

DAN ELLSWORTH



THE
TRUTH
TURN
TEST

A STUDY THROUGH THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT,
HOW JESUS FORMS THE HEART OF A DISCIPLE

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Dedication

This work would not exist without the steady, faithful support of my wife, Betsy. Since our marriage in 1996, she has walked alongside me through every season of building a career that rarely stayed in one place. She followed me across the country without complaint, anchoring our family while I pursued opportunities that demanded long hours, frequent travel, and more than a few risks.

Through it all, Betsy created a home that was stable, welcoming, and grounded. It was a place where our children could grow with consistency, security, and love. While my work often took me outward, she focused inward, shaping the daily rhythms that matter most and carrying far more than her share without asking for recognition.

She has extended me more grace than I deserve, more patience than I have earned, and more encouragement than I can properly acknowledge. When I fell short, she remained steady. When the path was uncertain, she remained confident. When success came, she never needed the spotlight.

After nearly three decades of marriage, I can say without hesitation that I love her more today than I did when we first said yes to this life together. That is her quiet gift to me, and I am deeply grateful.

Biblical Reference

*All Scripture quotations in this study are taken from the
English Standard Version.*

WEEK 1

Introduction



The Sermon on the Mount stands as one of the most significant moments in the ministry of Jesus. It is not a collection of random teachings, nor is it merely a moral code. It is the King of Heaven announcing the way of His kingdom. It reveals what a true disciple looks like from the inside out. To understand the power of this sermon, we must first step into its historical setting. Jesus delivered this message early in His public ministry, shortly after calling His disciples and just as His reputation was beginning to spread throughout Galilee. Crowds had begun following Him because of the signs and miracles He performed. People were amazed by His authority, His compassion, and the power that flowed through His words. In this moment of growing public attention, Jesus did something striking. He withdrew from the crowds and went up a mountain. His disciples came to Him, and it was to them that He spoke. The Sermon on the Mount is not directed to the curious, it is directed to the committed. Jesus is teaching His disciples what it means to belong to Him and what it looks like to live under the rule of God.

In Jewish culture, mountains were places of revelation. Moses met God on Sinai and brought down the Law. Elijah heard the whisper of God on Horeb. When Jesus goes up the mountain, He is not only creating physical distance from the crowd, He is signaling spiritual significance. Something foundational is being given. Just as the Law formed Israel as the people of God, so the Sermon on the Mount forms the disciples of Jesus as the people of the kingdom. It is a defining moment in salvation history. Jesus is not abolishing the Law but fulfilling it. He is not lowering the bar but revealing its true intent. He

is not offering new rules. He is forming a new people with renewed hearts.

The structure of the sermon reflects this intention. Jesus begins with the inner life, the character of the kingdom, the blessed posture of the one who follows Him. From there He moves outward into relationships, actions, motives, practices, priorities, trust, discernment, and ultimately obedience. He begins with who we are and ends with what we build. It is a progression of formation. It is a journey of discipleship. Every section of the sermon presses deeper into the life of the believer, confronting hypocrisy, inviting transformation, and calling for wholehearted devotion to God. This is why generations of Christians have returned to this sermon again and again. It reveals not only who Jesus is but who we are meant to become.

This study, *The Truth, The Turn, and The Test*, is designed to guide you through this transformative teaching in a way that is both accessible and deeply challenging. It continues the journey begun in *The Word, The Water, and The Way* by moving directly into the heart of Jesus instruction. If the first study established foundational identity, this study invites you to maturity. If the first study called you to recognize the work of God in your life, this one calls you to build your life upon His words. The Sermon on the Mount is not meant to be admired. It is meant to be obeyed. It is not a speech. It is a summons. It is Jesus declaring the kind of people His followers must become.

Below is an outline of the six weeks of study. Each week will guide you into one major section of the sermon and invite you to

respond to the teaching of Christ with reflection, honesty, and obedience.

Week 2, The Blessed Life

This week explores the Beatitudes as the foundation of kingdom character, revealing the posture of the heart that Jesus calls blessed.

Week 3, Salt and Light

This week examines the calling of disciples to influence the world with quiet steadiness and visible goodness, revealing the outward expression of an inwardly formed life.

Week 4, The Deep Work of the Heart

This week confronts the internal roots of sin by exploring Jesus's teaching on anger, lust, integrity, retaliation, and love for enemies, revealing the transformation that must happen beneath the surface.

Week 5, Hidden Practices

This week focuses on giving, prayer, and fasting, showing how a sincere and secret life with the Father becomes the foundation for all true discipleship.

Week 6, Treasure and Trust

This week emphasizes the connection between what we treasure and what we fear, calling disciples to seek first the kingdom and trust the Father without anxiety.

Week 7, Building on the Rock

This week culminates in Jesus's warning and promise that only those who hear His words and obey them will stand firm when the storms of life come.

Week 8, Now What?

This week is an invitation to turn reflection into action and step into a mature, resilient walk with Christ.

The goal of this study is not information but transformation. It is not about absorbing new concepts but about becoming a new kind of person shaped by the words of Jesus. The Sermon on the Mount is meant to unsettle the casual believer and strengthen the committed disciple. It exposes shallow faith, invites deeper surrender, and calls you to examine your inner life honestly, confront compromise, rethink priorities, and align daily practices with the heart of Christ. This study is for those who want their walk with Jesus to be more than habit or belief, a faith that is whole, resilient, and courageous.

As you enter this journey, come with an open heart and a readiness to let Jesus shape your thoughts, relationships, motives, and decisions.

This sermon is not an abstract ideal but a living invitation to maturity. It calls you not only to listen but to live. May these weeks awaken hunger for holiness and deepen your commitment to walk in His way with sincerity and joy.

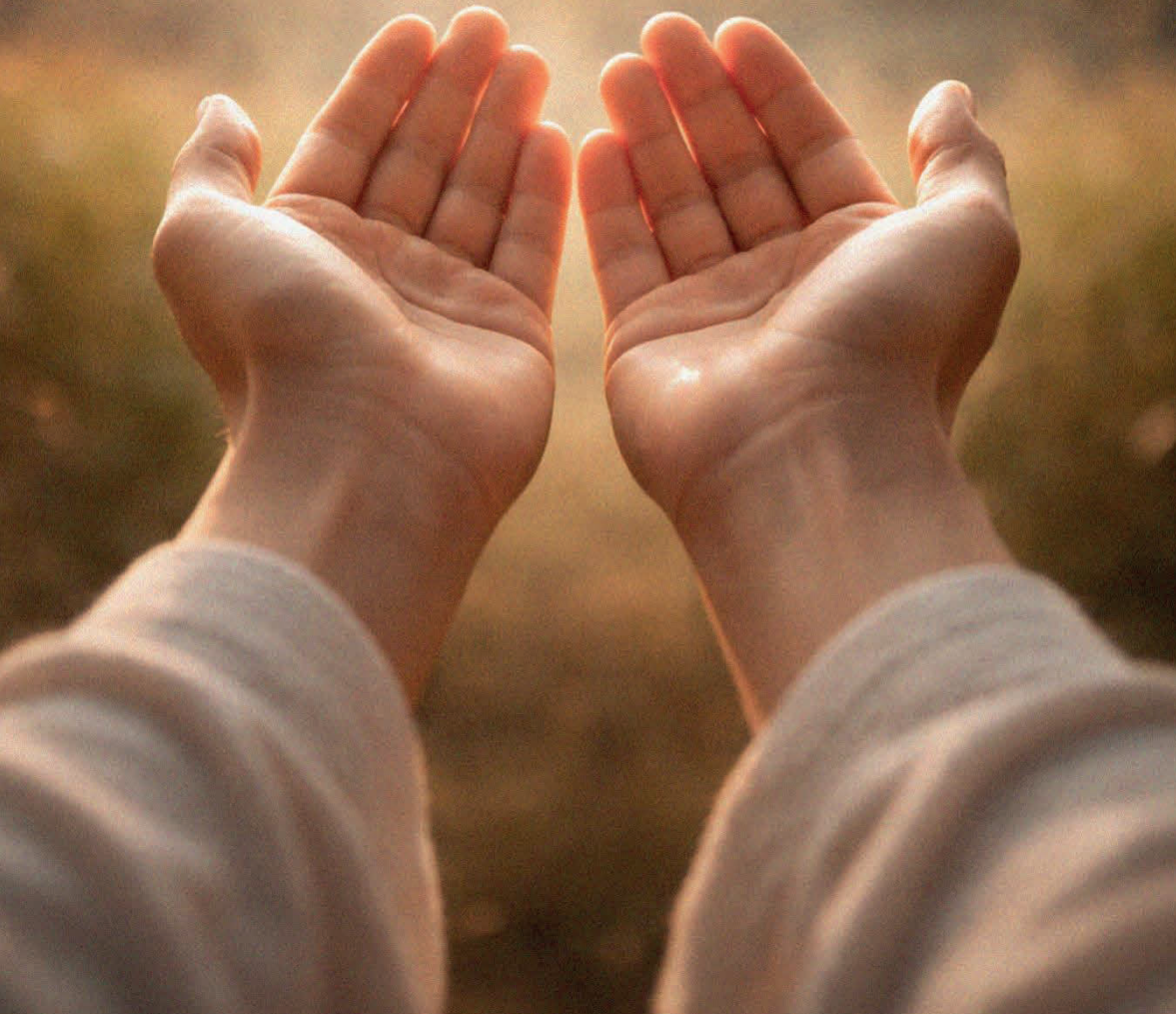
What are three goals or hopes you are looking for from this study?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

WEEK 2
The Blessed Life



Before You Begin

Read Matthew 5, verses 1-12, slowly. Read it aloud if you can. Let the words settle.

Let the mountain become real in your imagination. Then come back to this devotional.

THE INNER LIFE OF A DISCIPLE

There is a pattern in Scripture that rarely changes, before God sends a word to the world, He calls His people up the mountain. Moses went up. Elijah went up. Abraham went up. Jesus, too, moved upward, not because He needed elevation but because we do. Mountains strip away the noise. Mountains pull you out of the hurry and the grind and the endless pull of lesser priorities. Matthew tells us that when Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain, and His disciples came to Him.

This moment matters. It matters because Jesus is not giving a sermon to shape a crowd, He is giving a kingdom to shape a people. The Sermon on the Mount is not a random collection of teachings, it is a constitution. It is Jesus formal declaration of what life in His kingdom actually looks like and what kind of people He is forming. The King sits, as was the custom of a rabbi, and He opens His mouth to speak. Before He commands anything, before He warns, corrects, instructs, or inspires, He blesses.

This should stop us, because blessing is not the typical way kingdoms begin. Human kingdoms begin with demands, prove yourself, earn your place, show your worth, and achieve something

notable. Jesus, begins with blessing because the kingdom does not belong to achievers, it belongs to receivers. It belongs to the empty, the humble, the wounded, the desperate, the pure, the merciful, and the hungry. The kingdom is received, not earned. This is the same thread God wove through your study in The Word, The Water, and The Way, that the kingdom life always begins not with your strength but with your surrender. Not with your plan but with His presence. Not with your achievement but with your admission of need. Jesus begins the greatest sermon ever preached by turning the world's understanding of greatness upside down.

“BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT.”

We live in a culture that celebrates self-confidence, self-assertion, self-definition, and self-determination. However, Jesus declares blessing over those who know precisely what they are not, they know they are not enough, not without Him. To be poor in spirit is not to be spiritually depressed; it is to be spiritually honest. It is to see the distance between God's holiness and your own efforts and realize that only grace can cross that distance.

In my own journey and in the journeys I have shepherded, this is where transformation always starts. Not at the point of trying harder but at the point of admitting honestly,

**“Lord, nothing in my hands I bring.
Only to the cross I cling.”**

. Rock of Ages, August Toplady, 1776

When you become poor in spirit, you stop negotiating with God. You stop defending yourself. You stop trying to impress Him with the parts of your life you think look polished. You finally come empty and He begins to fill. Jesus says the poor in spirit receive the greatest treasure imaginable, **“for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”** He does not say, **“Will be.”** He says, **“Is.”** Present tense. The door of the kingdom swings open to the person who comes with empty hands, because the kingdom is not a wage, it is a gift.

“BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO MOURN.”

This is not mourning for mourning’s sake. This is not the sorrow of tragedy or loss, though God comforts those too. This is the mourning that happens when your heart breaks over what breaks God’s heart, starting with your own sin. We mourn because sin has fractured God’s good world, fractured our relationships, fractured our minds, fractured our desires, fractured the beautiful things God intended for us. We mourn because we see reality clearly.

In *The Word, The Water, and The Way*, we talked about how transformation requires truth, and truth often comes with tears. You cannot be comforted by grace unless you are first honest about your need for grace. Light comforts only those who admit their darkness. To mourn spiritually is to stop excusing sin and start grieving it.

To mourn is to tell the truth about what is broken. Jesus promises something staggering, **“They shall be comforted.”** Not **“might be.”** Not **“if they get their act together.”** Not **“after a probationary period.”** They shall be comforted, because God Himself draws near

to the humble and the contrite. The comfort is not abstract; it is the comfort of a Father who runs to His children.

“BLESSED ARE THE MEEK.”

Meek does not mean weak. It means strong but surrendered. It means power under control. It means trusting God when you could fight for yourself, letting Him control the events of the day.

Jesus Himself was meek, He had all power, yet He laid it down. The meek inherit the earth not because they dominate it but because they trust the One who made it. They refuse to grab, through their own efforts, what God has promised to give. They refuse to build their lives through force or self-promotion. Their security is not in achievement but in allegiance to the King. In a world that rewards noise, Jesus blesses meekness, quiet strength, patient endurance, surrendered power.

**“BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO HUNGER AND THIRST FOR
RIGHTEOUSNESS.”**

Spiritual hunger is a gift. Most people hunger for success, recognition, pleasure, or security. To hunger for righteousness, to long for your life to be aligned with God’s heart, is evidence that the Holy Spirit is already at work in your life. To that end, Jesus came to give life and life in abundance. Not partial, not fleeting, but the deep soul level fullness that only His presence can create as He reshapes our desires. In or out of the storm, Jesus gives us the peace that goes beyond man’s understanding, regardless of our temporal discomfort.

It is the satisfaction of Psalm 16, verse 11, “In Your presence there is fullness of joy, and at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”

“BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL.”

Mercy is costly because forgiveness always costs the forgiver something. Mercy is unnatural because our flesh wants justice for others and mercy for ourselves. But mercy is the language of the kingdom because it is the language of the King. You cannot genuinely receive God’s mercy and withhold it from others. You cannot kneel at the foot of the cross and rise with a clenched fist. Jesus says the merciful **“shall receive mercy,”** not as a reward but as a confirmation that they truly belong to Him. Mercy given is the evidence of mercy received.

“BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART.”

Purity in Scripture means single heartedness, an undivided devotion to God. The pure in heart do not have the cleanest record but the clearest allegiance. Purity is not merely about behavior but about vision. It is to want God more than anything God can give. It is to place every competing desire at His feet. Jesus promises the pure in heart something the prophets longed for, **“they shall see God.”** In this life partially, in the next fully. Purity opens the eyes of the soul.

Yet Scripture is equally clear that this purity does not originate within us. True purity is not achieved through moral effort, spiritual discipline, or religious performance. It is received. Purity begins with acceptance of Christ and rests entirely on His sacrifice. We are made clean not by refining ourselves, but by being covered by Him. The

only path to purity is to put on Christ, to be clothed in His righteousness rather than trusting our own.

Apart from Him, the heart remains divided. In Him, the heart is made new. His cross removes guilt. His resurrection restores relationship. What we could never cleanse, He has already redeemed.

Purity, then, is not perfection. It is belonging. It is living daily under the covering of His grace, with a heart no longer split between self and Savior.

“BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS.”

Peacekeeping Peacemaking manages conflict not by avoiding it but by working through it in pursuit of deeper connection. Peacemaking steps into conflict for the purpose of restoration. Peacemakers do not minimize sin or sweep brokenness aside, they move toward the fracture with the healing presence of Christ. They reflect the God who *“made peace with us through the blood of His cross” (Col. 1:20)*. To be a peacemaker is to move toward others with Christlike compassion, choosing to see them not through the lens of your wounds but through the lens of how God sees them, guiding them toward the truth that heals. To be a peacemaker is to bring people to God through Jesus, so peace can be made between them and their Creator.

“BLESSED ARE THE PERSECUTED.”

Jesus ends where no earthly leader ever would, with blessing for those who suffer because they belong to Him. When you follow Jesus, not everyone applauds. Some resist. Some oppose. Some mock. Some

slander. But persecution is not a sign of God's absence, it is a sign of your allegiance. **“Rejoice and be glad,”** He says, **“for your reward is great in heaven.”** **Luke 6:23**

In other words, lift your eyes. The story is much bigger than your suffering. This is the same call you read in *The Word, The Water, and The Way*, discipleship is costly, obedience is urgent, and eternity is at stake. The way of Jesus is narrow, beautiful, and worth every sacrifice.

The Invitation of Week Two

The invitation of this week is to not read the Beatitudes like a menu from which you pick one. They are a portrait, a composite picture of kingdom life. They show what happens when a disciple is shaped by the grace of God, filled with the Spirit of God, and surrendered to the will of God.

Notice the flow,

1. Poor in spirit, I bring nothing.
2. Mourn, I face what is broken.
3. Meek, I surrender my strength.
4. Hunger for righteousness, I long for God's life in me.
5. Merciful, I extend the grace I have received.
6. Pure in heart, I want God more than anything else.
7. Peacemaker, I embody God's reconciling love.
8. Persecuted, I endure because the kingdom is mine.

A passages like Romans 3:23 explains the moment of conversion, our universal need for grace, the Beatitudes then builds on it to reveal what life in Christ looks like after that moment. This provides a roadmap not merely for acknowledging sin, but for becoming a disciple. Here, Jesus does not speak in abstractions. He personalizes the path, meeting people where they are and gently leading them toward who they are becoming.

The Beatitudes describe a lived journey of transformation, marked by surrender, testing, and perseverance. Jesus does not promise the road of ease, but the road of redemption. He prepares His followers for the realities of life in a broken world, shaping hearts that can endure, love, and remain faithful.

This is the life He blesses, and this is where your journey in this study begins. On a mountain, in the presence of the King, learning not only how to enter the kingdom, but how to walk in it.

Week Two - Devotional Series

Blessed Life

Day Two

Before Jesus addressed the world, He called His disciples upward. The mountain was not about elevation but separation, creating space to hear clearly. Discipleship still begins the same way: stepping away from noise to receive truth that reshapes how we see everything else.

Scripture: Matthew 5:1–2; Psalm 24:3–4

Question for the Day: What distractions do I need to step away from to hear Jesus clearly?

Day Three

Jesus begins with blessing, but His definition contradicts every cultural instinct. The kingdom does not reward self-sufficiency, visibility, or strength. It blesses humility, hunger, surrender, and trust. Truth often begins by dismantling what we thought we knew.

Scripture: Matthew 5:3–6; Isaiah 55:8–9

Question: Where has the world’s definition of “blessed” shaped my expectations?

Day Four

To be poor in spirit is not weakness but honesty. It is the recognition, nothing we bring earns the kingdom. Grace fills only what pride empties. Jesus declares the kingdom present tense for those who come with empty hands.

Scripture: Matthew 5:3; Psalm 34:18

Question: What am I still trying to bring to God instead of simply receiving grace?

Day Five

Spiritual mourning is not despair; it is clarity. When we grieve what sin has broken, starting with ourselves, comfort becomes possible. God draws near not to denial, but to repentance that tells the truth.

Scripture: Matthew 5:4; 2 Corinthians 7:10

Question: What brokenness am I avoiding instead of bringing to God?

Day Six

Meekness is not passivity. It is power restrained by trust. The meek refuse to seize what God has promised to give. Their confidence rests not in force or control, but in the faithfulness of the King.

Scripture: Matthew 5:5; Psalm 37:11

Question: Where am I grasping instead of trusting?

Day Seven

Peacemaking is costly because reconciliation always requires taking a step forward. It reflects the heart of God, who moved toward us while we were still enemies. Kingdom peace is not avoidance, it is courageous, redemptive engagement.

Scripture: Matthew 5:9; Colossians 1:20

Question: Where is God inviting me to pursue peace rather than avoid conflict?