

## Weekend

1. What do you think Jesus' teaching on adultery and divorce (verses 27-30) tell us about his attitude to marriage?
2. Look up what else the Bible has to say on divorce.

Leviticus 21:7

Deuteronomy 24:1-4

Malachi 2:13-16

Matthew 5:31-32

Matthew 19:1-9

Mark 10:2-12

1 Corinthians 7:10-16

3. Try to get hold of a commentary on the Sermon on the Mount and read the section on Matthew 5. Two classics are John Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount* (IVP) and Dr D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount* (IVP).

### Notes



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### Meeting With God Bible Reading Notes

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### Week 43: Matthew 5 (A meditation)

Jesus' words in Matthew 5 must have shocked his Jewish hearers deeply. They expected certain things from the Messiah and Jesus seemed to be completely undermining their precious hopes.

As you read the chapter, try to imagine how those early disciples might have felt. Then as you start to understand and apply this radical teaching to your own life, be prepared for a few shocks yourself!

**Note:** Two essential ingredients are required for a meditative study. One is an openness to let the Holy Spirit of God be your teacher. The other is a willingness to take time to think and pray over what you are reading.

### Day 1. Upside-down kingdom

#### **Matthew 5:3-12**

1. Start by reading the whole chapter then concentrate on verses 3-12. The kingdom of heaven that Jesus describes here, would be quite different from the one the disciples expected him to rule.
2. Reflect on verses 3-12, known as the Beatitudes. Don't settle for your initial reaction to the words - think on. What does 'blessed' or 'happy' mean here? Is it linked with having God's approval? What does it mean to be poor in spirit, to mourn? What are the areas of your life which you mourn over or see a need for God to work in, areas where you need to hunger and thirst for his work?

Ask the Lord to show you if you've adopted any attitudes or opinions of the sinful world around you.

*The ways of the God of Scripture appear topsy-turvy to men. For God exalts the humble and abases the proud, calls the first last and the last first, ascribes greatness to the servant, sends the rich away empty handed and declares the meek to be his heirs. The culture of the world and the counter-culture of Christ are at loggerheads with each other. In brief, Jesus congratulates those whom the world most pities, and calls the world's rejects 'blessed'.*

John Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount* (IVP).

## Day 2. Purity

### Matthew 5

All the Beatitudes are radical, but 'Blessed [or 'happy'] are the pure in heart, for they shall see God' is perhaps the most demanding.

1. Look up Psalm 24:3-4 and Habakkuk 1:13. Think about what 'seeing God' involves. How far are we seeking to be pure in our thought life?
2. Look through the rest of the chapter and see how Jesus teaches that purity of mind and heart affects behaviour e.g. where does purity come into Jesus' teaching about salt (verse 13) and about what you say (verses 33-37) and so on?
3. How does this help us if we think we may be getting involved in slightly underhand actions or dubious conversations?

Pray for any of your friends who are finding difficulty with the high standards of behaviour that Jesus expects. Pray for purity of heart for yourself.

*The glory of the gospel is that when the Church is absolutely different from the world, she invariably attracts it. It is then that the world is made to listen to her message, though it may hate it at first.*

Dr. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount* (IVP).

## Day 3. Relationships

### Matthew 5

'Love your neighbour as yourself,' commanded Jesus (Matthew 19:19, NIV). This chapter helps us to see to what limits he took those words.

1. Jesus said, 'Blessed [happy] are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God' (verse 9). Think through what this may involve in the light of the example of Christ, the Son of God, in Colossians 1:19-20, although his supreme act of peacemaking needs never to be repeated.

*The peacemaker has only one concern, and it is the glory of God amongst men. That was the Lord Jesus Christ's only concern. His one interest in life was not himself, but the glory of God. And the peacemaker is the man whose central concern is the glory of God, and who spends his life in trying to minister to that glory. He knows that God made man perfect, and that the world was meant to be Paradise, so when he sees individual and international disputes and quarrelling, he sees something that is detracting from the glory of God. This is the thing that concerns him, nothing else.*

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount* (IVP).

2. Look through Matthew 5, concentrating on verses 21-37, and see how Jesus revolutionized already accepted values. In each case, what is he saying about our response to our neighbour?

3. With the pressures of society in mind, what practical steps can you take to ensure that all your relationships are distinctively Christian?

Pray for Christian families you know today, one area where broken relationships are all too frequent.

*Peace in our time?* by David Atkinson (IVP) explores the biblical framework of peacemaking in our violent modern world, dominated by a nuclear arms race.

## Day 4. More on relationships

### Matthew 5

For Jesus, loving your neighbour included loving your enemies.

1. Read through verses 38-48 carefully.
2. Think of examples of how Jesus lived out these words, such as at his unjust trial.
3. Reflect on what 'loving your enemy' may involve for you.
4. 'What are you doing more than others?' asks Jesus about our relationships (verse 47). Think about this.

Persecution seems to be the expected lot of the New Testament Christians, not just to be faced with toleration, but rather to: 'rejoice in that day and leap for joy!' (Luke 6:22-23, NIV). Jesus said, 'Happy are you when people ... persecute you...' (Matthew 5:11 GNB).

5. Look at verses 11 and 12 and meditate on what Jesus meant.

Write a prayer for those facing persecution. In some countries this may amount to rejection by family and friends, imprisonment, or even death.

## Day 5. Like Father - like son

### Matthew 5

Jesus says, 'Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect' (verse 48).

1. Think about this as you memorize the verse.

**Note:** Perfect = complete or whole.

2. Look carefully at the two illustrations in verses 13-16. Think what it means to be living in the world as salt and light.
3. How would you answer someone who said the teaching in this chapter is totally unrealistic? Write a brief answer.

Allow the Lord to show you where you are missing out on his lifestyle and pray that your light will indeed so shine that God will get the glory.