety.

B. It is a hard, cold realization that without God, you are spiritually bankrupt, NSF, broke, overdrawn, destitute, homeless.

### **II. The Pharisee and Tax Collector (Luke 18:9-14)**

A. Jesus addressed this story to those "Who were confident in their own righteousness, and looked down on everybody else."

B. Pharisee: the religious elite of the day, flawless in religious piety, and moral uprightness in the eyes of the community.

Pharisee prayed about HIMSELF:

Look at all the religious things I do, God, you're lucky to have me around.

Looked down on this low life tax collector and "his type."

C. Tax collectors were looked down upon, especially by the "mainline" religious view of the day

Stood at a distance, He realized the unapproachableness of a Holy God by an unholy man

Would not even look up to heaven. (Shame, the realization of his condition before the Almighty).

Beat his breast: (remorse, sorrow, anguish).

Pleaded for mercy rather than bragging on his moral accomplishments.

D. The Tax Collector impressed God because he was poor in spirit. His had the spirit of the kingdom of heaven. He had a kingdom attitude.

### **II. The New Testament Yuppie (Matthew 19:16-26)**

A. Italian suit, stock portfolio, chauffeured limousine, white Arabian horses. He's young, he's powerful. He pumps away fatigue at the gym and slam dunks old age on the court.

Until today, life's been a smooth cruise down a neon avenue.

Prosperous, pious, and very religious. Just ask him!!

B. The question: What good thing must **I DO** to get eternal life?

What are the requirements, the break even point? How much do I need to invest to be certain of my return?

C. Keep the commandments:

Pencil in hand, he waits for the list.

Oh, those commands (The very answer intended to show him how short he falls, makes him brag). "Those I have kept since I was a boy" Oh? Really.....?

D. What else? Go sell everything and give it to the poor.... then you will have treasures in heaven. Then you will get a kingdom attitude!

E. **HE WENT AWAY SORROWFUL, NOT BECAUSE HE WAS AFRAID OF BEING POOR, BUT BECAUSE HE WAS AFRAID OF BEING POOR IN SPIRIT!**

Impossible for the rich.... the rich in spirit, to enter life!

Money wasn't the hindrance, self sufficiency was. It wasn't the big bucks, it was a big head. No loopholes, no chances, no hope, no camels through the eye of a needle, and no self sufficient, independent, people who are confident in their own righteousness. Impossible!!

### **III. The Application To Us!**

A. The sinner and the member of the church:

I attend Bible class AND worship, and I never miss Sunday and Wednesday nights. I write my tax deductible contribution check and eat my cracker and drink my grape juice. Lord, I'm not like THOSE people... you know who I'm talking about. Their marriages are falling apart, their kids are rebellious, and they can't even hang on to a decent job. Lord I'm not like them....

B. The Rich Young Yuppie:

I am focused, I am in control of my destiny. I own my own business, and I've been a member of the church all my life, and my parents are members... I've kept all the commands since my youth.

C. It's not just the rich in spirit who will not enter the kingdom, it's the educated, the strong, the good looking, the popular, and the religious.

Matthew 7:21-23, not talking about the denominations, but about those who think that by their religiosity, they can enter the kingdom.

D. You cannot save yourself:

Not by right living and moral achievement.

Not by right doctrine or the right devotions.

Not by the right emotions and sentiments.

### **IV. Conclusion:**

A. Ephesians 2:8-9

B. The first Kingdom attitude before starting your walk with God, is Poverty of Spirit.

All the religion in the world will not save you without it.

Give a man religion without reminding him of his spiritual impotence, the results will be arrogance in a three piece suit, a Pharisee confident of his own righteousness, and a man who would gain the whole world... while sorrowfully, but willingly forfeit his own soul.

C. Blessed are the Poor in Spirit, theirs is the kingdom of heaven.



## **Small Group Discussion Outline: Poor in Spirit**

### **Introduction**

A. Matthew 13:44-45:

From these verses, what do you see about attitudes toward the kingdom of God?

Why is the kingdom valuable to you personally? How is it manifested in your life?

B. How would you define the term "KINGDOM ATTITUDE?" (ask several responses)

C. How can you tell if you or other people have a kingdom attitude ? (Ask for several responses)

D. Matthew 5:1-12

In this section of verses, Jesus lists several "Kingdom attitudes". What are some of those listed?

E. We're going to discuss the first Kingdom Attitude that Jesus mentions here: Poor In Spirit.

### **I. What Is Poor In Spirit?**

A. Poor: Define Poor (ask several) Beggar, bankrupt, destitute, homeless.

B. Poor: Who are the poor in this world? Describe them. (Homeless, cardboard boxes for homes, no clothes, eat from dumpsters)

C. What is poverty of spirit? (not low self esteem, or emotionally abused)...

It is the realization of your destitute, homeless, bankrupt condition before God.

### **II. The Pharisee and Tax Collector (Luke 18:9-14)**

A. In verse 9, to whom is Jesus aiming this parable? (Those confident of their own righteousness)

What does it mean to be "confident in your own righteousness?"

How did the Pharisee demonstrate his confidence in his own righteousness?

How could YOU demonstrate the attitude of the Pharisee? (ask several ideas)

Thinking you're a good person simply because you go to church.

Looking down on people who do things more sinful than you? (Ask for examples: child molesters, homosexuals, prostitutes, drug dealers)

B. The Tax Collector:

Where did the tax collector stand in reference to the temple (:13)? Why?

What can you tell about his attitude toward his own righteousness? How is this manifested? (stood at a distance, too ashamed to look toward heaven, beat his breast in anguish, pleaded for mercy)

Have you ever been too ashamed to approach God? (Would you care to share an instance?)

Who went away more justified? Why? (one was poor in spirit, the other wasn't)

### **III. The New Testament Yuppie (Biff) (Matthew 19:16-26)**

A. The Rich Young Man

Describe what this young man might have looked like, lived like, and acted like? ( Ask several, then share some of these ideas: Italian suits, stock portfolio, chauffeured limousine, white Arabian horses, young, powerful, pumps away fatigue at the gym, and slam dunks old age on the court)

What led you to these assumptions?

B. The Young Man's First Question

What question does the this young man ask Jesus (:16)? Can you see anything in his question that might tell you about his attitude? (what thing must **IDO** )

How would YOU have answered him? (come to church, get baptized, take the Lord's supper, be a good person???) What answer does Jesus give the young man (:17)?

How does the young man answer (:20)? (These I have kept since a young boy) Do you think he was telling the truth? Why?

No one was able to keep the 10 commandments perfectly. If you violated one, you were guilty of all. How does his answer betray his attitude? (he's not poor in spirit).

C. The Young Man's Second Question:

What second question does the young man ask Jesus (:20)? Why do you think he asks this question? (wants to be sure *he's* done everything required)

How would YOU have answered this question? (get several responses)

D Jesus answers:

What's your first reaction to Jesus' answer in verse 21?

How would YOU respond to this requirement ? Why?

What was the young man's reaction in verse 22?

He asked Jesus what was necessary to get eternal life. Why did he go away sad?

*He was not afraid of being poor. He was afraid of being poor in spirit.*

What is Jesus' response to him leaving (:23-24)?

Why is it so hard to enter life for the rich (self sufficiency, independence, wants to control his own destiny).

What would be the hardest thing for you to do if you asked Jesus "What Do I Still Lack?"

E. The Disciples' reaction (: 25-26):

Who then can enter life? What is Jesus' answer? ( God can do the impossible, if we let him)

#### **IV. Conclusion:**

A. Are YOU poor in spirit? How is that being manifested in your life? Evaluate your life and see if you really have a Kingdom Attitude!

# Blessed are those who Mourn

By Greg King

*"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted" (Matthew 5:4).*

## Blessed are Those Who Mourn

Salvation is a free gift from God, but to receive it you must admit that you need it. Jesus said that those who mourn are blessed, and would be comforted. But about what kind of mourning is he referring? Being sad and gloomy all your life? No. Going through life clinically depressed, showing that your religion is really *holy* by the wrinkle on your brow and the tear in your eye? NO! In order to understand the blessings of mourning, we'll examine Three men: Judas, Peter and Paul.

### Judas

*"When Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty silver coins to the chief priests and elders. 'I have sinned,' he said, 'for I have betrayed innocent blood.'... So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself" (Matthew 27:5-3).*

It is obvious that Judas mourned. But, his mourning was neither blessed, nor comforted. Rather, it led to a course rope around a haggard branch in the hot Galilean sun. Godly sorrow is different than worldly sorrow. *"Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death" (2 Corinthians 7:10).* Show a man his failures without a deliverer, and the results will be found in the road side gutter of hopelessness.

### Peter

*"I don't know the man!... Immediately the rooster crowed... then Peter remembered... and he went outside and wept bitterly" (Matthew 26:75).* How many times has the rooster crowed in your life, and you remember? Peter mourned.

Peter also mourned another time, but it wasn't a rooster crowing that reminded him, it was a seasoned fisherman standing knee deep in fish. *"They caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break... When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, 'Go away from me Lord; I am a sinful man'" (Luke 5:6-8).*

Peter mourned over his own sinfulness in the presence of a God who could perform the impossible. Roosters, fish, and broken nets - or broken lives, can help us mourn over our own sinfulness. But not a mourning like Judas. A mourning like Peter. Mourning that produced repentance, without regret and humbled a once rebellious life in the presence of the Almighty.

### Paul

It happened on the road to Damascus. A bright light, *"Who are you Lord? I am Jesus..."* He could feel the tightening of the noose around his neck at that point. *"What would you have me do Lord?"* No excuses, no apologies, no "buts" or "let me explain..." Just submission. *"Go to Damascus, there you will be told..."* God let Saul sit for three long days and nights with scales on his eyes so thick the only place he could see was inside himself. *"THERE, you will be told..."* A play on words? Perhaps.

The true prisons in life are not made of brick and mortar, but of pride. "I did it MY way." "Well, I'm not perfect, but I'm better than..." "Sure I sin a little, but I'm a pretty good ol boy..." And the rooster crows.

We justify, rationalize, compare ourselves to those "worse?" than us, but no mourning. These are the cold steel bars on the jail door of the prison of pride. They sound good! They sound familiar! They sound "American!" But in the kingdom of heaven, they sound pitifully hollow. *"There is none righteous, no not one! (Romans 3:10).*

But mourning alone is not sufficient. Judas did that. Realizing our sinfulness is the first step. Mourning over your sinfulness is an outflow of poverty of Spirit. The next step is the plea for mercy, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Then God can comfort you with forgiveness. Then you can be blessed!



## **Sermon Outline: Blessed Are Those Who Mourn**

Purpose: To inform Christians of the Kingdom Attitude of Mourning, and stimulate them to seek to have "Kingdom Attitudes"

### **Introduction**

**AC:** Salvation is a free gift from God, but to receive it, you must first admit that you need it. In order to be comforted, you first must mourn.

**NEED:** Many people, both in the church and out, do not understand what Jesus is expecting in this kingdom attitude.

Blessed are those who mourn, not whine!

Sorry for being caught, rather than sorry for their sin.

No mourning, no humility, no repentance, no kingdom!!

**CI: BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO MOURN, FOR THEY SHALL BE COMFORTED.**

### **I. Judas**

A. Thirty pieces of silver seemed like a reasonable incentive to betray a friend. But the comfort for which he was looking disappeared in deadly remorse. (Matthew 27:1-5)

When he saw the results of his sin, he was seized with remorse.

He confessed that he had sinned.

Realized he had betrayed innocent blood

He rejected the reward of his sin (30 pieces).

B. He had worldly sorrow, not Godly sorrow (2 Corinthians 7:10).

Grieved, but did not mourn.

Grief resulted in death (Acts 1:16-19).

C. Show a man his failures without any chance of deliverance, and the result will be found in the gutter of hopelessness.

### **II. Peter**

A. A man among men on the Galilean fishing fleet.

Rugged individualism, calloused hands toughened by the course nets. His friends call him "Rocky."

Bulging biceps, and if he had a tattoo on his forearm it would be a big black anchor with "Love Mom" written across it.

His motto: "I don't get mad, I get even."

B. He thought HE was in control of his own destiny..... until Jesus taught him to mourn:

C. Mark 14:27-31, cf. 14: 66-72.

Wept bitterly when he realized his failure.

Has a rooster crowed in your life lately?

D. Luke 5:1-8

Broken nets: Witnessing God's power manifested in the things that YOU think you have control over... but really don't.

E. Peter preached the first sermon to both Jews & Gentiles. His mourning, produced a life useful to God.

### **III. Paul**

A. Paul's mourning began on the road to Damascus (Acts 22:8,10).

Who are You Lord? (Mourning occurs only when we first understand who God is...)

What shall I do Lord? No excuses, no apologies, no attempt at explanation... just submission.

Go, and there it will be told you.

B. God let Saul sit for three long days and nights with scales on his eyes so thick the only place he could see was inside himself.

### **IV. Us**

- A. The true prisons in life are not made of brick and mortar, but of pride. "I did it MY way."  
Whimper? Complain? Losers limp? Self Pity? Prison!
- B. Betrayal sentence:  
"Well I'm not perfect, but I'm better than..."  
"Listen, I'm as good as the next guy..."  
And the rooster crows, and the net spills its fish at our feet.  
Romans 3:10  
James 4:6-10

## **V. Conclusion**

- A. Judas realized his sin, but rather than enjoying the blessedness of mourning, he had a field named after him... The Field of Blood.
- B. Peter heard the rooster crow, witnessed the net tear, and submitted a once useless life to God who makes the ordinary miraculous.
- C. Paul, murderer to martyr, persecutor to preacher, scourge of the church to the serge of the church.
- D. The kingdom of heaven makes no earthly sense.  
Joy through mourning?  
Liberty through surrender?  
Comfort through mourning?

## **Small Group Discussion Outline: Blessed Are Those Who Mourn**

### **Introduction**

A. Matthew 5:1-12

What is the second "Kingdom Attitude" of which Jesus speaks (verse 4)?

B. What does Jesus say about those who mourn? (Blessed, and would be comforted)

What do you think it means to mourn? (deep grief)

How would this differ from whining or complaining or being sorry for getting caught?

C. How does this philosophy differ from the philosophy of the world?

D. In this lesson we are going to look at the lives of three men, Judas, Peter, and Paul, and examine this Kingdom attitude in reference to their lives. Then we will make application to our lives.

### **I. Judas**

A. Matthew 27:1-5

Do you think Judas foresaw that his betrayal would end in Jesus' death? Why?

What was Judas' reaction when he saw the results of his actions? (Remorse, confession, rejected the 30 pieces of silver, finally suicide)

Did Judas "MOURN" as a kingdom attitude? Explain what you mean?

B. 2 Corinthians 7:10

What light does this verse shed on understanding the difference between mourning, and the sorrow that Judas experienced?

### **II. Peter**

A. From what you know about commercial fishermen, what type of person might Peter have been? (Rugged individualism, tough hands, "I don't get mad, I get even" attitude)

B. Mark 14:27-31; 66-72

What did Jesus know about Peter, that Peter did not know about himself?

Have you ever made a stupid statement about yourself like Peter did? Care to share?

From verses 66-72, why do you think Peter told people that he did not know Jesus? (fear, shame, embarrassment, wanted to be able to stay near to help...?)

What was his reaction when the rooster crowed? Why?

C. Luke 5:1-8

What do you find interesting about this section of verses?

Why did the full nets of fish have the reaction on Peter that they did (Verse 8)?

POINT: Witnessed God's power manifested in the things that YOU think YOU have control over, but really don't.

D. What did God accomplish with Peter's life after these events? (First Jewish & Gentile converts)

How is Peter's mourning and remorse different than that of Judas?

### **III. Paul**

A. Acts 9:1-9

What do you think Paul felt like when he realized it was Jesus who was speaking to him?

"What will you have me do Lord" (22:10)? What does this demonstrate about his attitude?

What do most people do when they've been caught at something they shouldn't be doing? (try to explain, apologize, justify,)

What do you think Paul was thinking about for those three days in Damascus?

B. "God let Saul sit for three long days and nights with scales on his eyes so thick the only place he could see was inside himself."

Do you think this is an accurate picture of what Saul was going through? Why?

### **IV. Us**

A. What do you see different in the lives of Judas, Peter, and Paul as far as their attitudes toward their sin?

B. What do the following phrases tell about the attitudes we sometimes have?

Well, I'm not perfect, but I'm better than... (Is this a Kingdom Attitude? Why)

"Listen, we all make mistakes, what's the problem?" (Does this demonstrate the mourning that Jesus is looking for? Why?)

- C. How can the "ROOSTER CROW" in our personal lives? (we get caught doing something we vowed we'd never do, or say)
- D. Have you ever seen God's power manifested in something you thought you had control over, and realized you were not worthy of God?

## **V. Application**

- A. What is Jesus saying "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted?"
- B. James 4:6-10, How does this passage help us understand Jesus' teaching?
- C. Explain the attitude of heart Jesus is expecting from your life by being Poor in Spirit and Mourning.

## **Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness**

**By Greg King**

*"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled" (Matthew 5:6)*

The neighbors whispered behind her back as she walked down the streets of her home town. She was one of



*those* women. Her face was weathered because of the type of life she'd been living. One-night stands sprinkled aimlessly on a desert of broken relationships and shattered dreams. The laughter of the pubs from the night before had a hauntingly hollow echo in her lonely life of today. The lover who now occupied her bed was not her husband. She'd grasped for meaningful relationships too many times before to want to be hurt like that again. She's the woman at the well.

## Hunger and Thirst

Jesus promised that those who hunger and thirst would be totally satisfied. We usually get what we hunger and thirst for - well, sometimes. The problem is that the treasures of this life don't satisfy, the treasures of heaven do!

We're a ragged lot bound together by our own broken dreams and dead promises. Fortunes that were never made. Families that were never built. Hopes that were never realized. We're trapped in the basement of our own failures. And we're thirsty! Not for fame, or possessions, or passion, or romance. We've drunk from those pools. They are salt water, and they kill rather than quench. *"Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again"* (John 4:13).

We thirst for righteousness, integrity, virtue, purpose in life. We hunger for a correct way to think and feel. The packed offices of the psychiatrist prove that. We ache for meaning, peace, and contentment. *"Can't someone or something give me a*

*clean conscience again?"* We crave for a clean slate and yearn for a fresh start. We pray for a hand which will enter the dark cavern of our world and do for us the ONE thing we can't do for ourselves - make it right again! *"Whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life"* (John 4:14).

Hunger and thirst are signs of life. A good appetite is a good sign of health. When your appetite is gone, something is wrong.

Listen how David craved for righteousness and for a relationship with God. *"As a deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, the living God. Where can I go and meet with God" (Psalms 42:1-3)? "O God, you are my God. Earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water"* (Psalm 63:1).

## Shall Be Satisfied

False fountains pacify our cravings with sugary swallows of pleasure. But there comes a time when pleasure does not satisfy. That's when we need something that will meet our higher heart hungers. Jesus and the righteousness that He brings is the only genuine satisfaction that will last.

*"I am the bread of life ... But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. I am the living bread that comes down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever"* (John 6:47-51). *"Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds from the mouth of God"* (John 4:4). *"Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you"* (John 6:27).

Man has a deep heart hunger and thirst that need to be quenched. Only our higher nature is capable of enjoying that which is true satisfaction. We all know down deep inside when these needs are being met.

Jesus reveals kingdom attitudes in the sermon on the mount. We need to understand our poverty of spirit and mourn over our sinfulness with a godly sorrow that can produce repentance that leaves no regret (2 Corinthians 7:10). We need to be submissive and moldable (meek) so God can help us. But, in addition, we must recognize the hunger and thirst of our inner most being that cries for satisfaction, not with junk food, but with the bread of life and living water.

When this primary need is met, we will experience total satisfaction. Peace that surpasses all comprehension can then guard our hearts and minds in Christ (Philippians 4:7).

The kingdom is not for those who are merely intellectually interested in Christ and His way. The kingdom is for those who long for righteousness as a matter of life and death. They shall be filled!

## ***Sermon Outline: "Those Who Hunger and Thirst"***

Purpose: To inform people of the meaning of "hungering and thirsting after righteousness" and motivate them to develop this kingdom attitude.

### **Introduction**

**AC:** Jesus' teaching on Kingdom attitudes is the blue print for rebuilding the shattered human heart, the prescription from the Great Physician, for a terminally ill humanity.

Realize our destitute spiritual poverty.

Mourn over our sinfulness and our filth.

Meek submission to a Master who can bring our lives under control.

**NEED:** But there is more. Poor people in absolute grief, are hungry. AND, people in spiritual poverty and godly sorrow are hungry too:

We need food and drink which will satisfy the heart hungers of our higher nature.

We are poor, we are in grief, and we ache with desire for someone to make it right again.

## CI: BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO HUNGER AND THIRST FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS, THE THEY SHALL BE SATISFIED

### I. A Hungry & Thirsty Woman

- A. The neighbors whisper behind her back when they see her walking down the street of her hometown. She's "one of those women." The weathered look on her face betrays the hard lifestyle she's lived. There's a empty, hollow feeling in her soul from the distant echo of laughter that lingers from the pub last night. The lover she's left in her bed this morning is not her husband. She'd tried finding true love too many times before to want to be hurt like that again. There's something missing in her life , a hole to be filled, a dull ache deep at the core of her being. Today, she'll meet someone special. .... Let's meet her (John 4:4-26).  
She wants the desire met and the burden lifted (:15) "Make life quit hurting."  
Jesus knows she's longing for true love and meaning (:16-18).  
She really wants a right relationship with God, but doesn't know how to have it (:21-26).  
She remembered all to vividly what she'd done in her past, now she knows there's someone who can finally make it right, someone who didn't condemn her for her sin (:28,39).  
She's hungry and thirsty for righteousness.

### II. A Hungry & Thirsty Humanity

- A. We are bound together by broken dreams, collapsed promises, personal failures:  
Fortunes that were never made.  
Families never built.  
Expectations never realized.
- B. We are lost in the parched desert of our own failures and very thirsty.  
Some drink from false fountains to pacify our cravings with sugary swallows of pleasure, but that does not satisfy.  
Some drink salt water in a desert of possessions, passions, or romance. They don't quench, they kill.
- C. We Are dying from thirst and starving of hunger..... for righteousness and a relationship with our Maker (Integrity, virtue, purity of life, a correct way of thinking, acting and feeling; true peace).  
**Thirst** for clean conscience, **crave** for clean slate, **yearn** for a new start.  
We pray for a hand which will enter the dark cavern of our world and do for us the ONE thing we can't do:  
MAKE IT RIGHT AGAIN!

### III. We Shall Be Satisfied

- A. Hunger and Thirst for God and His righteousness is where our real desire lies:  
Psalm 42:1-2  
Psalm 63:1-5  
Matthew 4:4
- B. Jesus and His righteousness is available to us:  
John 4:10-14 Drink of the Living Water.  
John 6:48-51 Eat the Bread of Life.  
2 Corinthians 5:21, Romans 1:16-17 We hunger for His righteousness.

### IV. Conclusion

- A. You can't be satisfied if you understand Righteousness as snack food and soft drink.
- B. The ones who are Blessed, are those who hunger and thirst as a matter of LIFE AND DEATH. They shall be satisfied.
- C. The Master himself will seat you at His table in front of golden candle sticks, and serve you on the finest china a banquet meal that will satisfy your every hunger and quench your every thirst.
- D. You will taste the succulent flavor of the Bread of Life, and will drink the sweetness of the Living Water from the crystal of life! "Give me this water...."

## ***Small Group Discussion Outline: Hunger & Thirst for Righteousness***

### **Introduction**

- A. Jesus teaching on Kingdom Attitudes is a blue print for rebuilding the shattered human heart. It is the prescription from the Great Physician for a terminally ill humanity.
- B. What is Poverty of Spirit? (realizing you are destitute, hopelessly poor spiritually).
- C. What is Mourning? (Deep grief over our sinfulness, godly sorrow).
- D. What is Meekness? (Submitting humbly so God can control our lives).
- E. Poor people in deep grief are hungry and thirsty. They need to be satisfied and nourished.
- F. Today, our discussion will be on Matthew 5:6 - hungering and thirsting for righteousness.

### **I. A Hungry and Thirsty Woman (John 4:4-26)**

- A. Read this description of the woman to the group.

The neighbors whisper behind her back when they see her walking down the street of her hometown. She's "one of *those* women." The weathered look on her face betrays the hard lifestyle she's lived. There's a empty, hollow feeling in her soul from the distant echo of laughter that lingers from the pub last night. The lover she's left in her bed this morning is not her husband. She'd tried finding true love too many times before to want to be hurt like that again. There's something missing in her life, a hole to be filled, a dull ache deep at the core of her being.

- B. Do you think the above description of the woman is a reasonable portrayal? Why?

C. John 4:13-15

What can you gather about this woman from these passages?

Do you think she's wanting her desires met, and her burdens lifted, or do you think she's just lazy and not wanting to carry water any more? Why do you think that?

D. John 4:21-26

What kind of relationship with God do you think she had? Why? (she knows some about God, but not a lot. She wants to have a relationship with Him, but doesn't know how).

E. Are there things in your past that you wouldn't want any one else to know about?

If you could erase those parts of your past, would you want to? Why?

How would you feel if someone told you they knew about EVERYTHING?

From verses 28, 39, what did Jesus know about her past, and how did she react to him knowing it? Why do you think she seemed excited rather than embarrassed or hurt? (she finally found someone who didn't condemn her for her sinful past, and who could help her make it right).

## II. We Are Hungry and Thirsty

A. Discuss this statement: "We are bound together by broken dreams, collapsed promises, personal failures. We THIRST for a clean conscience, CRAVE for a clean slate, YEARN for a new start."

How do you think this statement applies to us today? Why?

How do you know you have this hunger and thirst in your life?

B. How do you think people try to quench the hunger and thirst in their lives?

Possessions, pleasure, passion, romance, drugs, alcohol, etc..

Do these shallow ways of trying to meet our desires ever really satisfy us for very long? Why? (We keep going from thing to thing, relationship to relationship, pleasure to pleasure, "Looking for love in all the wrong places.")

## III. Seeking True Satisfaction

A. What do the following verses tell us about our real hunger and thirst?

Psalm 42:1-2

Psalm 63:1-5;

Matthew 4:4

Our hunger and thirst is really for God and his righteousness. That is the ONLY place where real satisfaction comes.

B. In what ways does Jesus satisfy our hearts desires?

John 4:10-14 (He's the Living Water, that quenches our real thirst).

John 6:48-58 (He's the Bread of Life that satisfies our real hunger).

What does Jesus mean, "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood you have no life" (verse 53)? (you must take me totally into yourself, and we must become one).

Matthew 4:4 What gives man real life?

C. How can God make us righteous again and make our lives right again? (2 Corinthians 5:21; Romans 1:16-17)

## IV. Conclusion

A. What do you do with finger foods and junk food? (Nibble, pick, etc.)

B. You can never be satisfied if you nibble and pick at righteousness and your relationship with God and treat it as junk food.

C. True satisfaction only comes to those who hunger and thirst AS A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH. (Matthew 5:6; Revelation 22:17).

## Blessed Are The Merciful

By Greg King

*"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" (Matthew 5:7).*

These "Kingdom Attitudes" of Jesus deal with every aspect of the human spirit. The first two deal with our attitude toward our self and our sinfulness (poor in spirit, and mourning). The next two deal with our attitude toward God's control in our lives and our desire for His righteousness (Meekness and hungering and thirsting for righteousness). The next Kingdom Attitude deals solely with man's relationship with man, "Blessed are the merciful," because only human beings can be the recipients of mercy. God does not need our mercy, but we need His, and we need the mercy of other people.

The dynamic of offering mercy is the key to understanding mercy, for it is when we forgive others that we begin to feel what God feels.

### What Is Mercy?

Mercy is "**Personalized Grace In Action**". It is more than pity, or a feeling of good will. Mercy is the active manifestation of Grace from you to another human being. God did not send some created angel to do His mercy for Him, He came Himself! Personal involvement is the key. To personally involve oneself with suffering people or those who need our forgiveness is much more demanding than to mail a check to some worthy cause. The Christian who tries to escape from the reality of personal mercy by salving his conscience with impersonal donations to charity, is much more akin to Buddha than to Christ. Buddha tried to escape from misery and suffering, Jesus was personally involved in the misery and sinfulness of society

*"Have mercy on my son" .....and he did (Matthew 17:5).* He cleansed the lepers, healed the sick, caused the blind to see, and moved the tombstone of a dead friend. He became flesh and blood to take away the agony. The agony of sin. The agony of suffering, The agony of bitterness. He came to bless the merciful.

Mercy always has as its goal absolute good will and is governed by principle and justice. Mercy cannot be earned by the recipient, nor can it be offered without principle. For example, a judge offering leniency on a hardened, impenitent criminal excludes justice. This is not mercy, it is evil and mocks law and order.

Unlimited tolerance of a disobedient child is not mercy, but encourages and rewards disobedience. Feeding a hungry man who refuses to work is not mercy, but promotes laziness and destroys the persons character.

Diminishing the seriousness of sin by offering forgiveness to a person who remains stubbornly rebellious is not mercy. Relieving a young girls tragic misery and stress by aborting her baby is not mercy. Assisting a terminally ill friend to commit suicide is not mercy, but degrades the value of human life.

Never confuse soft heartedness with soft headedness! Mercy always has as its goal, absolute good will governed by principle and justice.

## Practical Mercy

To understand mercy's application we must understand its practical aspects to our lives. How can you be merciful to others? It's not easy.

**Prayer.** This is one of the easiest ways to show mercy. We are to pray for our enemies (Matthew 5:43-48). We are to pray on all occasions for all kinds of things, especially for other Christians (Ephesians 6:18). We are to pray for all men and the governing authorities (1 Tim 2:1), and for the sick (James 5:15). Prayer is personal, active, and specific.

**Physical needs.** The Good Samaritan showed practical, personal mercy from one person to another. (Luke 10:25-37). Jesus feed the multitudes (Matthew 15:32-38) and healed the sick (Matthew 4:23). Empty words of well wishing without meeting the physical need is useless (James 2:14-16). Mercy measured in meeting physical needs will be one of the standards of judgment (Matthew 25:34-36). It would do us well to pay closer attention to this ministry of mercy.

**Spiritual Needs.** This is usually the area that most people immediately think of when dealing with mercy. Restoring someone caught in sin is a vital aspect of showing mercy (Galatians 6:1-5).

The area of mercy that most of us struggle with, is in the area of forgiveness. Jesus taught Peter a valuable lesson about learning forgiveness. *"How many times do I have to forgive the guy who keeps sinning against me.....?" (Matthew 18:21-35).* Parents who said awful things to you as a child, and they still cut years later. *How many times?* The brother in Christ who slanders or accuses you. *How many times?* The one who hurt your spouse or your child. *How many times?*

The answer. As many times as it takes! You can't expect God to forgive you if you can't forgive others. *"Judgment without mercy shall be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment" (James 2:13).*

Religion without mercy, no matter how doctrinally correct or morally sound, is hell bound. *"Go learn what this means, I desire mercy more than sacrifice" (Matthew 9:13).*

## **Sermon Outline: "Blessed Are The Merciful"**

Purpose: to inform Christians of the meaning of merciful and motivate them to put this Kingdom Attitude into practice in their lives.

### **Introduction**

**AC:** The Kingdom Attitudes of Jesus deal with every aspect of rebuilding the human heart:

Attitude toward self & sin (poor in spirit, mourn).

Attitude toward submission and desire (Meek, Hunger...).

Attitude toward fellow man (merciful).

**NEED:** Mercy can be one of the most uncomfortable attitudes to develop.

Demands personal involvement, and proper perspective.

We focus on doctrinal correctness as a cop out for mercy (Matthew 23:23-24).

**CI: BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL FOR THEY SHALL RECEIVE MERCY**

### **I. The Importance of Mercy**

A. Mercy is **Personalized Grace in Action**.

B. It is more weighty (Matthew 9:9-13, "Go learn its meaning..." ) We still need to!

The life that excludes mercy is spiritually and morally empty, no matter how doctrinally correct or morally sound it may be.

C. Our understanding and implementation of mercy will set the standard for our own judgment before God (James 2:13).

D. Mercy motivated from love is the very heart of God (Ephesians 2:4.. rich in mercy...)

### **II. The Manifestations of Mercy**

A. Physical Mercy

He was a graduate of one of the most notable schools in the brotherhood. Well versed on the issues, doctrinally flawless, a guest speaker on all the lectureships. He'd written articles in the publication *Reading for Rabbis*. He's considered an expert in areas of doctrinal dispute and now he wants to test the orthodoxy of this itinerant preacher from Nazareth (Luke 10:25-37).

He changes from testing to tested and attempts to justify himself (:29). He's more concerned with doctrinal accuracy, than loving those he doesn't like, so, like all experts, he tries to redefine the term *Neighbor*.

Two religiously upright, morally pure, politically and orthodoxically correct religions leaders pass by an



average man in need.

An average man offered mercy: go and do likewise.

**B. Spiritual Mercy (Matthew 18:21-35)**

It's March 24, 1989. A bitter Northeast wind beats the 15 foot whitecaps of the Alaskan gulf against the frozen steel hull of the Exxon Valdez. A slightly off course tanker and the shallowly submerged "Bligh Reef"- disaster and devastation are the inevitable result.

A bitter, off course circumstance in the sea of life combined with the shallow reef of emotions ... devastation is also the inevitable result. ("how many times?")

Betrayal of a mate,.... the affair, the reef crashes against the hull of your heart and the cold black sea of hatred and bitterness flood your life. (How many times!?)

The angry, heated words of a sister ... the contentious argument of a meeting, the cruel words of a parent and the crude oil of resentment, revenge and hurt coat your emotions and pollute your heart... (How many times..!?)

Answer: as many times as you expect to be forgiven!

### **III. The Implementation of Mercy**

A. Physical mercy is going to be a standard that governs our judgment (James 2:14-16; Matthew 25:31-46).

B. Spiritual Mercy will set the gauge for our forgiveness (Matthew 18:35; James 2:13).

C. What mercy is NOT:

Not a judge lenient on a hardened criminal: mocks justice.

Not unlimited tolerance on a disobedient child: encourages and rewards disobedience.

Not feeding a hungry man who refuses to work: encourages laziness.

Not forgiving a person while he remains impenitent.

Not aborting a baby to relieve a poor young girls' misery, or assisting the suicide of a terminally ill friend: devalues human life.

Don't confuse a soft heart with a soft head! But consider these questions:

D. Do you ignore the needs of those who are the "Untouchables" of society or do you help them like the good Samaritan? (I was hungry but...)

E Do you hold a grudge and harbor resentment. Mercy holds no grudges. (judgment will be merciless.....)

### **IV. Conclusion**

A. Those in God's kingdom must develop Kingdom Attitudes, toward themselves, toward God, and toward others.  
Blessed are the merciful.

## ***Small Group Discussion Outline: "Blessed Are The Merciful"***

### **Introduction**

- A. The Kingdom Attitudes of Jesus deal with every aspect of rebuilding the human heart.
  - Attitude toward SELF (Poor in spirit and mourning).
  - Attitude toward submission and desire (Meek and Hunger and thirsting).
  - Attitude toward our fellow man (Matthew 5:7) Merciful.
- B. Today we are going to talk about how our Kingdom attitude relates to our fellow man.

### **I. The Importance of mercy**

- A. What is Mercy? (ask several responses) Answer: It is **personal grace in Action**
- B. Matthew 9:9-13
  - What did the Pharisees think of Jesus eating with these "sinners?" Why did they feel this way? (answer: they were self righteous).
  - Why did Jesus instruct the Pharisees to "Go learn what this means, I desire mercy not sacrifice?"
  - Was Jesus approving of these "sinners" lifestyle? How does your answer demonstrate the importance of mercy? (point: mercy is not showing approval for wrong doing, but it is getting personally involved in order to help a person find God's grace).
- C. James 2:13
  - According to this verse, why is mercy important to you personally?
- D. Ephesians 2:4
  - From this verse, how does God view mercy?

### **II. The Manifestations of Mercy**

- A. **Physical Mercy** (Luke 10:25-37)
  - What type of person was this "expert" in the law? (graduate of one of the most notable schools in the brotherhood. Well versed on the issues, doctrinally flawless, a guest speaker on all the lectureships. He is considered an "expert" in areas of doctrinal dispute and now he wants to "Test" the orthodoxy of this "novice" preacher from Nazareth.
  - From verse 29 why does this "expert" want to justify himself? (answer: he knows Leviticus 18:19 says to "love your neighbor", so he redefines the term "neighbor" to mean "those he likes, or those he wants to love, rather than every man." The Jews hated Samaritans, so he didn't want to love them.
  - In the parable, what happens to the man going to Jerico (:30)?
  - What does the priest do when he sees the man in need (:31)?
  - What does the Levite do (:32)?
  - What does the Samaritan do (:33-35)?
  - Which one showed mercy?
- B. **Spiritual Mercy** (Matthew 18:21-35)
  - Why do you think Peter asked "How many times?" (perhaps he thought there should be a "reasonable" time when you don't have to forgive a person if he keeps on sinning against you).
  - What does this parable teach us about forgiving others? How does this parable demonstrate this?
  - How many times are you to keep on showing spiritual mercy to someone who has offended or sinned against you? (as many times as they ask, unlimited!)
  - What can you imagine that would be the most difficult thing to forgive? (affair of a mate, child molester, murderer of someone whom you loved, parents saying awful things to you as a child...)
  - What is the most difficult thing for YOU personally to forgive?
  - What would you think is the most difficult sin that you've committed for God to forgive?

### **III. The Implementation of Mercy**

A. James 2:14-16

If you see someone in physical need and tell them that you will pray for them, is that showing mercy?  
Why?

B. Matthew 25:31-46

What does this passage reveal about the judgment day? Is your being merciful to other human beings going to be important? Why?

C. Matthew 18:35, James 2:13

What do these verses teach us about God's judgment upon us personally? (We can set certain standards by which we will be judged).

D. Let's discuss some applications

Is it merciful for a judge to overlook a hardened criminal's offense and set him loose on society? Why?

Is it merciful to show unlimited tolerance with no punishment on a disobedient child?

Is it merciful to feed a hungry man who is too lazy to work? (see 2 Thessalonians 3:10).

Is it merciful to overlook the abuse of a person who keeps abusing you and who has no intention of changing? How does this idea make sense in light of Matthew 18:35? (Point: God is willing to forgive everyone, but forgives only those who repent and ask for forgiveness in Christ).

## IV. Conclusion

Do you ignore those who are the *untouchables* of society, or do you show mercy like the Good Samaritan?

Do you hold a grudge and harbor resentment on someone who has hurt you?

Those in the Kingdom must develop Kingdom attitudes toward themselves, toward God, and toward their fellow man.

# Blessed Are The Pure In Heart

By Greg King

*"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8)*

## The Importance of a Pure Heart

To the Jews of Jesus day, religious purity was almost exclusively ceremonial or ritualistic cleansing. They were interested more in clean hands, than clean thoughts or actions. *"Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? They don't wash their hands before they eat? Jesus replied, why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition?... Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you: These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me" (Matthew 15:2-8)*. The Pharisees were always being confronted by Jesus because of the impurity of their hearts. Inside they were evil, unmerciful, unjust, greedy, self willed, hypocritical, and full of lust (Matthew 23:23-32). Oh, they were very religious. But they were not righteous, they were not pure in heart.

Purity of heart is more than religious orthodoxy. Jesus proved that no matter how strict one might be in the externals of religion, he is not truly pure unless the heart is right.

## What Is A Pure Heart?

The word *pure* (καθαρος, katharos) means: *"unsoiled, undefiled, void of evil, or without alloy or contamination."* The word *heart* (καρδιά, kardia), is used for the seat of the emotions, will, and thinking. Literally, a *pure heart* is a clean, unsoiled, uncontaminated center of emotion and thought. The pure heart has two manifestations: moral cleanness, and singleness of motive.

Moral living is *always* the result of moral thinking. Solomon put it this way, *"Guard your heart with all diligence; for out of it come the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23)*. Jesus said, *"For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him" (Matthew 12:34-35)*.

Jesus identifies the heart as the epicenter of outward action. *"Are you still so dull? Don't you see that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and then out of the body? But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man 'unclean'. For out of the heart comes evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what make a man unclean; but eating with unwashed hands does not make him unclean" (Matthew 15:16-20)*. Moral action comes from pure thinking. Observe your actions, emotions and words and they will reveal the condition of your heart.

The second manifestation of the heart is its focus. The pure heart has a singleness of motive. Like pure gold, the pure heart does not have two minerals, but one. The pure heart cannot be devoted to two things at the same time. *"For where your treasure is there will your heart be also. The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. ... No one can serve two masters. Either you will*

*hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money" (Matthew 6:20-24)*. You also can't serve God and pleasure, or God and sin, or God and worry, or God and ... you fill in the blank. Christians who are impure in heart are doubleminded. *"Purify your hearts you doubleminded" (James 4:8)*.

## Cleansing The Heart

So you've taken a spiritual EKG and you've detected a heart defect. The heart of the problem is the problem of the heart. Now, how do you change it? How do you purify it?

Let's use an illustration. A young family left on a two week summer vacation and unplugged a radio before leaving. But, instead of unplugging the radio, the freezer plug was pulled by accident. Two long, hot, very hot, summer weeks passed in a closed up apartment, while the meat in the freezer oozed, pulsated, and began to crawl. Rotting meat in an air tight container... use your imagination!

Upon returning, dear ol dad is selected to "fix the problem", since he unplugged it! Does he DARE open it up? Nope! He's got a better idea. He'll get some new tub & tile cleanser, and spit polish the top, the sides, and the

door. He even polishes the chrome handles and puts a vase of flowers on top. He'll dust the counter around the freezer, wax the floor beneath the freezer, and air out the apartment. Ah, problem solved right? Wrong. Until he opens the door, gets hit in the face with the putrid odor, sticks his hands in there and fills up the "Hefty" trash bag and disinfects the interior, the smell will stay and only get worse.

*"Woe to you teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisees! FIRST clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside will be clean" (Matthew 23:25-26).* You clean the heart by opening up your heart and dealing with the real issues in your life! You can't mask the smell of dead flesh, and you can't hide a rotten heart. You have to get the rotten stuff out. *"Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another that you may be healed" (James 5:16).* *"He purified their hearts by faith" (Acts 15:9).* *"How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the Eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God" (Hebrews 9:14).* Then... you will see God!

## **Sermon Outline " Blessed Are The Pure In Heart"**

Purpose: to inform people of the meaning of pure in heart and motivate them to adopt this Kingdom Attitude.

### **Introduction**

**AC:** The Kingdom attitudes reshape the heart of the disciple. They accomplish this by forcing us to look at our own sinfulness, producing humble obedience, and then offering the mercy that we need to others as well. In order to be complete we need to develop a pure heart.

**NEED:** To Jews, religious purity was almost exclusively ceremonial or ritualistic cleansing:

Clean hands, vrs clean actions or thoughts (Matthew 15:2-8).

Strain at gnats & Swallow camels (Matthew 23:23-28).

No matter how strict one might be in the externals of religion, he is not truly pure unless his heart is pure.

The number 1 killer in North America is heart disease.

**CI: BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART, THEY SHALL SEE GOD**

### **I. What is a Pure Heart?**

A. Blessed are the PURE in heart, not the PERFECT in heart. It is possible to have a pure heart and still be imperfect!

B. Pure: "unsoiled, undefiled, void of evil, without alloy or contamination."

C. Heart: the seat or center of emotion or thought, or will.

D. Two manifestations of a pure heart:

Moral living because of moral thinking: (Proverbs 4:23; Matthew 12:34-35; Matthew 15:16-20).

Observe your actions, emotions and words and they will reveal the real condition of your own heart.

Singleness of focus or motive.

Like pure gold, the pure heart does not have two mixtures, but one. A pure heart cannot be devoted to two things at the same time (Matthew 6:20-24; James 4:8).

### **II. How To Cleanse Your Heart**

A. You've taken a spiritual EKG, clogged artery perhaps?

The heart of the problem is the problem of the heart.

B. Unplugged freezer full of meat, family goes on vacation for two weeks, begins to pulsate, ooze, and crawl.

Rotting Meat in a warm air tight container... Use Your Imagination.

Dad doesn't open it up, he uses some tub & tile cleaner to polish the top, the sides, the door, polish chrome, wax floor, vase of flowers on top.

He wants to do everything possible EXCEPT the one thing that will fix the problem.

C. Pharisees had maggot infested, putrid, rotten flesh in their chests, but tried to polish the outside (Matthew 23:25-28).

D. The pure want their hearts to be pure (Psalm 51:10). You can't mask the smell of dead flesh, and you can't hide a rotten heart. You have to clean it up.

James 5:16: Confess your sins to someone who can help.

Confess to God who can forgive (1 John 1:7-9; Psalm 32:1-5).

Take control of your thinking (2 Timothy 2:22 Garbage in garbage out; 2 Corinthians 10:5; Philippians 4:8-9).

Accept God's help when offered (Hebrews 9:14; 10:22).

### **III. They shall see God**

A. The physical eyes can see THINGS, but only the heart can see the MEANING of things.

Spiritual sight depends on the condition of the eyes of the heart (Ephesians 1:18; Matthew 13:13-16; John 9:39-41; 1 John 3:6) Titus 1:15-16).

B. How does the pure heart see God (Psalm 17:15)?

Physical Creation (Romans 1:20; Psalm 19:1; This is my Father's world).

In His Word (1 Corinthians 2:14-15).  
In His Blessings (James 1:17).  
In Christ (John 1:18;14:9).  
At the resurrection (1 John 3:2-3).

## **IV. Conclusion**

- A. The condition of your heart affects:
  - What you think like.
  - What you feel like.
  - What you act like.
- B. You can purify your heart by opening up your life and cleaning the rottenness out
- C. When you do:
  - Your thinking will change.
  - Your feelings will change.
  - Your actions will change.
- D. You will see God, perhaps for the first time (Acts 17:27).
- E. Blessed are the Pure in Heart, they shall see God.....

## **Small Group Discussion Outline: "The Pure In Heart"**

### **Introduction**

The Kingdom attitudes reshape the heart of the disciple. They accomplish this by forcing us to look at our own sinfulness, producing humble obedience, and then extending mercy to others as well. But in order to reshape our lives completely, we need to look at the "HEART" of the problem. And the heart of the problem is the problem of the heart.

Matthew 5:8: What does Jesus say in this verse about your heart?

### **I. What is a Pure Heart?**

A. To the Jews, religious purity was almost exclusively ceremonial or ritualistic.

B. Matthew 15:2-8

What problem do you see in this passage with the Pharisees' heart? (Answer: more concerned with ritualistic man made externals, than caring for people).

C. Matthew 23:23-28

What heart problems does Jesus reveal in this passage? (Answer: Very careful to observe certain commandments of God, but ignoring more important ones).

What does it mean to "Strain at a Gnat and Swallow a Camel?"

D. Does PURE mean PERFECT? Why?

"Pure" means: unsoiled, undefiled, void of evil, without alloy or contamination.

"Heart" is The seat or center of emotion or thought, or will.

E. Proverbs 4:23; Matthew 12:33-35; 15:16-20

What do these passages reveal about the heart? (The heart is like your "Auto Pilot" Your life will follow the course which is programmed in your heart).

How can you diagnose the condition of your own heart? (Observe your words, and actions)

F. Matthew 6:20-24; cf. James 4:8

Another diagnosis of a heart problem is "double-mindedness." How can you detect this heart problem?

(What do you think about most? Are your thoughts divided between God and the world or riches, or lust.

Do you worry when you should pray instead?)

### **II. How Can You Cleanse Your Heart?**

A. Psalm 51:10

What does this verse say about cleansing the heart? (Answer: It is possible, God can help, but you have to have a genuine desire).

B. Matthew 23:25-28

What does Jesus see as the solution for a sin problem in your life? (Clean the inside and the outside will follow).

C. James 5:16

What benefit does confessing your sins to someone have? (It helps you get the heart problem opened so you can deal with it, free yourself, and be healed).

D. Compare 1 John 1:7-9 and Psalm 32:1-5

Guilt and shame often keep us from purifying our hearts. What do these verses teach about confessing our sins to God and the result? (He forgives the sin and removes the guilt).

E. Philippians 4:8-9; 2 Corinthians 10:5

What effect does changing your thoughts have on your heart? (Answer: Your thoughts program your heart. Garbage in, garbage out!)

How are your thoughts programmed? (What you read, what you listen to, what you watch on TV, who you associate with, what you allow yourself to focus on).

### **III. The Shall See God**

A. The physical eyes see THINGS, the heart sees the MEANING of things.



B. Matthew 13:13-16

How does the condition of the heart affect a persons' understanding of spiritual things? (see also Romans 8:6-8; John 9:39-41 for additional reference).

C. 1 John 3:6

What does this verse tell you about the connection between our conduct and our spiritual insight? (If your actions are sinful, your heart is not pure, and your spiritual vision is blinded so you cannot see God).

D. How can you SEE God with a pure heart?

In the creation (Psalm 19:1; Romans 1:20).

In His Word (1 Corinthians 2:14-15).

In His Blessings (James 1:17).

In Christ (John 14:9).

At the resurrection (1 John 3:2-3).

## IV. Conclusion

A. The condition of your heart affects what you think like, what you feel like, and what you act like.

B. You can purify your heart by having a genuine desire, opening up your heart by confessing your sin to God and to someone who can help you, and renewing your thinking patterns by feeding your mind with good, wholesome, positive instruction from God's word.

C. When you purify your heart, you will see the real meaning of life, and you will see God (Acts 17:27).

# **Blessed Are The Peacemakers**

**By Greg King**

*"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the sons of God" (Matthew 5:9)*

One of the greatest themes in the New Testament is *peace*. It is mentioned 88 times and is in every New Testament book. Every letter by Paul begins with the wish of peace and many close with the same thought.

Jesus came to bring the world peace, *"Peace I leave, My peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid" (John 14:27).*

People talk about peace as though it was merely the absence of turmoil, but this is not the case. Jesus said nothing about being a peace *lover* or peace *hoper*. Jesus said that the peace *makers* will be blessed. Peace is something that is achieved at great cost and great sacrifice. There are many areas that we need peace:

## **We Need Peace With Other Men**

At the time Jesus spoke about being a peace maker, the world was divided between races, sexes, nationalities, religion, and politics. Divisions raged between Jew and Gentile. There is a record of the morning prayer of a Jew which reads, "I thank you O Lord, that I am not made a Gentile, a slave, a woman, or a dog." When an orthodox Jew traveled from Judea to Galilee, he would take a longer route through Perea to avoid passing through Samaria because of the severe animosity Jews had against Samaritans. There was fueled hatred between Greeks and Barbarians. Plato taught young disciples to hate everyone who was not an educated Greek.

We have the same problems with people today. Racism, economic division, union vrs management, sexism, feminism and others wars are typical headlines in the daily news. We read of the PLO and Israel, the Protestant - Catholic war in Ireland, LA Riots, and strife in our own communities. We need peace with other men.

## **We Need Peace In Our Homes**

Sociological studies show that only 26% of children today have their original mom and dad still at home. In high school seniors, statistics show that 62% use physical force on a brother or sister. Among common causes for divorce, physical abuse was a cause in 23% of middle class marriages, and 40% in working class. The largest single category of police calls involves domestic calls. More murders are committed upon family members than upon other persons. We need peace in our homes.

## **We Need Peace With Ourselves**

Mark Twain said, "From the cradle to the grave, man does nothing, save that which is calculated to bring him a measure of peace of mind." We look for peace in pleasure, pills, and sex.. The psychiatry offices have no shortage of business because men are trying to find peace with themselves. Paul illustrated this dilemma in Romans 7:14-24, "Wretched man that I am, who will set me free from the body of this death!"

## **We Need Peace With God**

This is the primary reason we lack peace in every other area of life. We've lost our peace with God! Sin has made us enemies of God (James 4:4; Ephesians 2:12 Romans 5:10). We are out of sync with the rest of the world because we are out of sync with the Creator of the World. This is the beginning place, finding peace with God (Romans 5:1). This can only happen through Christ.

A boy was given a difficult puzzle of the world to assemble. To the amazement of his parents, he put the puzzle together quickly. "How did you do it so quickly, son?" they asked. The boy replied, "I noticed that there was a picture of a man on the back of the puzzle, so I put the man together. When I turned the puzzle over again, all the pieces of the world were in place." This is why Jesus said to "Seek first the kingdom and His righteousness" (Matthew 6:33). When you put the man together and establish peace with God, the whole world falls in place.

## **Blessed Are The Peace Makers**

Jesus said the ones who were blessed are those who are actively involved in the peace making process - the *peace makers*. No man can render greater service than acting in the capacity as a peace maker.

We do this as ambassadors of God (2 Corinthians 5:18-20). The work of bringing men to God is the basic responsibility of the peace maker. When men are restored to peace with God first, there are several benefits.

The peace is restored between races, economies and nations (Ephesians 2:12-18; Isaiah 2:2-4; Galatians 3:26-29).

The peace is restored in our homes (Psalm 127:1; Ephesians 5:22-25; 6:1-4)

The peace is restored with ourselves (Romans 7:24 - 8:2; Galatians 2:20)

Peace makers are sons of God (Galatians 3:26; John 1:10-11). When we show men the way of true peace with God, we are imitating the most powerful characteristic of our Maker (Matthew 5:43-45).

## **Sermon Outline: "Blessed Are The Peacemakers"**

Purpose: to inform Christians of the meaning of peacemakers and motivate them to take on this attribute in their lives.

### **Introduction:**

**AC:** One of the great and prominent themes of the NT is Peace.

Occurs 88 times and occurs in every NT book.

Every Pauline letter begins with the wish of peace and many close with the same thought.

Jesus came to give his followers peace (John 14:27; 16:33)

**NEED:** Some talk about peace, but do nothing positive to bring it about, perhaps assuming that "Peace will just come"

Jesus said the Peace MAKER is blessed, not just the peace lover, the peace hoper

### **CI: BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS, FOR THEY SHALL BE CALLED SONS OF GOD**

#### **I. We need peace with other men**

A. At the time Jesus spoke this Kingdom attitude, the world was sadly divided between races, sexes, nationalities, and religion, and politics

**Gentile and Jew:** Jewish morning prayer, "I thank you O Lord, that I am not made a Gentile, a slave, a woman or a dog"

**Jew & Samaritan** "when making a trip from Judea to Galilee, he would take the longer way through Perea to avoid passing through Samaria

**Greek philosopher and Barbarians** Plato taught young boys to hate everyone who was not a Greek.

B. We still have the same need for peace today

Race, economic status, union vrs management, sexism, feminism,

PLO/ Israel, Protestant/Catholic war in Ireland, LA Riots, down to strife in our community and schools

#### **II. We need peace in our homes**

A. Sociological studies show:

Only 26% of children today have the original mom and dad still at home

62% of high school seniors used physical force on a brother or sister

23% of middle class, and 40% working class people gave physical abuse as a cause for divorce.

Largest single category of police calls involves domestic calls, and more murders are committed upon members of the family than upon any other persons.

#### **III. We need peace with ourselves**

A. Mark Twain said, "From the cradle to the grave, man does nothing save that which is calculated to bring him a measure of peace of mind"

B. Pleasure, pills, psychiatry, sex. There is a civil war within (Romans 7:14-24)

#### **IV. We need to first find peace with God**

A. Sin has made us enemies and thrown the rest of our world out of sync (Romans 5:10; Ephesians 2:12; James 4:4)

B. This is the beginning place of finding peace (Romans 5:1)

Boy given difficult puzzle of the world, but solved it quickly. There was a picture of a man on the back. I just turned the puzzle over and put the man together, when I turned it over again, all the pieces of the world were in place. (Matthew 6:33)

#### **V. But Jesus said blessed are the peace MAKERS**

A. More than passive peace lovers, but personally, actively involved in the peace process.

B. No man can enjoy any greater blessing in this world than peace, and he can render no greater service than in the capacity of peacemaker.

As ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:18-20)

C. The work of bringing men to God is indeed the basic responsibility of the peace maker. Because in reconciling men to God through the cross, Christ simultaneously reconciles them to each other.

Solves the peace dilemma between races, economies, and nations (Ephesians 2:12-18; Isaiah 2:2-4; 9:6-7; Galatians 3:27-28)

Solves the peace dilemma in our homes (Psalm 127:1; Ephesians 5:22-25; 6:1-4)

Solves the peace dilemma with ourselves (Romans 7:24-8:2; Galatians 2:20)

## **VI. Conclusion**

A. Peacemakers are sons of God (Galatians 3:26; John 1:10-11).

When we show men the way of true peace with God, we are imitating the most powerful characteristic of our Maker (Matthew 5:43-45).

## **Small Group Discussion Outline: "The Peacemakers"**

### **Introduction**

One of the greatest themes in the New Testament is "Peace". It is mentioned in every New Testament book and occurs 88 times. Every Pauline letter begins with the wish of peace and many close with the same thought.

### **I. Jesus wants His followers to have peace.**

A. John 14:27, 16:33

From these verses what do you see about the peace Jesus wants us to have?

(answer: it is not like the world's view of peace, it is something that Christ gives us, and in the world we have tribulation, but can overcome the world with true peace through Christ)

B. Matthew 5:9

Is there a difference between experiencing peace and making peace with others? How?

Point: Jesus said that the peace MAKER is blessed, not just the peace lover.

C. What are some areas that you can think of that need someone to help make peace? (get responses, but don't comment on them at this point). Let's look at some areas we need peace.

### **II. We need peace with other men**

A. In Jesus time the world was sadly divided between races, sexes, nationalities, religion, and politics.

Jewish prayer: "I thank you O Lord that I am not made a Gentile, a slave, a woman or a dog"

Jew & Samaritan. When making a trip from Judea to Galilee he would take the longer way through Perea to avoid passing through Samaria

Greek Philosophers taught young boys to hate everyone who was not an educated Greek

B. Why do we need peace with other men today?

Racism, economic status, sexism, radical feminism, Protestant - Catholic war in Ireland, Riots, strife in our local communities and schools.

C. Ephesians 2:12-18

How does Christ and His ways break down the barriers that separate nationalities and races? (answer: by uniting His followers into one body and making them brothers)

D. Galatians 3:26-28

How does Christ make peace between the sexes, and economic and political problems? (He makes us sons of God, and makes us ONE in Christ)

### **II. We need peace in our homes**

A. What is happening in the homes in our country and around the world today?

Only 26% of children today have their original mom and dad still at home, more than 50% of marriages end in divorce with an even higher number of divorces occurring in remarriages, child abuse and family violence are some of the fastest growing areas of crime.)

B. Why is this happening?

### **III. We need peace with ourselves**

A. Mark Twain said "From the cradle to the grave man does nothing save that which is calculated to bring him a measure of peace of mind"

B. Romans 7:14-24

How does this verse demonstrate that we need and want peace with ourselves?

C. Romans 7:25 - 8:2

What does Paul say is the solution to our need for peace with ourselves?

### **IV. We need to find peace with God.**

A. Romans 5:10; Ephesians 2:12; James 4:4

What has sin done to our peace with God?

B. If you don't first have peace with God, do you think peace with other men, peace in our homes, and peace with ourselves is easily attainable? Why?

C. Matthew 6:33

What does this verse teach about what should be first priority in your own life? Why?

## **V. Jesus said we would be blessed if we are peace MAKERS**

A. Jesus wants you to be actively involved in the peace process as a peace MAKER. But how?

B. 2 Corinthians 5:18-20

What part does an ambassador play in peace negotiations?

How can you be God's ambassador of peace to the world? (Sharing the message of Christ)

C. When you reconcile men back to God through Christ, you simultaneously reconcile them to each other.

What happens to political division, ethnic division, sex division, and education division when people become sons of God? (see Galatians 3:26-29; and Ephesians 2:12-18 if needed)

D. What happens when you as an ambassador show people Christ's teaching on the Home (Ephesians 5:22-25; 6:1-4). Answer: you help in the peace process as a peacemaker.

E. How can you be a peacemaker to people looking for peace with themselves (See Romans 7:24-8:3)

## **VI. Peacemakers are the sons of God**

A. When you show men the way of true peace with God, you are imitating the most powerful characteristic of our Creator.

B. How have you been blessed as a peacemaker

# The Persecuted Righteous

By Greg King

*"Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (Matthew 5:10-12).*

## Promised Persecution

The first seven kingdom attitudes describe the characteristics of the disciple, the last kingdom attitude describes the world's reaction because of these characteristics. It is God's decree and forewarning that His kingdom people will suffer persecution. *"So that no one would be unsettled by these trials. You know quite well that we were destined for them. In fact, when we were with you, we kept telling you that we would be persecuted" (1 Thessalonians 3:3-4). "In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2 Timothy 3:12).* During Jesus' time on earth He made it overwhelmingly clear that his followers would be persecuted (Mark 13:9; Luke 21:16-17; John 15:18-21).

## Realized Persecution

Since the earliest days of Christianity, the Lord's predictions concerning persecutions have come to pass. Valiant disciples have been thrown in prison, put to the sword, stoned, tortured, and thrown to the lions.

Peter and John were called before the Sanhedrin and threatened with punishment for their testimony about Christ and the dynamics of their lives (Acts 4:1-22). Later, the apostles were brought before the council and flogged (Acts 5:17-42). Stephen's martyrdom by an angry Jewish mob began a domino effect of intense persecution against the disciples of the Lord (Acts 7:54 - 8:4).

Paul, who himself persecuted Christians, was persecuted. *"In prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, been exposed to death again and again..." (2 Corinthians 11:23-25).*

During later Roman times, the persecution of Christians was appalling. Some were shut up in a sack with snakes and thrown into the sea. Others were crucified, or hanged on trees and beaten with rods until their bowels gushed out, while salt was rubbed into their wounds. During Diocletian's hideous persecution, many Christians had limbs ripped off, or burned with molten lead.

Today, persecution takes the form of reproach or slander. Although not physically persecuted today in most countries, there are still the cold looks, the nicknames, and the social ostracism. This kingdom attitude is not out of place in our time. Faithful Christians still suffer persecution.

## Why Persecution?

Persecution has at its center the forces of the enemy of truth and righteousness - Satan. Persecution for righteousness sake is the same as being persecuted for Christ's sake.

Men are the instruments of evil in opposing God and His kingdom, and a Christian's righteousness can bring persecution upon him. Why? *"Because men loved darkness rather than the light, for their deeds were evil. For every one that does evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be made manifest," (John 3:19,20). "If you were of the world, the world would love its own, but because you are not of the world, ... therefore the world hates you," (John 15:19).* It is the very difference between the holy life of the faithful disciple and the unholy life of the sinner that causes the problem. The Christian ethic itself is a threat to the worldly person. Peter said, *"They think it strange that you do not run with them into the same excess.. and they speak evil of you," (1 Peter 4:4).* They cannot stand the light that exposes their evil, so they feel obligated to put out the light.

The first seven attitudes cut across the grain and fly into the teeth of the evil world provoking violent opposition and misunderstanding. Poverty of spirit challenges human arrogance and pride. Mourning over our sin and shortcomings is regarded as cowardly weakness. The craving for righteousness threatens the lust of the carnal man. The merciful disciple rebukes the hardhearted, grudge motivated, hater.

Those who love darkness, however, are not always outside the church. As the prophets of old were persecuted by many of their fellow Jews, so faithful disciples today are persecuted, slandered, and despised by



members of the Lord's church who cannot stand the righteousness that exposes their selfishness, their carnality, and their spiritual lukewarmness. To justify themselves, they "mark" slander, and attack the righteous.

### **Rejoice in Persecution**

The world says, "Blessed are those who live in ease and comfort." Jesus says, "Blessed are the persecuted righteous." Persecution for the right reasons places one in "Tall cotton" in common association with Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Jesus, Paul, and Stephen. Persecution for being faithful is the highest compliment that can be given. It means the world takes you seriously!

## **Sermon Outline: "Blessed Are The Persecuted Righteous"**

Purpose: To stimulate Christians to have a proper attitude toward persecution for doing what is right.

### **Introduction**

**AC:** Matthew 5:10-12

**NEED:** The first seven kingdom attitudes describe the characteristics of the disciple. The last attitude describes the world's reaction to them: persecution. Some have fallen away because of persecution thinking that God has abandon them for doing the right thing. Such is not the case however.

### **CI: GOD PLACES A HIGH BLESSING ON THOSE PERSECUTED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS SAKE**

## **I. Persecution is Promised**

- A. God warned that His Kingdom people would suffer (1 Thessalonians 3:3-4; 2 Tim 3:12)
- B. Jesus made it overwhelming clear that his followers would be persecuted (Mark 13:9-13; John 15:18-21)

## **II. Persecution was Realized**

- A. Since the earliest days of Christianity, the Lord's predictions of persecution have come to pass.
  - Valiant disciples have been thrown into prison, put to the sword, stoned, tortured, and thrown to the lions. Peter and John before the Sanhedrin (Acts 4:1-21)
  - Apostles flogged before the Council (Acts 5:27-42)
  - Vicious church wide persecution (Acts 7:57 - 8:4)
  - Saul the persecutor becomes Paul the persecuted (2 Corinthians 11:23-27)
- B. During later Roman times, the persecution of Christians was appalling.
  - Some shut up in a sack with poison snakes and thrown into the sea.
  - Crucified, hanged on trees, impaled, beaten with rods until their bowels gushed out while salt was rubbed into the open wounds.
  - Diocletian's persecution: limbs ripped off, thrown to wild beasts alive, or burned with molten lead.
- C. Some of the most hideous persecution has been aimed at good, morally upright, community minded, innocent religious people. Hitler's persecution of the Jews is nothing new. The Romans and Jews alike were doing that to Christians beginning in the first century.
- D. Persecution still comes today
  - Intimidation at work, slander, mocking, teasing from school friends, nick names, cold looks
  - Well meaning family members, issuing threats, warnings, etc.
- E. It still has the deadly potential of causing Christians to abandon their Lord and deny Him.

## **III. Why Persecution?**

- A. Because the life of a faithful disciple is a threat to those in Darkness (John 3:19-20)
- B. Because we are not like the world, but we are like Christ (John 15:18-21)
- C. Because your life has changed they think you're strange (1 Peter 4:1-4)
- D. Because kingdom attitudes are diametrically opposed to the mindset of the world
  - Poverty of spirit challenges human arrogance and pride
  - Mourning over sin is regarded as cowardly weakness
  - Hunger for righteousness threatens the lust for power, prestige, and pleasure
  - Those who are merciful rebuke those who seek revenge
- E. Because persecution separates those who are not really committed from the true disciple
  - As the prophets of old were persecuted by fellow Jews, so faithful disciples are persecuted, slandered, and despised by so-called church members who cannot stand their selfishness, their worldly lust, and their spiritual lukewarmness exposed.

To justify themselves, they "mark", slander, and attack the righteous.

#### **IV. Conclusion: Rejoice When Persecuted**

- A. The world says, "Blessed are those who live in ease and comfort" Jesus says, "Blessed are those who are persecuted just because they're righteous!"
- B. Persecution should never come from being arrogant or from evil motives, but from being like Christ (1 Peter 4:12-19)
- C. Persecution puts you in the same arena with Isaiah, Daniel, Jesus, Paul, and Stephen. It is the highest complement the world can pay you. It means the world takes you seriously!!

## **Small Group Discussion Outline: "The Persecuted Righteous"**

### **Introduction**

The first seven kingdom attitudes describe the characteristics of the disciple. The last kingdom attitude describes the world's reaction because of these characteristics.

### **I. Persecution promised for the righteous**

- A. Matthew 5:10-12, 1 Thessalonians 3:3-4; 2 Timothy 3:12
  - What warnings do these passages give to those who are Kingdom People?
  - Do you think Jesus was trying to discourage people from being His followers by telling us these things? Why?
- B. Do you think that this teaching about being persecuted is believed by people who start to follow Jesus? Why?

### **II. Persecution realized**

- A. Since the earliest days of Christianity, the Lord's predictions of persecution have come true.
  - Christians have been thrown into prison, put to death, stoned, tortured and thrown to the lions.
- B. Let's look at some examples
- C. Acts 4:1-21
  - What kind of persecution do Peter and John receive here?
  - What kind of attitudes do they show in their persecution? (Rejoicing)
  - Do you think they are masochists? (Those who like to be hurt)?
- D. Acts 5:27-42 What type of persecution occurs here?
- E. Acts 7:57 - 8:4 What happens when the predicted persecution occurs in this section?
- F. 2 Corinthians 11:23-27 What types of things were done to Paul to persecute him for his faith?
- G. Historical Persecution of Christians was appalling:
  - Some were shut up in sacks with poison snakes and thrown into the sea
  - Crucified, hanged on trees, beaten with rods, whipped, and salt rubbed into open wounds.
  - The Roman Emperor Diocletian had Christian's arms ripped off by horses, some thrown to wild beasts alive, or burned with molten lead.
- H. Most of us will probably never see this magnitude of persecution. So how does persecution come today?
  - Intimidation, threats, slander, mocking.
  - Why is persecution so dangerous? (Because some fall away and abandon their faith when persecution comes to them)

### **III. Why Persecution?**

- A. Why do you think that those who merely want to live a life of faithfulness to God suffer persecution?
- B. Let's look at some reasons from the Bible.
  - John 3:19-20 What do you see from this verse? (a faithful life exposes an evil life)
  - John 15:18-21 What do you see in this section? (We are different from the world, we are like Christ)
  - 1 Peter 4:1-4 What do you see in this section of verses? (People think you're strange if you don't want to live an unproductive life like them.)
- C. A Kingdom attitude is diametrically opposed to the mindset of the world.
  - How is poverty of spirit different than arrogance and pride?
  - How is mourning over sin different from the world? (Viewed as weakness)
  - Hungering and thirsting for righteousness is different from the world in which ways? (World lusts for power, prestige, and pleasure, not righteousness)
  - What reaction does the world have toward those who are different? (Persecution) Why?
- D. Persecution separates those who are not really committed. Why is this sometimes a good thing?

#### **IV. Rejoice When Persecuted.**

A. The world says blessed are those who live in excess and comfort. Jesus says, "Blessed are those persecuted because they doing the right thing"

B.1 Peter 4:12-19 This verse warns us about being persecuted and suffering over the wrong things. Why is this an important distinction?

C. Jesus said for us to "rejoice, for they persecuted the prophets who were before you." When you are persecuted for righteousness sake, who are you associated with? (Jesus, Daniel, Stephen)

#### **V. Conclusion**

When you are persecuted for righteousness sake (and you will be) it means that the world takes you seriously.

# Salt and Light

By Greg King

*"You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt had become tasteless, how will it be made salty again? ... You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden" (Matthew 5:13-16).*

In the section on Kingdom Attitudes, Jesus described the character and blessedness of kingdom disciples. The final attitude (Blessed are the persecuted) described the world's attitude toward disciples with kingdom hearts.

The emphasis now changes from our attitude towards our own sinfulness, our hearts, and our service as merciful and peacemakers, to our influence and impact on the world around us. The citizens of the kingdom, no matter how despised or persecuted we are or regardless of how insignificant we may seem to the world, *we alone*, not the scribe, not the Pharisee, not the philosopher, are the salt of the earth and light of the world.

Jesus' statement here shows how different from the world, and yet how closely related to the world believers are. Worldliness and carnal attitudes are always condemned by Jesus, but so is isolation. Jesus calls us to impact our world through dynamic influence, not to be monks hidden secretly away in a wilderness cave. In these symbols of salt and light, Jesus declares that our influence, our actions, and our lives are to make a difference in our world.

## The Salt of the Earth

Salt has many characteristics: flavor, purity, and preservative power. Salt is used to prevent decay when rubbed into meat. It combats deterioration. The idea of salt as flavor and preservation are used in scripture. *"Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned as it were with salt, so that you may know how you should respond to each person" (Colossians 4:6).*

The righteous act as a preservative to guard against decay and destruction within society. When Abraham pleaded with the Lord over the destruction of Sodom & Gomorrah God responded, *"For the sake of ten, I will not destroy it" (Genesis 18:32)*. Only ten righteous people out of two corrupt cities would have spared them.

Salt helps prevent deterioration. When a citizen of the kingdom enters a crowd of worldly people, the off colored joke is nervously held back, the profanity is left unspoken, and the mean revenge seems to be restrained. Your words, your actions, your relationship with God flavors an otherwise bland world, and

preserves a deteriorating, rotting society. Your opinion and words are salt.

*"But if the salt becomes tasteless, what will make it salty again? It is good for nothing but to be thrown away and trampled underfoot by men."* The salt from the marshes and lagoons or from the rocks around the Dead Sea easily acquired a stale or alkaline taste because of its mixture with gypsum. It was literally "Good for nothing".

Kingdom people with kingdom attitudes are to have an influence with their lives. Don't "tone down" your influence on issues in the office. Don't become dry, dusty, tasteless white powder. People who never read a Bible are reading you! You are the salt of the earth.

## You are the Light of the World

While salt acts quietly and sometimes secretly, light is very positive and open.

Light indicates the true knowledge of God. *"The Lord is my light and my salvation" (Psalm 27:1)*. Light symbolizes goodness, righteousness, and example. *"For you were once darkness, but now you are the light in the Lord. Live as children of light" (Ephesians 5:8)*. Light is used in the broader sense for "salvation", a light unto the world (Luke 1:77-79).

God's kingdom people not only have been "enlightened" with the light of the Gospel that brought them out of darkness, but they are luminaries, and stars shining in a world groping in darkness. We are *"Light in the Lord"*. Christ Himself is the true, original light, and as the moon reflects the light of the Sun, so we also reflect the light of the Son. *"You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you. The man who walks in the dark does not know where he is going. Put your trust in the light while you have it, so that you may become sons of light" (John 12:25-26)*.

It is the business of the church to be light in the world. The more like Jesus we are, the more of His brilliance we reflect.

The primary duty of the kingdom on earth is to let the light of the Gospel, the knowledge of eternal life, shine in all its glory. Men in darkness do not know where they are going. They are hopelessly wandering in total blindness. Our light opens the eyes of the human heart as we reflect God's truth.

A lamp is supposed to shine. It shines brightest in the darkness and draws people to it. You cannot take the city of Helena and hide it at night. There are too many lights shining. In fact, on a typical night, you can see the lights of Helena in the sky all the way from Boulder, 33 miles away.

The followers of Christ must be both visible and radiant. We must "*walk in the light*" (1 John 1:7), and be the light so that men will see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven. Actions speak louder than words. So shine!

## **Sermon Outline: "Salt of the Earth / Light of the World"**

Purpose: to convince Christians that kingdom people are to have an impact and influence on their world because of their kingdom attitude.

### **Introduction:**

AC Matthew 5:13 - 16

In the section on Kingdom attitudes, Jesus describes the character and blessedness of kingdom people. The final attitude describes the world's reaction toward kingdom people, "Blessed are the persecuted" Jesus now shifts to remind us of our purpose in life, our destiny in time. Our lives are supposed to make a difference!

**NEED:** Christians underestimate the effect and influence that their lives are to have. Worldliness is always condemned by Jesus, but so is isolation. We are to influence, not be a secluded cult of monks keeping our religious convictions secretly stored away in a monastery we call a church building.

Pharisees were isolationists who thought their lack of contact with the world would keep them pure spiritually. (Matthew 9:10-13)

### **CI: KINGDOM PEOPLE ARE THE SALT OF THE EARTH AND THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD**

## **I. The Salt of the Earth**

A. Salt's characteristics : Flavor, purity, preservative power; used to prevent decay when rubbed into meat, combats deterioration

B. We influence people by our words (Colossians 4:6) (Not whole saltshaker!!)

C. Our righteousness preserves a rotting society

Only ten people's righteousness could have spared two major cities (Genesis 18:23-32)

D. Salt prevents deterioration

When a Christian enters a crowd, the off colored jokes are nervously held back

Revenge and hatred seen to be restrained

E. Your words, actions, and your relationship with God flavors an otherwise bland world and preserves a rotting society (1 Timothy 4:16)

F. But, what if the salt becomes tasteless?

The salt from the marshes and lagoons or from the rocks around the Dead Sea easily acquired a stale or alkaline taste because of its mixture with gypsum. It was literally "Good for nothing"

Salt becomes tasteless through a process of adulteration, contamination, or because some foreign substance had become mixed with it.

Jesus encountered many Pharisees and scribes who advocated a formal, legalistic religion in the place of the true religion of God but their influence was gone (Matthew 23:15).. son of hell..

G. When we lose our influence in the world, we literally become "Good for nothing, and will be cast out trampled underfoot by the world!" (Hebrews 3:12-14; Matthew 8:11-12)

What's the point, Never become a "Good for nothin Christian, or you'll get thrown out and walked all over"

A lot of people who will never read a Bible are reading You!

## **III. You are the Light of the World**

A. While salt sometimes acts quietly and secretly, light is very positive and open.

Light indicates knowledge of the Lord and salvation (Psalm 27:1; Luke 1:76-79)

Light symbolizes goodness, righteousness, and example (Ephesians 5:8)

Light symbolizes the best there is in learning, love, and laughter contrasted with *darkness*, that is, the worst there is in dullness, depravity, and despair.

B. Christ is the true, original light, and as the moon reflects the light of the S-U-N, so we also reflect the light of the S-O-N. (John 8:12;12:25-26; )

As a light bulb cannot shine by itself unless it is in contact with electrical current, so one cannot be the light of the world without remaining in living contact with the original light.

The quality of our relationship with Christ will be the quality of our light. Attitude, sin, or other things can dull our light like the Pharisees.

C. The primary duty of the church on earth is to let the light of the Gospel shine to those in darkness ( Philippians



2:14-16)

We are not to be like Moses who veiled his face to hide the glory of God, we are to take our positions on our lampstands, and allow the glory of God to reflect brightly so that the world will come to know God (2 Corinthians 3:10 - 4:6)

D. The world will see our good works, not because we want to draw attention to ourselves, but because we want to bring glory to God (Matthew 6:1; good cannot be hidden (1 Timothy 5:24-25)

Tertullian (about 200 AD) writing of Christians influence and example: "But it is mainly the deeds of a love so noble that lead many to put a brand on us. See, they say, how they love one another. ... See, how they are ready even to die for one another, for they themselves will rather be put to death," (Apology XXXIX)

## **IV. Conclusion**

A. Never underestimate the effect your life has on other people, and on society. Never be bland or allow your good to be hidden.

B. You are the salt of the earth and the light of the world.

## **Small Group Discussion Outline: "Salt and Light"**

### **Introduction**

In the section on Kingdom Attitudes, Jesus described the character and blessedness of kingdom disciples. The final "Attitude" dealt with the world's reaction toward the disciple with a kingdom heart (Blessed are the persecuted). The emphasis now changes from our attitude toward our own sinfulness, our hearts, and our service as merciful and peacemaking people to our impact and influence on the world around us. The citizens of the kingdom, no matter how despised and persecuted we are, no matter how insignificant we may seem to the world, **we alone**, not the scribe, not the Pharisee, not the philosopher, are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. In this lesson we will examine what Jesus is saying and how to apply the principles to our lives.

### **I. You are the Salt of the Earth**

- A. Matthew 5:13 What Did Jesus mean when he said disciples were salt?  
What do we mean when we say someone is the "Salt of the Earth" (Answer: the finest example of certain good qualities? A good person? One who influences others for good?)  
What characteristics do you see that salt has? (Answer: flavor, purity, preservative power, prevents decay)
- B. Is there any significance to the fact that Jesus said we are the Salt of the EARTH?  
Why not the salt of the church? (Question: is he telling us one of our tasks is to influence the whole world?)
- C. Let's look at some of the characteristics of salt in the lives of God's people in scripture
- D. Colossians 4:6 How does this passage help us understand how to influence people? (Answer: our speech, our language, what we talk about, our tone of voice influence people for the kingdom).  
Can anyone share an example of how your speech has influenced someone for the kingdom?  
Too much salt can ruin the soup. How does this relate to using wisdom in our speech?
- E. Genesis 18:23-32. Salt also prevents deterioration and decay. From this passage, what insights do you see about the impact that only 5 righteous people would have had on two major cities?
- F. Salt can lose its saltiness. The salt from the marshes and lagoons or from the rocks around the Dead Sea easily acquired a stale or alkaline taste because of its mixture with gypsum. It became contaminated because of being mixed with a foreign substance. Jesus said that we as the salt of the earth can become tasteless and good for nothing. What do you think he meant, and how can this happen?

### **II. You are the light of the world**

- A. How is salt's influence different than that of light? (Answer: salt acts sometimes quietly, light is very positive and open? Other ideas?)
- B. When Jesus says that you are the light of the world, what do you think he meant?  
Ephesians 5:8 What do we learn about light from this passage?  
How is light different than darkness? (Light symbolizes the best there is in learning, love and laughter, contrasted with darkness - the worst in depravity, ignorance, and despair.
- C. John 8:12; 12:35-36  
From these passages, what can you learn about who is the source of our light?  
Jesus is the true, original light. As the moon reflects the light of the S-U-N, so we also reflect the light of the S-O-N.  
What determines the quality of your light personally? (Answer: your relationship with Christ, your good works, and your direction in life. Good relationship = bright light. Sin, attitudes, and practices can dull your light)
- D. Philippians 2:14-16. From this passage, what is the primary duty of those who are citizens of God's kingdom? (Answer: to shine the light of the Gospel to those in darkness)

### **III. Conclusion and Application**

- A. How can we apply this lesson to our lives?  
Realize that God has a purpose for your life. You are God's instrument of influence to the world. We are

not the light of the church, we are the light of the world.

B. 1 Timothy 4:16 By paying close attention to your life and teaching, you will ensure salvation both for those who hear you and for yourself

# The Righteousness of the Kingdom

By Greg King

*"For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:20).*

Kingdom attitudes are for kingdom people. The citizens of God's kingdom are to have a certain kind of righteousness that is expected by God. That righteousness is different from that of the Pharisees and teachers of the Old Law about whom Jesus is referring.

## The Righteousness of the Pharisees

Jesus had just declared, *"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law of the Prophets, I have not come to abolish, but to fulfill them.... Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:17,19).*

The righteousness of the Pharisees was rooted in cold formalistic religious practice. They buried the divine oracles of God under a load of tradition and regarded the outward observance of religious practice and traditional forms of religion as the **greatest** commandments, regardless of the inner condition of the heart.

Not every commandment carried equal significance. The rabbis divided the law into 613 commandments. They considered 248 of these to be positive and 365 negative. They carried on lengthy debates about heavier and lighter commandments. Some rabbis considered Deuteronomy 22:6 to be the lightest of them all, *"You shall not carry off the mother bird together with her young."* The heaviest or most significant commands were *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and Love your neighbor as yourself."* Jesus obviously agreed with their interpretation of the greatest commands (Matthew 22:34-40).

The Pharisees, however, were *Masters of Evasion* when it came to the true interpretation and application of the law of God.

The remainder of the Sermon on the Mount is an explanation of the perversion of the traditional interpretation and application of the Law of God contrasted with Jesus' true expectation of righteousness for His Kingdom People. The nature of the Pharisees was to reduce the expectation of the real intent of the Law, and substitute their tradition and formalistic religious rules. Thus Jesus declares that *"Your righteousness must exceed that of the Pharisee."*

Jesus is not saying that our religious formalism and volume of kept commands must be higher. He is saying that our hearts must be genuinely and completely submissive to the intent of God's law. Religious duty and false piety will not serve as a substitute. If God's law seems too hard to keep, you can't reduce or redefine the law to make it easier for you to justify your disobedience in your own mind.

## Failure of the Righteousness of the Pharisee

There are four basic failures of the righteousness prescribed and practiced by the Pharisee.

**1. Fails to satisfy the heart.** It is formal, external, and shallow. It falls far short of perfection. In contrast, Jesus commands satisfy the heart. It is genuine, internal, deeply rooted, and complete. To understand the contrast see (Matthew 5:8; Luke 16:15; and Matthew 23:25).

**2. Fails to satisfy the mind.** Because false righteousness is deceptive, misleading, and insincere, the mind cannot find peace with a clear conscience. Jesus invites, *"come all you who are weary and heavy laden," (Matthew 11:28).* Notice the *sound* reasoning of the Prodigal when he came to himself through reasoning and common sense (Luke 15:17-19). The Pharisee had nullified the sound reason of the Word of God by their tradition (Matthew 15:3-5).

**3. Fails because it is self made.** The Pharisee was *"Self righteous"* whereas Jesus gives to His kingdom people a righteousness that is not their own, but of His nature (2 Corinthians 5:21). Jesus blessed those who *hunger and thirst after true righteousness* (Matthew 5:6). The Pharisee *trusted in themselves that they were righteous* (Luke 18:9-14).

**4. Fails because it glorifies self.** False religion has as its goal glorification of itself rather than glorification of the Almighty. The Pharisee thought he was so good because he was religious and in his own mind not a sinful as

"Those" people (Luke 18:9-14). Jesus commanded that His righteous ones would do good works that *glorify your Father in heaven*" (Matthew 5:16). Their practice was not to be done before men to draw attention to themselves as the hypocrites were in the habit of doing (Matthew 6:1,2).

### **True Righteousness**

In the remainder of Jesus' sermon he will set his true righteousness up against the misinterpretations of the ages. He will set these up by saying, *You have heard it said ... but I say to you.*

Jesus will give clarification on six major issues, Murder, Adultery, Divorce, Oaths, Retaliation or revenge, and Love without respect of persons. These will be the topics for the following weeks.

## **Sermon Outline: "The Righteousness of the Kingdom"**

Purpose: To inform Christians of the identity of true righteousness that Jesus requires from Kingdom citizens.

### **Introduction:**

**AC:** Read Matthew 5:17-20

Kingdom Attitudes are for kingdom people. The citizens of the kingdom are to have a certain kind of righteousness that God expects. That righteousness is different from that of the Pharisees and teachers of the old law.

**NEED:** Christians today need to understand that our righteousness must exceed that of the Pharisees, or we will not inherit the kingdom of heaven.

Think that just because we believe the right doctrine, observe the Lord's Supper, give of our money, sing without a piano, and come to church three times a week that we are righteous.

But the Pharisees were close observers of religious orthodoxy and formality in practicing their traditions... and Jesus said unless they change, they won't inherit heaven.

**CI: UNLESS YOUR RIGHTEOUSNESS EXCEEDS THAT OF THE PHARISEES AND TEACHERS OF THE LAW, YOU WILL CERTAINLY NOT ENTER THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.**

## **I. The righteousness of the Pharisees**

A. Jesus had been accused of abolishing the Law and Prophets because his interpretation and application of them was different (Matthew 5:17,19)

B. Pharisees tradition was rooted in cold, formalistic religious practice.

They buried the divine oracles of God under a load of tradition and regarded outward observance of religious practice and traditional forms of religion as the GREATEST righteousness, regardless of the condition of the heart.

C. Rabbis divided OT law into 613 commandments

248 were positive, 365 were negative and debated on greater and lesser commands.

Deuteronomy 22:6 by most rabbis was considered the lightest or least

D. Pharisees were **MASTERS OF EVASION**

Murder wrong: anger and contempt are OK as long as you do your religious duty

Actual adultery wrong, but lust isn't that bad...

Honoring parents was secondary as long as you tithed even your garden herbs. (Matthew 15:4-6)

Divorce was no longer a serious concern, "Everybody else is doing it"...

## **II. The failure of Pharisaical righteousness**

**A. Fails to satisfy the heart.**

It is formal, external, and shallow contrasted with true, heart felt righteousness. (Matthew 5:8; Luke 16:15; Matthew 23:25)

**B. Fails to satisfy the mind.**

False righteousness of deceptive, misleading and insincere. Therefore, the mind cannot find peace with a clean conscience.

Compare Matthew 11:28

The prodigal, came to himself through common sense reasoning (Luke 15:17-19)

Pharisees nullified sound reasoning by tradition (Matthew 15:3-5)

**C. Fails because it is self made.** (Luke 18:9-14)

compare 2 Corinthians 5:21 His righteousness vrs our own.

**D. Fails because it glorifies self rather than God.**

Matthew 5:16 glorify God vrs self (Matthew 6:1-2).

## **III. The call for true righteousness**

A. True righteousness threatens tradition and calls for CHANGE (the "C" word) (Matthew 9:16-17)

Greg King Publications

Pharisees were tight, dry, cracking, withering, rotting rigid wineskins that had lost the flexibility to change and conform to true righteousness.

**Some want to grow? But don't want stretch marks!**

Traditions, when practiced long enough, become religious laws that blind the observers to the intent and call for true righteousness. **Sacred cows make good hamburgers!**

B. Jesus sets his standards of true righteousness up against the traditional misinterpretations of the ages *YOU HAVE HEARD IT SAID... BUT I SAY TO YOU.*

C. Jesus will challenge six areas of misinterpretation in the Sermon on the Mount and several others throughout his ministry:

Murder & Hatred, Adultery & lust, Divorce and remarriage, Oaths and keeping your word, retaliation and revenge, and Love without respect of persons.

In later speeches, Jesus will challenge purity of heart in contrast with empty religious practice and formality.

## **IV. Conclusion**

A. Jesus came to declare the true intent of the Law of Moses and the teaching of the Prophets that had been misinterpreted by the Masters of Evasion

B. Our righteousness must exceed theirs.

## ***Small Discussion Outline: "Righteousness of the Kingdom"***

### **Introduction**

Kingdom attitudes are useless unless proper application to the heart and mind and action are made. Jesus illustrated this in the second section of the Sermon on the Mount, "Kingdom Righteousness." Kingdom citizens are to have and develop a kind of righteousness that God expects. That righteousness is different from that of the Pharisees and teachers of the law. They were very religious, but very unrighteous! In this lesson we will explore what Jesus means about exceeding the righteousness of the Pharisees. Let's begin by reading Matthew 5:17-20.

### **I. The Righteousness of the Pharisees**

A. What do we know about the Pharisees that was good?

They were interested in and committed to restoration of doctrinal purity.

They were strongly opposed to worldliness and sin.

They were close observers of formality and propriety in practicing their religion, and in their worship.

The leading Rabbi's divided the Old Testament into 613 commandments, 248 were positive and 365 were negative. They viewed Deuteronomy 22:6 as "The Least Of The Commandments"

They developed practical ways of applying and carrying out God's commandments.

B. What could possibly be wrong with this type of attitude? What could it lead to?

C. Pharisees were MASTERS OF EVASION: Here's how they thought.

Murder was wrong, but anger and contempt were OK, as long as you did your formal religious duty and attended synagogue regularly.

Actual adultery was wrong, but lust wasn't such a bad thing.

Honoring your father and mother was secondary to tithing (Matthew 15:4-6).

Divorce was not longer a serious concern, everybody else was doing it.

### **II. Failure of the Righteousness of the Pharisees**

A. Fails to satisfy the heart (Matthew 5:8; Luke 16:15; Matthew 23:25)

Explain how the practices of the Pharisees in the above passages would fail to satisfy the heart of a true worshipper?

B. Fails to satisfy the mind

From Matthew 11:28; explain how truly following Jesus satisfies the mind.

False righteousness is deceptive, misleading and insincere. Therefore the mind cannot find peace with a clean conscience.

From reading Matthew 15:3-8; describe how the Pharisees "Reasoned" his way to place certain commandments over others.

Was the Pharisees priorities in commandments proper? Explain. (they ignored the weightier commands but focused on the lesser commands, they strained at gnats and swallowed camels).

How could we be guilty of this today?

C. Fails because it is self made religion. Read Luke 18:9-14

What is the purpose of this parable of Jesus from verse 9?

What was the Pharisee confident of? (answer: his own law keeping mentality)

What do you see different between the Pharisee and the tax collector in their attitudes?

How might we be like the Pharisee?

D. Fails because it glorifies self, rather than God.

Compare Matthew 5:16 with 6:1-2

What is the difference in emphasis of these two verses?

### **III. The Call For True Righteousness**



- A. True righteousness threatens tradition and calls for the nasty "C" word - CHANGE!  
Matthew 9:16-17 How does this passage illustrate the above statement?
- B. The Pharisees were tight, dry, cracking, withering, rotting, rigid wineskins that had lost the flexibility to change and conform to true righteousness.  
Do you think it is possible that some people may want to grow, but don't want any "stretch marks?"  
Explain.  
Tradition, when practiced long enough, become religious laws that blind observers to the intent and call for true righteousness.  
What do you think of the following statement: "Sacred Cows Make Good Hamburgers?"
- C. Jesus sets the standard for true righteousness. You will see this illustrated in the rest of the Sermon on the Mount by statements like: "You have heard it said, but I say to you..." There will be six areas of misinterpretation that Jesus deals with:  
Murder and hatred  
Adultery and lust  
Divorce and remarriage  
Oaths and keeping your word  
Retaliation and revenge  
Love without respect of persons

#### **IV. Conclusion**

- A. What do you understand Jesus means when He says that our righteousness must exceed that of the Pharisees?  
B. How can we be careful to do this?

# The Righteousness of the Kingdom: Murder

By Greg King

*"You have heard it said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to punishment,' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment..." (Matthew 5:21 - 26)*

Jesus had just told those listening to his sermon, that their righteousness must exceed that of the Pharisees and scribe (5:20). Their righteousness was self made, self elevating, and offered no satisfaction for the heart or mind. In the next six specific instances, Jesus is going to sharpen the edge of the precept under discussion by pointing out and condemning the evil disposition of the heart that lies at the root of the sin. He will then place the tradition driven interpretation up against his positive commandment. The formula for understanding the contrast will be the phrase, *"You have heard it said ... But I say to you"*.

## Murder

The sixth of the ten commandments dealt with murder, *"Thou shalt not murder (Exodus 20:13)*. Moses' law also prescribed capital punishment for one committing the act of murder. *"Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man," (Genesis 9:6)*. The ancient teachers of the law had plainly agreed that murder was wrong. What is the problem then? For in his teaching Jesus says, *You have heard it said ... but I say to you*. He also declared that he had not come to abolish the law or the prophets teaching (Matthew 5:17), and yet whatever he is saying on this subjects obviously stands in sharp contrast with the interpretation of those teachers of the law that Jesus is challenging.

On the surface, it would seem that no fault can be found in the manner in which they had interpreted the law on murder. What was wrong was not what they had said, but *what they left unsaid* (or at least unemphasized). Their interpretation, though correct as far as it went, did not go nearly far enough.

The Pharisee and lawyers failed to point out the *spiritual cause that produced murder* - hatred and anger. They had reduced the law of God to nothing more than a penal code that justified retribution.

Jesus gets to the heart of the matter when he teaches, *"But I say to you, that anyone who is **angry** with his brother deserves to be punished. And whoever says to his brother "Raca" (you empty head, or you blockhead) deserves to be condemned by the court (Sanhedrin). And whoever says, You fool (or you idiot or you moron), deserves to be cast into the hell of fire."*

## Jesus' Lesson

Jesus is teaching just *one* lesson, and a very important one. Sinful anger, the kind that leads to bitter words, is in its very nature murder. It is murder committed in the heart. Unless he repents, the person with this kind of attitude faces punishment in hell. The Pharisee focused only on the actual act of murder, Jesus traces the deed to the evil disposition of the heart. The root of evil lies in the heart, where love must be substituted for hatred and indifference, and sincerity for hypocrisy and selfishness.

Moses had also emphasized the need for a pure heart toward people, *"Love your neighbor as yourself," (Leviticus 18:19)*. He had also pointed out that jealous anger was the root cause of murder in the very first domestic dispute between Cain and Able (Genesis 4:1-16, especially verses 6,7). The same lessons had been reemphasized in later writings. *"Do not be quickly provoked*

*in your spirit, for anger resides in the lap of fools," (Ecclesiastes 7:9)*. Jesus does not annul the command against murder. He shows what it had meant from the very beginning. Anger, malice, bitterness, and hatred *are* murder in the heart. One cannot be justified before God while harboring hatred.

## Relationships With Men Affect Relationships With God

*"Therefore, if while you are bringing your offering to the altar, you there remember that your brother **has a grievance against you**, leave your offering there in front of the altar, and **first** go and be reconciled to your brother;*

*then come and present your offering" (Mat 5:23-24). John, the disciple whom Jesus loved put it this way, "Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him" (1 John 3:15). "If anyone says, 'I love God', yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has seen" (1 John 4:19). Peter also recognized that worship is hindered when spousal relationships are not good (1 Peter 3:7).*

### **Application**

The emphasis Jesus places is on the relationship with others, whether you have the problem with them, or they have the problem with you. If you even suspect that someone has a grudge or grievance against you (justified or unjustified), then you need to make every possible effort to restore the relationship. (see Matthew 6:12; 14, 18:21-35). It's a matter of the heart.

## **Sermon Outline: "Righteousness of the Kingdom: Murder"**

Purpose: to inform Christians of Jesus view of anger, hatred and jealousy, which are murder from the heart and stimulate them to the true righteousness of the kingdom.

### **Introduction**

**AC:** Matthew 5:21-26

Jesus is dealing with the sixth commandment of Exodus 20:13)

Moses' law also prescribed capital punishment for one committing the act of murder (Genesis 9:6)

**NEED:** The teachers of the law also believed that murder was wrong, but Jesus is telling his listeners and us that our righteousness must exceed that of the Pharisee.

We also believe that murder is wrong, so what is Jesus dealing with here?.

On the surface, it would seem that no fault can be found in the manner in which they interpreted murder.

The problem is not in what they said, but in what they left unsaid.

They had reduced the law of God to nothing more than a penal code that justified retribution. Jesus gets to the heart of the matter: Anger, hatred, and contempt for your fellow man.

### **CI: THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE KINGDOM DEMANDS THAT WE DEAL WITH MURDER AT ITS SOURCE**

#### **I. Murder is the result of emotions of the heart**

A. Jesus is teaching just one lesson. Sinful anger that leads to bitter words and contempt is in its very nature murder  
This teaching fulfills Moses' law (Leviticus 18:19)

Moses showed that jealous anger was the root cause of murder in the very first domestic dispute (Genesis 4:1-9; esp. verses 6,7).

B. The outward action always comes from the emotions of the heart (Matthew 15:16-19)

C. The Pharisees attempted to reduce the requirements of the law to their own obedience level by "*Redefining*" the terms and de-emphasizing the intent of the heart. They masked their evil intent usually with religiosity.

Justify self by asking "Who is my neighbor?" (Luke 10:25-37)

Unjustifiably angry with people,

Called people *RACA* (you empty head, or you blockhead)

Called people "Fool" (Greek more) "Moron"

D. In explaining the full intent of the law, Jesus says that unjustifiable anger, abusive language, and contempt for people is punishable by hell fire. (1 John 3:15)

#### **II. Bad relationships with people prevent true worship to God.**

A. Still solving the problem at its source, Jesus commands reconciliation between disputing parties before worship takes place. (Matthew 5:23-26)

A right relationship with God cannot be had by one in a wrong relationship with his brother (1 John 4:20)

The early church" Let none who has a quarrel with his fellow join in your meeting until they be reconciled, that your sacrifice be not defiled (*Didache 14:2*).

According to the Mishna, the day of atonement does not atone for the man unreconciled to his brother (*Yoma 8:9*).

This is the "unworthy manner" (1 Corinthians 11:17-29)

Poor spousal relationships also hinder our worship (1 Peter 3:7)

#### **III. True righteousness demands reconciliation**

A. The emphasis Jesus places is on mending your relationship with others

Whether they have the problem with you (Matthew 5:23-24)

Or you have the problem with them (Matthew 18:15-17)

B. An effort at restoring the relationship must be made by YOU

Ephesians 4:3;26-27, 31-32)

However, if your opponent refuses to be fair, and, where necessary to be forgiving, the guilt will rest upon him alone.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

A. Jesus drives our attention to the heart of true righteousness. Murder is wrong, and always has been. But so is malice, envy, jealousy, contempt, and hatred.

B. It is your duty to make every possible attempt at reconciliation.

C. If you would desire to worship God in spirit and truth, and enter the kingdom, your righteousness must exceed that of the Pharisee.

## **Small Group Discussion Outline: Murder**

### **Introduction**

Jesus had just told those listening to his sermon that their righteousness must exceed that of the Pharisees and scribes (Matthew 5:20). Their righteousness was self made, self elevating, and offered no satisfaction for the heart of mind. Jesus is now going to give six specific instances of how to exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees. He will deal with the issues from their source - the heart. He will then place the tradition driven interpretation up against his positive command. The formula for understanding the contrast will be the phrase: "*You have heard it said ... But I say to you...*" Let's look at the first issue of hatred & murder (Matthew 5:21-26).

### **I. Murder in the Old Testament**

A. Exodus 20:13; Genesis 9:6

What insights do you gain from these passages in the Old Law?

Do you think that the Pharisees understood these passages?

B. If they understood murder to be wrong, what is Jesus dealing with here?

Is there something that they left *unsaid*?

Did they perhaps reduce the law of God to a mere penal code that justified retribution?

Do you think they perhaps ignored the issues of the heart that caused murder (anger, hatred, contempt)?

What do you think?

### **II. Murder's source**

A. How does Jesus address the source of murder in 5:21-26?

B. It seems that Jesus is teaching just one lesson: Sinful anger that leads to bitter words and contempt is in its very nature murder? What do you think?

C. Let's look at some passages that help us gain more insight into this concept:

Leviticus 18:19

Genesis 4:1-9, especially : 6-7)

Matthew 15:16-19 Where do outward actions come from? Other examples?

D. Key to understanding Pharisees: They attempted to reduce the requirements of the law to their own obedience level by "*redefining*" the terms and de-emphasizing the intent of the heart. They masked their evil intent with religiosity.

They were unjustifiably angry with people

Called people *RACA* (you empty head, or you blockhead)

Called people *FOOL*, (Greek *more'* which we translate "Moron")

Since the law said love your neighbor, they tried to redefine who their neighbors were (see Luke 10:25-37).

### **III. How does anger in our heart affect our relationship with God?**

A. Matthew 5:23-26, What does Jesus indicate about unresolved conflict with other people?

B. Let's look at some other passages, and see what you can discover about this topic

1 John 4:20

1 Corinthians 11:17-29 (relationship problems is the "unworthy manner")

1 Peter 3:7 (relationship with spouse)

### **IV. How can we apply true righteousness to our lives?**

A. Matthew 5:23-24

Who has the responsibility for reconciling issues in these verses?

You, if you are aware that someone has a problem with you?

B. Matthew 18:15-17

Who has the responsibility for reconciling issues in these verses?

You, if you have an issue with someone else?

- C. Does the initiative for restoring the relationship rest with you?
- D. What if the relationship cannot be reconciled?  
How does Ephesians 4:3,26-27, 31-32 help with this application?

## **V. Conclusion and application**

- A. Jesus forces out attention to the heart of true righteousness. Murder is wrong and always has been, but so is malice, envy, jealousy, contempt, and hatred. The Pharisees emphasized only the outward manifestation, and never dealt with the issues of the heart.
- B. How can you apply this lesson to your personal life?
- C. What struggles will we have in exceeding the righteousness of the Pharisees?

# Kingdom Righteousness: Adultery

## by Greg King

*"You have heard it said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:27-28)*

As in the case of the commandment about murder, the Pharisees stopped short of giving full exposition on the matter of sexual immorality and adultery. Moses, in the 7th commandment said, *"You shall not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:14)*. The 7th commandment was not at fault, but the Pharisees narrow interpretation of the commandment was. The Pharisees stopped short of the *intent* of the commandment and reduced it to a shallow, superficial interpretation.

It's amazing how Satan has created an entire industries around our desires (alcohol, drugs, pleasure, and sex). Today, the sex industry is a multi- billion dollar a year industry in the US, and is available in magazines, videos, "900" numbers, and is readily available in person in every city. There are even bill boards advertising condoms to prevent sexually transmitted disease when immorality is engaged in. With the onslaught of AIDS, the actual act of adultery may be slowed, but adultery in the heart is as rampant and destructive as it ever has been in the history of mankind. We need to learn ways of being more righteous than the Pharisees in this area of committing adultery and lust in the heart.

### I. Adultery begins in the heart

The seventh commandment, *"Do not commit adultery"* should be explained in light of the tenth commandment, *"Do not covet your neighbor's wife" (Exodus 20:17; Deuteronomy 5:21)*. Jesus recognized that adultery has its origin in the heart, *"For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality..." (Matthew 15:19)*. Jesus views the evil sexual lust of the heart as adultery, just as He views the hatred of the heart as murder.

No one can be tempted with something that he does not inherently like. *"We are carried away by our own desires" (James 1:14-15)*. The sex drive is the second strongest natural desire in man, second only to self preservation. At times, the sex drive can even be stronger than self preservation. This is why the heart must be guarded, *"guard your heart with all diligence, for from it comes the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23)*.

### II. Adultery is always destructive

When one considers the destructive nature of adultery, we can't help but think of the man of God - David. In 2 Samuel 11:2-5, we see that David lusted after another mans wife and committed adultery. This led David to lie and ultimately murder a faithful, loyal soldier of his. In the adulterous union, a child was conceived, which God took from them. Later in time, David's family suffered the consequences of this sin.

Solomon's wisdom reveals the pain and destructive nature of adultery. In fact in Proverbs 5, 6, and 7, there are three consecutive chapters in the bible devoted primarily to this one subject. They show that adultery is not wise, and it leads to death, destruction, shame, and humiliation. I know of no other sin where three consecutive chapters in the Bible are devoted to uncovering its hideous consequences and warning against yielding to its powerful influence.

### III. Adultery must be dealt with seriously

Adultery must be dealt with on a personal level and on a congregational level. The first principle for avoiding this most powerful temptation is to not feed the lust. The mind attracts what the mind thinks about most, therefore don't let your mind dwell on lust, immorality, and sin. In order to do this, you must not allow your mind to be subjected to the influence of books, videos, or wrong associations.

Jesus said that if your hand offends you, cut it off. This means that if lust and adultery are serious, eternal life threatening temptations, it is better for you to avoid even getting close to this sin. Cut it off! This life is not all there is. Nothing, no matter how precious it may seem at the moment, (right hand, right eye, etc.) should be allowed to doom our glorious destiny. The sin of adultery, being the vicious, destructive force that it is, must not be pampered!

### IV. Conclusion



Our righteousness must exceed that of the Pharisees, who were interested only in the outward act, and not the heart. Adultery begins in the heart, and is always destructive. You must deal with it seriously in your own life. Eternity is nothing to take lightly!

## **Sermon Outline: "The Righteousness of the Kingdom: Adultery"**

Purpose: to inform Christians of the dangers of adultery, both in the heart and in action, and convince them that the Righteousness of the kingdom includes sexual purity in heart and in deed.

### **Introduction**

**AC:** Matthew 5:27-30

**NEED:** As in the case of the commandment on murder, the Pharisees stopped short of giving a full exposition of the matter. (Exodus 20:14)

It was not the law of the 7th commandment that was at fault, it was that they stopped short of the full meaning of the command.

Amazing how Satan creates entire industries around sin (alcohol, drugs, pleasure, and sex)

Today, the sex industry is a multi - billion dollar a year industry, magazines, videos, 900 numbers.

With the onslaught of AIDS, the actual act of adultery may be slowed, but adultery in the heart is as rampant and destructive as it has ever been in the history of mankind

**CI: ADULTERY CAN BE COMMITTED IN THE HEART AND WE NEED TO LEARN WAYS TO AVOID THIS SIN.**

### **I. Adultery begins in the heart**

A. Seventh commandment should have been explained in light of the tenth "Do not covet your neighbor's wife" (Exodus 20:17; Deuteronomy 5:21).

B. Jesus recognized the origin of adultery: the heart (Matthew 5:19).

Jesus views the evil lust of the heart as adultery, just as he views the hatred of the heart as murder.

None of us can be tempted with something that we don't like (James 1:14-15).

The sex drive at its peak is the second strongest natural desire, second only to self preservation. At times it is # 1.

C. This is why the heart must be guarded (Proverbs 4:23).

### **II. Adultery is always destructive**

A. David and Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11:2-5).

David lusted and committed the act of adultery

David lied and murdered

The child was taken

David's family suffered later consequences

B. Solomon's wisdom reveals the pain of adultery

Proverbs 5:1-14

Proverbs 6:20-33

Proverbs 7:1-27

Is there any other Bible subject where three consecutive chapters are devoted to uncovering the destructive power of a single sin?

### **III. Adultery must be dealt with seriously**

A. Don't feed the lust

The mind attracts what the mind thinks about most, therefore avoid material or environments that can tempt you to lust.

B. Lessons for us to learn from Verses 29-30

The present is not our only life

NOTHING, no matter how precious it may seem at the moment (right eye, right hand) should be allowed to doom our glorious destiny.

Sin, being a viciously destructive force, must not be pampered.

## **IV. Conclusion**

A. Our righteousness must exceed that of the Pharisees, who were interested only in the outward act, and not the heart.

B. Adultery begins in the heart, it is always destructive, and you must deal with it seriously in your own life. Eternity is nothing to take lightly.

## **Small Group Discussion Outline: Adultery**

### **Introduction**

Jesus said that our righteousness must exceed that of the Pharisees or we will not enter the kingdom (Matthew 5:20). What do you think Jesus meant in that statement? (Answer: the Pharisees were interested mostly in the outward rituals of religion, with little regard to the inward condition of the heart)

Jesus deals with about six specific conditions of righteousness in applying the teaching about kingdom righteousness. The first issue is that of Murder (Matthew 5:21-26). What observations can you make about Jesus teaching on the subject of murder, anger, and hatred? (It is an issue of the heart. In order to be truly righteous, our hearts have to become pure).

The second issue that Jesus deals with in Kingdom Righteousness is that of adultery, and lust in the heart. This lesson will concentrate on the source of adultery, the destructive nature of adultery and lust, and how to deal with it seriously in our lives.

### **I. Adultery: It's origin.**

- A. Let's read Matthew 5:27-28. Where did these people hear "Do not commit adultery" before? (Answer: reading the 10 commandments and hearing its explanation from the Pharisees and teachers of the law)
- B. What do you suppose the teachers of the law had said about adultery? (It was wrong to commit the act, but they did not concentrate on the heart).
- C. Let's read Matthew 15:19. What insights can you gain about the origin of the sin of adultery and sexual immorality from this verse? (Answer: adultery, immorality has its origin in the heart).
- D. Let's read James 1:13-15. From these verses, what insights do you see about how we are tempted? (Answer: we're tempted by our own desires, and then carried away).  
Are desires wrong? Why?  
What makes desire wrong? (Answer: when we allow our desires to control our thoughts and actions)
- E. Since adultery and immorality has its origin in our hearts, what advice should we gain from Solomon's instruction in Proverbs 4:23 and why?

### **II. Adultery is always destructive.**

- A. 2 Samuel 11:1-5  
What sequence of events do you notice occurring in David's sin? (Lust gave in to sin, and then produced death in its result)  
What consequences did David experience in his life because of his sin? (the child conceived in the adultery died, David murdered a man, he lied, his family later suffered consequences).  
What warnings should we heed ourselves as we look at the consequences of lust in David's life?
- B. Solomon's wisdom reveals the pain of adultery:  
Proverbs 5:1-14; 6:20-33; 7:1-27  
Why do you suppose three chapters are devoted to uncovering one sin? (Answer: this sin is obviously very powerful, and very destructive)

### **III. Adultery must be dealt with seriously**

- A. From Matthew 5:29-30, what insights do you gain about how to deal with lusts in your life?
- B. What can you learn about adultery and lust from the manner in which Jesus prescribes the solution?  
The present life is not our only life. We will have to reckon with our sin at the judgment, therefore we better take it seriously now.  
NOTHING should be allowed to doom your soul to hell. Do you consider your right hand and right eye precious? Is Jesus telling us to cut off our arm and pluck out our eyes in this section?  
Sin is highly destructive and must not be pampered!
- C. What are the applications we can make from this lesson to our personal lives? (get some to share)  
Since we are tempted to lust, we must not feed the lust and allow ourselves to be lured away.  
Avoid books, magazines, videos, and anything that causes us to lean toward lust.

Cut off whatever in your life is leading you into sin. (places you go, people you hang out with, things you do, things you read or watch)

#### **IV. Conclusion**

- A. Jesus said our righteousness must exceed that of the Pharisees or we will not enter the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:20). God is interested in the inner condition of your heart as well as in your actions.
- B. Adultery begins in the heart, it is always destructive, and you must deal with it seriously in your life. Eternity is nothing to take lightly.
- C. Close with a prayer asking God to help the group to avoid lust and sexual immorality. Ask for God's intervention to deliver us from temptation, and purify our hearts.

# Kingdom Righteousness: Divorce

## by Greg King

*"It has been said, 'Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.' But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to commit adultery, and anyone who marries a woman so divorced commits adultery" (Matthew 5:31-32).*

There are two contrasting positions dealt with in these verses. First is the opinion expressed by men of long ago, and promoted by the scribes and Pharisees. On the basis of these opinions, huge debates arose, which amounted to this, that when a wife was to be dismissed, a certificate of divorce was to be properly drawn up and given to her. The assumption was that this act of providing a certificate in itself justified the dissolving of a marriage, and assumed permission for the parties to remarry.

The second position was that of Jesus. In these verses and others throughout the Gospels (Matthew 19:3-9; Mark 10:2-11; Luke 16:18) Jesus stresses that violation of the sacred marriage contract is forbidden and always has been. It is clear that here again, as in the case of murder, and adultery, that Jesus goes back beyond rabbinical opinions to the original intent of the law (Genesis 2:24; 24:67; Exodus 20:14; Deuteronomy 5:18; 24:1-4; Malachi 2:14-16).

Jesus' position reaches all the way back "from the beginning" (Matthew 19:4,8). The law had made it very clear that in marriage *one* man is joined to *one* woman, the implication being that death alone was able to part them (see Romans 7:1-7; 1 Corinthians 7:39). The exception to the rule to which Jesus refers in Matthew 5:32 and 19:6-9 (except for infidelity) permits divorce and ultimately a remarriage. Even in the Old Testament practice it would appear that remarriage constituted an act of adultery, but it was apparently permitted and accepted (see Romans 7:1-7).

The Pharisees stressed the "giving of the certificate". Jesus stressed the bond of marriage. The Pharisees objected to Jesus strict interpretation of the law when they asked the question, "*But didn't Moses leave room for the exercise of a greater measure of freedom and permit us to divorce our wives" (see 19:4-9)?* They interpreted Moses like this, "*If you wish to divorce your wife, go right ahead, but be sure to give her a divorce certificate.*" Such seems to have been the opinion of the scribes, Pharisees, and some prominent rabbi's.

Jesus answers their misinterpretation and misapplication like this, "*If you divorce your wife, and she hasn't been immoral, then **you** are responsible for exposing her to adultery.* This seems to be the comment of Paul also in Romans 7:1-7). She does have some responsibility for her guilt, but that is not the point which Jesus is emphasizing. He is emphasizing and correcting the careless dissolving of a marriage by stressing the serious implications of three parties: 1) the man who puts his wife away shares some guilt for adultery, 2) the woman who remarries commits adultery, and 3) the man who marries the divorced woman commits adultery.

The point being, that you'd better think long and hard about your careless *certificate giving* mentality. Whoever divorces his wife except on the grounds of infidelity must bear the chief responsibility if, as a result, she in her deserted state, should immediately yield to the temptation of becoming married to someone else, and thereby become an adulteress.

Jesus, in these few verses, discourages divorce, refutes the rabbinical misinterpretation of the law, restores the true intent and meaning of the law, rebukes the guilty party, defends the innocent, and upholds the sacredness of the marriage bond as ordained by God.

## **Sermon Outline: Righteousness of the Kingdom: Divorce**

Purpose: to convince Christians of the teaching on divorce and remarriage and motivate them to act on this teaching.

### **Introduction:**

**AC:** Divorce has been a topic of discussion for men for almost 4,000 years and was a topic of discussion by Jesus on numerous occasions, once in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:31-32).

**NEED:** As they had done on the topic of hatred and murder, and lust and adultery, the Pharisees had also distorted the law of God on the subject of divorce and remarriage. (see Matthew 5:17-20)

They had apparently taken the same careless approach to marriage as had those in the time of Moses which led to the regulation concerning giving the divorce certificate in Deuteronomy 24:1-4

The Pharisees had reduced the requirements of God to their own obedience level, rather than raising their standard to His.

### **CI: OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS MUST EXCEED THAT OF THE PHARISEES ON THE TOPIC OF DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE**

## **I. The Background of The Divorce Debate**

A. In Matthew 5, there are two contrasting positions dealt with: Jesus' position, and that expressed by men of long ago and promoted by the Pharisees and scribes.

B. The background stems from Deuteronomy 24:1-4

There were no divorces permitted up to this time

Immorality must have been a problem (Deuteronomy 22:13 ff.)

The divorce decree forced the man to prove probable cause for divorcing his wife, and thus restricted a present hard hearted practice of marriage breakdown for no reason.

C. There were three positions prominent in that day according to Gittin 9:10

Rabbi Shammai: 'a man may not divorce his wife unless he hath found unchastety in her, for it is written, 'because he hath found in her **indecenty** in anything'

Rabbi Hillel: "He may divorce her even if she spoiled a dish, for it is written, because he hath found in her indecenty in **anything**."

Rabbi Akiba: "Even if he found another fairer than she, for it is written, and it shall be if she finds no favor **in his eyes**"

D. The primary focus of the Pharisees was on ensuring that a certificate was given. The assumption was that the act of providing a certificate in itself justified the dissolving of a marriage and assumed permission for the parties to remarry (see Matthew 19:3,7).

## **II. Jesus' Statements on Divorce and Remarriage**

A. Let's read all of what Jesus said in this topic together in our Bibles (Matthew 5:31-32; 19:3-10; Mark 10:2-12; Luke 16:18)

B. Jesus teaching was for Jew and Gentile, man and woman (Luke 16...)

C. Jesus position on divorce and remarriage is a clear, but a hard teaching to accept:

The disciples reaction (Matthew 19:9-10)

The discussion of celibacy makes it difficult (9:12)

D. John the Baptist lost his head over this topic (Mark 6:17-28)

Herod Antipas had married Herodias, the daughter of Aristobulus, who was the son of Herod the Great by Mariamne I.

Herodias had been previously married to Antipas's half brother: Herod Philip, son of Herod the Great by Mariamne II.

Herodias's daughter's name was Salome, according to Josephus, *Antiquities XVIII.136*).

John denounced this incestuous relationship as being unlawful, and it cost him his head!

E. Let's summarize Jesus' teaching on the subject

If a man divorces his wife for no cause, and she remarries, he has caused her to commit adultery, and the man who marries the divorced woman also commits adultery. If a man divorces his wife for no cause, and

marries another woman, he commits adultery, and the woman who marries him commits adultery. If a woman divorces her husband for no cause, and remarries, she commits adultery, and the man who marries her commits adultery. This was also the case for remarriage even under the Mosaic permission (see Romans 7:1-7). It was, however accepted and apparently forgiven.

The **only** exception Jesus' gives for a lawful remarriage is for a person to divorce his spouse on grounds of sexual immorality. They may then apparently remarry a person without it being considered adultery.

F. If a believer divorces for reasons other than sexual immorality, he should remain unmarried or be reconciled to his spouse (1 Corinthians 7:10-11). To remarry, eliminates the chance of later reconciliation (See Dt 24)

### **III. Applications For Us Today:**

- A. The problem comes not from our observation of what was said to those in the Bible.
  - The problem does not come from an objective interpretation of the Biblical text.
  - The problem comes when we try to apply this teaching to our lives and our lives are not in harmony with what Jesus taught.
- B. We cannot be like the Pharisees who reduced the requirements of God to their own obedience level, rather than raising their standards of Righteousness to be like God (Matthew 5:20).
- C. That being said, we need to remember that divorce is not the “second” unforgivable sin. While God issues a standard that he wants us to obey, he also understands that “WHEN” we sin, we still have an advocate, Jesus Christ (1 John 2:1-2).



## Small Group Discussion Outline: Divorce

### Introduction

Divorce has been the topic of discussion for men for almost 4,000 years and it was the topic of discussion by Jesus on numerous occasions. One of those times was in the Sermon on the Mount.

In this lesson we are going to discuss how Jesus is correcting the misinterpretation of the Pharisees and scribes and explore what Jesus expects of Kingdom people.

### I. The Background of the divorce debate

#### A. Deuteronomy 24:1-4

What observations can you see about divorce from this passage in the Law of Moses? (Answer: Moses commanded that a certificate of divorce be given by a husband to his wife who had "some indecency")

What do you think the "Indecency" was in the life of the woman in Deuteronomy 24?

Romans 7:1-7: Paul comments on the correct understanding of "THE LAW" What was his interpretation of the law of marriage in the Law of Moses? NOTE: Even though he says it was adultery to remarry, it was apparently accepted and forgivable.

#### B. There were three basic interpretations given by Prominent Rabbis throughout the ages

Rabbi Shammai: "A man may not divorce his wife unless he hath found unchastity in her, for it is written, 'because he hath found in her **indecent** in anything" . Rabbi Shammai said the indecency was unchastity, or sexual immorality.

Rabbi Hillel: "He may divorce her even if she spoiled a dish, for it is written, 'because he hath found in her indecency **in anything**" Hillel said that anything that the husband didn't like about his wife was grounds for him to give her a certificate of divorcement.

Rabbi Akiba: "Even if he found another fairer than she, for it is written, 'and it shall be if she finds no favor **in his eyes**". Akiba said that if a man found his wife no longer attractive he could divorce her.

What do you think Moses meant when he referred to "Indecency" in the wife?

#### C. Let's read Matthew 19:3,7

What do the Pharisees seem to be emphasizing in their debate with Jesus?

The Pharisees, scribes, and Rabbis focused on giving the woman a certificate, rather than proving probable cause for divorcing the wife. They thought that by giving a piece of paper, they were justified in dissolving a marriage.

### II. Jesus statements on Divorce and Remarriage

#### A. Let's read what Jesus said on this topic

Matthew 5:31-32: What observations do you see in Jesus statement in this passage? (Answer: Jesus said that a man who divorces his wife without valid reason **causes** her to commit adultery, and the man who marries her also commits adultery.)

Matthew 19:3-10 What observations do you see in Jesus' statements in this passage? (Answer: Jesus said that **whoever** divorces his wife **except** for marital unfaithfulness and then **marries another woman** commits adultery.)

What reaction did the disciples have about Jesus strict teaching in verses 9-10? (Answer: they said if this is the case, it would be better never to marry)

Why do you think they reacted this way? (Answer: they thought Jesus teaching was too restrictive)

Mark 10:2-12 What insights do you see about Jesus teaching on Divorce in this passage? (Answer: If a man or a woman divorce their mate and then marries another, they commit adultery)

Luke 16:18 What insights do you see about Jesus teaching on Divorce in this passage? (Answer: The man who marries a divorced woman commits adultery)

Romans 7:1-7: Did Paul understand that the LAW also assumed that if a woman joined another man while her husband was living, that she was considered an adulteress? Was it forgivable according to Deut. 24:1-4?

#### B. Is this a popular teaching in today's society? Why?

### III. Application for us today

A. Mark 6:17-28

B. There are a lot of questions related to this topic. There are some things for which we do not have answers, but there are also things of which we can be totally sure:

The **only** permission Jesus gives for divorcing and then remarrying is if the innocent party puts their mate away for sexual immorality.

NOTE: Romans 7:1-7 stated that if a woman under the law was joined to another man while her husband was living, she was considered an adulteress. However it's clear that Deuteronomy 24:1-4 permitted this, even though it may not be the ideal.

# Kingdom Righteousness: Oaths

By Greg King

*"Let your speech be such that yes is simply yes, and no is simply no. Anything beyond that comes from the evil one."*

Remember playing the game "Kings' X" when you were a kid? If you told a friend that you were going to do something, or if you made a promise then you'd do it - well, as long as you didn't have your hand behind your back with your fingers crossed. You see, the secret was that if your fingers were crossed, then you didn't have to do what you said - "Kings' X!"

This is the problem Jesus is addressing in this area of righteousness among citizens of the kingdom. Only it wasn't a game among kids this time, it was among religious people who claimed to be following the righteousness of God. They were playing "Kings' X" with their promises and oaths.

## Background of Oaths

Oaths and promises are not wrong. The Old Testament gave several instructions for giving and keeping of oaths. *"You shall not swear by my name **falsely**" (Leviticus 19:12). "When a man makes a vow to Jehovah or swears an oath ... **he shall not break his word**" (Numbers 30:2). "When you shall make a vow to Jehovah your God, **you shall not be slack to pay it**" (Deuteronomy 23:21). Or, using the paraphrase of the interpreters: "You shall not break your oath, but shall keep the oaths you have sworn to the Lord."*

The emphasis is on truthfulness. A person must be truthful when he solemnizes his promise with an oath. He must really mean it. He must be faithful in keeping the oath and must carry out his promise.

## God's Emphasis on Oaths

The Lord Himself uses oaths to solemnize his promises as being totally trustworthy. *"Jehovah has sworn to David in truth; he will not turn from it" (Psalms 132:11)*. God has even coupled two totally unbreakable items in assuring his commitment to save man by means of the New Covenant.

God wanted to assure man of his unrelenting intent to totally carry through on his promise to save us. *"Men swear by someone greater than themselves, and the oath confirms what is said and puts an end to all argument. Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. God did this so that by two unchangeable things (**his promise, and his oath**) in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged. We have this hope as an anchor for the soul firm and secure..." (Hebrews 6:13-19).*

God can't lie, and he promised he would save us. In order to confirm in our minds the security of his promise, he also confirmed his promise by swearing an oath using his own nature as collateral to ensure the promise.

## The Pharisees and Scribes - "Kings X"

In the thinking of the scribes and Pharisees, and the men "long ago", an oath sworn *to the Lord* must be kept. However, an oath or promise given in which the name of the Lord was not expressly mentioned was of lesser significance - at least in their own minds. If the name of the Lord was not invoked as part of the promise, one did not need to be quite so conscientious about keeping it.

The result of this thinking led to oaths being given *"by heaven and by earth"* and *"by Jerusalem"*. Jesus further challenged the hypocrisy of the Pharisees in saying, *"Woe to you blind guides! You say, 'If a man swears by the temple, it means nothing; but if anyone swears by the gold of the temple, he is bound by his oath... You also say, 'If anyone swears by the altar, it means nothing, but if anyone swears by the gift on it, he is bound by his oath'" (Matthew 23:16-18).*

They even would go so far as swearing *"By the hair on my head"*. Jesus rebukes this type of false intent by reminding the Pharisees that they have absolutely no power to make their hair gray or dark, inferring that there is no need to attach such ridiculous phrases to oaths and promises.

## Application for Us Today

We often hear the same type of ridiculous phrases occurring in our conversation today. *"I swear to God..."* or *"I swear on my mother's grave..."* Jesus said that those in the kingdom must keep their word in its simplicity and in its entirety if they are to exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees (Matthew 5:20, 37).

We have problems keeping our word in society today, and it can even be seen in the church. *"Will you love this person until death parts you..."* We say *"Yes, so help me God"*, and then renege on our oath. We say, *"You can count on me..."* and then are unreliable. We say, *"Yes, I'll agree to do this..."* and then find loop holes for backing out.

Business practices are full of examples of people breaking their promises. Lawyers make a living on making contracts to try to bind people to their word, while other lawyers make a living trying to find an escape clause.

Kingdom people should not be like this. Jesus said that our yes should be yes, and no should be no. If Jesus were a cowboy he'd say, *"A man's word is his contract."* If you give your word, that's all that should be required among Kingdom People! There are no "Kings' X's" or escape clauses.

Giving your word and even swearing an oath or entering into a contract is not wrong. What is wrong and condemned by Jesus is the giving of flippant, profane, uncalled for, and hypocritical oaths used just to make an impression and to spice up daily conversation. Jesus stresses simple truthfulness in thought, word and deed. Anything more or less is evil.

## **Sermon Outline: The Righteousness of the Kingdom: Oaths**

Purpose: to inform Christians of a correct understanding of oaths, and how the Pharisees avoided keeping their word, and motivate a desire to seek the righteousness of the kingdom.

**AC:** Matthew 5:33-37

**NEED:** Remember playing King's X when you were a kid? The key: you didn't have to keep your word as long as your fingers were crossed behind your back - "King's X"

Jesus is addressing those who would be citizens of God's kingdom, not little kids. These religious people claimed to know God.

They played King's X with their promises and oaths.

**CI: LET YOUR SPEECH BE SUCH THAT YES IS SIMPLY YES, AND NO IS SIMPLY NO. ANYTHING BEYOND THAT COMES FROM THE EVIL ONE.**

### **I. Background of oaths**

A. Oaths are not wrong. The OT gave several instructions for giving and keeping oaths.

Leviticus 19:12

Numbers 30:2

Deuteronomy 23:21

B. To paraphrase the idea, "You shall not break your oath, but keep the oaths you have sworn to the Lord."

C. Emphasis: a person must be truthful when he solemnizes his promise with an oath. He must really mean it, He must be faithful in keeping the oath and must carry out his promise

### **II. God's Emphasis on Oaths**

A. The Lord Himself uses oaths to solemnize his promises as being totally trustworthy (Psalm 132:11)

B. God has coupled two unbreakable items to assure us of his total commitment to save men by means of the New Covenant

Hebrews 6:13-19 **God's promise, PLUS God's oath = No backing out!**

God can't lie. He uses his own nature as collateral to guarantee the promise, not to mention he paid for the plan with the blood of Christ, and sealed the promise with the Holy Spirit.

### **III. The Problem of the Pharisees**

A. If they swore an oath "TO THE LORD", it must be kept, however a promise given in which the name of the Lord was not expressly mentioned was of lesser significance in their minds.

B. Other phrases used in oath taking:

I swear by heaven itself

I swear by the earth

I swear to you by the Holy City of Jerusalem

I swear to you by my very head

C. They used further King's X's In Matthew 23:16-18)

I swear by the temple (King's X) but by the gold, I have to keep it

I swear by the altar in the temple (King's X),

D. Their promises were unreliable. One never really knew when he could trust the promise or the contract, it was reliant upon if the right phrase was attached. King's X!

### **III. Application For Us**

A. Common phrases we hear today along these lines: *"I swear to God" "I swear on my mother's grave..."*

B. Those in the kingdom must keep their word in its simplicity and entirety if they are to exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees (Mat 5:20;37).

C. How do we break our word today?

Till death do us part, so help me God... but we break our oaths

You can count on me ... but we break our word if we don't want to keep the commitment and find some

excuse to justify things in our own minds.

Business practices often have examples of people breaking promises

Lawyers make living writing contracts to try to bind people to their word, while other lawyers make a living trying to find an escape clause.

D. Kingdom people should not be like this.

Our yes should mean yes, and our no should mean no.

A Christian's word is his contract.

No King's X's, and No escape clauses

## **IV. Conclusion**

A. Giving your word or pledging an oath is not wrong. What is wrong and condemned by Jesus is the giving of flippant, profane, uncalled for, and hypocritical oaths just to make an impression and to spice up daily conversation.

B. Kingdom people need to live by simple truthfulness in thought, word, and deeds. Anything more or less is evil.

C. Read Matthew 5:33-37

## **Small Group Discussion Outline: Oaths**

### **Introduction**

Who has ever played the game "King's X?" Tell us what that game was like. (Answer: King's X is a kids game where you didn't have to keep your word as long as your fingers were crossed behind your back).

In our lesson, we are going to be reading Matthew 5:33-37, and seeing how the Pharisees were playing "King's X" and not keeping their word. Let's read that text together.

### **I. Background of oaths**

A. Do you get the impression from reading Jesus words that it is wrong for you to take an oath or to swear an oath?

B. Let's look at several Old Testament passages about taking oaths.

Leviticus 19:12

Numbers 30:2

Deuteronomy 23:21

C. What observations can you see from reading these passages? (Answers: God expects us to not give our word lightly, but when we do, we must be willing to commit to keeping our promise)

### **II. God's Emphasis on Oaths**

A. Psalm 132:11. What do you observe about God in this verse? Why did he swear an oath?

B. Hebrews 6:13-19.

God has coupled two unbreakable things to assure his total commitment to save men in the New Covenant.

What are the two unbreakable things? (Answer: His promise and his oath)

When God swore with an oath, what did that do to the assurance of him keeping his word? (Answer: God can't lie. He uses his own nature as collateral to guarantee His promise, and he swore an oath to bind himself to that promise)

### **III. The Problem of the Pharisees**

A. Let's read Matthew 5:33-37 again.

What observations can you see about what was wrong with the Pharisees keeping their word? (Answer: If they swore an oath TO THE LORD, it must be kept, however a promise given in which the name of the Lord was not mentioned was of lesser significance in their minds.)

B. Matthew 23:16-18

What phrases bound the Pharisees, and what phrases allowed them in their minds to bread their word?

(Answer: I swear by the temple (King's X), I swear by the gold in the temple, I have to keep my word... etc.)

What would this type of thing do to the reliability of any promises that the Pharisees gave?

C. In reading Matthew 5 and 23, can you detect any other phrases they used in their giving of oaths? (Answer I swear by heaven itself, or by the earth, or by the Holy City, or by my very head etc.)

### **IV. Application for us today**

A. What are some common phrases that you hear today that are similar to the Pharisees swearing by heaven and earth? (Answer: I swear to God... I swear on my mother's grave... etc.)

Why are these type of phrases useless in binding us to keep our promise?

B. Can you think of some examples of breaking promises, commitments, or oaths in our lives today?

Marriage: "Till death do us part, so help me God..."

You can rely on me... and you are unreliable

Business practices

C. How do Law practices today illustrate our lack of commitment in keeping our word?

Some lawyers make a living on phrasing contracts to bind people to keep their word, while other lawyers make a living trying to find an escape clause to allow someone to break his word.

The idea is: "If you can't force me to keep my word, then I'm not going to keep it"

D. What practical application can you make to your life from this lesson?





# **Kingdom Righteousness: Revenge**

## **by Greg King**

*"You have heard it said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, But I tell you, do not resist an evildoer; but to him that slaps you on the right cheek turn the other also..." (Matthew 5:38-42).*

Jesus, in this context, is quoting from a passage in Exodus 21:24-25 in which Moses is laying down guidelines for issuing sentences in the civil courts. The Pharisees wanted to use these very same verses to justify taking personal revenge on someone who did them wrong. The Mosaic injunction means exactly the opposite of how the Pharisees were interpreting them. The intent of the Old Testament Law on sentencing an evil doer meant *"Do not avenge yourself, but let justice be administered publicly in a degree equal to the crime."*

The Pharisees appealed to this law to justify personal retribution and revenge. They quoted this commandment in order to defeat its very purpose. They had conveniently overlooked passages like Leviticus 19:18, *"Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself."*

Jesus is condemning the spirit of hatred and yearning for revenge. If you were to paraphrase this passage in Matthew and in Luke 6:27-30, it would read something like, *"Do not resist the evildoer with measures that arise from an unloving, unforgiving, unrelenting, vindictive disposition. Overcome evil with good, bitterness with kindness, overbearing demands with a servant spirit."* Paul commands the same spirit, *"Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written, 'It is mine to avenge, I will repay,'"*

### **Turn the Other Cheek**

Turning the other cheek does not infer that Christians are to simply lay down spinelessly and allow others to take away their rights as citizens. Paul demanded civil authorities to make a public acknowledgment of wrongdoing when he was mistreated (Acts 16:35-40). Turning the other cheek means to show in attitude, word, and deed that one is filled with the spirit, not of bitterness and revenge, but of love.

### **Let Him Take Your Robe Also**

In conjunction with this kingdom attitude and righteousness, Jesus instructs that when wrongfully charged in a lawsuit, the Christian must present an attitude of love, even toward his enemies. The robe served as a cover, often the poor man's only one during sleep (Exodus 22:26,27). Jesus instructs the proper attitude necessary for the disciple. We have no right to hate the person who tries to deprive us of our possessions. Love should fill our hearts and reveal itself in our actions at all times.

### **Go the Extra Mile**

Revenge and retaliation are often the temptations when harsh impositions are made upon us. Jesus' solution is "Go the extra mile with a smile." If your boss is harsh or demanding, then do more than required.

### **Application**

We see several great men and women of faith who understood and practiced this principle. We see Abraham, who rushed to rescue his nephew Lot who had earlier been greedy and uncaring (Genesis 14:14 ff.; 13:1-13). Joseph generously forgave and helped his brothers who had sold him into slavery (Genesis 37:18-28; 50:19-21). David spared the life of his enemy King Saul instead of taking vengeance (1 Sam 24). Stephen praying that God forgive his killers (Acts 7:60). Above all, we see Jesus loving and accepting us, even though we were his enemies (Romans 5:8-9; John 3:16).

Let God's plan do the vengeance in His way, turn your other cheek, surrender your cloak, and go the extra mile with a smile. That's the kingdom way!

## **Sermon Outline: The Righteousness of the Kingdom: Revenge**

Purpose: To inform Christians of the proper attitude necessary so that revenge is left up to God and motivate service, forgiveness, and love

## **Introduction**

**AC:** Has someone ever done something bad to you or to a loved one, and you wanted to get even? How did you feel, and how did you act?

**NEED:** A lot of times we don't act or feel in ways that are appropriate as citizens of God's Kingdom (cf. Matthew 5:38-42; 5:20).

Overbearing or unfair boss -

Hard to get along with coworkers - gossip, hold resentments,

Difficult neighbors

People in the church hurt you with cutting remarks

Class mates at school

A. Pharisees took civil standards of the judges and used them to justify their own actions and desires for personal vengeance (Exodus 21:22-25)

Eye for eye means that the punishment by the court should match the severity of the crime committed

This principle did not and does not give the individual the right to take matters into his or her own hands.

**CI: "HOW SHOULD YOU RESPOND WHEN YOU WANT TO GET EVEN?"**

## **I. Turn the other cheek**

A. Example: Joseph Genesis 37:18-28

B. Opportunity for revenge (Genesis 44:1-16 ff.)

C. Actions of forgiveness instead of revenge (Genesis 45:1-11)

D. Review of Joseph's actions

He had been brutally betrayed by his brothers

He had opportunity for revenge

BUT He understood and accepted God's higher purpose was in play

## **II. Give the coat off your back**

A. Example: Abraham with Lot (13:1-13)

B. Opportunity to get even (14:11-16)

C. Later actions of care (18:26-33; 19:29)

D. Review of Abraham's actions

He had been taken advantage of by Lot's selfishness

He had the opportunity for revenge and could have allowed Lot to be killed

He continued his actions later by intervening to God which allowed Lot to be delivered

## **III. Go the extra mile and sacrifice**

A. Example: Saul tries to kill David (1 Sam 23:7-14)

B. Opportunity for revenge but David spared Saul's life (1 Samuel 24:1-10)

C. David left the avenging up to God (24:12-13)

D. Review of David's actions

Saul had attacked David without cause because of jealousy

David had ample opportunity to take vengeance at his own hands

He humbled himself and allowed God to avenge

## **IV. Conclusion and Application**

A. The Pharisees used a passage of scripture intended to set a judicial standard for the legitimate courts to justify their own personal vengeance.

B. Jesus gives the citizens of the kingdom a higher calling than attempting to justify personal vengeance.

If you are wrongly treated and you want to get even, use the proper channels established by God. Do not take matters into your own hands.

Turn the Other cheek like Joseph rather than justifying your own revenge

If someone uses you or takes advantage of you, remember the example of Abraham and Lot: let him have your coat as well

If someone has a personal ax to grind with you, remember David. Go the extra mile

C. These are not easy commandments to follow, but they are the right commands to follow.

## ***Small Group Discussion Outline: Revenge***

### **Introduction**

Has someone ever done something bad to you or to a loved one and you wanted to get even? How did you feel and what did you do or want to do? What are some times when we want revenge or want to get even (Answers: overbearing boss? Difficult coworkers, difficult neighbors, people at church who hurt you with cutting remarks,

class mates at school)

Jesus said that our righteousness must exceed that of the Pharisees (Matthew 5:20). Sometimes acting in a right way when you want to get even or get revenge is difficult to do. In this lesson we will see what Jesus says about how you should respond when you want to get even Let's read Matthew 5:38-42.

## **I. Background of this issue**

A. Exodus 21:22-25

What do you observe about the context of this discussion on an eye for an eye? (Answer: the context is giving of judicial principles by which the judges were to issue penalties for those who broke the law)

B. Matthew 5:38-42

From Jesus discussion on this subject, how do you think some people understood these verses from the Old Testament? (Answer: they took verses intended for the judicial system and used them to justify taking their own revenge).

C. The Bible does not condemn due process of law, and does not condemn using proper channels to deal with a situation in life such as being attacked, robbed, or stolen from. The Bible condemns the spirit of hatred and yearning for revenge which justifies personal retribution.

D. How does Jesus suggest we act when we want to get even? Let's look more closely at Matthew 5:38-42. What observations do you see?

## **II. Turn the other cheek**

A. By turning the other cheek, do you think Jesus is suggesting that Christians be door mats for people to walk on and take advantage of? Why? Let's look at some passages dealing with someone who turned the other cheek - Joseph.

B. Genesis 37:18-28

What did Joseph's brothers do to him, and how do you think Joseph felt about it?

C. Genesis 44:1-16 ff.

Do you observe here that Joseph had an opportunity for revenge here? How? What could he have done?

D. Genesis 45:1-11

Instead of revenge, what actions do you see manifested in the life of Joseph toward his brothers? How could he have controlled his desire for revenge, and why did he?

## **III. Give the coat off your back**

A. What do you think Jesus meant when he instructs you to give someone the coat off your back?

B. Genesis 13:1-13

What do you notice about the relationship between Abraham and Lot from this section? Do you think Lot took the better land and how might that have made someone feel?

C. Genesis 14:11-16

How could this have been an opportunity for Abraham to get even with Lot for his selfishness? (Answer: Abraham could have let Lot be killed)

D. Genesis 18:26-33; 19:29

How does Abraham demonstrate his heart and righteousness toward Lot? (Answer: He prays for deliverance for the cities, he doesn't want Lot to be destroyed)

## **IV. Go the extra mile and sacrifice**

A. 1 Samuel 23:7-14

King Saul was envious and jealous of David. If someone was trying to kill you, and destroy you simply because you were more successful than they were, how would most people feel toward them?

B. 1 Samuel 24:1-10

What kind of opportunity does David have here to get even with Saul? Why doesn't he take it?

C. 1 Samuel 24:12-13

What attitude do you see demonstrated in the life of David here?

## V. Conclusion and Application

- A. The Pharisees and some men used a passage of scripture intended to set a judicial standard to justify their own personal revenge.
- B. Jesus gives the citizens of the kingdom a higher calling than this.
- C. What applications can you see for us today from this study? (get responses, then suggest the following)
  - If you are wrongly treated and you want to get even, use the proper channels established by God. Do not take matters into your own hands to seek personal revenge.
  - Turn the other cheek like Joseph did to his brothers
  - Remember Abraham, and give him your cloak as well
  - If someone levies a personal attack against you, remember David, go the extra mile, even though you may have opportunity to get even.

# Kingdom Righteousness: Love

by Greg King

*"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matthew 5:43-48).*

It's amazing how people hear things they want to hear. Somewhere in their past, these Pharisees had heard, or possibly wanted to hear, someone say that it was OK to hate your enemies. The law never permitted anyone to hate his enemies, but stressed service and love, even to those you may consider enemies. *"If you come across your enemy's ox or donkey wandering off, be sure to take it back to him. If you see the donkey of someone who hates you fallen down under its load, do not leave it there; be sure to help him with it" (Exodus 23:4-5).*

While we don't like to admit that we have enemies, we do. As kingdom people, we need to see what Jesus expects of us in our attitudes. In this life of kingdom people, Jesus said that we would have those who persecute us, and they are enemies (Matthew 5:10-12). If our love, we need to be perfect like our Father in heaven is perfect (Matthew 5:48).

## I. Love Your Enemies

The Pharisees and scribes were prejudiced and loved only those who were orthodox according to their standards. They hated Gentiles and considered them dogs (Matthew 15:26-27; Acts 11:2). While association and intermarriage with foreigners was prohibited under the law of Moses, they were never encouraged to hate. The Pharisees looked down on those who were not *formally trained* in the law as they were (John 7:47-49). This is spiritual arrogance at its peak. They looked down on the tax collectors and sinners (Matthew 9:10-11). They even looked down on and despised women as in the case of the Samaritan woman (John 4). Samaritans were especially despised by the Jews. The law had said *love your neighbor* (Leviticus 19:18), so the Pharisee redefined the term "neighbor" to exclude Samaritans. Since they were not considered neighbors, they felt no obligation to love them. Jesus, of course, deals with this in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37).

Those who followed Jesus seem to have fallen prey to this concept of not loving people. They looked down on little children (Mark 10:13-15); and the poor and needy (Mark 10:46-48).

Who are the enemies in your life? An ex-spouse who has hurt you or your children? A family member who may have hurt you or persecuted you. *"A man's enemies will be the members of his own household" (Matthew 10:34-36).* Perhaps there are people at work or at school who talk about you or insult you. Enemies can be found everywhere if we look. So what does Jesus want us to do about this? How do you control your attitude and heart as a Christian?

## II. Pray for those who persecute you

Perhaps the most difficult thing we can imagine is to pray for someone who hurts a little child, unless of course, it's imaging ourselves praying for someone who is hurting us. Let's not get mushy here, it's tough to pray for someone who doesn't like you or who hurts you!

Jesus set the ultimate example when he prayed for those who were killing him, *"Father, forgive them, they don't know what they're doing" (Luke 23:32-35).* Could you pray for someone who just spit on you? Could you pray for someone who has just called you cruel names, and is in the process of murdering you? Jesus did, and he told us to do the same! It's possible, because we see Stephen doing it when he was being murdered (Acts 7:54-60).

## III. Be perfect as your Father

How can we be perfect like God? It seems like an impossible command to obey, doesn't it? It's like the one that says *"Be holy, for I am holy" (Leviticus 19:2; 1 Peter 1:15-16).* We are told to be perfect before the Lord (Deuteronomy 18:13; Ephesians 5:1). Sinless perfection may not be attained in this life, so why even try? The answer? Because God commanded us to try. *"Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it, but one thing I do; Forgetting what is behind, and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. All of us who*

*are mature should take such a view of things" (Philippians 3:12-15).*

The word *perfect* here means to be brought to completion, full grown, mature. Even as the perfect God shows mercy and extends love to his enemies, so the sons of the Father should show perfect and mature love demonstrated by action toward those who are his enemies, even those who persecute him. God sets the standard and example for his sons and daughters to follow. He blesses His enemies as well as His children with rain. He blesses His enemies as well as His children with sunshine, and with health, and with prosperity, and with life itself.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

Kingdom people should not be satisfied with halfway obedience to the law of love as were the scribes and Pharisees. They never touched upon the heart of the law of love, and never had God as their Father. It's easy to love those who love you and it's easy to pray for those who you know are praying for you. But only a kingdom heart can rise above the easy and convenient practices of a superficial religion to a level of mature perfection that loves its enemies and prays for its persecutors.

## **Sermon Outline: The Righteousness of the Kingdom: Love**

Purpose: To motivate Christians to love their enemies and develop a proper attitude toward those for whom Christ died, both good and evil men.

### **Introduction**

**AC:** Matthew 5:43-48

**NEED:** In this section on Kingdom Righteousness, Jesus stresses the proper attitude toward those who we may consider enemies, and those who persecute you.

A. The law never permitted anyone to hate his enemies even though some would like it to sometimes be that way (Exodus 23:4-5)

While we don't like to admit that we have enemies, we do, so we need to see what our proper attitude needs to be

In the life of kingdom people, we will have persecutors (cf. Matthew 5:10-12) so we also need to consider our attitudes and actions toward those who persecute us for righteousness.

**CI: IN OUR LOVE WE NEED TO BE PERFECT LIKE OUR FATHER IS PERFECT**

### **I. Love your enemies**

A. Pharisees and scribes were prejudiced and loved only those who were orthodox and at their standard. The disciples also had these standards.

Gentiles vs.. Jews (Dogs... Matthew 15:26-27; Acts 11:2)

Those who were not "formally trained" in the law (John 7:47-49)

Tax collectors and sinners (Matthew 9:10-11)

Women (John 4...)

Little children (Mark 10:13-15)

The needy and poor (Mark 10:46-48 (Bartimaeus)

Samaritans (Luke 10:25-37)

B. Who are YOUR enemies?

Ex spouse who has hurt you or your children?

Family members who have hurt you? (Matthew 10:34-36)

People at work who talk about you or insult you?

School mates who harass you?

### **II. Pray for those who persecute you**

A. Jesus set the example, mocking and sneering at a dying man is especially cruel... (Luke 23:32-35)

B. Steven followed the example (Acts 7:54-60)

C. Who are those who persecute you? Do you pray for them? It's difficult to have a right attitude when people persecute you for doing the right thing.

### **III. Be perfect as your Father**

A. Parallel: Be holy for I am holy... Leviticus 19:2 cf. 1 Pet 1:15-16)... be perfect before the Lord (Deuteronomy 18:13; Ephesus 5:1)

B. Sinless perfection may not be attained in this life, so why even try? ANSWER: because God commands it! (Philippians 3:7-16)

C. Perfect here means: brought to completion, full grown, lacking nothing.

Even as the perfect God shows mercy and extends love to his enemies, so the Sons of the Father should show perfect and mature love demonstrated by action toward those who are his enemies even those who persecute him.

D. God sets the standard and the example for his sons and daughters to follow.

He blesses His enemies as well as His children with rain

He blesses His enemies as well as His children with sunshine

He blesses His enemies as well as His children with health, prosperity, and life



## **IV. Conclusion**

- A. Kingdom people should not be satisfied with halfway obedience to the law of love as were the scribes and Pharisees, who never penetrated to the heart of the law.
- B. It's easy to love those who love you and it's easy to pray for those who you know are praying for you. But only a kingdom heart can rise above the easy and convenient to a level of mature perfection that loves its enemies and prays for its persecutors.

## **Small Group Discussion Outline: Love**

### **Introduction**

**Opening Question:** Do any of you have people in the world that you might consider enemies? (Ex spouse, family member who has hurt you or your kids, school mates, people at work??). We all face relationship problems in life; some greater than others.

The people of Jesus' day had relationship problems with other people. Some people were persecuted for following Jesus, and it would be natural to feel some resentment toward the persecutors. Some viewed their opponents as enemies. In this lesson we are going to see what Jesus' expects of Kingdom people in our relationship toward those who are less than friends in our lives. Let's read Matthew 5:43-48 as we begin.

### **I. Love Your Enemies**

- A. Can you think of any passage in the Bible where it says that we are to hate our enemies? Where did the people of Jesus day get the idea that it was OK to hate their enemies?
- B. Like us today, the Pharisees and even Jesus disciples were somewhat prejudiced toward people who didn't believe exactly as they did or who were in a different status in life. Let's look at some examples and see how certain differences were manifested in attitudes.
  - Jews versus Gentiles (Matthew 15:26-27; Acts 11:2)
  - Pharisees looked down on those who were not "Formally Trained" (John 7:47-49)
  - Tax Collectors and sinners (Matthew 9:10-11)
  - Little Children (Mark 10:13-15)
  - The needy and poor (Mark 10:46-48)
  - The Samaritans (ethnic prejudice (Luke 10:25-37)
- C. Read Matthew 10:34-36. Who can be our enemies according to these verses? (Our own families)
- D. Jesus says we are to love those we consider enemies. How can you do this?

### **II. Pray For Your Persecutors**

- A. Do you think it's especially cruel to make fun of a dying man? How would you feel toward someone who did this? Let's see how Jesus felt (Luke 23:32-35)
- B. Acts 7:54-60. How did Stephen respond to his persecutors? What do you think you would have done in his situation ..... REALLY!
- C. Who are those who persecute you (Family, coworkers, who?)
  - Do you pray for them, or do you find it difficult to have good feelings toward them?
  - What does this tell you about this kingdom attitude that Jesus expects us to develop?

### **III. Be Perfect**

- A. What do you think Jesus means when he says that we are to be perfect like God? Let's look at some other parallel passages:
  - Leviticus 19:2; 1 Peter 1:15-16 Be holy because God is holy. Do you think you can be as holy as God?
  - Deuteronomy 18:13 "You must be perfect (blameless NIV) before the Lord your God" Do you think you can be perfect or blameless before God?
  - Ephesians 5:1 Do you think you can imitate God? How?
- B. **Perfect** in this verse does not mean sinless, but it means "Brought to completion, full grown, mature, lacking nothing" How does this definition help us understand Jesus command to love our enemies and pray for our persecutors?
  - Even as the perfect God shows mercy and extends love to His enemies, so the sons of the Father should show perfect and mature love demonstrated by action toward those who are enemies.
- C. How does God set the example and standard for us to follow?
  - Sends the rain on good and evil
  - Sends the sunshine on good and evil
  - Blesses His enemies as well as his children with health, prosperity and life.

D. How is God's actions different than that of normal men? (Answer: normal men love those who love them, but not those who treat them wrongly)

#### **IV. Conclusion and application**

A. What applications can we make from this study for our personal lives today? (Discuss)

B. Let's just recap some main points for us to remember as we close:

Kingdom people should not be satisfied with halfway obedience to the law of love as were the scribes and Pharisees.

It's easy to love those who love you and it's easy to pray for those who you know are praying for you. But only a kingdom heart can rise above the easy and convenient to a level of mature perfection that loves its enemies and prays for its persecutors.

# Kingdom Righteousness: Acts of Righteousness

by Greg King

*"Be careful not to do your 'acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven" (Matthew 6:1).*

Acts of righteousness should not be done just to get approval or praise from men. While praise and recognition are not bad in themselves, Jesus challenges the heart of individuals who do their acts of righteousness for wrong motives. God is interested in more than the good deed, he is interested in the heart of the doer.

Some people do many good things for other people, but their motive for doing them is to simply get attention, praise, or recognition. Others, take no personal responsibility for serving people because they are not in the public eye, and no one is watching them. They leave the serving to others who are *officially* appointed to take care of such things as benevolence, or prayer, or ministry. Jesus wants us to be careful to not do our acts of righteousness from a self-seeking motive of receiving praise from men. In this section from Matthew 6:1-18, He deals with three areas of righteousness that can be done from impure motives, giving to the poor, prayer, and fasting.

## I. Giving to the poor (6:2-4)

Giving alms to the poor was a common practice, both for Jews and non Jews. According to the law of Moses, every seventh year a field was to be left so that the poor and wild animals could benefit from the bounty (Exodus 23:10-11). The "law of gleaning" was a practice prescribed by the law which encouraged the land owners to leave the edges of their fields for the poor (Leviticus 10:9-10).

Cornelius is an example of a Gentile who respected and helped poor people. He "gave alms" to the poor, and God acknowledged his gracious heart (Acts 10:1-2).

God has always been concerned for poor people, and in the Old Testament, it seems more so. *"He who oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God" (Proverbs 14:31).*

In Jesus day, relief for the underprivileged was provided by the religious community, each person being taxed according to his or her ability. This amount was supplemented by voluntary gifts. The latter welfare contributions were announced publicly in the synagogues, and even in the alley ways, the places where the poor were likely to gather.

The Pharisees loved public recognition (Matthew 23:1-12), a practice for which they were sharply criticized by Jesus. They were called *hypocrites*, or imitators. These men pretended to be giving out of genuine care, but were actually intending to receive honor from men for doing so. It is this action that Jesus condemns. Our giving should be done out of pure motives, whether someone sees or not. Recognition should not be the motive for giving.

## II. Prayer (6:4-15)

Prayer among Jews was done twice a day in the early morning and at the ninth hour. There was also a sunset service. Public prayer is nowhere condemned, nor is individual prayer offered in a public place. In fact we have examples of public places of prayer recorded (Acts 4:23-31; 16:13, etc.).

The emphasis which Jesus places is that those who pray should not pray like the hypocrites (actors). How did they pray? They prayed long, flowery prayers, laced with words of splendor to declare their own righteousness and goodness, *"Lord, I thank you that I am not like other men, robbers, evildoers, adulterers... I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get..." (Luke 18:9-14).*

They prayed for show and made lengthy prayers thinking that they might be heard for their repetitious babbling (Mark 12:40). Though lengthy prayer is not wrong, it becomes wrong to do it just to seem pious. Jesus is not saying that you should hide in a closet in order to pray. He is bringing into question MOTIVE! Are you praying from a genuine heart and pure desire, or are you praying just to be seen by men and praised?

## III. Fasting

Fasting and prayer are often combined in the Bible (Acts 12:2-3; 14:23). Fasting here refers to a condition not forced upon a person because of a lack of accessibility to food, but to a voluntary abstinence from food as a

religious exercise.

Fasting had various purposes. Expression of humiliation and sorrow over sin (Nehemiah 9:1-3). Lamenting over some tragedy, such as a defeat in battle (Judges 20:26). Fasting accompanied bereavement in the case of Saul's death ( 1 Samuel 31:11-13). Annually, there was an ordered fast on the day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:29-34).

The Pharisees and scribes took this solemn religious practice and made a show to prove how pious they were. They put on a gloomy face, perhaps covered themselves with ashes so that the people around them would see how pious they were. This is the hypocrisy that Jesus condemns.

When we fast as Christians, clean yourself up, and don't let people see how hard you are serving the Lord. Check the honest motive of your heart!

#### **IV. Conclusion and Application**

Kingdom people should be involved in doing acts of righteousness such as giving to the poor, prayer, and fasting. But, we should be careful that our deeds are done from pure motives, and not simply to be seen by men.

## **Sermon Outline: Kingdom Righteousness: Acts of Righteousness**

Purpose: To inform Christians that their acts of righteousness should not be done just to get approval from men, and motivate them to greater individual service.

### **Introduction**

**AC:** Matthew 6:1-18.

**NEED:** Jesus in this section instructs the kingdom citizens to be careful not to do their acts of righteousness out of a motive of receiving praise from men.

Some people do a lot of good things, but their motives for doing them is to get attention, praise, and recognition.

Others take no personal responsibility for serving others because they are not "In the public lite" They leave the serving to others who are "officially" appointed to take care of such things as benevolence, or prayer, or fasting.

**CI: BE CAREFUL NOT TO DO YOUR ACTS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS BEFORE MEN TO BE SEEN BY THEM**

### **I. Giving to the poor (6:2-4)**

A. Giving alms to the poor was a common practice, both for the Jew and non Jew

Seventh Year of crops Exodus 23:10,11

Law of gleaning the fields by the poor (Leviticus 19:9-10)

Cornelius (Acts 10:1-2)

B. God has always encouraged caring for the poor (Proverbs 14:31)

C. In Jesus day, relief for the underprivileged was provided by the religious community, each person being taxed according to his ability. This amount was supplemented by voluntary gifts. The latter welfare contributions were announced publicly in the synagogues, and even in the alleyways, the places where the poor were likely to gather.

D. The Pharisees loved public recognition (Matthew 23:1-12)

Hypocrite (imitator). These men **pretended to be giving** out of genuine care, but were actually **intending to receive** honor from men.

E. It is this action that Jesus condemns. Our giving should be done out of pure motives, whether someone sees us or not.

### **II. Prayer (6:4-15)**

A. Prayer among Jews was done twice a day in the early morning and at the ninth hour. There was also a sunset service.

B. Public prayer is nowhere condemned, nor individual prayer offered in a public place. (e.g.. Acts 4:23-31; 16:13... the place of prayer...)

C. Don't pray like the hypocrites (Actors) How did they pray?

Publicly, with flowery words to declare their own righteousness and goodness (Luke 18:9-14)

For show make lengthy prayers (Mark 12:40). (Though lengthy prayer is not wrong... it's wrong to do it just to seem pious)

D. Jesus is not saying that you should hide in a closet in order to pray. He is bringing into question MOTIVE! Are you praying from a genuine heart and pure desire, or just to be seen by men?

### **III. Fasting (6:16ff)**

A. Fasting and prayer are often combined in the Bible (Acts 13:2-3; 14:23)

Fasting here refers not to a condition forced upon a person because of a lack of accessibility to food, but to a voluntary abstinence from food as a religious exercise.

B. Fasting had various purposes:

Expression of humiliation and sorrow over sin (Nehemiah 9:1-3)

Lamenting over some tragedy : Defeat in battle (Judges 20:26); Bereavement: Saul's death (1 Sam 31:11-13);

Annually, there was an ordered fast on the day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:29-34)

C. The Pharisees and scribes took this solemn religious practice and made a show to prove how pious they were  
They put on a gloomy, dismal face...

Perhaps they covered themselves with ashes in order that , to the people around them they might look O so  
sorry for their sins, and therefore SOOO pious!

D. When you fast, clean yourself up, and don't let people see how *hard you are serving the Lord...*

#### **IV. Conclusion**

A. Kingdom people should be involved in acts of righteousness: Giving to the poor, prayer, and fasting.

B. We should be careful that our deeds are done from pure motives, and not simply to be seen by men.

## **Small Group Discussion Outline: Acts of Righteousness**

### **Introduction**

There are acts of righteousness that kingdom citizens do as they serve God and people. Three of these acts are giving to the poor, prayer, and fasting. Jesus wants to ensure that we do these acts of righteousness from a pure heart and not from a motive of receiving praise from men. This is the topic of discussion in this lesson. Let's read Matthew 6:1-18 together as we begin.

### **I. Giving to the poor (6:2-4)**

- A. Let's look at some passages that encourage us to provide for the poor
  - Exodus 23:10-11 What were the Jews to do with their fields that would help provide for the poor?
  - Leviticus 19:9-10 In this passage, how were the poor provided for?
  - Acts 10:1-2 What can we see about Cornelius in his giving to the poor (alms)?
  - Proverbs 14:31 What is God's attitude toward the poor from this passage?
- B. In Jesus day, relief for the underprivileged was provided by the religious community. Each person was taxed according to his ability. This amount was supplemented by voluntary gifts. The latter welfare contributions were announced publicly in the synagogues and even in the alleyways, the places where the poor were likely to gather.
- C. From Matthew 23:1-12 what can we learn about the attitude of the Pharisees as far as receiving recognition from men for their acts of righteousness?
  - These men were **pretending to be giving**, but were really **intending to receive** honor from men
- D. What application can we get from this about our giving and helping other people?

### **II. Prayer (6:4-15)**

- A. Prayer among the Jews was done twice a day, in the early morning and at the ninth hour. There was also a sunset service.
- B. Public prayer is nowhere condemned, not is individual prayer offered in a public place (Acts 4:23-31; 16:13)
- C. When Jesus says "Don't pray like the hypocrites" what do you think he is saying?
  - Don't pray with words to declare your own righteousness (Luke 18:9-14)
  - Don't pray for show making lengthy prayers (Mark 12:40) (NOTE: Lengthy prayer is not wrong, but doing it for show is)
- D. Is Jesus saying that you should hide in your closet and not ever pray publicly? What is he saying and how can we apply this to our lives today?

### **III. Fasting (6:16 ff.)**

- A. Fasting and prayer are often combined in the Bible. It has various purposes. Let's look at some:
  - Nehemiah 9:1-3 What purpose does prayer and fasting play here? (Expression of humiliation and sorrow over sin)
  - Judges 20:26 What purpose does prayer and fasting play here? Lamenting over a tragedy, like defeat in battle.
  - 1 Samuel 21:11-13 What part does fasting play here? (Sorrow over King Saul's death)
  - Leviticus 16:29-34 (Deny yourself" means to deny yourself food or fast). Fasting was ordered on the day of Atonement.
  - Acts 13:2-3; 14:23 What part does fasting play in these New Testament passages?
- B. Jesus says don't fast like the hypocrites. How did they fast?
  - They put on a gloomy, dismal face to show everybody how holy and sacrificial they were.
  - Perhaps they covered themselves with ashes in order that the people around them might look and say how pious they were.
- C. What is Jesus saying about how to fast that we need to apply in our acts of righteousness today?



## **IV. Conclusion**

A. Kingdom people should be involved in acts of righteousness. Giving to the poor, praying and fasting are acts of righteousness.

B. We need to be careful that our deeds are done from pure motives, and not simple to be seen of men.

# Kingdom Righteousness: Values & Worry

by Greg King

*"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:21)*

In the section of the sermon on the mount from Matthew 6:19-34, Jesus stresses the point that your focus in life determines your priorities, and ultimately your overall attitude toward life. As kingdom citizens, our treasure needs to be the kingdom. This attitude will determine our focus.

## I. Treasure Determines Focus

One man once said, "The mind attracts what the mind thinks about most." This is exactly what Jesus said in Matthew 6:21, *"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."* A worldly focus attracts worldly treasures. Treasures that are vulnerable to deterioration (6:20). Treasures that are open to theft.

Your focus determines your perception and value system. Jesus says that if the eye of the soul (the mind's focus) is in poor condition or inappropriately focused, then life will be a blur, and values will be distorted. Commitments will be wrong. What you focus on determines the course of your entire life!

Your treasure determines your loyalties, either to God or to temporary things (Verse 24). The man with a misplaced heart and misdirected mind also suffers from a misaligned will, a will that will not be in line with God's will. One man said, "Piling up earthly treasures blurs spiritual vision." Regardless of the outward religious practices or apparent allegiance a man might think he has, when called upon to make a tough decision, a man will *always* submit to his god, whether it be the creator or

created things (Matthew 19:22-24). You cannot serve both God and things, one always wins your ultimate devotion.

## II. Treasures Determine Our Security

A heart focused on temporary things is always anxious because it knows the insecurity of this temporary life. The new car gets hit in the parking lot, or its first rust spot. The roof on the new house will eventually leak. Thieves steal the diamond ring, or the new Weatherby Rifle. The bank or insurance company can always go insolvent, and there goes your retirement!

We attempt to insure, protect, guard, lock up, and preserve our treasures, while anxiously worrying about the future. Worry is holding in your mind that which you don't want to happen. Worry is wasting today's time cluttering up tomorrow's opportunities with yesterday's troubles.

Wrong focus, always places wrong value on things in life. Food, our bodies, and clothes are all temporary (6:31-32). Look at how the world attempts to focus out attention on these temporary things. Just look at your latest catalogue! Every page is temporary! God knows we need these things, so Jesus says, "Don't sweat the small stuff!"

## III. Treasure Determines Our Priority

You can check your own heart's focus by checking four simple things: your checkbook, your calendar, your tongue, and your fruit (Galatians 5:19-24)

If as kingdom people we spent as much time thinking about eternity, the kingdom, and eternal life, as we do thinking about shopping, staying fit, and going through our closets trying to decide the appropriate outfit for the day, what kind of impact would that have on our world, on our families, and on our own lives (Matthew 6:33-34)?

Heavenly treasures are moth proof, rust proof, and burglar proof. They endure forever in all their sparkling luster, as the eternal possessions of the children of the heavenly Father! Look at the things that really last and focus on them: Eternal life (John 3:16). Springs of life that will never run dry (John 4:14). A hand out of which the Good Shepherd's sheep will never be snatched (John 10:28). A love from which we can never be separated (Romans 8:39). A calling that will never be revoked (Romans 11:29). A foundation that will never be destroyed (2 Timothy 2:19). An inheritance that will never fade, that is reserved for us (1 Peter 1:4-5). A peace that surpasses all comprehension (Philippians 4:7). A crown of righteousness that is ours (2 Timothy 4:8). And our names enrolled in heaven (Luke 10:20). These are the things that we should focus upon - the things that should capture our hearts.

## **IV. Conclusion and Application**

Our treasure in life needs to be the kingdom first. Jesus assures us that if we seek first the kingdom and his righteousness, everything else will take care of itself (Matthew 6:33). Are you willing to sell all, do all, and commit all to put the kingdom first in your life?

## **Sermon Outline: Righteousness of the Kingdom: Values and Worry**

Purpose: to convince Christians that where they place their values determines their attitude in life.

### **Introduction**

**AC:** Matthew 6:19-34

**NEED:** In this section Jesus stresses the point that your focus in life determines your priorities, and your overall attitude.

**CI: OUR TREASURE IN LIFE NEEDS TO BE THE KINGDOM**

### **I. Because our treasure determines our focus**

- A. "The mind attracts what the mind thinks about most" (:21)
- B. A worldly focus attracts worldly treasures
  - Treasure that is vulnerable to deterioration (:20)
  - Treasure that is open to theft
- C. Your focus determines your perception and values (:22-23)
  - If the eye of the soul (the mind's focus) is in poor condition or wrongly focused, life itself is a blur, values are distorted, and commitments are wrong.
- D. Your treasure determines your loyalties, either to God or to temporary things (:24)
  - The man with a misplaced heart and misdirected mind also suffers from a misaligned will, a will not in line with God's will. "Piling up earthly treasures blurs spiritual vision"
  - Regardless of the outward religious practices or apparent allegiance a man might think he has, when called upon to make a tough decision a man will ALWAYS submit to his God, whether it be the creator or the creation (Matthew 19:22-24)

### **II. Because our treasure determines our security**

- A. A heart focused on the temporary things of this life is always anxious because it knows the insecurity of the temporary.
  - The new car gets hit in the parking lot, or its first rust spot
  - The roof on the new house leaks
  - Thieves steal the diamond ring, or the new Weatherby Rifle
  - The bank or insurance Co. goes insolvent
- B. We attempt to insure, protect, guard, lock up, and preserve our treasures, while anxiously worrying about the future.
  - "Worry is holding in your mind that which you don't want to happen.
  - Worry is wasting today's time cluttering up tomorrow's opportunities with yesterday's troubles"
- E. Wrong treasure places wrong values on things in life
  - Food, our temporary body, and clothes (6:31-32)
- F. God knows what we need, so don't sweat the small stuff!

### **III. Because our treasure determines our priority.**

- A. You can check your own heart's focus by looking at
  - Your checkbook
  - Your calendar
  - Your tongue
  - Your fruit (Galatians 5:19-24)
- B. If, as kingdom people, we spent as much time thinking about eternity, the kingdom, and eternal life as we do thinking about shopping, staying fit, and going through our closets trying to decide the appropriate outfit for the day what kind of impact would that have on our world, on our families, and on our own lives? (Matthew 6:33-34)
- C. Heavenly treasures are moth proof, rust proof, and burglar proof. They endure forever in all their sparkling luster, as the irremovable possessions of the children of the heavenly Father.

Eternal life (John 3:16)  
Spring of Life that will never run dry (John 4:14)  
A hand out of which the Good Shepherd's sheep will never be snatched (John 10:28)  
A love from which we can never be separated (Romans 8:39)  
A calling that will never be revoked (Romans 11:29)  
A foundation that will never be destroyed ( 2 Tim 2 :19)  
An inheritance that will never fade that is reserved for us (1 Pet 1:4-5)  
A peace that surpasses all comprehension (Philippians 4:7)  
A crown of righteousness that us ours (2 Tim 4:8)  
Our names enrolled in heaven (Luke 10:20)

#### **IV. Conclusion**

A. Our treasure in life needs to be the kingdom. Are we willing to sell all, do all, and commit all to put it first in our lives?

## **Small Group Discussion Outline: Values & Worry**

### **Introduction**

- A. When you were a teen ager, what did your parents think of your clothes? (Wierd, indecent, tattered, trendy, fashionable?)
- B. What do you think about Mrs. Marcos's closet full of shoes? (Extravagant, silly, greedy, or just wanted to be ready for any occasion?)
- C. In our section of scripture in this lesson we are going to see Jesus stress the point that your focus in life determines your priorities, and your overall attitude. As Kingdom people, our priorities and focus in life often reveal themselves in unusual ways. We'll discuss these but first let's look at our text (Matthew 6:19-34).

### **I. What you treasure determines your focus**

- A. One man said "The mind attracts what the mind thinks about most". How does verse 21 support that statement?
- B. From verse 20, what do we attract when we focus on things of this life? (Material things that deteriorate, get old, and get stolen)
- C. What do you think Jesus means when he talks about eyes full of darkness or full of light in verse 22-23? (Answer: If the eye of the soul (the mind's focus) is in poor condition or wrongly focused, life itself is a blur, values are distorted, and commitments are wrong)
- D. Is it really impossible to serve God and riches? Does that mean that we should all sell our homes, cars, clothes, and things and become poor?  
How does Matthew 19:22-24 relate to Jesus' statement?

### **II. What you treasure determines your security**

- A. Why is a heart focused on things of this life always anxious? Can you give some examples of things we get uptight about or worry about?
  - New car gets its first dent, or rust spot
  - Roof on the house leaks
  - Thieves steal your most valuable thing
  - Bank, or insurance company goes insolvent
- B. What do we do to try to protect our material things? (Insure, protect, guard, lock up, preserve... and then sometimes still worry! What does this tell us about the security of this life and its treasures?)
- C. Misguided treasure places wrong values on things in this life. Who does Jesus say we are like when we display this attitude? (Verses 31-32)

### **III. Your treasure determines your priority**

- A. There are four things you can use to check your treasure focus in life
  - Your checkbook
  - Your calendar
  - Your tongue
  - Your fruit (Galatians 5:19-24)
- B. Do you agree or disagree that these things are indicators of our focus in life? Just for your own application, how do you check out on these?
- C. Heavenly treasures are moth proof, rust proof, and burglar proof. They endure forever and are sparkling possessions of the children of the heavenly Father.
  - Eternal life (John 3:16)
  - Spring of life that will never go dry (John 4:14)
  - A hand out of which the Good Shepherd's sheep will never be snatched (John 10:28)
  - A love from which we can never be separated (Romans 8:29)
  - A foundation that will never be destroyed (2 Timothy 2:19)
  - A crown of righteousness that is ours (2 Tim 4:8)
  - An inheritance that will never fade away that is reserved for us (1 Peter 1:4-5)

A peace that surpasses all comprehension when we learn to focus properly (Philippians 4:7)  
Your name enrolled in heaven (Luke 10:20)

## **IV. Conclusion**

Our treasure needs to be the kingdom first! How can we do this?

# Kingdom Righteousness: Judging

by Greg King

*"Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you" (Matthew 7:1-2)*

This section of verses in the Sermon on the Mount is perhaps the most quoted, least understood teaching of Jesus. Some people have used these verses to justify their behavior, while others have misunderstood these verses to such a degree that they feel they can not properly correct others. What does Jesus mean, "Do not judge?" Is it wrong to make judgment calls on character, lifestyle, and doctrinal accuracy? Is Jesus here condemning a critical self-righteous attitude, or is there more involved in judging? If there is more involved, what is the proper way to judge? In this section, we will see that hypercritical judging and condemnation are condemned by Jesus, but judging righteous judgment is not.

## I. Judging Righteous Judgment

We all have to make discerning judgment calls on a daily basis. The Bible gives us some parameters in which to determine righteous and unrighteous judgment. For instance, it is improper to judge by appearance, yet we are told to judge righteous judgment (John 7:24). We are not to judge or condemn those outside the church because that's God's job (1 Corinthians 5:12).

We have an insight into a statement that we will be involved in the judging of angels, perhaps as a jury? (1 Corinthians 6:1-5). We must make discernments about truth *"Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits..."* (1 John 4:1, see also Galatians 1:6-9; Acts 17:11). We must also discern and judge good and evil (Hebrews 5:14; Philippians 3:2).

Jesus himself had drawn conclusions and expressed them about the Pharisees and scribes. Their righteousness was inadequate for salvation, therefore we must understand and judge what that unrighteousness is, *"Unless your righteousness surpass that of the Pharisees and teachers of the law, you will in no way enter the kingdom of heaven"* (Matthew 5:20). He also acknowledged their hypocrisy in giving, prayer, and fasting (Matthew 6:2 ff.). He was quick to point out their misapplication of scripture (Matthew 15:1-9).

There is nothing in the teaching of Jesus or the apostles that relieves us of the obligation to form opinions about people, their character, and teaching, and to act upon these opinions and judgments. This also implies that at times it will be our duty to express our judgments. These verses on judging, therefore, do not relieve us of our responsibility in church discipline (1 Corinthians 5:1-5). They do not allow us to be tolerant of any and every doctrine (Acts 17:11). They do not allow us to be tolerant of any and every practice (1 Corinthians 6:9-10). Judgments and opinions must always be made, so what is Jesus dealing with when he says "Do not judge?"

## II. Don't Judge With Hypercritical Judgment

The Lord is condemning the spirit of judging harshly, self-righteously, without mercy, without love, and making comparisons of "Big sin - little sin." To be discriminating and critical is necessary. To be hypercritical condemning, and condescending is judging, and forbidden by Jesus.

There are several examples of hypercritical judgment. The woman caught in adultery, for instance, shows the Pharisees lack of compassion, and condemning, spiteful attitude (John 8:3-11). They were not concerned about the woman repenting of her sin, or helping her overcome her failings. They were using her to place Jesus into a corner.

David himself fell into the trap of "Big sin - little sin" judging. Nathan presented a case to him and David was ready to execute a man, *"David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, 'As surely as the Lord lives, the man who did this deserves to die!'"* Nathan responds with a stern correction and says, *"You are the man David!"* (2 Samuel 12:1-7). David was ready to condemn a man for stealing sheep, but he himself was not willing to look at his own adultery, murder and deceit in the same light. This is unrighteous judging.

The Jews often did this. Paul deals with this topic in Romans, *"You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you*



*who pass judgment do the same thing"* (Romans 7:1-4; 17-23). The parable of the Pharisee and tax collector demonstrates the wrong attitude that Jesus condemns. The Pharisees were *confident in their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else* (Luke 18:9-14).

Consequences for unrighteous judgment are quite severe. *"Judgment without mercy shall be shown to anyone who has not been merciful"* (James 2:13). By your own judgment, you set the standard for your own judgment (Matthew 7:2).

### **III. Application**

Jesus warn the citizens of the kingdom from being blind eye doctors who try to perform micro surgery on someone else's eye (Matthew 7:3-5). He does not mean or infer that we should not be discriminating and thereby practice mutual examination and correction, *"If anyone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of gentleness, watching out for yourselves lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ"* (Galatians 6:1-2).

In judging properly you need to observe these guidelines. Avoid saying what is untrue or false (Exodus 23:1). Avoid saying what is unnecessary (Proverbs 11:13) or unkind (Proverbs 18:8). Righteous judgment makes just, kind, and accurate calls, not blinded by ones own sin, malice, bitterness, or self righteousness.

### **IV. Conclusion**

While Jesus instructs us to do not judge or condemn, he does not mean that we are to be so tolerant and open minded that we lack discernment. We need to be aware that the standard of judgment that we set is the exact same standard by which the Lord will judge us.

## **Sermon Outline: The Righteousness of the Kingdom: Judging**

Purpose: To inform Christians of the meaning of "Do not judge", and motivate them to proper application of this principle in their lives.

### **Introduction**

**AC:** Matthew 7:1-6

**NEED:** There are several questions that need addressing because of this verse:

What does Jesus mean "Do not judge?"

Is it wrong to make judgment calls on character, doctrinal accuracy, or lifestyle?

Is Jesus here condemning a critical self righteous attitude, or is there more involved in judging

What is the proper way to judge?

**CI: HYPERCRITICAL JUDGING AND CONDEMNATION IS CONDEMNED BY JESUS, BUT JUDGING RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT IS NOT.**

### **I. Judging Righteous Judgment**

A. We all have to make discerning judgments

Not by appearance, but righteously (John 7:24)

Not to judge or condemn those outside the church (1 Corinthians 5:12)

We will judge the world and angels (As jury??) (1 Corinthians 6:1-5)

We must discern truth (Galatians 1:8-9; 1 John 4:1; Acts 17:11)

We must discern and judge good and evil (Hebrews 5:14; Phil 3:2)

B. Jesus had drawn righteous conclusions and expressed them about the scribes and Pharisees

Their righteousness was inadequate for salvation (Matthew 5:20)

He acknowledged hypocrisy in giving, prayer, and fasting (Matthew 6:2)

He confronted their misapplication of scripture (Matthew 15:1-9)

C. There is nothing in the teaching of Jesus or the apostles that relieves us of the obligation to form opinions about people AND to act upon these opinions and judgments, which also implies that at times it will be our duty to express our judgments

This does not relieve us of exercising church discipline (1 Corinthians 5:1-5)

This does not allow us to be tolerant of any and every doctrine

This does not allow us to be tolerant of any and every practice (1 Corinthians 6:9-10)

D. Judgments and opinions must always be made. So what is Jesus dealing with here?

### **II. Don't Judge with Hypercritical Judgment**

A. The Lord is condemning the spirit of judging harshly, self righteously, without mercy, without love, and making comparisons of "Big Sin, Little Sin". To be discriminating and critical is necessary; to be hypercritical and condemning is wrong

Woman caught in adultery (John 8:3-11)

David's adultery and murder vrs stealing and killing a lamb (2 Samuel 12:1-7)

Concerning another and ignoring your own wrong (Romans 2: 1-4; 17-23; Luke 18:9-14)

B. Consequences of hypercritical condemnation

James 2:13 "Judgment without mercy..."

You set the standard for your own judgment (Matthew 7:2)

### **III. Application**

A. Jesus warns the citizens of the kingdom from being blind eye doctors who try to perform micro surgery on someone else's eye (Matthew 7:3-5)

B. He does not mean or infer that we should not be discriminating and practice mutual examination (Galatians 6:1-2).

C. One should avoid saying

What is untrue and false witness (Exodus 23:1)

Unnecessary (Proverbs 11:13)  
Unkind (Proverbs 18:8)

#### **IV. Conclusion**

- A. While Jesus instructs us to not judge or condemn, he does not mean to be so tolerant and open minded that we lack discernment.
- B. We need to beware that the standard of judgment that we set is the exact same standard by which the Lord will judge us.

## **Small Group Discussion Outline: Judging**

### **Introduction**

Have you ever compared yourself with someone else and felt glad that you didn't do the things that they were doing? If you did (and most of us have at one time or another) then you made a judgment call. In our lessons today, we are going to be discussing judging others. Let's turn to Matthew 7:1-6 and someone read that for us.

There are several questions that need addressing because of this verse

What exactly does Jesus mean "Do not judge"?

Is it wrong to make judgment calls on character, doctrinal accuracy, and lifestyle?

Is Jesus here condemning a critical self righteous attitude or is there more involved in judging?

What is the proper way to judge?

We will see in this lesson that hypercritical judging and condemnation is condemned by Jesus, but judging righteous judgment is not.

### **I. Judging Righteousness Judgment**

A. We have to make discerning judgments

B. John 7:24:

What can we see about how NOT to judge according to this verse? (Answer: not by appearance)

C. 1 Corinthians 5:12

Who are we not to judge according to this verse? (Answer: Those outside)

D. 1 Corinthians 6:1-5

Who does these verses indicate we will be responsible for judging? (Answer: the world and angels).

Do you think we will be on the judgment throne, or in the jury box? Why?

E. From the following passages, what must we judge and discern?

Galatians 1:6-9 (Truth and accuracy)

1 John 4:1 (The spirits: correct teaching, accuracy)

Acts 17:11 (truth, and accuracy)

F. Jesus had drawn righteous conclusions and expressed them about the scribes and Pharisees. From the following passages, how is Jesus judging?

Matthew 5:20 (judging that the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees was inadequate)

Matthew 6:2 ff. (Judging hypocrisy in giving, prayer, and fasting)

G. There is nothing in the teaching of Jesus or the apostles that relieves us of the obligation to form opinions about practices AND to act upon these opinions and judgments. This implies that at times it will be necessary to express our judgments.

1 Corinthians 5:1-5 What judgments do Christians need to make here? (Fellowship judgments)

1 Corinthians 6:9-10, What judgments do we need to make here (moral judgments)

We need to be judging righteously and accurately! So what is Jesus dealing with here?

### **II. Don't judge with hypercritical judgment**

A. The Lord is condemning the spirit of judging harshly, self righteously, without mercy, without love and making comparisons of "Big Sin, Little Sin". To be discriminating and critical is necessary; to be hypercritical and condemning is wrong! Let's see some examples to illustrate:

John 8:3-11 What can you see about wrong judgment here?

2 Samuel 12:1-7 David had just committed adultery and murdered a man. How is he playing the game of "Big sin, Little Sin" here?

Romans 2:1-4; 17-23 and Luke 18:9-14 What do you see about self righteousness and false judging from these verses?

B. Let's look at some of the consequences of judging falsely

James 2:13 What will be the result of judging and condemning without mercy?

Matthew 7:2 What can we learn about judging from this verse? (Answer: you set the standard for your own

judgment)

### **III. Application**

A. Jesus warns the citizens of the kingdom from being blind eye doctors who try to perform micro surgery on someone else's eye (Matthew 7:3-5).

What do you think he means and how does this apply to us?

B. Jesus does not mean or infer that we should not be discriminating and practice mutual examination (Galatians 6:1-2)

C. What should we avoid in judging and in our statements?

Exodus 23:1 (Avoid saying what is untrue and bearing false witness)

Proverbs 11:13 (Avoid saying what is unnecessary)

Proverbs 18:8 (Avoid saying what is unkind)

### **IV. Conclusion**

A. While Jesus instructs us to not judge or condemn, he does not mean for us to be so tolerant and open minded that we lack discernment

B. We need to be aware that the standard of judgment that we set is the exact same standard by which the Lord will judge us.

# Kingdom Entry: Ask, Seek, Knock

by Greg King

*"Ask and it will be given you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened for you" (Matthew 7:7-12).*

Do you ever feel like you're pestering God? If anything in the Sermon on the Mount is clear, it is this - God wants people to enter the kingdom! He deals with the attitude necessary for kingdom entry, and the accompanying righteousness that he expects from kingdom citizens. But entry into the kingdom is not easy, it requires persistence, perseverance, and patience. This is the beginning of the section entitled, "Kingdom Entry" because it deals with the mindset necessary to make it in.

## I. Ask and it shall be given

Asking implies humility and consciousness of need. The Pharisee of the parable in Luke 18:10-13 asks nothing. Instead, he tells God how good he is. The tax collector, on the other hand, asks and pleads for mercy from God.

Asking presupposes several things. It assumes belief in a personal God with whom man can have fellowship. It implies faith in a God who can, does, and will answer honest requests for help. Having this kind of humble spirit of faith makes the prayer a warm, personal request, which keeps on asking and asking and asking, until the answer is revealed. Unlike the atheist Voltaire, who supposedly prayed a prayer at his death, "O God, if there be a God, save my soul, if I have a soul." This is the spirit of insincerity, and lack of faith in the Almighty.

The promised attached to asking is receiving. God will give, but waits for us to ask in faith without doubting, *"But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind" (James 1:5-8).*

## II. Seek and you will find

Seeking is asking plus acting. Asking is not enough. Actively pursuing the answer is required if we are to find the answers to eternal life.

So how does this manifest itself in practical application? Praying for a deeper knowledge of God and his word requires action on the part of the individual to diligently search and examine the scriptures and then put into practice what is learned. The Pharisees were unwilling to do this, *"You diligently search the scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life" (John 5:39-40).* The Bureans, on the other hand, searched the scriptures to see if what was being taught them was accurate so they could obey honestly (Acts 17:11).

Praying for commitment requires consistent fellowship and assembling with God's people in order to gain spiritual strength (Hebrews 10:23-25). Praying for God to relieve anxiety and worry will not happen until we see first the kingdom and his righteousness (Matthew 6:33). Desiring to live in harmony with God requires seeking, obedience, and application of godly principles (Matthew 7:21-23). Faith without actively applying the principles accomplishes nothing (James 2:18-26). Seek and you will find.

## III. Knock and the door will be opened

Knocking is asking plus acting plus persevering. One knocks again and again until the door is open. In all three imperatives, the present tense verb is used in the Greek, *keep on asking, keep on seeking, keep on knocking.*

In one parable Jesus demonstrated persistence. *"Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up..." (Luke 18:1-8).* We are instructed to be faithful in prayer (Romans 12:12). Persistent prayer is an admonition for the faithful citizen of God's kingdom. *"Pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17, see also Ephesians 6:18; and Colossians 4:2).*

## IV. Promises are fulfilled when the command is obeyed

Ask, it will be given. Seek, you will find. Knock, the door will be opened. A promise is attached to faithful

compliance with God's expectations.

The problem rises when we are too casual and inconsistent in prayer and searching for God's will. We cannot be sufficient on our own to judge righteous judgment, for example, on our own. We need God's input and assistance which is revealed through persistent prayer, study, and effort.

God's answer to our requests will be just and practical. *"Which of you, if his son asks for bread will give him a stone, or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake?"* (Matthew 7:9-11). God will not deceive his children with imitations. Sometimes God's answer to persistent prayer and earnest effort is "no" or "not now". Paul prayed three times that his thorn in the flesh be removed, and God answered *"My grace is sufficient for you"* (2 Corinthians 12:7-10).

## **V. Conclusion**

Kingdom citizens may rest assured that the Father will provide solutions for the problems with respect to man to man relationships and the difficulties arising from the earnest attempt to follow the instructions about judging properly. God expects us to be diligent in our quest for the kingdom. It must be of first priority in our lives (Matthew 6:33).

## **Sermon Outline: Kingdom Entry - Ask, Seek, Knock**

Purpose: To inform Christians of the necessity of coupling persevering prayer and earnest effort

### **Introduction**

**AC:** Matthew 7:7-12

**NEED:** Is there any connection between Jesus' instruction on persistency in prayer and Judging in the previous verses? If so, how does this fit together?

Jesus said don't judge, yet judgments are necessary (:6)

He said to not be hypocritical, yet to be critical in discernment while being humble and patient

How can we be sufficient in our human nature to carry out such a burden (2 Cor 2:16)?

**CI: JESUS ANSWERS THIS QUESTION BY URGING THE NECESSITY OF PERSEVERING PRAYER ACCOMPANIED BY EARNEST EFFORT: ASK, SEEK, AND KNOCK.**

### **I. Ask and it shall be given**

A. Asking implies humility and consciousness of need

The Pharisee of the parable asks nothing, but instead **tells** God how good he is. (Luke 18:10-13)

The tax collector **asks and pleads** for mercy.

B. Asking presupposes:

Belief in a personal God with whom man can have fellowship

Implies faith in a God who can, does, and will answer.

Having such faith makes the prayer warm and personal.

C. Unlike Voltaire's supposed prayer at his death: "O God, if there be a God, save my soul, if I have a soul"

D. The promise attached to asking is receiving. God will give, but waits for us to ask in faith, without doubting (James 1:5-8)

### **II. Seek and you will find**

A. Seeking is **asking PLUS acting**.

Asking is not enough. Actively pursuing the answer is required.

B. How does this manifest itself in practical application?

Praying for a deep knowledge of God and his word requires action on the part of the individual to diligently search and examine the scriptures (John 5:39; Acts 17:11)

Praying for commitment requires consistent fellowship and assembling with God's people (Hebrews 10:25)

Praying for God to relieve anxiety and worry will not happen until we seek **first** the kingdom and His righteousness (6:33)

Desiring to live in harmony with God requires seeking Obedience and application of Godly principles (Matthew 7:21-23;)

Faith without actively applying the principles accomplishes nothing (James 2:18-26)

### **III. Knock and the door will be opened**

A. Knocking is **asking PLUS acting PLUS persevering**.

One knocks again and again until the door is open

B. Present tense verbs are used here "Continue to ask, seek and knock"

Luke 18:1-8: asking, seeking, and persistence are evidences of strong faith.

Faithful in prayer (Romans 12:12)

Admonition for consistent, persistent, and intense prayer (Ephesians 6:18; Colossians 4:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:17)



#### **IV. Promises are fulfilled when the command is obeyed**

- A. Ask ... given. Seek ... find, Knock ... door will be opened.
- B. The problem rises when we are too casual and inconsistent in prayer  
    We cannot be sufficient on our own to judge righteous judgment. We need God's input and assistance which is revealed through persistent prayer and earnest effort.
- C. God's answer will be just, and practical (Matthew 7:9-11)  
    God will not deceive his children with imitations  
    Sometimes God's answer to persistent prayer and earnest effort is "NO" or "NOT NOW" ( 2 Corinthians 12:7-10... three times = persistent and earnest)

#### **V. Conclusion**

- A. Kingdom citizens may rest assured that the Father will provide solutions for the problems with respect to man-to-man relationships, and the difficulties arising from the earnest attempt to follow the instructions in 7:1-6)
- B. The Golden rule is one practical application of persistent prayer of faith in the presence of a faithful and just God (7:12)

## **Small Group Discussion Outline: Kingdom Entry - Ask, Seek, Knock**

### **Introduction**

Jesus had just given instruction on not judging one another and ensuring that we look at our own lives (Matthew 7:1-5). He then seems to shift from judging, to persistent prayer and earnest effort, and then dramatically shifts back to treating others as we want to be treated (:12). Is there a connection between our view of and treatment of other people and our prayer life and relationship with God? If so how?

In this lesson we will examine Jesus' teaching on persistent prayer and earnest effort. Let's read Matthew 7:7-12.

### **I. Ask and it shall be given**

- A. What are the implications involved in asking God for something? (Answers: belief in a personal God, Faith in a God who can, does, and will answer etc...)
- B. Luke 18:10-13 What differences do you observe between the Pharisee and the tax collector in this section as it pertains to asking of God?
  - Pharisee **tells** God how good he is and doesn't think he needs anything from God.
  - Publican **asks and pleads** for mercy.
  - How are our attitudes revealed in our prayers?
- C. What is the promise attached to asking God for something? (Answer: you will receive)
- D. Are there any stipulations or requirements attached to asking? (Yes: James 1:5-8)

### **II. Seek and you will find**

- A. What is the difference between asking and seeking? (Answer: seeking is asking PLUS acting)
- B. How is seeking demonstrated or manifested in our lives?
  - If you seek knowledge, is asking all that is necessary? (see John 5:39; Acts 17:11)
  - If you desire commitment and consistency in your Spiritual life, is asking all that is necessary? How does Hebrews 10:25 help us understand the necessity to seek?
  - Is praying to God to remove anxiety and worry from your life all that is required for it to happen, or is there more involved? How does Matthew 6:33 help us understand this more?
  - If you desire to live in harmony with God, is there more required than just asking? Let's look at Matthew 7:21-23 . How is seeking applied here?

### **III. Knock and the door will be opened**

- A. What is different between asking, seeking, and knocking? (Answer: Knocking is asking, PLUS acting, PLUS persevering.)
- B. Why do you think God wants us to go through this process? Why doesn't He just give what we want or need without having to be so "difficult?"
  - Luke 18:1-8 What do we learn about the necessity on our part of persistence and earnestness from these verses? (They are evidence of a strong faith see Hebrews 11:6)
  - From Romans 12:2 what does God expect from our prayers and why? (Persistent in prayer, so our faith in His power can be manifested)
- C. Let's look at some other instructions on persistence and earnestness in prayer
  - Ephesians 6:18
  - Colossians 4:2
  - 1 Thessalonians 5:17

### **IV. Promises are fulfilled when the command is obeyed**

- A. What promise is offered if we ask? If we seek? If we knock?
- B. From Matthew 7:9-11, what do we learn about God's answer to our persistent and faithful prayers? (Answer:

God's answer will be just and fair. He will not deceive his children with imitations

C. From 2 Corinthians 12:7-10, what insights do we gain about asking, seeking, and knocking? (Answer: sometimes God's answer is "No" or "Not now")

Why does God sometimes answer us in this way?

## **V. Conclusion and Application**

- A. Are there things in your personal life that you are not receiving because you don't ask God?
- B. Are there things in your life that you are not getting answers to because you are not diligently seeking?
- C. Are there doors that are not being opened for you because you aren't knocking hard enough or long enough?
- D. How does persistent and earnest prayer help us in our relationship to other people (7:1-6; and verse 12)?
- E. What are some practical things that we need to do after studying this lesson together?

# Kingdom Entry - Narrow or Broad Way?

by Greg King

*" Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it" (Matthew 7:13-14).*

Kingdom entry not only takes persistent perseverance, but it takes focused determination. This third division in the Sermon on the Mount begins with asking, seeking, and knocking.

After hearing the message of the kingdom and its requirements, we need to make sure to enter the kingdom. There are choices in life, and this, to be sure, is the most important decision in our life because it determines our eternal destination. And eternity is a long time!

Entrance into the kingdom is both inviting and difficult, favorable and unfavorable. It is favorable because those who enter are blessed, comforted, they inherit the earth, and will be fully satisfied. It is unfavorable because those who enter will be persecuted, insulted, and slandered. They must practice a superior righteousness that exceeds that of the Pharisees (Matthew 5:20). They must love their enemies, pray for their persecutors, and not judge others, while still remaining discerning. Entrance into the kingdom clashes with men's natural tendencies and instincts.

One does not just "get saved" and then enter the kingdom. The entrance gate is very narrow, and must be found by asking, seeking and knocking. The road is narrow and restrictive.

## I. Two gates and two ways

The gate to life means that there is a choice that must be made in this life. Only by making a conscious, informed choice, does one arrive on the right way.

Narrow gates don't allow you to carry lots of baggage along with you. Through this gate you cannot carry you love of riches or your possessions. You cannot carry your unforgiving spirit or your selfishness. No self righteousness or self indulgence will be permitted through this narrow gate. It is the gate to life!

The narrow gate leads to a narrow way or road which is constructed according to the specifications of the Supreme Architect (Hebrews 11:10). Directions for this road are found in the road map to eternal life - the bible.

In sharp contrast with the narrow gate, the wide gate allows you to enter with all the baggage you desire. It seems inviting and easy, like a six-lane interstate freeway; well, at least at the on-ramp! The travelers on the wide road are headed for a fatal crash just ahead!

## II. Two kind of travelers

Many are on the broad path, but few are on the narrow. Jesus talked about a wedding feast in which few are chosen (Matthew 22:14). God is now, and always has been in the remnant business (Romans 9:27; 11:5). In the Old Testament, we read about God saving only a few, that is eight souls in the ark (1 Peter 3:20). According to Morris, in *The Genesis Record*, there were several billion people on the earth when God destroyed it by water - "Few are chosen?!"

Those on the broad way think they have happiness and freedom. They have loosed the moorings and cast off the anchor and are free! Free, that is, from everything except the winds, the storms, and the rocks! Jesus says they are slaves to sin (John 8:34).

Those on the narrow way are the ones truly free. Though they are on a restricted path, they have been unshackled to whatever hinders them. They are blessed and have peace through total assurance - a peace that is beyond comprehension that guards their hearts and minds in Christ (Philippians 4:4-7). Their focus is on something better than those insignificant things they left behind. *"So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal"* (2 Corinthians 4:17-18; see also Romans 8:18).

## III. Two Destinations

Those on the broad road are headed for destruction. Jesus warned of this impending destruction on numerous occasions. Hell is a place where the fire never goes out (Mark 9:43). It will be a place in total outer darkness where

weeping and gnashing of teeth are the expressions of total agony and remorse for wrong decisions made (Matthew 8:12). In this place of destruction there will be no love or fellowship; no peace, no joy, no happiness. Only misery, for ever, and ever and ever. There are many on that path, Jesus says!

Those on the narrow way are headed for eternal life. There will be fellowship with God, Christ and the Holy Spirit and all the redeemed. *"In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am..." (John 14:2-4; see also 1 Peter 1:3-9).* It only took God six days to create the universe, and Jesus has been preparing our room for almost 2,000 years. Do you think there's any significance to the magnificence that awaits those on the narrow road?

There will be a new heaven and new earth full of righteousness, peace, total love and fellowship with the Almighty Himself! ( 2 Peter 3:10-13; Revelation 21:1-7).

## **IV. Conclusion**

You should choose the gate and the way that leads to life. The narrow gate the restricted way.

The wide gate and the broad way are tempting however. It is natural to prefer what is wide and broad and easy to access as opposed to the narrow and restrictive. It is also natural to follow the crowd rather than just a few.

But, Jesus will lead you to life if you will follow him. *"I am the way and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6).*

The decision to answer the invitation of God is yours alone. No one can answer it for you. *"The Spirit and the bride say come! And let him who hears say come. Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life" (Revelation 22:12-17).*

## **Sermon Outline: Kingdom Entry: Narrow or Broad Way**

Purpose: To convince people to make the proper choice so they can enter the way to life.

### **Introduction:**

**AC:** We have entered the third division in the Sermon on the Mount: Kingdom Entry (7:7-27)

Kingdom Attitudes 5:1-16

Kingdom Righteousness 5:17-7:6

Kingdom Entry (7:7-27)

**NEED:** After hearing the message of the kingdom and its requirements, we need to make sure to enter the kingdom.

There are choices in life, and this, to be sure, is the most important decision in our life because it determines our eternal destination.

A. Entrance into the kingdom is both inviting and difficult, favorable and unfavorable:

**Favorable**, because those who enter are blessed, comforted, inherit the earth, and will be fully satisfied

**Unfavorable**, because those who enter will be persecuted, insulted and slandered. They must practice a superior righteousness that exceeds the Pharisee. They must love their enemies, pray for their persecutors, and not judge while still remaining discerning and because entering the kingdom clashes with men's natural tendencies and instincts.

B. One does not just "get saved" and enter the kingdom. The entrance gate is narrow and must be found and the road is narrow and restricted.

**CI: MATTHEW 7:13-14**

## **I. Two Gates and Two Ways**

A. The Gate to life means that there is a choice that must be made right now in life. Only by making a conscious, informed choice does one arrive on the right way.

B. Narrow Gates don't allow you to carry lots of baggage along

No love of riches or possessions

No unforgiving spirits or selfishness

No self righteousness or self indulgence.

This is the Gate of Life

C. The Narrow Way

Constructed according to specifications of the Supreme Architect (Hebrews 11:10)

Directions are found in the Road Map to Eternal Life the Bible

D. The Wide Gate allows you to enter with all the baggage you desire

The Broad Way seems inviting and easy... at least at first

## **II. Two Kinds of Travelers**

A. Many are on the Broad Path, FEW on the Narrow

Wedding Banquet "Many invited, few chosen" (Mat 22:14)

God is in the remnant business (Romans 9:27; 11:5)

God saved only a few (8) in the ark (1 Peter 3:20)

B. Those on the Broad Way

Think they have happiness and "Freedom". They have loosed the mooring and cast off the anchor and are free, from everything but the winds, and the storms and the rocks.

Slaves to Sin John 8:34

C. Those On the Narrow Way

Though on a restricted path, they are free, having been unshackled to whatever hinders them

They are blessed and have peace through assurance (Philippians 4:4-7)

Their focus is on something better (2 Corinthians 4:17-18; Romans 8:18)

## **III. Two Destinations**

A. Those on the Broad way are headed for destruction

Hell, where the fire never goes out (Mark 9:43)  
Outer darkness and weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 8:12)  
No love or fellowship  
No peace, no joy, no happiness, only misery ... forever!

B. Those on the Narrow Way are headed for eternal life

Fellowship with God, Christ, the Holy Spirit and all the redeemed (John 14:2-4; 1 Peter 1:3-9)  
A New Heaven and a New Earth full of righteousness (2 Peter 3:10-13; Revelation 21:1-7)

## **IV. Conclusion**

A. You should choose the gate and the way that leads to life: The Narrow Gate and the restricted way.

B. The Wide gate and Broad way are tempting however

It is natural to prefer what is wide and broad and easy to access as opposed to narrow and restrictive

It is also natural to follow the crowd rather than just a few

C. But Jesus will lead you to life if you will follow him (John 14:6)

D. The decision to answer the invitation is yours alone (Revelation 22:12-17).

## **Small Group Discussion Outline: Narrow & Broad Way**

### **Introduction**

There are three main divisions in the Sermon on the Mount 1) Kingdom Attitudes (5:1-16); 2) Kingdom Righteousness (5:17 - 7:6); and 3) Kingdom Entry (7:7-27). This lesson is included in the section of Kingdom Entry, the Wide Gate and Broad Way, and the Small Gate and Narrow Way.

Entrance into the Kingdom is both inviting and difficult; favorable and unfavorable. Let's discuss these two questions, Why is entrance into the kingdom favorable, and why is it unfavorable?

(Answers: **Favorable** because those who enter are blessed, comforted, inherit the earth, will be fully satisfied, and have eternal life.

**Unfavorable** because those who enter will be insulted, persecuted, and slandered. They must practice a righteousness that exceeds the Pharisees, must love their enemies, pray for their persecutors and not judge unjustly.

Entrance into the Kingdom of God clashes with man's natural tendencies and instincts).

Someone read our text for us (Matthew 7:13-14). In this section we will see that there are Two Gates and Ways men can choose; Two Kinds of Travelers; and Two Destinations.

### **I. Two Gates and Two Ways**

- A. Does the fact that there are two Gates and Two Ways indicate that there are choices that we are forced to make? How?
- B. If a Gate is really narrow and you can only barely fit, can you take a lot of things with you? If the Gate to eternal life is narrow, what "Baggage" must you decide to leave behind?  
(Answers: love of possessions of riches, unforgiving spirit, selfishness, self righteousness, etc.).
- C. Let's read Hebrews 11:10.  
What do you learn about who the Architect or builder of this way is?
- D. Where are the directions or "Road Map" found for proceeding on this Narrow Way?
- E. What does the Wide Gate and Broad Way look like in comparison to the small gate and narrow way? (Broad way seems easier to follow, less restrictions, more "Freedom?" etc.)
- F. So there are two choices that you can make. Let's now look at the travelers who choose these two separate paths.

### **II. Two Kinds of Travelers**

- A. What does Jesus say about the volume of traffic on these two paths? (Many on the broad road, few on the narrow)
- B. Let's look at some passages together and tell what observations you make about God's view of numbers and why.  
Matthew 22:14  
Romans 9:27; 11:5 (discuss what a remnant is) Why is God interested in remnants?  
1 Peter 3:20
- C. What do those on the Broad way think like? (Answers: think they have happiness and "Freedom").  
What light does John 8:34 shed on this concept?
- D. What do those on the narrow path think and feel like?  
Though on a restricted path, they are free (John 8:32) and have been unshackled by whatever hindered them from finding true life (John 10:10).  
What else do those on the narrow path enjoy from Philippians 4:4-7)?

### **III. Two Destinations**

- A. Where are those on the broad Way headed for? Let's look at some verses and see what the end of that road looks like:  
Mark 9:43 (Hell, where the fire never goes out)  
Matthew 8:12 What is "Outer darkness like"? and Why will there be weeping and gnashing of teeth?  
No love or fellowship. Some people think that Hell is going to be a fun party place where all the routy party animals hang out and have fun for all eternity. Is this going to be true? Why do you say that?



No peace, no joy, no happiness, only misery ... forever.

B. Where does the Narrow Way lead and what will it be like?

Fellowship with God, Christ, the Holy Spirit and all the redeemed (John 14:2-4; 1 Peter 1:3-9)

A New Heaven and New Earth full of righteousness (2 Peter 3:10-13; Revelation 21:1-7)

How does the concept of a "New Heaven and New Earth" compare with the idea that heaven will be like living on a cloud playing a harp with the angels? (Discuss this)

## **IV. Conclusion**

A. How can we apply what we've learned here in this lesson?

B. The Wide Gate is tempting. It's natural to prefer what is wide and broad, and easy as opposed to narrow and restrictive.

C. But Jesus will lead you to life if you will follow Him (John 14:6)

D. The decision to follow Him and keep following Him is yours alone (Revelation 22:12-17)

# Kingdom Entry - Beware of False Prophets

by Greg King

*" Watch our for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves" (Matthew 7:15 - 20).*

Jesus wants people to enter the kingdom and that is the main function of the Sermon on the Mount. We've seen that entry into the kingdom must be made through a narrow gate and followed along a straight and narrow path. False prophets are one of the obstacles that prevent people from entering or from continuing on the path into the kingdom. If you want to enter the kingdom, you cannot throw caution to the wind, you must constantly be aware of false prophets.

## I. Why beware of false prophets?

False prophets have always been a danger to those desiring to please God. False information always leads to a false response. In the case of Adam and Eve, they were given false information which led to false action, which in turn led to disobedience and ultimately death (Genesis 3:1-5). Peter confirms the fact that false teaching can cause you to fall from your secure position ( 2 Peter 3:16-17).

We need to beware of false prophets because they were also in Israel. God allowed them so that the people's allegiance could be tested (Deuteronomy 13:1-4). False prophets were also in Jesus' day. They taught that the tradition of the elders was superior to the command of God (Matthew 15:1-20). The Pharisees and teachers of the law were hypocrites, liars and deceivers (Matthew 23:13-32). The disciples were admonished to beware of the influence of their false teaching (Matthew 16:6-12).

False teachers were also on the early church. Some said that there was no resurrection of the dead (1 Corinthians 15:12). Some advocated that you must be circumcised in order to be saved (Acts 15:1; Galatians 5:2). Some said that the second coming of Christ had already come and that those Christians who remained had missed it ( 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3). Others said that Christ was not coming back at all ( 2 Peter 3:3-4). Others promised "freedom" through immorality (2 Peter 2:17), and some traveled through different churches spreading their heretical teaching (Jude:12,13; 16).

False prophets are also among us today, and therefore we must be on guard in we are to enter the kingdom (see 1 Timothy 4:1-3; 2 Timothy 4:3-4).

## II. The nature and character of false prophets

They are said to be shrewd and crafty. Satan in the Garden of Eden was said to be "more crafty than any...". The false prophets are liars (John 8:42-47). Those mentioned in these verses were Jews, the descendants of Abraham. They are deceivers (Matthew 24:9-11). They masquerade as angels of light and come across as sincere to those who are unsuspecting (2Corinthians 11;13-15; see also Revelation 3:2).

False teachers have no respect for the authority of scripture, but instead, they twist the scripture to their own destruction, making it say what they want ( 2 Peter 3:15-17). They are known by their fruit, and the fruit they bear is not pretty!

Their character and life is known by their actions, words and lack of repentance (Matthew 3:7-10). They claim to know God, but their actions speak louder than their words ( Titus 1:16). They are known by what they teach. John Calvin said, "When talking

about fruit, the manner of teaching holds first place." You can always spot a false prophet by the way he handles the scriptures, and that is why individual responsibility and knowledge of the word is so vital (see 2Peter 3:18; cf. Hosea 4:6).

## III. Practical application for us.

We need to grasp the seriousness of the true Gospel message. *"I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different Gospel, which is really no gospel at all..." (Galatians 1:6-9).* If we distort the teaching of the message, God will destroy us (Revelation 22:18-19). It is the truth that saves us, and false teachers are not interested in the truth (John 8:32).

There is an individual responsibility for each person to grow up and mature in the word of God so that he or she can detect and avoid following those who are false teachers (see Ephesians 4:11-15; 2 Peter 3:18; Hebrews 5:12-14).

We need to be discerning, and test the spirits (1 John 4:1). The noble thing to do is to check what is being said, practiced, and inferred against the inspired scripture (Acts 17:11). Everyone is individually responsible in this area.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

Jesus said that the way into the kingdom is through a small gate and along a narrow path. There are obstacles, both as we enter, and as we continue to walk. False prophets are some of the most dangerous. Beware!

## **Sermon Outline: Kingdom Entry - Beware of False Prophets**

Purpose: To inform Christians to beware of false teachers by identifying their character and nature, and motivate discernment

### **Introduction:**

**AC:** Matthew 7:15-20

**Need:** Jesus wants people to enter the kingdom and that is the main function of the sermon on the Mount. We've seen that entry into the kingdom must be made through a narrow gate and followed along a straight path.

False Prophets prevent people from entering or continuing on the path into the kingdom.

**CI: IF YOU WANT TO ENTER THE KINGDOM, YOU CANNOT THROW CAUTION TO THE WIND, YOU MUST CONSTANTLY BEWARE AND BE ON GUARD AGAINST FALSE PROPHETS.**

### **I. Why Beware Of False Prophets**

A. Because false information leads to a false response to God's will (Genesis 3:1-5)

False teaching can cause you to fall from your secure position (2 Peter 3:16-17)

B. Because false prophets were in Israel (Deuteronomy 13:1-4)

C. Because False Prophets were in Jesus' day

Tradition of elders superior to command of God (Matthew 15:1-20)

Pharisees and teachers of the law (Mat 23:13-32)

Disciples were told to beware (Matthew 16:6-12)

D. Because False prophets were in the early church

No resurrection of dead (1 Corinthians 15:12)

Must be circumcised to be saved (Acts 15:1; Galatians 5:2)

2nd coming of Christ (Came already: 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3) (Won't come at all (2 Peter 3:3-4)

Promise "Freedom" through immorality (2 Peter 2:17)

Some traveled to different churches (Jude :12-13; 16)

E. Because False Prophets are here today

Predicted (1 Tim 4:1-3; 2 Tim 4: 3-4)

### **II. The Nature and Character of False Prophets**

A. Shrewd and crafty (Satan in the Garden "More crafty than any..."

B. Liars (John 8:42-47) "These were Jews.."

C. Deceivers (Matthew 24:9-11)

D. Masquerade as angels of light ( 2 Corinthians 11:13-15; cf. Revelation 3:2)

E. No respect for the authority of scripture (2 Peter 3:15-17)

F. They are known by their fruit:

Character and life (fruits of repentance (Matthew 3:7-10)

Claim to know God, but actions speak louder (Tit 1:16)

What they teach (John Calvin said, "When talking about fruit, the manner of teaching holds first place"

### **III. Practical Application For Us**

A. We need to grasp the seriousness of true teaching

Gal 1:6-9

Revelation 22:18-19

John 8:32

B. We need to grow up and mature in the Word

Ephesians 4:11-15

2 Peter 3:18

Hebrews 5:12-14

- C. We need to be discerning
  - 1 John 4:1
  - Acts 17:11

## **IV. Conclusion**

- A. Jesus says the way to the kingdom is through a small gate and along a narrow path
- B. There are obstacles both as we enter and as we walk. False Prophets are some of the most dangerous. Beware!

## **Small Group Discussion Outline: False Prophets**

### **Introduction**

Jesus wants people to enter the kingdom and that is the main function of the sermon on the mount. We've already seen that entrance into the kingdom must be made through a narrow gate and followed along a straight path. But there are hindrances. One of the dangerous hurdles is false prophets, the subject of this lesson. False prophets prevent people from entering or continuing on the path into the kingdom. If you want to enter the kingdom, you cannot throw caution to the wind. You must constantly beware and be on guard against false prophets, both outside and inside the church. Let's read our text as we begin : Matthew 7:15-20.

### **I. Why beware of false prophets?**

- A. Would someone like to share your opinion on this question?  
Let's look at some Bible passages as we try to answer this important question.
- B. Because false information leads to a false response to God's will for your life. (Genesis 3:1-5).  
How does this passage illustrate this idea?
- C. Because false teaching can cause you to fall from your secure position (2 Peter 3:16-17).  
How does Peter make people aware of the dangers and pitfalls of false teaching?
- D. Because False Prophets were in Israel (Deuteronomy 13:1-4).  
What does Moses say about false prophets in this section?  
Why does God allow false prophets to exist?
- E. Because False Prophets were in Jesus' day. Let's look at some examples of what Jesus dealt with.  
Matthew 15:1-20. What were these false teachers doing that caused Jesus to challenge them so severely? (exchanging the traditions of the elders for the commands of God)  
Matthew 23:13-32. What can you learn about the attitude Jesus had toward these false teachers? Do you think Jesus was cruel or unkind in some of his statements? Why?  
Matthew 16:6-12. What were the disciples told to beware of? Why?
- F. Because False prophets were in the early church.  
1 Corinthians 15:12: What was the false teaching Paul opposed here? What effect could it have?  
Acts 15:1; Galatians 5:2: What false teaching was being exposed here?  
2 Thessalonians 2:1-3; and 2 Peter 3:3-4: What false teaching is being corrected here? What is the difference in the teaching between 2 Thessalonians and 2 Peter?  
2 Peter 2:17: What were these false prophets promising people?  
Jude :12-13; 16. Jude is exposing traveling preachers who went from congregation to congregation with no accountability spreading their false teaching. What observations can you detect about the dangers and effect of these false prophets?
- G. Because false prophets are here today. They were predicted (1 Timothy 4:1-3; 2 Timothy 4:3-4) .  
From these passages that predict false teaching that would appear, should we be surprised when we hear of false teaching?

### **II. The nature and character of false prophets**

- A. Genesis 3:1-4, what was the serpent's characteristic from these verses? Would you expect false teachers to be crafty like the devil?
- B. John 8:42-47  
What character does Jesus expose about false teachers here?
- C. Matthew 24:9-11  
What does Jesus call false prophets in this verse?
- D. 2 Corinthians 11:13-15.  
What were false prophets doing in the first century church?  
From a comparison of Revelation 3:2, what did some churches do about this problem?
- E. 2 Peter 3:15-17.

Peter calls these false prophets something in these verses, what?  
Do they have respect for the authority of the scriptures?  
From this verse how do you know that?

F. False prophets are known by their fruit, but what is fruit?

Matthew 3:7-10 What fruit was John the Baptist looking for?

Titus 1:16 What fruit does Titus look for in this verse?

In Matthew 7:15-20, and 16:6-12 Jesus is primarily concerned with the teaching of these false prophets.  
The fruit they bear is the teaching they spread.

### **III. Practical application for us**

A. How can we guard against being led astray by false teaching ourselves? (Discuss) Let's look at some solutions from the scripture.

B. First we need to grasp the seriousness of holding to true teaching. How do the following verses stress that fact?

Galatians 1:6-9

Revelation 22:18-19

John 8:32

C. Second, we need to grow up and mature individually in the word.

Ephesians 4:11-15

2 Peter 3:18

Hebrews 5:12-14

D. Third, we need to always be discerning of anyone's teaching

1 John 4:1

Acts 17:11

### **IV. Conclusion**

A. The way into the kingdom is through a small gate and a narrow way. Truth leads us down that path.

B. What application can you see for us personally from this lesson?

# Kingdom Entry - Obedience

by Greg King

*"Not everyone who says to me 'Lord, Lord' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven..." (Matthew 7:21-29).*

Jesus has been dealing with kingdom entry, and stresses the necessity of persistence, selection of the narrow way and the danger of false prophets. Now he shifts to the individual's responsibility for obedience, not to religious rules, not to pseudo piety, but to obedience to the will of the Father.

There is a natural tendency for us to apply this section to others and not to ourselves. We often hear these verses applied to denominational teaching verses the one church, but that is not what Jesus is dealing with. We hear these applied to the faithless agnostic, but, again, that is not what Jesus is addressing. Jesus intends the application of his sermon to be applied directly to those who consider themselves citizens of the kingdom of God - US! So how can you insure that you will be welcomed into the kingdom of heaven? Let's look.

## I. Don't substitute religion for obedience ( 7:21-23)

There is a connection between this section and that of the false prophets. They called Jesus "Lord, Lord", but he wasn't. They prophesied in Jesus' name, but they taught things that were not honest. They cast out demons in Jesus name, and did works in Jesus name. But, they did not know him!

There are two kinds of knowledge. Knowledge of the mind, and knowledge of the heart. Jesus knew the false prophets so thoroughly, that he was completely justified in condemning them (John 2:24-25). They speak of him as though he is their friend, but Jesus replies, "Not for a single moment have I acknowledged you as my own, or known you to be my friend." Jesus knows when we are faking it!

Were the miracles that they claimed authentic? Possibly so. False miracles sometimes appear authentic (2 Thessalonians 2:9-10). Pharaoh's magician's could duplicate some of the miraculous signs of Moses (Exodus 7:22; 8:7-19). Demas, who was once a faithful disciple and most probably had the gift of miracles, and definitely preached many eloquent sermons later departed from the faith and no longer did the Father's will (see Colossians 4:14 and compare 2 Timothy 4:10). Judas was once commissioned to heal the sick and cast out demons, but later hung himself because of his unfaithful betrayal (see Matthew 10:1).

Like Demas and Judas, we cannot substitute religious activity for the obedience of a surrendered heart or God will say to us on that day, "I never knew you, depart from me."

## II. Build a solid foundation of obedience (7:24-27)

Every man is a builder. Every ambition, every thought he conceives, every word he speaks, and every deed he performs is a building block from which the structure of his life arises. Every man will be tested in some way, and the results of his life will become evident. He will be tested by trials (James 1:2-3,12). He will be tested with temptations (James 1:13-16, and as in the case of Peter (Matthew 26:69-75)). He will be tested with bereavement (John 11:1 ff.), death (Acts 7:59-60; 2 Peter 1:13-15), and worry and anxiety. We will all be tested at the final judgment ( 2 Corinthians 5:10).

Every man will either stand or fall in the test. You can build on sand or you life will collapse when tested. You can hear the word and not obediently act upon it, and your life will collapse in the judgment (Matthew 7:26-27). You can build on a firm foundation and your life will stand, and that will be accomplished by hearing the word and acting upon what you hear in an obedient way (Matthew 7:24-25).

## III. Application

You can be religious and not be righteous. You can't substitute religious activity for true obedience and righteousness (Matthew 5:20). Are you totally obedient to the kingdom attitudes mentioned in Matthew 5:3-16? Are you poor in spirit? Do you mourn over your sin? Are you gentle and meek? Do you hunger and thirst for righteousness? Are you merciful and pure in heart? Do you consider yourself to be a peacemaker, and do you rejoice in persecution? Are you salt and light?

Are you obedient in the demands of kingdom righteousness? How about your relationships with your



brothers in Christ? Do you lust? Are you obedient in your marriage relationship, and in the expectations about divorce? Do you keep your word? Do you seek revenge? Do you really love your enemies? Do you practice your righteousness to please God, and not men? Are your treasures really in heaven, or are you anxious and full or worry about this life? Do you seek the kingdom first? Are you critical of others and judge them when you have a beam in your own eye? Are you persistent in asking, seeking, and knocking?

Are you submissive and obedient to the will of God by entering the narrow gate, testing the spirits, and doing the genuine will of your Father? Are you putting Christ's words into practical application in your own life? The kingdom is for you if you are!

As Peter encourages us, *"Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:10-12).*

## **Sermon Outline: Kingdom Entry - Obedience**

Purpose: To inform Christians that they must do the will of the Father and do the things Jesus said to do in His sermon if they want to enter the kingdom.

### **Introduction:**

**AC:** Jesus has been dealing with kingdom entry and stresses the narrow way, danger of false prophets preventing entry, and now shifts to obedience from the heart to the will of the Father. (Matthew 7:21-28)

**NEED:** There is a natural tendency for us to apply this section to others and not ourselves

The denominations vrs the one church

The faithless agnostic

But Jesus intends the application of His sermon to be applied directly to those who consider themselves citizens of the kingdom of God - US!

**CI: HOW CAN YOU ENSURE THAT YOU WILL BE WELCOMED INTO THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN?**

### **I. Don't substitute religious activity for an obedient heart. (7:21-23)**

A. There is a connection between this section and that of false prophets

They called Jesus Lord, Lord

They prophesied in Jesus name

They cast out demons in Jesus name

They did works and miracles in Jesus name

B. Jesus did not "Know" them

Two kinds of knowledge: 1) knowledge of mind, and 2) knowledge of heart

Jesus **knew** the false prophets so thoroughly, that he was completely justified in condemning them (John 2:24-25)

They speak of him as though he is their friend. Jesus replies, "Not for a single moment have I acknowledged you as my own, or known you to be my friend!"

C. Were the miracles they claimed authentic?

False miracles appear authentic (2 Thessalonians 2:9-10)

Pharaoh's magicians (Exodus 7:22, 8:7-19)

Demas may have preached many accurate and inspiring sermons ((Colossians 4:14; 2 Tim 4:10)

Judas was commissioned to heal the sick and cast out demons (Matthew 10:1)

D. Like Demas, and like Judas, we cannot substitute religious activity for the obedience of a surrendered heart or God will say on that day, "I never knew you!"

### **II. Build a solid life on a foundation of obedient application (7:24-27)**

A. Every man is a builder. Every ambition, every thought he conceives, every word he speaks and every deed he performs is a building block from which the structure of his life arises.

B. Every man's life will be tested

Trials (James 1:2-3, 12)

Temptations - (James 1:13-16) Peter (Matthew 26:69-75)

Bereavement (John 11:1 ff.)

Death (Acts 7:59,60; 2 Peter 1:13-15)

Worry and Anxiety

Final judgment (2 Corinthians 5:10)

C. Every man's life will either stand or fall in the test

You can build on sand and your life will collapse when tested (hear the word and not act) (Matthew 7:26-27)

You can build on a firm foundation and your life will stand (hear the word and act) (Matthew 7:24-25)

### **III. Application**

- A. You can be religious and not be righteous: you can't substitute religious activity for true obedient righteousness  
Are you totally obedient to the kingdom attitudes (Matthew 5:3-16) (Poor in spirit, mourning over your sin, gentle and meek, hunger and thirst for righteousness, merciful, pure in heart, peacemakers, rejoicing in persecution, being salt and light)  
Are you totally obedient to the demands of kingdom righteousness (Matthew 5:17- 7:12) ( Relationships with brothers in Christ, lust, divorce, keeping your word, revenge, loving your enemies, practicing your righteousness to please God and not men in prayer and fasting, your treasures and values, anxiety and worry, seeking the kingdom first, judging others with a beam in your own eye?, persistence in asking, seeking and knocking?)  
Are you submissive and obedient to the will of God by entering the narrow gate, testing the spirits, doing the genuine will of the Father and putting Christ's words into practical application in your own life?

B. 2 Peter 1:10-11

## **Small Group Discussion Outline: Kingdom Entry - Obedience**

### **Introduction**

Jesus has been addressing entry into the kingdom and stressing the narrow way, the danger of false prophets preventing entry, and now shifts to the necessity of obedience from the heart to the will of the Father. Let's read our passage together (Matthew 7:21-28)

There is a natural tendency for us to apply this section to others and not ourselves. We apply this section to denominations, to faithless agnostics and to those who we know are hypocrites. Jesus intends the application of his sermon to be applied directly to those who consider themselves citizens of the kingdom of God - US! So we want to answer an important question in this lesson, "HOW CAN YOU INSURE THAT YOU WILL BE WELCOMED INTO THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN?"

### **I. Don't substitute religious activity for an obedient heart (7:21-23)**

- A. What connection can you observe between this section of verses and the previous verses concerning false prophets?
- B. The people about whom Jesus is talking believed and did some seemingly good religious things. What are they?
  - They called Jesus Lord, Lord
  - They prophesied (taught in Jesus name)
  - They cast out demons in Jesus' name
  - They did works and miracles in Jesus name.
- C. What will Jesus say to these people at the judgment and why?
  - There are two kinds of knowledge 1) knowledge of mind, and 2) knowledge of the heart
  - Let's read John 2:24-25. Would you say Jesus knew these people who called him Lord, Lord, and if he knew him, what did he know about them?
- D. Were the miracles that they claimed in Matthew 7:21-23 authentic? Let's consider the following facts"
  - False miracles appear authentic (2 Thessalonians 2:9-10)
  - Pharaoh's magicians did apparent miracles (Exodus 7:8-13; 7-19)
  - Demas, once a faithful disciple may have preached many accurate and inspiring sermons (Colossians 4:14; 2 Timothy 4:10)
  - Judas was commissioned to heal the sick and cast out demons (Matthew 10:1)
- E. What can we learn about how God feels about substituting religious activity for obedience from the heart?

### **II. Build a solid life on a foundation of obedient application (7:24-27)**

- A. Every man is a builder.
  - Every ambition, every thought, every word he speaks, and every deed he performs is a building block from which the structure of his life arises.
  - What things in your life determine the stability of what you are building? (Discuss)
- B. Every man's life will be tested. How? (Discuss)
  - Trials (James 1:2-3; 12)
  - Temptations (James 1:13-16; example: Peter Matthew 26:69-75)
  - Bereavement (John 11:1 ff.)
  - Death (Acts 7:59, 60; see Peter's present departure 2 Peter 1:13-15)
  - Worry and anxiety (Matthew 6:24-33)
  - Various influences (Matthew 13:18-22)
  - Final judgment (2 Corinthians 5:10)
- C. Every man's life will either stand or fall in the test. What will determine the outcome and stability of your house when it is tested?

You can build on sand and your life will collapse when tested (hear the word and not act (Matthew 7:26-27)  
You can build on a firm foundation and your life will stand (hear the word and act on it (Matthew 7:24-25)

### III. Application

A. You can be religious and not be righteous. You can't substitute religious activity for true obedient righteousness.

Let's consider the sermon on the mount and test yourself and your heart obedience.

Are you totally obedient to the kingdom attitudes (Matthew 5:3-16)? (Poor in spirit, mourning over your sin, gentle and meek, hunger and thirst for righteousness, merciful, pure heart, peacemaker, rejoicing in persecution, being salt and light)

Are you totally obedient to the demands of kingdom righteousness (Matthew 5:17-7:12)? (Relationships with brothers in Christ, lust, divorce, keeping your word, revenge, loving your enemies, practicing your righteousness to please God and not men in prayer and fasting, placing your treasures and values, anxiety and worry, seeking the kingdom and righteousness first, judging others with a beam in your own eye, persistence in asking, seeking and knocking).

Are you submissive and obedient to the will of the Father by entering the narrow gate, testing the spirits and not listening to false prophets, and putting Christ's words into practical application in your own life?)

B. Close with reading 2 Peter 1:10-11

# Test Over The Sermon On The Mount

## Introduction

The Sermon on the Mount is an inspiring document. It has been called the Magna Carta of the Christian faith. The following study questions are a review of our previous lessons and are designed to help you in your own study and application of the principles that Jesus taught.

1. What does it mean to be "poor in Spirit"?
2. What is the blessing attached to being poor in spirit and what does that mean?
3. What does it mean to "mourn", and why or how will they be comforted?
4. What is the result of being merciful?
5. What is a peacemaker and why are they the "sons of God"?
6. From Matthew 5:10-12, why is persecution a part of Christian discipleship for those wishing to be kingdom people?
7. What is the kingdom attitude that Jesus expects for those experiencing persecution and insult? Why?
8. What does it mean to be "Salt of the earth"? How is this manifested in your life?
9. What does it mean to be "Light of the world"? How is this manifested in your life?
10. Jesus makes a statement in Matthew 5:17-20 that he did not come to abolish the law or the prophets. Does he mean that we are still under the Old Testament law? Why or why not? What DID he mean?
11. Jesus said your righteousness must exceed that of the Pharisees and scribes. Describe their righteousness, support your answer with scripture, and explain how you must exceed their righteousness.
12. Matthew 5:21-26 Jesus deals with His expectations for relationships in the kingdom. If you think someone has something against you, what does Jesus expect you to do about it?
13. Matthew 5:27-32 Jesus deals with lust and divorce. Explain Jesus' teaching on these subjects. (Additional references Matthew 19:3-10; Mark 10:2-12; Luke 16:18)
14. Jesus deals with oaths and vows in 5:33-37. Does he mean that it is wrong for Christians to take oaths? Explain your answer.

15. Jesus deals with vengeance in 5:38-42. When you are wrongly treated, what is the action prescribed by Jesus?
16. Where did people hear it said, "Love your neighbor but hate your enemy?" (See Matt 5:43).
17. Describe how the Pharisees handled issues that they considered too difficult or uncomfortable to obey?
18. What is Jesus recommendation for the proper way to pray and fast (6:1-18).
19. What is the result of not forgiving someone?
20. What is fasting and how should you do it?
21. Jesus deals with treasures and values in 6:19-33. What does he mean in that context in verses 22-23?
22. What is Jesus' solution for anxiety and worry?
23. What does it mean in a practical way to seek the kingdom and his righteousness first (6:33)?
24. When Jesus said "Do not judge" (7:1), does he mean that we are not to be discerning of sin, error or things that are wrong? What does he mean?
25. What is the difference between asking, seeking and knocking (7:7)?
26. Describe the difference between the two optional entries of life (7:13-14). What can you take through the narrow gate and what does this tell you about your priorities in life?
27. Jesus said to beware of false prophets. What is a false prophet, why are they so dangerous, and how can you recognize one?
28. In 7:21-23 Jesus addresses some very serious obedience issues. These questions are important for you to answer yourself.
  - Did these people believe in Jesus? \_\_\_\_\_
  - Did these believers prophesy (teach) in Jesus' name? \_\_\_\_\_
  - Did these believers cast out demons in Jesus' name? \_\_\_\_\_
  - Did these believers perform many works in Jesus' name? \_\_\_\_\_

What did Jesus say to these believers and why?

How should this apply to your own life?

29. Who is the foolish builder from 7:24-27? How do you know if you are a foolish builder?

30. Who is the wise builder and how do you know if you are a wise builder?

31. Look back over the sermon on the mount from 5:1 to 7:27. The sermon divides itself into three sections: I. Kingdom Attitudes, II. Kingdom Righteousness, and III. Kingdom Entry. If you truly are a wise builder, detail how you will apply each of the teachings of Jesus in the sermon on the Mount to your own life. Be practical for yourself.