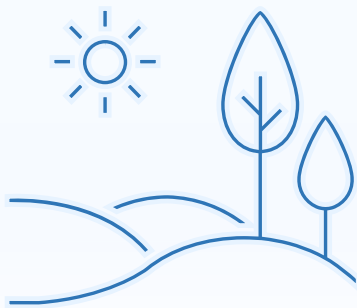


*The
21-Day
Sermon
on the Mount
Challenge*



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The 21-Day Sermon on the Mount Challenge
by Rose Murdock

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Introduction

The Sermon on the Mount is Jesus' first recorded sermon.

Think about this, God Himself came down in Jesus Christ to speak to His people. What did He want to say? What was the message burning in His heart for people to understand, so we could live life as He intended for us to live?

Yes, He previously spoke through the prophets, but now, He was speaking through His own Son, His own, "Word" made flesh. In this first sermon of Jesus, what did He feel was most important to say?

We sometimes study this foundational sermon in bits and pieces, but it really is one beautiful, flowing sermon. My hope is that through this challenge, you come to see the message of the sermon in its entirety, while at the same time gaining deeper knowledge of the details.

The 21-Day Sermon on the Mount challenge is this:

1. To read the entire sermon *out loud* for 21 days in a row, preferably in the mornings.
2. Read and meditate on a portion of the sermon in the evenings, to gain a deeper understanding of that portion.

For your convenience, I've included the entire sermon over the next several pages for the morning readings. Then, the entire sermon is broken up into 21 segments and numbered so you can easily find the portion of Scripture for the evening meditation, along with some of my own thoughts. Of course, you're welcome to use your own Bible. I've put it all together here for convenience, using the NASB 1995 version.

I want to emphasize the importance of reading the Scripture OUT LOUD in the mornings. This is a way for you to *hear* while you read, which is an important aspect in building your faith.

It may not seem like you're gaining any insight right away, but you will. Please, ask the Holy Spirit to give you understanding and insight before you read each day.

Thank you for taking the challenge — enjoy!

Rose Murdock

Chapter 5

The Sermon on the Mount; The Beatitudes

When Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain; and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him. ²He opened His mouth and *began* to teach them, saying,

³“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁴“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

⁵“Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.

⁶“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

⁷“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

⁸“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

⁹“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

¹⁰“Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹“Blessed are you when *people* insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. ¹²Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Disciples and the World

¹³“You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty *again*? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men.

¹⁴“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; ¹⁵nor does *anyone* light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. ¹⁶Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

¹⁷“Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. ¹⁸For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. ¹⁹Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others *to do* the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches *them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

²⁰“For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses *that* of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Personal Relationships

²¹ “You have heard that the ancients were told, ‘You shall not commit murder’ and ‘Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.’ ²² But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, ‘You good-for-nothing,’ shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, ‘You fool,’ shall be guilty *enough to go* into the fiery hell. ²³ Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴ leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering. ²⁵ Make friends quickly with your opponent at law while you are with him on the way, so that your opponent may not hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. ²⁶ Truly I say to you, you will not come out of there until you have paid up the last cent.

²⁷ “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery’; ²⁸ but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹ If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. ³⁰ If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into hell.

³¹ “It was said, ‘Whoever sends his wife away, let him give her a certificate of divorce’; ³² but I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for *the* reason of unchastity, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

³³ “Again, you have heard that the ancients were told, ‘You shall not make false vows, but shall fulfill your vows to the Lord.’ ³⁴ But I say to you, make no oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, ³⁵ or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. ³⁶ Nor shall you make an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. ³⁷ But let your statement be, ‘Yes, yes’ or ‘No, no’; anything beyond these is of evil.

³⁸ “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’ ³⁹ But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. ⁴⁰ If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. ⁴¹ Whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two. ⁴² Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you.

⁴³ “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ ⁴⁴ But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on *the* evil and *the* good, and sends rain on *the* righteous and *the* unrighteous. ⁴⁶ For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷ If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing *than others*? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? ⁴⁸ Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Chapter 6

Giving to the Poor and Prayer

“Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven.

²“So when you give to the poor, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be honored by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. ³But when you give to the poor, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴so that your giving will be in secret; and your Father who sees *what is done* in secret will reward you.

⁵“When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. ⁶But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees *what is done* in secret will reward you.

⁷“And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. ⁸So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.

⁹“Pray, then, in this way:

‘Our Father who is in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.

¹⁰‘Your kingdom come.
Your will be done,

On earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹‘Give us this day our daily bread.

¹²‘And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

¹³‘And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. [For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.]

¹⁴For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.

Fasting; The True Treasure; Wealth (Mammon)

¹⁶“Whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites *do*, for they neglect their appearance so that they will be noticed by men when they are fasting. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. ¹⁷But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face ¹⁸so that your fasting will not be noticed by men, but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees *what is done* in secret will reward you.

¹⁹“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth

nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; ²¹ for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

²² “The eye is the lamp of the body; so then if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. ²³ But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

²⁴ “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

The Cure for Anxiety

²⁵ “For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, *as to* what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, *as to* what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and *yet* your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? ²⁷ And who of you by being worried can add a *single* hour to his life? ²⁸ And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, ²⁹ yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. ³⁰ But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is *alive* today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, *will He* not much more *clothe* you? You of little faith! ³¹ Do not worry then, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear for clothing?’ ³² For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³ But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

³⁴ “So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Chapter 7

Judging Others

“Do not judge so that you will not be judged. ² For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. ³ Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? ⁴ Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ and behold, the log is in your own eye? ⁵ You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye.

⁶ “Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.

Prayer and the Golden Rule

⁷ “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. ⁹ Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a

stone? ¹⁰ Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? ¹¹ If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!

¹² “In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

The Narrow and Wide Gates

¹³ “Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. ¹⁴ For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

A Tree and Its Fruit

¹⁵ “Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶ You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn *bushes* nor figs from thistles, are they? ¹⁷ So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ So then, you will know them by their fruits.

²¹ “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven *will enter*. ²² Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ ²³ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.’

The Two Foundations

²⁴ “Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵ And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and *yet* it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. ²⁶ Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. ²⁷ The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell – and great was its fall.”

²⁸ When Jesus had finished these words, the crowds were amazed at His teaching; ²⁹ for He was teaching them as *one* having authority, and not as their scribes.

Day 1

Morning: Read Matthew Chapters 5-7 out loud

Evening: Meditation on Matthew 5:3-12, The Beatitudes

Matthew 5:1-12

¹ When Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain; and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him. ² He opened His mouth and *began* to teach them, saying,

³ “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁴ “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

⁵ “Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.

⁶ “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

⁷ “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

⁸ “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

⁹ “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

¹⁰ “Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹ “Blessed are you when *people* insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

What we gather from the Beatitudes is that those who long to be righteous, from the heart, will in fact receive just that—righteousness—and will be blessed. Jesus spoke of being persecuted for **righteousness**—for doing and being right—and said, “Theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” He also spoke of being persecuted, criticized, and falsely accused **because of Him**—and said, “Your reward in heaven is great.”

He spoke of both *those* who were persecuted for righteousness, that they will inherit a place in the kingdom of heaven; and then He spoke of *you* who are persecuted because of Him, that your reward is great. One makes it to heaven, the other has a reward there. It’s obvious He prefers that we go beyond doing and being right, (as important as that is), and enter into a relationship and fellowship with Him, even one that is apparent to others.

With that in mind, here is my paraphrase of the Beatitudes

“Blessed are those who recognize their spiritual inferiority to the Lord. They wait for and long for His righteousness in them to be revealed; He will not hold it back from them, they shall joyfully receive the kingdom of heaven.

They are patient, they don't try to hastily or improperly advance themselves to obtain their inheritance; but they wait for God's timing and will receive it at the proper time.

Those who crave the righteousness of God will be satisfied with it. They are merciful from their innermost being, releasing the power of mercy, forgiveness, and love to others, driving out sin, bringing deliverance and healing, while they receive the same mercy in return.

These ones are pure and innocent in heart, free from evil intentions, and they will see God--what He is doing, what He is saying, and experience His favor. They make peace, resolving conflicts and disputes along their journey, revealing their sonship of the Most High.

They are sometimes rejected and persecuted for being righteous and doing good. They are criticized and falsely accused of evil because of their faith in, and likeness to, Jesus. Yet, the kingdom of Heaven is theirs, their reward there is great, and they rejoice in that."



Day 2

Morning: Read Matthew Chapters 5-7 out loud

Evening: Meditation on Matthew 5:13-16; Salt and Light

Matthew 5:13-16

¹³“You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty *again*? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men.

¹⁴“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; ¹⁵nor does *anyone* light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. ¹⁶Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

Jesus’ discussion in the Beatitudes about the persecution His followers may experience flows beautifully into His examples about being salt and light. Jesus’ followers are to be different from the world. We are to maintain our saltiness; and we are to be a light to the world.

Just as there is conflict between light and darkness, so is there a contrast between Jesus’ disciples and those who are not. This contrast will be seen, the difference will be noticeable. If we blend in with the world, participating in the unrighteousness of it, then we are not showing them the way out of their darkness, we are still in it ourselves.



Day 3

Morning: Read Matthew Chapters 5-7 out loud

Evening: Meditation on Matthew 5:17-20; All Will be Fulfilled

Matthew 5:17-20

¹⁷ “Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. ¹⁸ For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. ¹⁹ Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others *to do* the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches *them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

²⁰ “For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses *that* of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Remember, Jesus was speaking to the Jews. He had already spoken of persecution because of Him, and the great reward that held. Did they ask themselves, “Just who is He? Something more than a prophet?”

Here He spoke of His purpose for coming—to fulfill the Law and the Prophets. He made sure to tell them that He wasn’t coming to start a different religion, or to do away with the Law of Moses, but to fulfill what God had started in the Jewish people.

Quite the contrary to abolishing the Law and commandments, Jesus came to fulfill them. He said if someone disregards one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, then he will be called least in the kingdom. But whoever keeps and teaches, even the least of the commandments, will be called great in the kingdom.

It’s not enough to just keep the “big ones.” How many people think they’ll go to heaven just because they’ve never murdered anyone, or they’re not a thief? We don’t want to settle for a righteousness that is “good enough.”

If I’m not willing to keep the “little” things in the Word, thinking they don’t really matter that much, then my heart is not really with it, with Him. If I have God’s heart, I will want to be just like Him, keep all of His Word, and help other do the same.

Jesus said we must surpass the “righteousness” of the scribes and Pharisees in order to enter into the kingdom of heaven. And so He begins to address more directly the heart desires of the people.



Day 4

Morning: Read Matthew Chapters 5-7 out loud

Evening: Meditation on Matthew 5:21-24; Solving Disputes

Matthew 5:21-24

²¹ “You have heard that the ancients were told, ‘You shall not commit murder’ and ‘Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.’ ²² But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, ‘You good-for-nothing,’ shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, ‘You fool,’ shall be guilty *enough to go* into the fiery hell. ²³ Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴ leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering.

For the rest of Chapter Five, Jesus gave examples of what He had been talking about. How do we keep the “little” commandments, and how do we surpass the righteousness of the religious? How are we different from the world? What does this look like? He mentioned some of the “big ones” and how to go beyond that.

He began each one of these points by saying, “*You have heard. . .*” or “*It was said. . .*” and then contrasts it with, “*But I say to you. . .*”

Murder / Anger

It’s not just about not murdering someone. Of course, it’s a good thing not to kill someone you’re angry with! But Jesus explained that being truly righteous is more than refraining from hurting someone when you’re mad at them. It’s more than refraining from the physical act. He deals with heart issues by explaining that being angry with your brother, calling him a “good-for-nothing,” or a fool, is a sin and brings judgment just as murder does.

He said if you’re coming before the altar of the Lord with an offering, and remember your brother has something against you, to go reconcile with him. Don’t come to make peace with God, and worship Him, while there is this unsettled conflict with your brother. Settle that first and then come worship God. Seeking reconciliation with our brothers and sisters is a part of seeking reconciliation with God.



Day 5

Morning: Read Matthew Chapters 5-7 out loud

Evening: Meditation on Matthew 5:25-26; Settle Out of Court

Matthew 5:25-26

²⁵ Make friends quickly with your opponent at law while you are with him on the way, so that your opponent may not hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. ²⁶ Truly I say to you, you will not come out of there until you have paid up the last cent.

Continuing the thought of reconciliation, Jesus goes on to say that if you are involved in a legal dispute with someone, make peace, settle out of court, don't take the chance of going before a judge — a human, potentially unrighteous or biased one at that — or you could lose and be thrown into prison.

The point He's making here is that it's better to "make friends quickly with your opponent," then to "win" this dispute. Having to prove you are right all the time is not the kind of relationships He wants us to have.



Day 6

Morning: Read Matthew Chapters 5-7 out loud

Evening: Meditation on Matthew 5:27-30; Lust and Control of the Body

Matthew 5:27-30

²⁷“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery’; ²⁸but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. ³⁰If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into hell.

Adultery / Lust

The next “big sin” that Jesus addressed was adultery. Just as the example He gave with murder and anger, being righteous is more than not committing the act of adultery. It’s about dealing with the desire to do so.

More than refraining from the act of adultery, a righteous person will not give in to those sinful thoughts or desires. Being willing to sacrifice in the flesh to keep yourself from that which will separate you from God is a heart that is set on righteousness. One who hungers and thirsts after righteousness will be satisfied with it (Matthew 5:6).



Day 7

Morning: Read Matthew Chapters 5-7 out loud

Evening: Meditation on Matthew 5:31-32; Divorce

Matthew 5:31-32

³¹ “It was said, ‘Whoever sends his wife away, let him give her a certificate of divorce’; ³² but I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for *the* reason of unchastity, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

Divorce / Breaking Obligations

Here is another “big one.” Up until this time, God’s people had justified sending their wives away, by saying if you did so legally, with divorce papers, then it was okay. But Jesus said if a man sends his wife away, he’s causing her to commit adultery. Men were the main providers in those days. A woman without a source of income, or a home, would be forced to find another husband, forced to commit adultery in God’s eyes, and the man who married her was also committing adultery, in the eyes of God.

This not only speaks of the man who decides he wants another wife and breaks his obligation to his first wife, but it also speaks of the laws of a society that accommodate sin. How many laws or practices do we have today that accommodate sin, rather than oppose them? (lawsuits, divorce, abortion, same-sex marriage etc.)



Day 8

Morning: Read Matthew Chapters 5-7 out loud

Evening: Meditation on Matthew 5:33-37; Keep Your Word

Matthew 5:33-37

³³“Again, you have heard that the ancients were told, ‘You shall not make false vows, but shall fulfill your vows to the Lord.’ ³⁴But I say to you, make no oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, ³⁵or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. ³⁶Nor shall you make an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. ³⁷But let your statement be, ‘Yes, yes’ or ‘No, no’; anything beyond these is of evil.

Swearing by Oaths / Keeping Your Word Without an Oath

Jesus contrasted those who make an oath, who swear by something as a way of saying, “*I swear this is really true.*” Or, “*I swear by. . . that I will really do this.*”

He said, rather than swearing by something else to guarantee that what you’re saying is true, just keep your word. If you say yes, then mean yes. If you say no, then mean no. All of your words should be true and kept, not just those that you say while swearing by something else.

If we swear that something is true, does that mean that all of the other words we speak without swearing by something are not true? It causes doubt about our integrity to keep our word or tell the truth, if part of the time we are swearing by something else.



Day 9

Morning: Read Matthew Chapters 5-7 out loud

Evening: Meditation on Matthew 5:38-42; Above and Beyond

Matthew 5:38-42

³⁸ “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’ ³⁹ But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. ⁴⁰ If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. ⁴¹ Whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two. ⁴² Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you.

Revenge: Eye for an Eye / Above and Beyond

Continuing His examples of the heart as opposed to just refraining from just the “big” or obvious sins, Jesus went on to say to turn the other cheek. Give your coat too if someone sues you for your shirt. Go the extra mile. Give to whoever asks of you, and don’t turn away a borrower.

Instead of demanding your rights or haggling over how much you should be forced to give or do for someone, show the giving attitude in your heart by doing more than is asked (or demanded) of you. Do you think Jesus’ listeners were starting to see God’s true intent of the Law?



Day 10

Morning: Read Matthew Chapters 5-7 out loud

Evening: Meditation on Matthew 5:43-48; Love Your Enemies

Matthew 5:43-48

⁴³ “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ ⁴⁴ But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on *the* evil and *the* good, and sends rain on *the* righteous and *the* unrighteous. ⁴⁶ For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷ If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing *than others*? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? ⁴⁸ Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Hate Your Enemies / Love and Pray for Them

The Jewish people were previously told to love their neighbors and hate their enemies. But again, Jesus dealt with the heart and said to love your enemies and pray for your persecutors, so that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. If He sends sunshine and rain on both the righteous and unrighteous, we should follow that example.

Once again, we are to be different, and love those whom others don’t love. To greet those that others won’t greet. We are to be perfect, as our heavenly Father is perfect.

A notable point here is that Jesus called God, “Father.” They were used to calling Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and other Jewish leaders of the past their fathers. But Jesus spoke of God as their Father, which would make them His children.

At this point, those who were really listening, and honest, would see how fall short they fall from this kind of “perfection” of righteousness that Jesus is talking about. He is addressing the need for a change of heart, not simply forced outward behavior. And this is His purpose. In fact, this was the purpose of the Law – to reveal that no person can keep it. Everyone falls short. (Romans 3:10-12, 23).



Day 11

Morning: Read Matthew Chapters 5-7 out loud

Evening: Meditation on Matthew 6:1-4; Acts of Righteousness – Giving to the Poor

Matthew 6:1-4

“Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven.

²“So when you give to the poor, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be honored by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. ³But when you give to the poor, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴so that your giving will be in secret; and your Father who sees *what is done* in secret will reward you.

So, up to this point, Jesus spoke of His followers being those who truly desire and crave righteousness, of having a reputation of being a follower of Him, and of being different from the world, not settling for “good enough,” but keeping all of the Word of God, even going above and beyond the righteousness of the religious.

Then, He moved on to further explain the attitude of the heart in all of this. To live righteously in order to please the Father, not people, and not doing what’s good to earn the praises of people or for our own self-glory.

As He already said, we are to let our light shine – our good works – in a way that glorifies God. We put our light on a lampstand, we don’t hide it under a bushel. (Matthew 5:16). Yet, He warned of doing your “righteousness” before men simply to be noticed or honored by them.

The difference is found in the heart, not in the outward actions. A good thing can be done, for the wrong reason. If you are flaunting the good things you do in order to get the praises of men, that is the only reward you will get. There will be no reward with your Father in heaven.

Jesus gave examples, using three acts of righteousness – giving to the poor, prayer, and fasting.

Giving to the Poor

He said not to flaunt your giving by sounding a trumpet when you do. Don’t call attention to yourself when you’re giving to the poor. Let it be done in secret, and your Father, who sees everything done in secret, will reward you.



Day 12

Morning: Read Matthew Chapters 5-7 out loud

Evening: Meditation on Matthew 6:5-8; Prayer

Matthew 6:5-8

⁵ “When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. ⁶ But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees *what is done* in secret will reward you.

⁷ “And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. ⁸ So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.

Prayer

Next Jesus addressed the righteous act of prayer. Just as He said when giving to the poor, He said don’t stand in the synagogues or on the street corners to pray just so people can see you and be impressed by your eloquent prayers. That is the only reward you will get. Instead, go into your closet and shut the door. Pray in secret and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

The question Jesus is stirring up inside the people is *why* they are praying. Do you pray to communicate with God, to fellowship with Him, to bear your heart to Him, to ask of Him and hear His heart? Or is it simply a ritual that you have become so “good at” that you flaunt it in front of people? Has it just become a sense of duty, or a habit without meaning?



Day 13

Morning: Read Matthew Chapters 5-7 out loud

Evening: Meditation on Matthew 6:9-15; The Lord's Prayer

Matthew 6:9-15

⁹ "Pray, then, in this way:

'Our Father who is in heaven,

Hallowed be Your name.

¹⁰ 'Your kingdom come.

Your will be done,

On earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹ 'Give us this day our daily bread.

¹² 'And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

¹³ 'And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. [For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.']

¹⁴ For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵ But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.

After telling the people how not to pray, Jesus gave an example of how to pray, which is what we call The Lord's Prayer. The content of this sample prayer reveals the attitude of the heart.

He began with addressing God as Father, honoring Him and His name, and His position above us. It reveals a heart that is in submission to His will, asking for His kingdom to come into the earth, into your life's situation, just as it is in heaven.

Then He addressed asking for your daily needs, and forgiving others, while asking for His forgiveness. Asking for Him to keep you from temptation, and deliverance from evil.

The prayer ends with a praise-filled acknowledgement that all belongs to Him, forever. And He explained the importance of the heart attitude of forgiveness while praying.

A much different attitude than that of seeking eloquent prayers to impress people with.



Day 14

Morning: Read Matthew Chapters 5-7 out loud

Evening: Meditation on Matthew 6:16-18; Fasting

Matthew 6:16-18

¹⁶ “Whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites do, for they neglect their appearance so that they will be noticed by men when they are fasting. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. ¹⁷ But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face ¹⁸ so that your fasting will not be noticed by men, but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.

Fasting

Fasting is an important part of a life of prayer, and another “righteous act” that Jesus addressed. Once again, He addressed the attitude of the heart and said when you fast, not to neglect your appearance, or put on a false sense of humility or suffering, just to get pity or respect from people. Instead, make yourself presentable. Your Father knows what you’re doing and that’s all that matters. Your reward is with Him.



Day 15

Morning: Read Matthew Chapters 5-7 out loud

Evening: Meditation on Matthew 6:19-24; Storing Treasure

Matthew 6:19-24

¹⁹“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; ²¹for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

²²“The eye is the lamp of the body; so then if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. ²³But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

²⁴“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

Jesus' first sermon then flows from these acts of righteousness, and what kind of reward you are looking for, to speak of treasure. If you're just doing good things to please people, your reward will remain only here on earth. What kind of treasure do you think is better – temporary, earthly, human treasure, or eternal, heavenly, God-given treasure?

He said to store up treasure in heaven. This treasure can't be stolen or corrupted. This is eternal treasure from God which is way better than any earthly man-given treasure.

He spoke of the “eye” being the lamp of the body. The eye refers to whether you are generous or stingy. Do you hang on too tightly to the “wealth” of this world? Not just money, but the prestige and attention that the world gives. Are you able to let go of this world's treasures and give your all to God? *What* are you treasuring? Where your treasure is, your heart will be also.

What you give to – your money, time, prayer, effort, and attention – is where your heart will be. What you give to, you have an interest in. And if your heart is in it, you will value it.

We think we are to give according to what we feel is right in our heart, but when we give according to **His heart** our heart will follow. Don't let a selfish heart, or an unrenewed mind, lead you. Store treasure in heaven.

When we are moved with the heart of God – His love and compassion, His nature and His presence – then His power will be there to provide what is needed. This is true not only for our own needs, but for our intercession for others. Which segways beautifully into the next part of His sermon.



Day 16

Morning: Read Matthew Chapters 5-7 out loud

Evening: Meditation on Matthew 6:25-34; Cure for Worry

Matthew 6:25-34

²⁵ “For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, *as to* what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, *as to* what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and *yet* your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? ²⁷ And who of you by being worried can add a *single* hour to his life? ²⁸ And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, ²⁹ yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. ³⁰ But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is *alive* today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, *will He* not much more *clothe* you? You of little faith! ³¹ Do not worry then, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear for clothing?’ ³² For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³ But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

³⁴ “So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

The message so far about craving righteousness and longing to please the Father, had been on God’s heart for thousands of years. Yet, to live this kind of righteous life requires a change of heart. What Jesus was calling on the people to do was beyond what they could do on their own, in their sinful condition. He was revealing the standard of God, so they could see how far short they came, and so they could come to put faith in Him as the Messiah – their Savior – who would soon bear their sin on the cross.

So, He moved on, to reveal the love and care of the Father, and to tell them not to worry about their needs. It’s the Gentiles – the unbelievers – who care so much about all of these earthly things. Your heavenly Father knows what earthly things you need, and as long as you seek His kingdom and His righteousness first, all of these earthly things you need will be taken care of. He knows what you need. He is not unjust. He will provide a way. Just don’t treasure them above heavenly things.



Day 17

Morning: Read Matthew Chapters 5-7 out loud

Evening: Meditation on Matthew 7:1-6; Judging Correctly

Matthew 7:1-6

“Do not judge so that you will not be judged. ²For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. ³Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? ⁴Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ and behold, the log is in your own eye? ⁵You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye.

⁶“Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.

At this point, I can imagine that as people started to grasp the concept of just how much God was requiring of them, and how far short they fell, that they began to point fingers, or to compare themselves with each other. Jesus addressed this.

He said not to judge others and point out all their faults. Don’t criticize them and tell them what they need to do to get right with God. Look at yourself first. Take the log out of your own eye first before you try to help someone else. You’ll be judged by the same standard you judge others, so treat each other how you want to be treated. This is the Law and the Prophets—the Word and the Spirit—which reveal the Father’s heart.



Day 18

Morning: Read Matthew Chapters 5-7 out loud

Evening: Meditation on Matthew 7:7-12; Prayer and the Golden Rule

Matthew 7:7-12

⁷“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ⁸For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. ⁹Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? ¹⁰Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? ¹¹If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!

¹²“In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

Ask, seek, knock. Go to Him for what you need. If you, imperfect as you are, know how to do good for your children, how much more will your heavenly Father do what is good for you?

Again, Jesus was giving them the image of God as their Father — their loving, heavenly Father who cares for them. He is not a tyrannical God who takes pleasure in punishing sin. He is pointing these things out, so we can find the way to Him, with an open door and a legitimate path, so we can communicate with Him and fellowship with Him, which was His desire for the human race all along.



Day 19

Morning: Read Matthew Chapters 5-7 out loud

Evening: Meditation on Matthew 7:13-14; Narrow and Wide Gates

Matthew 7:13-14

¹³“Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. ¹⁴For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

We often break down these portions of Scripture for the rest of this chapter into segments, but this is all one thought process. It's not just about *unbelievers* who miss the narrow gate, but some “Christians,” and/or those who call themselves Christian but the Lord doesn't know them. The narrow gate is something we have to *look for*. If we just follow the crowd, we'll stay on the path to the broad gate which leads to destruction. We have to pay attention and look for His way.

We are called to stand out from the world, but also to stand out from those religious ones who appear righteous but inwardly are not. Inwardly, they desire praises of men and the world's wealth and prestige. We are to be different. We are to desire to please the Father. As a true child of God, a true believer in Christ, our hearts are to be changed to be in sync with His.



Day 20

Morning: Read Matthew Chapters 5-7 out loud

Evening: Meditation on Matthew 7:15-23; A Tree and Its Fruit

Matthew 7:15-23

¹⁵ “Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶ You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn *bushes* nor figs from thistles, are they? ¹⁷ So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ So then, you will know them by their fruits.

²¹ “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven *will enter*. ²² Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ ²³ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.’

Jesus said to beware of the false prophets – they are on the path to destruction. Don’t follow them. Know them by their fruit. Their fruit reveals their true nature. Look deeper than just apparent righteousness, or even apparent miracles. Look for the narrow gate. Not everyone who calls Him Lord, prophesies in His name, casts out demons, or does miracles, will enter into heaven. The fruit reveals the heart – whether they are wolves and thorns, or whether they are true prophets with good, edible fruit. So then a false prophet is one who gives the appearance that he acknowledges Jesus as Lord, but does not follow Him themselves.

If people are prophesying in His name, that would make Jesus greater than a man. It would mean that He is God. Did the Jews understand this? It at least must have raised a question about who He was.

Jesus said that those who practice lawlessness are the ones He doesn’t know, in spite of what they might be doing in His name. It is the *righteous* whom He knows. It’s seeking His kingdom and His righteousness that will bring us into His kingdom, into fellowship with Him. It’s pursuing His way that will bring us there. But if our treasure is not in heaven, if our heart is here with the world’s praises and conveniences, then our fruit will not come from a good tree. We will not be that good tree. The need for their hearts to be changed was becoming very obvious.



Day 21

Morning: Read Matthew Chapters 5-7 out loud

Evening: Meditation on Matthew 7:24-27; Foundations

Matthew 7:24-29

²⁴ “Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵ And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and *yet* it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. ²⁶ Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. ²⁷ The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall.”

²⁸ When Jesus had finished these words, the crowds were amazed at His teaching; ²⁹ for He was teaching them as *one* having authority, and not as their scribes.

Jesus summarized His first sermon by saying that everyone who hears His words and acts on them, will hold up under the storms of life.

Calling Him Lord is what causes us to be born-again so our spirit is changed into a righteous one, (Romans 10:9-10, 2 Corinthians 5:17), and doing what He says will prove that He really is our Lord (Luke 6:47), and will transform the nature of our souls to be like Him—one who pleases the Father.

This is a call to become one who keeps His Word not just out of a sense of duty, but out of a passionate love and desire for Him, and in response to His passionate love and desire for us (1 John 4:19, James 4:5 AMPC).



Congratulations, you’ve completed the 21-Day Sermon on the Mount Challenge!