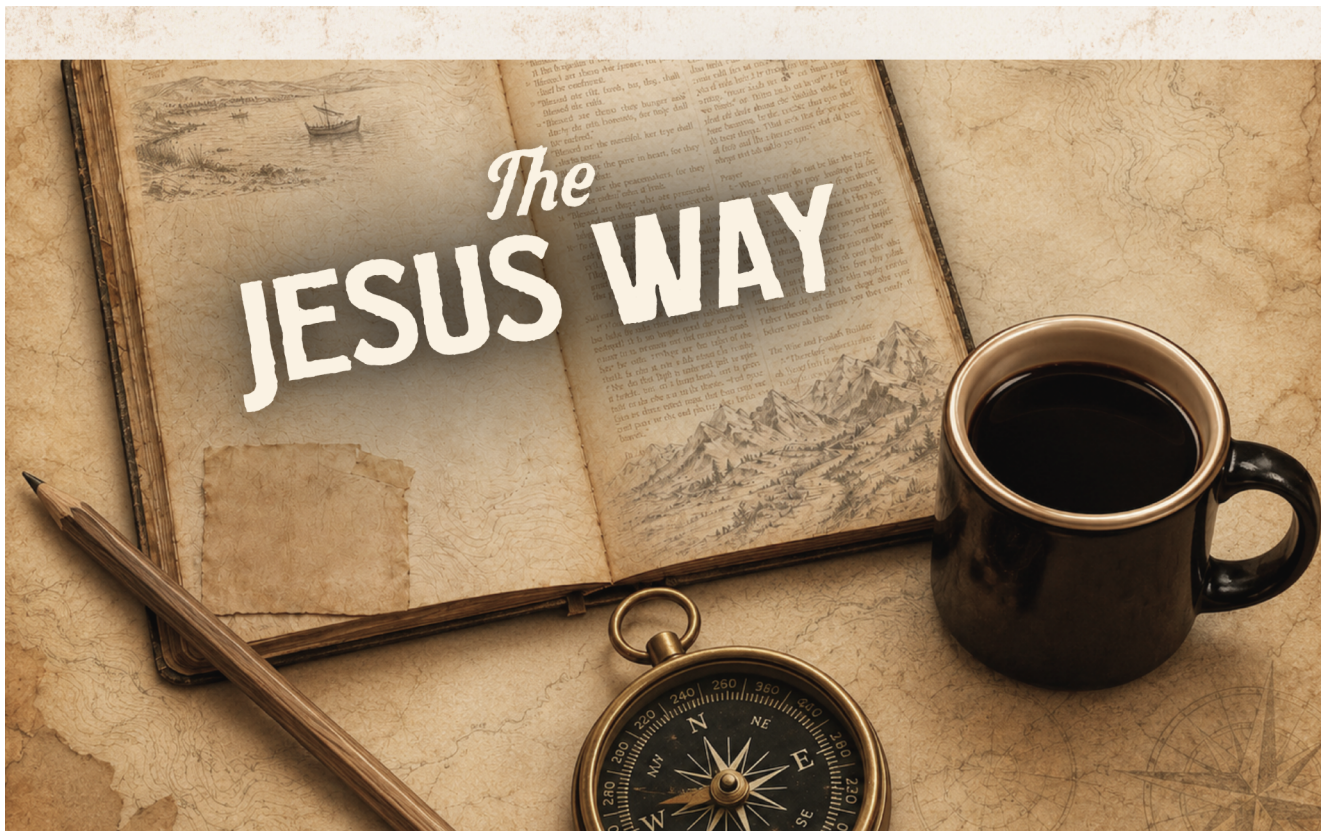




DISCUSSION GUIDE

(Jesus) "Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock. Though the rain comes in torrents and the floodwaters rise and the winds beat against that house, it won't collapse because it is built on bedrock."

– **Matthew 7:24-25**

THE
JOURNEY
CHURCH • NYC

GROWTH GROUP OVERVIEW

Welcome to your Fall 2026 Growth Group. Your group will meet weekly beginning the week of October 5 and will conclude the week of December 14. Each week we will read and discuss specific passages from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7) and learn from God's Word how to live **THE JESUS WAY** — the path that leads to a blessed life. Come to the group each week prepared to participate in the discussion.

WEEK	DATE	STUDY / FOCUS
01	Oct 5	Introduction: Welcome, Overview, Group Covenants
02	Oct 12	Matthew 5:1–16
03	Oct 19	Matthew 5:17–32
04	Oct 26	Matthew 5:33–48
05	Nov 2	Matthew 6:1–15
06	Nov 9	Matthew 6:16–24
07	Nov 16	Matthew 6:25–34
08	Nov 23	No Group — Happy Thanksgiving!
09	Nov 30	Matthew 7:1–11
10	Dec 7	Matthew 7:12–23
11	Dec 14	Matthew 7:24–29 & Christmas Party

GROUP PLANNING

SUNDAY SERVING DATES: _____

OUTREACH

GROWTH GROUP OUTREACH DATE: _____

WEEK 01**The Jesus Way****October 5–10****WEEKLY FOCUS**

Introduction & Group Covenants

FIRST 5 MINUTES

Allow people to arrive and talk. Arrive 10 min early to be ready to receive people in-person or online before the group begins. (5 min)

INTRODUCTIONS

Welcome everyone to the Growth Group. Have everyone introduce themselves and share what they do, where they are from, and how long they've attended The Journey. (10 min)

PRAY (2 min)

Opening Prayer

ICE BREAKER GAME: Did Jesus Really Say That in the Sermon on the Mount?

(5 min)

Read each statement and have the group vote:

✓ Sermon on the Mount

✗ Not the Sermon on the Mount

- “God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God.” ✓ — Matthew 5:9
- “Cleanliness is next to godliness.” ✗ — Not found in the Bible.
- “But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you!” ✓ — Matthew 5:44
- “God helps those who help themselves.” ✗ — Not found in the Bible.
- “So don’t worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today’s trouble is enough for today.” ✓ — Matthew 6:34
- “Do not judge others, and you will not be judged.” ✓ — Matthew 7:1
- “Follow your heart.” ✗ — Not found in the Bible.
- “Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you.” ✓ — Matthew 7:7
- “You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden.” ✓ — Matthew 5:14
- “Everything happens for a reason.” ✗ — Not found in the Bible.
- “Hate the sin, love the sinner.” ✗ — Not found in the Bible as a direct biblical phrase.
- “Do to others whatever you would like them to do to you.” ✓ — Matthew 7:12

- “Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock.” ✓ — Matthew 7:24
- “To thine own self be true.” ✗ — Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (Act 1, Scene 3), not the Bible.

Whether you realized it or not, many of Jesus’ most famous teachings come from one message the Sermon on the Mount. Over the next eleven weeks we’re going to discover that these aren’t just famous sayings...they’re Jesus’ invitation to a completely different way of living. That’s why we’re calling this series The Jesus Way.

Why did you sign up for this Growth Group? What do you hope to get out of this study of the Sermon on the Mount?

READ

Matthew 5:1-2 (1 min)

“One day as he saw the crowds gathering, Jesus went up on the mountainside and sat down. His disciples gathered around him,² and he began to teach them.”

QUESTION: Does anything from Sunday’s message stand out to you?

INTRODUCE THE JESUS WAY FALL CAMPAIGN: (10 min)

- Walk through GG Syllabus. Answer any questions. Point out that your group meets weekly during the Fall.
- Remind group to attend every Sunday during The Jesus Way series to hear teaching on the Sermon on the Mount.
- They will receive a Daily Devotion email every weekday morning to help them go deeper into the Sermon on the Mount. If they haven’t received it – let us know so we can add them.
- Each week they will read one chapter in the Sermon on the Mount that will include the passage we will discuss in our Growth Group that week.
- You will receive the assigned passage to read for the week along with some thought-provoking questions in Monday Daily Devotion email.

Explain and ask for volunteers for different roles within the group:

- Snack Coordinator (coordinates snacks), Prayer Coordinator (write down and email prayer requests), etc. (5 min)
- Serving on Sundays – Go over and explain your Welcome Team serving dates. Make sure everyone has the Sundays to serve.

GROUP COVENANT

Read through the Growth Group Covenant with the group. Explain as you read each one. Answer any questions. If anyone tries to be difficult and disagreeable, offer to talk with them individually at the end of the meeting. Online groups sign the covenant at www.JourneyNYC.com/Covenant. (10 min)

SHARE PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAY TOGETHER. (10 min)

TALK – Give people a few minutes to talk before ending the group.

HOMEWORK FOR NEXT WEEK

- Read Matthew 5 – especially Matthew 5:1-16
- Attend The Jesus Way on Sunday
- Read your Daily Devotions

GROUP NOTES

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WEEK 02**The Jesus Way****October 12–17****WEEKLY FOCUS**

Matthew 5:1–16

Homework for Today: Read Matthew 5 – Especially Matthew 5:1-16

FIRST 5 MINUTES

Allow people to arrive and talk. Arrive 10 min early to be ready to receive people in-person or online before the group begins. (5 min)

PRAY (1 min)**ICE BREAKER**

Share your name, what you do and one good thing that happened to you since last week – one way you feel blessed. (5 min)

READ

Matthew 5:1-16: (ask one person or multiple people to read)

(Jesus) “One day as he saw the crowds gathering, Jesus went up on the mountainside and sat down. His disciples gathered around him, ² and he began to teach them. ³ “God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him, ^[a] for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs. ⁴ God blesses those who mourn, for they will be comforted. ⁵ God blesses those who are humble, for they will inherit the whole earth. ⁶ God blesses those who hunger and thirst for justice, ^[b] for they will be satisfied. ⁷ God blesses those who are merciful, for they will be shown mercy. ⁸ God blesses those whose hearts are pure, for they will see God. ⁹ God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God. ¹⁰ God blesses those who are persecuted for doing right, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs. ¹¹ “God blesses you when people mock you and persecute you and lie about you and say all sorts of evil things against you because you are my followers. ¹² Be happy about it! Be very glad! For a great reward awaits you in heaven. And remember, the ancient prophets were persecuted in the same way. ¹³ “You are the salt of the earth. But what good is salt if it has lost its flavor? Can you make it salty again? It will be thrown out and trampled underfoot as worthless. ¹⁴ “You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Matthew 5:3-12 are commonly called the Beatitudes.

- In these verses who is blessed and why are they called blessed? What does the word “blessed” mean when Jesus uses it here in Matthew 5? Is this different from how the world defines blessed?

The word blessed has been redefined and watered down by current usage to such a degree that we may not understand what Jesus meant here.

“Blessed” in the biblical sense refers to a state of well-being in relation to God that is secure now and forever. It refers to an assurance of eternal life with God in heaven and a deep abiding feeling of God’s peace, presence and power no matter your circumstances.

On the other hand, current usage of the word generally refers to material or circumstantial prosperity.

- How would the world list the Beatitudes? Blessed are the _____.
- Has your understanding of “blessed” been wrong? Why or why not?
- How does the biblical view of “blessed” change the way you think about your circumstances?
- Which of the Beatitudes stands out to you the most and why?
- How is each of these “blessed” characteristics different from what the world values?
- Jesus says salt can lose its saltiness. What do you think he means?
- How does that warning apply to God’s people today?
- Jesus says that you are the light of the world. As a follower of Jesus what are the different ways you think Jesus wants you to let your light shine? At work? At school? At home?
- Is there any area you are tempted to hide your light right now? If yes, reflect on what underlying motivation might contribute to this desire to hide your light.
- How can you bring out the flavor of God’s kingdom in the ordinary spaces of your week – at home, at work, or in your neighborhood?

SHARE PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAY TOGETHER

HOMEWORK FOR NEXT WEEK

- Read Matthew 5 – especially Matthew 5:17-32
- Attend The Jesus Way on Sunday
- Read your Daily Devotions
- Let your group know if you are assigned to the Fall Outreach in Union Square on Saturday, October 24 @Noon.
- Invite your group to attend Membership Class THIS Sunday!

GROUP NOTES

WEEK 03**The Jesus Way****October 19–24****WEEKLY FOCUS**

Matthew 5:17–32

Homework for Today: Read Matthew 5 – Especially Matthew 5:17-32

FIRST 5 MINUTES

Allow people to arrive and talk. Arrive 10 min early to be ready to receive people in-person or online before the group begins.

PRAY (1 min)

ICE BREAKER: Rule or Recommendation

Read each statement and have people vote Rule or Recommendation.

- Don't text while driving.
- Don't eat on the subway.
- Brush your teeth twice a day.
- Don't cut in line.
- Read the instructions first.
- Say "thank you."
- Don't eat food that's fallen on the floor.

Then ask: "Which rules do people obey only because they're afraid of getting caught?"

Transition: "In today's passage, Jesus says God's goal isn't just rule-following it's a transformed heart." (5 min)

READ

Matthew 5:17-32: (ask one person or multiple people to read)

(Jesus) ¹⁷ “Don’t misunderstand why I have come. I did not come to abolish the law of Moses or the writings of the prophets. No, I came to accomplish their purpose. ¹⁸ I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not even the smallest detail of God’s law will disappear until its purpose is achieved. ¹⁹ So if you ignore the least commandment and teach others to do the same,

you will be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But anyone who obeys God's laws and teaches them will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven."

²⁰ "But I warn you – unless your righteousness is better than the righteousness of the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven!"

Teaching about Anger

²¹ "You have heard that our ancestors were told, 'You must not murder. If you commit murder, you are subject to judgment.' ²² But I say, if you are even angry with someone, you are subject to judgment! If you call someone an idiot, you are in danger of being brought before the court. And if you curse someone, you are in danger of the fires of hell."

²³ "So if you are presenting a sacrifice at the altar in the Temple and you suddenly remember that someone has something against you, ²⁴ leave your sacrifice there at the altar. Go and be reconciled to that person. Then come and offer your sacrifice to God. ²⁵ When you are on the way to court with your adversary, settle your differences quickly. Otherwise, your accuser may hand you over to the judge, who will hand you over to an officer, and you will be thrown into prison. ²⁶ And if that happens, you surely won't be free again until you have paid the last penny."

Teaching about Adultery

²⁷ "You have heard the commandment that says, 'You must not commit adultery.' ²⁸ But I say, anyone who even looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹ So if your eye—even your good eye – causes you to lust, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. ³⁰ And if your hand—even your stronger hand – causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell."

Teaching about Divorce

³¹ "You have heard the law that says, 'A man can divorce his wife by merely giving her a written notice of divorce.' ³² But I say that a man who divorces his wife, unless she has been unfaithful, causes her to commit adultery. And anyone who marries a divorced woman also commits adultery."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- In Matthew 5:17 Jesus says he did not come to abolish the law (the Old Testament) – but to accomplish its purpose. What does He mean by that?

Jesus did not intend for his life and message to be a replacement of the law – but as its ultimate fulfillment. One – Jesus fully demonstrated God's holy character as laid out in the law. Two – Jesus fully demonstrated God's unconditional love by laying down His life for us so we could be forgiven for not being able to fully live out all the law requires in our own lives.

- How can we encourage one another to live the righteous life that Jesus describes without it turning into performance or legalism?

Jesus spends this whole section talking about what's below the surface.

- What's in the heart matters as much as what people see. Why is that true?

ICE BREAKER: "The Hidden Iceberg"

Draw an iceberg.

Above the water:

- Divorce
- Murder
- Adultery

Ask the group: "What heart issues might be underneath these?"

Below the water, write answers:

- Anger
- Pride
- Lust
- Bitterness
- Selfishness
- Envy
- Resentment
- Unforgiveness
- Coveting

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Why do you think Jesus gives such serious consequences for things we might consider small (anger, name-calling)?

- According to Jesus – what is the underlying issue behind the crime of murder?
 - The Aramaic word "raca" that is used for "idiot" means "empty-headed" "a way of dismissing someone's value. How do our words today (in person or posted online) do the same thing?
 - What does it say about God's priorities that reconciliation takes precedence even over worship at the altar? How do Jesus' examples about the altar and the courtroom help us understand the urgency of reconciliation?
- Why do you think Jesus connects lustful thoughts with adultery? What's he getting at beneath the surface?

3. Jesus' teaching in Matthew 5:29-30 is metaphorical (not to be taken literally – phew!). But what do Jesus' words tell you about the seriousness of the issue of lust, and how can we avoid it?
4. When a beautiful woman or a handsome man walks by, is it adultery to look at them and admire their physique?
5. How does Jesus' teaching on divorce challenge the casual way relationships were treated in his day? How does it speak into our current culture?

SHARE PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAY TOGETHER

HOMEWORK FOR NEXT WEEK

- Read Matthew 5 – especially Matthew 5:33-48
- Attend The Jesus Way on Sunday
- Read your Daily Devotions
- Join the Fall Outreach Event this Saturday, October 24 @ Noon if your Growth Group is assigned to it!
- Invite your group to volunteer at the Journey Kidz Fall Festival.

GROUP NOTES

WEEK 04**The Jesus Way****October 26–31****WEEKLY FOCUS**

Matthew 5:33–48

Homework for Today: Read Matthew 5 – Especially Matthew 5:33-48

FIRST 5 MINUTES

Allow people to arrive and talk. Arrive 10 min early to be ready to receive people in-person or online before the group begins. (5 min)

PRAY (1 min)

ICE BREAKER

What's one teaching of Jesus that's easy to understand, but hard to live out? Let the group answer and discuss. (5 min)

Answers may include:

- Forgive
- Love your enemies
- Turn the other cheek
- Don't worry
- Give generously

READ

Matthew 5:33-48: (ask one person or multiple people to read)

(Jesus) ³³ *You have also heard that our ancestors were told, 'You must not break your vows; you must carry out the vows you make to the Lord.'* ³⁴ *But I say, do not make any vows! Do not say, 'By heaven!' because heaven is*

God's throne. ³⁵ *And do not say, 'By the earth!' because the earth is his footstool. And do not say, 'By Jerusalem!' for Jerusalem is the city of the great King.* ³⁶ *Do not even say, 'By my head!' for you can't turn one hair white or black.* ³⁷ *Just say a simple, 'Yes, I will,' or 'No, I won't.' Anything beyond this is from the evil one.*

Teaching about Revenge

³⁸ You have heard the law that says the punishment must match the injury: ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’ ³⁹ But I say, do not resist an evil person! If someone slaps you on the right cheek, offer the other cheek also. ⁴⁰ If you are sued in court and your shirt is taken from you, give your coat, too. ⁴¹ If a soldier demands that you carry his gear for a mile, carry it two miles. ⁴² Give to those who ask, and don’t turn away from those who want to borrow.

Teaching about Love for Enemies

⁴³ “You have heard the law that says, ‘Love your neighbor’ and hate your enemy. ⁴⁴ But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you! ⁴⁵ In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven. For he gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and the unjust alike. ⁴⁶ If you love only those who love you, what reward is there for that? Even corrupt tax collectors do that much. ⁴⁷ If you are kind only to your friends, how are you different from anyone else? Even pagans do that. ⁴⁸ But you are to be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Have you made a casual oath or commitment before – that later you didn’t want to keep? What kind of commitments are the easiest for you to break? What lies are the easiest to tell?
- What does Jesus’ teaching on just saying YES or NO communicate about the importance of rigorous honesty and keeping your word in every instance? An important part of character is doing what you say you are going to do. Keeping your word even when it’s inconvenient.
- What was the original purpose of “an eye for an eye”? To make sure people didn’t overdo the retribution. Why do you think people twisted it into justification for revenge?
- When you get to the turn the other cheek passage – you can include this ice breaker –

How Would You Get Even?

- Someone cuts you off in traffic.
- Someone steals your parking spot.
- A coworker takes credit for your idea.
- Someone leaves a nasty online comment about you or someone
- you love.

How would you respond . . . first instinct?

What do you think Jesus would say?

- Jesus gives three examples of what to do when you are mistreated. What are they? (Turn the other cheek, give your coat, and walk the extra mile.) What are some modern-day examples of how we might live out these principles?
- What does Jesus mean by “Do not resist an evil person”? How is this different from doing nothing or being passive?
- Why should we love and pray for our enemies? How did Jesus demonstrate this in His life on earth?
- Is there anything preventing you from praying for your enemies right now?
- It’s easy to love people who deserve it. The true test of Christian maturity is how we treat people who don’t. If everyone in our city lived like Jesus describes in this passage for one week, what would be different?

SHARE PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAY TOGETHER

HOMEWORK FOR NEXT WEEK

- Read Matthew 6 – especially Matthew 6:1-15
- Attend The Jesus Way on Sunday
- Read your Daily Devotions
- Remind your group about Baptism & Worship Night

GROUP NOTES

WEEK 05**The Jesus Way****November 2–8****WEEKLY FOCUS**

Matthew 6:1–15

Homework for Today: Read Matthew 6 – Especially Matthew 6:1-15

FIRST 5 MINUTES

Allow people to arrive and talk. Arrive 10 min early to be ready to receive people in-person or online before the group begins. (5 min)

PRAY (1 min)

ICE BREAKER**“Fill in the Blank”**

Have everyone answer these quickly:

- I can't start my day without _____.
- One word that describes my week is _____.
- If I had one extra hour every day, I would _____.
- One thing that's been taking up most of my attention lately is _____.
- If I could accomplish one thing this month, it would be _____.

Then ask:

- What takes up most of your time, energy, or attention right now?
- If someone watched your life this past week, what would they say was your top priority?

Transition:

Today, Jesus challenges us to look beyond our actions and examine our hearts. In Matthew 6:1-15, He teaches that God isn't just interested in what we do - He's interested in why we do it. Whether it's giving, praying, or fasting, Jesus reminds us that our relationship with God should matter more than the approval of other people.

READ

Matthew 6:1-15: (ask one person or multiple people to read)

Teaching about Giving to the Needy

¹ “Watch out! Don’t do your good deeds publicly, to be admired by others, for you will lose the reward from your Father in heaven. ² When you give to someone in need, don’t do as the hypocrites do—blowing trumpets in the synagogues and streets to call attention to their acts of charity! I tell you the truth, they have received all the reward they will ever get. ³ But when you give to someone in need, don’t let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. ⁴ Give your gifts in private, and your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.”

Teaching about Prayer and Fasting

⁵ “When you pray, don’t be like the hypocrites who love to pray publicly on street corners and in the synagogues where everyone can see them. I tell you the truth, that is all the reward they will ever get. ⁶ But when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father in private. Then your Father, who sees everything, will reward you. ⁷ “When you pray, don’t babble on and on as the Gentiles do. They think their prayers are answered merely by repeating their words again and again. ⁸ Don’t be like them, for your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him!”

The Lord’s Prayer

⁹ “Pray like this: Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy. ¹⁰ May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. ¹¹ Give us today the food we need,¹² and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us.¹³ And don’t let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the evil one. ¹⁴ “If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. ¹⁵ But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: Giving to the Needy (v. 1-4)

Jesus begins this section by addressing something deeper than the action itself. He addresses the heart behind the action. Giving to those in need was a good and important thing in Jewish culture, but some religious leaders had turned generosity into a way to gain attention and praise. When Jesus says, “don’t let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,” He is not saying we should never let anyone know when we do something generous. Instead, He is teaching us that our ultimate motivation should not be the applause of people, but the approval of God. The question is not just “What are we doing?” but “Why are we doing it?”

- Why do you think Jesus cares so much about the motivation behind our good deeds, not just the action itself?
- Have you ever done something good but found yourself hoping someone would notice or recognize it? Why do you think we naturally desire that kind of approval?
- What are some practical ways we can serve, give, or help others while keeping the focus on God rather than ourselves?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: Prayer and Fasting (v. 5-8)

Jesus now shifts from giving to two other spiritual practices: prayer and fasting. Jesus is not criticizing the practice... He is correcting the heart behind it. The religious leaders were praying publicly in ways that drew attention to themselves. Their prayers may have sounded spiritual, but they were more focused on impressing people than connecting with God. Jesus reminds us that prayer is not a performance. Prayer is an invitation to come before our Heavenly Father honestly and personally. God is not impressed by fancy words or long prayers; He cares about a heart that desires to know Him. Fasting was also a spiritual practice where people would intentionally give something up to seek God. Jesus' point is that our relationship with God should never become something we do to appear more spiritual to others.

- What do you think is the difference between praying to be heard by God and praying to be noticed by others?
- What are some things that can make prayer difficult or challenging in our everyday lives?
- Jesus says, "Your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask Him." How does knowing God already knows our needs change the way we approach prayer?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: The Lord's Prayer (v. 9-15)

After teaching about prayer, Jesus gives His disciples a model for how to pray. The Lord's Prayer is not meant to be something we simply repeat without thinking; it is a picture of what a healthy relationship with God looks like. Notice the order Jesus gives us. He begins with God: "Our Father in heaven, may Your name be kept holy." Before bringing our requests to God, we first recognize who He is. Then Jesus teaches us to pray for God's Kingdom, daily dependence, forgiveness, and strength to overcome temptation. The Lord's

Prayer reminds us that prayer is not about convincing God to follow our plans... it is about surrendering our lives to His plans.

- Which part of the Lord's Prayer stands out to you the most, and why?
- What does it look like practically to pray, "Your Kingdom come, Your will be done" in your everyday life?
- Jesus connects receiving forgiveness from God with extending forgiveness to others. Why do you think forgiveness is such an important part of following Jesus? Forgiveness isn't always easy, but it is a mark of a heart that has been changed by God's grace. As we grow in our relationship with Him, He gives us the strength to extend to others the same forgiveness we've received.
- After reading Matthew 6:1-15, what is one area where Jesus is challenging you to examine your heart... your giving, your prayer life, or your forgiveness?

SHARE PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAY TOGETHER

HOMEWORK FOR NEXT WEEK

- Read Matthew 6 – especially Matthew 6:16-24
- Attend church on Sunday
- Read your Daily Devotions

GROUP NOTES

WEEK 06**The Jesus Way****November 9–15****WEEKLY FOCUS**

Matthew 6:16–24

Homework for Today: Read Matthew 6 – Especially Matthew 6:16-24

FIRST 5 MINUTES

Allow people to arrive and talk. Arrive 10 min early to be ready to receive people in-person or online before the group begins. (5 min)

PRAY (1 min)**ICE BREAKER: What's Worth It?**

Ask everyone:

- What's something you've spent a lot of money or time on that was completely worth it?
- What's something you thought would make you happy but didn't live up to the hype?
- What's something you've invested a lot of time in that has really paid off?
- What's one thing you own that means a lot to you, even if it isn't worth much money?

Then ask: How do you decide what's truly worth your time, money, or energy?

Transition: Every day we invest our time, money, and attention into something. In today's passage, Jesus challenges us to think about what we treasure most. He reminds us that what we value shapes our hearts—and ultimately determines who or what we're living for.

READ

Matthew 6:16-24: (ask one person or multiple people to read)

¹⁶ “And when you fast, don’t make it obvious, as the hypocrites do, for they try to look miserable and disheveled so people will admire them for their fasting. I tell you the truth, that is the only reward they will ever get. ¹⁷ But when you fast, comb your hair and wash your face. ¹⁸ Then no one will notice that you are fasting, except your Father, who knows what you do in private. And your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.”

Teaching about Money and Possessions

¹⁹ “Don’t store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of

your heart will also be.

²² *“Your eye is like a lamp that provides light for your body. When your eye is healthy, your whole body is filled with light. ²³ But when your eye is unhealthy, your whole body is filled with darkness. And if the light you think you have is actually darkness, how deep that darkness is! ²⁴ “No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and be enslaved to money.”*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Jesus begins this passage by talking about fasting.

- Why do you think He once again emphasizes living for the approval of God rather than for the approval of other people?

Just as He did with giving and prayer earlier in Matthew 6, Jesus reminds us that our spiritual lives are not meant to be performances. God is far more concerned with our hearts than our image. Whether we're serving, giving, praying, or fasting, our goal is to honor God... not to impress others.

Jesus tells us to "store up treasures in heaven."

- What do you think that looks like in everyday life?

Earthly treasures eventually fade, break, or are left behind. Heavenly treasures are the things that have eternal value... loving God, loving people, giving, serving others, sharing our faith, and investing our lives in what matters most.

Jesus says, "Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.

- " What are some practical ways we can tell what we truly treasure?

Examples might include:

- How we spend our time.
- How we spend our money.
- What we think about most.
- What we sacrifice for.
- What excites or worries us the most.

Jesus makes an interesting statement here. We often think our heart determines where our treasure goes. Jesus says the opposite is also true...our hearts follow whatever we invest in. The more we invest our time, money, and energy into something, the more we care about it. That's why Jesus calls us to invest in eternity and treasure things that will last forever.

- Jesus says, “Your eye is like a lamp.” What do you think He means by that?

The “eye” represents what we choose to focus on. What we allow into our hearts and minds.

Whatever we focus on shapes our attitudes, decisions, and desires. When we keep our eyes fixed

on God, our lives are filled with His light. When our focus is consumed by the things of this world, we lose sight of what matters most.

- What are some things that we focus on that steal our focus from God, or even fill our lives with darkness?
- Jesus ends by saying, “No one can serve two masters.” What are some things besides money that compete for first place in our lives today?

Examples might include:

- Career or success.
- Comfort.
- Entertainment.
- Social media.
- Relationships.
- Sports or hobbies.
- Approval from others.
- Busyness.

Jesus isn't just talking about money. Money represents anything that competes for our devotion. Every day we're choosing what will shape our lives and capture our hearts.

Jesus lovingly reminds us that only one Master is worthy of our complete trust and devotion.

- Why do you think Jesus says we **cannot** serve both God and money instead of saying we simply **should not**?

Jesus knows our hearts eventually become devoted to what we trust most. We may try to divide our loyalty, but over time one master will always take first place. Following Jesus means intentionally choosing Him above everything else.

Challenge for This Week

Take a few minutes to reflect on your own life.

- Where have your time, attention, and energy been going lately?
- Is there anything that has slowly become more important than your relationship with God?
- What's one practical step you can take this week to store up "treasure in heaven" and put God first?

Remember... Every day we invest our lives in something. Jesus invites us to invest in what lasts forever.

SHARE PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAY TOGETHER

HOMEWORK FOR NEXT WEEK

- Read Matthew 6 – especially Matthew 6:25-34
- Attend church on Sunday
- Read your Daily Devotions

GROUP NOTES

WEEK 07**The Jesus Way****November 16–21****WEEKLY FOCUS**

Matthew 6:25–34

Homework for Today: Read Matthew 6 – Especially Matthew 6:25-34

FIRST 5 MINUTES

Allow people to arrive and talk. Arrive 10 min early to be ready to receive people in-person or online before the group begins. (5 min)

PRAY (1 min)**ICE BREAKER**

If you could instantly remove one everyday worry from your life – what would it be? (5 min)

Answers may include: money, health, work, family, time, etc.

READ

²⁵ “That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn’t life more than food, and your body more than clothing? ²⁶ Look at the birds. They don’t plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren’t you far more valuable to him than they are? ²⁷ Can all your worries add a single moment to your life?”

²⁸ “And why worry about your clothing? Look at the lilies of the field and how they grow. They don’t work or make their clothing, ²⁹ yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are. ³⁰ And if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith?”

³¹ “So, don’t worry about these things, saying, ‘What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?’ ³² These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. ³³ Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need. ³⁴ “So don’t worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today’s trouble is enough for today.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Jesus begins by saying, “That is why I tell you not to worry...”

- What do you think He is connecting this command to from the verses that came before it?
- Jesus points to the birds of the air and the flowers of the field as examples. What do these illustrations teach us about God’s character?

Jesus asks, “Can all your worries add a single moment to your life?”

- Why do you think worry is so tempting even though we know it rarely accomplishes anything?
- What are some of the biggest things people tend to worry about today?
- Which of those worries have you personally struggled with the most?

Read verses 31-32 again. Jesus says that unbelievers run after these things, but our Heavenly Father already knows what we need.

- How should knowing God is aware of our needs change the way we respond to difficult circumstances?

TEACHING POINT FOR LEADERS

Worry is often more than an emotional response - it can become a spiritual issue. Jesus isn’t telling us to ignore real problems or pretend hardships don’t exist. Instead, He invites us to trust that our Heavenly Father knows our needs, cares deeply for us, and will provide what we truly need. Trust doesn’t eliminate uncertainty, but it changes where we place our confidence.

Followers of Jesus are called to live with faith in God’s care rather than being controlled by fear about the future.

- Verse 33 says, “Seek the Kingdom of God above all else and live righteously...” What does it look like to seek God’s Kingdom first in everyday life?
- How can worry distract us from God’s priorities and keep us from experiencing His peace?
- Jesus tells us not to worry about tomorrow because “tomorrow will bring its own worries.” What practical habits help you stay focused on trusting God one day at a time?
- Can you think of a time when God faithfully provided for you or carried you through a season of uncertainty? How did that experience strengthen your faith?
- After reading this passage together, what is one specific worry you need to surrender to God this week? What would trusting Him with that situation look like?

SHARE PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAY TOGETHER

HOMEWORK FOR NEXT WEEK

- No Growth Group meeting next week due to Thanksgiving break!
- Read Matthew 7 – especially Matthew 7:1-11 – in preparation for the next group meeting the week of November 30.

GROUP NOTES

WEEK 08

The Jesus Way

November 23–28

WEEKLY FOCUS

Thanksgiving Break

NO GROUP THIS WEEK

Happy Thanksgiving!

PLANNING NOTE

Use this week as a built-in break in the Fall 2026 Growth Group schedule.

WEEK 09**The Jesus Way****November 30 – December 5****WEEKLY FOCUS**

Matthew 7:1–11

Homework for Today: Read Matthew 7 – Especially Matthew 7:1-11

FIRST 5 MINUTES

Allow people to arrive and talk. Arrive 10 min early to be ready to receive people in-person or online before the group begins. (5 min)

PRAY (1 min)**ICE BREAKER**

Have you ever made a wrong first impression about someone - or had someone make a wrong first impression about you? What happened, and what did you learn from it? (5 min)

READ

Matthew 7:1-11 (ask one person or multiple people to read)

Do Not Judge Others

¹“Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. ²For you will be treated as you treat others. The standard you use in judging is the standard by which you will be judged.”

³“And why worry about a speck in your friend’s eye when you have a log in your own? ⁴How can you think of saying to your friend, ‘Let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,’ when you can’t see past the log in your own eye? ⁵Hypocrite! First get rid of the log in your own eye; then you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend’s eye.”

⁶“Don’t waste what is holy on people who are unholy. Don’t throw your pearls to pigs! They will trample the pearls, then turn and attack you.”

Effective Prayer

⁷“Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you.”

⁸For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.

⁹ “You parents—if your children ask for a loaf of bread, do you give them a stone instead? ¹⁰ Or if they ask for a fish, do you give them a snake? Of course not!

¹¹ So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good gifts to those who ask him.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Jesus begins by saying, "Do not judge others, and you will not be judged."

- What do you think Jesus means by "judge"?
- What do you think He is not saying?

Jesus uses the illustration of a speck in someone else's eye and a log in our own.

- Why do you think it's often easier to notice the faults of others than to recognize our own?
- Have you ever experienced someone extending grace to you instead of harsh criticism? How did that affect you?

Jesus doesn't say to ignore sin altogether. Instead, He tells us to first remove the log from our own eye before helping someone else.

- Why is self-examination so important before correcting another person?

TEACHING POINT FOR LEADERS

Jesus is not forbidding discernment or accountability. Throughout Scripture, believers are called to lovingly encourage, correct, and restore one another. What Jesus is condemning is a self-righteous, hypocritical, or condemning attitude that focuses on the failures of others while ignoring our own need for God's grace. Healthy correction begins with humility. The more we recognize how much grace God has shown us, the more gracious we become toward others.

- Verse 6 says, “Don't waste what is holy on people who are unholy. Don't throw your pearls to pigs.” What do you think Jesus is teaching with this illustration? How can we balance sharing truth with exercising wisdom?
- In verses 7-11, Jesus encourages us to ask, seek, and knock. What do these three actions teach us about prayer and our relationship with God?
- Why do you think Jesus describes God as a loving Father who delights in giving good gifts to His children? How does that shape the way we approach Him in prayer?
- Can you think of a time when God answered a prayer differently than you expected? Looking back, how did you see His wisdom or faithfulness?
- Which part of this passage challenges you the most right now: avoiding judgment, examining your own heart, showing wisdom, or trusting God through prayer? Why?
- What is one practical step you can take this week to extend more grace to others while also growing in your own walk with Christ?

SHARE PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAY TOGETHER

HOMEWORK FOR NEXT WEEK

- Read Matthew 7 – especially Matthew 7:12-23
- Attend church on Sunday
- Read your Daily Devotions
- Share with your group about our final Membership Class of the year on Sunday, December 6 @ _____pm at the Faith & Life Center.

GROUP NOTES

WEEK 10**The Jesus Way****December 7–12****WEEKLY FOCUS**

Matthew 7:12–23

Homework for Today: Read Matthew 7 – Especially Matthew 7:12-23

FIRST 5 MINUTES

Allow people to arrive and talk. Arrive 10 min early to be ready to receive people in-person or online before the group begins. (5 min)

PRAY (1 min)

ICE BREAKER: “Which Way?”

Give everyone these quick choices and have them answer without overthinking.

- GPS or paper map?
- Stairs or elevator?
- Drive-thru or dine-in?
- Beach vacation or mountains vacation?
- Plan everything or be spontaneous?
- Take the shortcut or stay on the main road?

Then ask: “Tell us about a time you took a shortcut that actually made things worse.”

Transition: Today Jesus talks about roads, gates, fruit, and ultimately the most important decision anyone can make—which way will we choose?

READ

Matthew 7:12-23: (ask one person or multiple people to read)

The Golden Rule

¹² “Do to others whatever you would like them to do to you. This is the essence of all that is taught in the law and the prophets.

The Narrow Gate

¹³ “You can enter God’s Kingdom only through the narrow gate. The highway to hell is broad, and its gate is wide for the many who choose that way. ¹⁴ But the gateway to life is very narrow and the road is difficult, and only a few ever find it.

The Tree and Its Fruit

¹⁵ “Beware of false prophets who come disguised as harmless sheep but are vicious wolves. ¹⁶ You can identify them by their fruit, that is, by the way they act. Can you pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ A good tree produces good fruit, and a bad tree produces bad fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree can’t produce bad fruit, and a bad tree can’t produce good fruit. ¹⁹ So every tree that does not produce good fruit is chopped down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Yes, just as you can identify a tree by its fruit, so you can identify people by their actions.

True Disciples

²¹ “Not everyone who calls out to me, ‘Lord! Lord!’ will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who do the will of my Father in heaven will enter. ²² On judgment day many will say to me, ‘Lord! Lord! We prophesied in your name and cast out demons in your name and performed many miracles in your name.’ ²³ But I will reply, ‘I never knew you. Get away from me, you who break God’s laws.’

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: The Golden Rule (v. 12)

Today's passage begins with a well-known verse. We often call it the Golden Rule. There are many variations of the Golden Rule – and historically, it has been most rendered: “Do not do to others what you would not wish done to yourself.”

- How does Jesus turn the Golden Rule upside down? Why is that significant?

If I said don't do harm to anyone today, it might be easy for you to keep to yourself and just do nothing.

But if I said do good to someone today whether they have done good to you or not – you would have to proactively live in such a way as to bless someone else.

It's the difference between avoiding evil and intentionally doing good.

- Think about someone who has treated you with unusual kindness or generosity. What made that so memorable?
- If everyone lived by the Golden Rule, how would your workplace...your neighborhood...your family...or even social media be different?
- Do you have a relationship that's strained or broken? How can you apply the Golden Rule this week to begin to repair it?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: The Narrow Gate (vv. 13-14)

- Jesus says there are only two roads—the broad road and the narrow road. Why do you think so many people choose the broad road?

The broad road requires very little commitment. It follows our natural desires and the culture around us. The narrow road requires surrender, obedience, and following Jesus even when it's unpopular or difficult. Jesus isn't teaching that God wants to keep people out.

He's warning us that following Him requires an intentional decision... one that most people do not make.

What pressures today make it difficult to stay on the "narrow road"?

Examples might include:

- Conformity
- Cultural Values
- Business
- Comfort
- Fear of what others think
- Compromise

Because so many people are on "the broad road that leads to destruction", what do you think Jesus wants us to do?

o Help as many people as possible find the narrow gate, come to Jesus and go to heaven.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: The Tree and Its Fruit and True Disciples

(vv. 15-23) In Old Testament times, a "prophet" was a person chosen by God to speak the words of God, who had the authority of God and must be listened to. A person would be considered a "false prophet" if what they proclaimed in God's name did not come true or would lead people to worship other gods and would be punishable by death. (See Deut. 18:18-22; 13:1-5.) Jesus' warnings here could also be applicable to those who proclaim a false gospel and mislead others. They might look like believers ("in sheep's clothing") but are dangerous ("ferocious wolves") and would be subject to judgment ("cut down and thrown into the fire").

- Since we can't read a person's "heart", how can you recognize a "false prophet" according to Matt 7:15-20? What are some ways you can tell by their fruit?
- If someone watched your life for one month, what "fruit" would they most likely see? Would they see Love? Joy? Peace? Patience? Kindness? Self-control? Something else?
- What's the difference between occasionally failing and consistently producing unhealthy fruit?

Jesus ends this passage with one of the most sobering statements in the Sermon on the Mount: “I never knew you.” Notice what the people in verses 21-23 point to:

- “We prophesied...”
- “We cast out demons...”
- “We performed miracles...”

Jesus never argues about whether they did those things. Instead, He says, “I never knew you.”

- Why do you think Jesus focuses on knowing Him instead of simply doing religious activities?
- What is the difference?

Christianity is not ultimately about religious performance. It is about a real relationship with Jesus that transforms our lives from the inside out. Good works are evidence of salvation—not the basis of it.

SHARE PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAY TOGETHER

HOMEWORK FOR NEXT WEEK

- Read Matthew 7 – especially Matthew 7:24-29
- Attend church on Sunday
- Read your Daily Devotions
- Share with your group about our Christmas Baptism on Sunday, December 13 @ 3:30pm at the Faith & Life Center.

GROUP NOTES

WEEK 11**The Jesus Way****December 14–19****WEEKLY FOCUS**

Matthew 7:24–29 & Christmas Party

Homework for Today: Read Matthew 7 – Especially Matthew 7:24-29

FIRST 5 MINUTES

Allow people to arrive and talk. Arrive 10 min early to be ready to receive people in-person or online before the group begins. (5 min)

PRAY (1 min)**ICE BREAKER: Built to Last?**

Ask everyone to answer one of these questions:

- What's something you've owned that lasted much longer than you expected?
- What's something you bought that fell apart almost immediately?

Then ask: "What makes the difference between something that's built to last and something that falls apart quickly?"

Transition: Tonight we wrap up The Jesus Way and our discussion of The Sermon on the Mount. Jesus closes the greatest sermon ever preached with a parable about building a house. But He's really talking about what we will do with what we've been taught in the Sermon on the Mount, and how we build our lives.

READ

Matthew 7:24-29: (ask one person or multiple people to read)

Building on a Solid Foundation

²⁴ "Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock. ²⁵ Though the rain comes in torrents and the floodwaters rise and the winds beat against that house; it won't collapse because it is built on bedrock.

²⁶ But anyone who hears my teaching and doesn't obey it is foolish, like a person who builds a house on sand. ²⁷ When the rains and floods come and the winds beat against that house; it will collapse with a mighty crash."

²⁸ When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, ²⁹ for he taught with real authority—quite unlike their teachers of religious law.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- This is Jesus' conclusion to the Sermon on the Mount. Why do you think He ends with a story instead of simply saying, "Go obey everything I've taught you"?

Good teachers know people remember pictures longer than lectures.

Throughout the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus has challenged His followers to live differently:

- Be salt and light.
- Love your enemies.
- Forgive.
- Don't worry.
- Seek first God's Kingdom.
- Judge yourself before judging others.
- Walk the narrow road.

Now Jesus asks one final question: "What are you going to do with everything you've just heard?" Knowledge alone isn't enough.

- According to Jesus, what is the difference between the wise builder and the foolish builder?

Notice something important. Both builders... heard Jesus' teaching...built a house... experienced the same storm. The only difference was what they did with what they heard. Obedience—not merely information—is the foundation of a disciple's life.

Jesus isn't contrasting believers and unbelievers who never heard. He's contrasting people who hear His words. One applies them. One doesn't. The difference isn't knowledge. The difference is obedience.

- Why do you think Jesus says both houses experienced storms? Wouldn't it seem fair if only the foolish builder experienced storms?

One of the biggest misconceptions people have been that following Jesus guarantees an easier life. Jesus says exactly the opposite. The storms came to both houses. Following Jesus doesn't keep us from life's storms. It gives us a foundation that can withstand them.

- Looking back over your life, can you think of a difficult season that revealed what your life was really built upon?
- If someone asked you, "What does it actually look like to build your life on Jesus?" how would you answer?

What are some practical examples?

Examples might include:

- Regular time in God's Word.
- Prayer.
- Obedience even when it's difficult.
- Forgiveness.
- Generosity.
- Trusting God during uncertainty.
- Living differently than culture

Jesus says the foolish builder also heard His teaching. Why do you think it's so easy to mistake hearing truth for living it? It's possible to attend church every week, know Bible verses, listen to sermons, and participate in Bible studies... and still never allow God's Word to reshape our daily lives.

Spiritual maturity isn't measured by how much Bible we know. It's measured by how much we obey and apply what we know.

That's the proof that God's truth is changing us.

- Throughout this series we've studied the Sermon on the Mount together. As you look back over these eleven weeks...
- Which teaching of Jesus has challenged you the most?
- Which one has changed you the most?

Take a few minutes as a group to reflect on the entire The Jesus Way journey.

Ask everyone to complete this sentence:

- Because of this series, I want to...
- One habit I want to continue is...
- One truth I don't want to forget is...

Challenge for This Week

Jesus didn't ask us to admire His teaching. He asked us to build our lives on it. This week, choose one teaching from the Sermon on the Mount that God has impressed on your heart during this series. Write it down. Pray over it each day. Then intentionally practice it throughout the week.

Remember:

A strong foundation isn't built in a single day. It's built one act of obedience at a time.

SHARE PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAY TOGETHER

HOMEWORK FOR NEXT WEEK

- Join us next week for our Group Christmas Party
- Attend church on Sunday
- Invite your friends and family to Christmas Eve at The Journey.

GROUP NOTES

Contact & Prayer

Questions or Prayer Requests

CONTACT

If you have questions about your Growth Group or have a specific prayer request, contact us at Groups@journeynyc.com or call/text 212-335-1653.

Prayer Notes