

Interactive Learning Guide

The Sermon on the Mount

by John R. W. Stott, D.D.

INSTITUTE OF
THEOLOGICAL
STUDIES



COURSE INTRODUCTION

The Sermon on the Mount

Revised 2006

INSTITUTE OF
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THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Dr. John R. W. Stott

The Institute of Theological Studies provides the following syllabus as the standard for this course. You will be responsible for all assignments *unless your school changes the requirements*.

Course Description

Nowhere is the essence of Jesus' teachings more clearly portrayed than in His Sermon on the Mount. In this course learners complete an expository and reading study of the Sermon as found in Matthew 5-7. Students examine key issues in the Sermon and analyze the various interpretations therein. The lectures concentrate on both theological and practical questions raised in the Sermon, such as "How did Christ fulfill the law?" and "How should Christians relate to their world?" Throughout the course, Dr. Stott encourages learners to apply the Sermon's principles to life and ministry.

Course Objectives

At the end of this course, you should be able to:

1. Appreciate the message of the Sermon on the Mount as God's Word for our salvation.
2. Explain the special theological difficulties raised by the Sermon on the Mount.
3. Propose solutions to the theological difficulties raised by the Sermon on the Mount.
4. Compare and contrast how the Pharisees handled the law with the way Christ fulfilled it.
5. Apply key principles from the Sermon to contemporary life and ministry.
6. Honor God with your life as being different from the world.

COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

Whether you sit in a traditional classroom or study from a distance, you will benefit from interaction, collaboration, and spiritual formation (ATS schools, note Standards 3.2.1.3; 10.3.3.3; 10.3.4.3). In order to meet this need in distance theological education, ITS is developing structures and resources to encourage spiritual formation and community interaction in our courses. In this course, we have included three collaborative learning features:

1. [ITS Online Interactivity Forum](#) (see course requirements) - fosters peer-to-peer interaction in a global, threaded discussion (required for all students)
2. [Spiritual Formation Project](#) (see course requirements) - fosters mentor-to-learner interaction in a mentor-guided reflection, discussion and application (required for all students)
3. [Learning Community Assignments](#) (see end of ILG) - fosters peer-to-peer collaboration in a group approach to assignments (optional but recommended where possible)

Go to www.ITScourses.org/interactivity/ for the most up-to-date ITS resources.

Course Texts

Carson, D. A. *Jesus' Sermon on the Mount: And His Confrontation with the World: An Exposition of Matthew 5-10*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2004.

Patte, Daniel. *The Challenge of Discipleship: A Critical Study of the Sermon on the Mount as Scripture*. Valley Forge, PA: Trinity International Press, 1999.

Course Requirements

1. Book Evaluations

For each of the textbooks, the student will write a **6-9 page** critical evaluation. The evaluation will follow the format listed below. By "critical evaluation" is meant that you are to read the entire text carefully and thoughtfully, with a view to analyzing the author's strengths and weaknesses relative to his demonstrating his main thesis(es). Papers should utilize the following guidelines:

- A. 1-2 pages of summarization, wherein you synthesize the author's overall message, noting his/her purpose for writing and the book's main thesis(es). This is not a "book report" -- Do not merely "restate" the book's contents.
- B. 3-4 pages of critical ("evaluative") interaction with the book's contents. Here you will note the strengths and weaknesses of the author's arguments as related to the book's main thesis(es), including 3--6 quotes and your thoughtful engagement with these quotes. You will also point out here areas of your agreement/disagreement with the author, including your reasoned judgment as to why you agree/disagree.
- C. 2-3 pages summarizing your paper, including here your understanding of how the text has helped or will help in your personal life and ministry.

2. Term Paper

The student will write a **10-12 page** paper on any issue within the Sermon on the Mount. Although the student may pick any topic within the sermon, he/she must nuance the study by describing how Christ's dealings with the subject and the Pharisee's dealing differed. How Christ fulfilled the law must be considered along with the Christ/Pharisee comparison and contrast.

3. ITS Online Interactivity Forum

Participate with other students worldwide in an ongoing asynchronous threaded discussion

two major course topics. Go to www.ITScourses.org/interactivity/ to register for and enter the ITS On-Line Forum. In order to get the fullest benefit from the Forum, complete the assignment *after* you have listened to *all* the lectures. Be sure to return to the forum after finishing the course to see how others respond. Follow these steps to complete the assignment:

- ♦ Post an original answer to each question for your course (75 word min.).
- ♦ Post your response to any previous answer given to each question (75 word min.).
- ♦ Submit a document to your proctor that contains the original questions, your postings, and the postings to which you responded.

NOTE: Please read the “Assignment Instructions” in the Forum for more details.

Objective: to develop critical thinking skills through personal interaction with the content of the course and the responses of others within a diverse community of learners.

4. Spiritual Formation Project

RATIONALE: Ministry preparation and the Christian life require more than academic exercises. Learners also need personal, spiritual formation, which involves theological reflection and critical thinking on their current practices and assumptions. This process occurs as learners engage in self-reflection and interaction in a community of learning. **With this in mind**, ITS includes in all courses a capstone project addressing these issues and facilitating interaction beyond the formal learning environment (ATS schools, note Standards 3.2.1.3; 4.1.1; 10.3.3.3).

Write a **five-to-six page reflective essay** and **interview a mentor**, discussing the spiritual impact of this course on your life. *Identify your mentor early in the course*, and submit the essay to your grader when you take the final exam. This last project should not be a summary of course content, but an application of course principles. Complete the following:

1. **Personal Reflection and Evaluation: *Reflect on the course*** – To integrate your academic studies with your walk of faith, reflect on the content of the course and evaluate your life in light of what you learned.
 - a. Follow these steps in your reflection:
 - Step 1: What **one** theme, principle, or concept in the course is the most significant to you personally? Why is it significant?

Step 2: What portion(s) of the course brought this theme/principle/concept to light?

Step 3: Think about your past. Why is it vital now for you to deal with and apply this theme/principle/concept?

Step 4: How should this affect your thoughts and actions, and what *specific steps* should you take to *concretely* apply what you have learned?

- b. Write your answers to the above questions in full paragraph form. (Recommended length for this reflection: **approximately three pages**)
 - c. Give a copy of this reflection to your mentor (see #2).
- 2. Community Reflection and Interaction: Interview a mentor** – Since the Holy Spirit uses the input of others to guide and form His people, interview a mentor according to the following guidelines:
- a. Who should you interview? (1-3 are required; 4-6 are recommended)
 1. Someone with whom you have a reasonably close relationship.
 2. Someone who is a mature Christian ministry leader (i.e. a pastor).
 3. Someone who is **not** your grader or a family member.
 4. Someone who values the spiritual formation process.
 5. Someone who is familiar with and values the subject of the course.
 6. Someone who has experience using the content of the course in ministry.

NOTE: **Identify your mentor early in the course**, and give him/her the page entitled “Guidelines for Mentors.”

- b. Focus of the interview – Your interview should focus on the issues and questions you raise in your essay. For example:
 - ◆ What feedback can your mentor give in response to your essay?
 - ◆ In light of the course content, are the conclusions you made appropriate? Why or why not?
 - ◆ What additional advice, deeper insights or broader applications might he/she suggest from his/her own life and ministry?

NOTE: Conduct this interview either in person (preferred) or over the phone. Do **not** use electronic communication (i.e. email, instant messenger, etc). Suggested length: 45 minutes.

3. **Synthesis and Application: *Draw your final conclusions*** – Having reflected on the course and the discussion with your mentor, synthesize what you have learned in these three sections:
- a. Section 1: Begin your essay with the personal reflection from #1 above. This should be exactly what you gave your mentor for the interview.
 - b. Section 2: Comment on your interview, explaining what you discussed and the insights you gained from your mentor. Include the following:
 - ♦ What were the mentor’s comments regarding your essay?
 - ♦ What advice did he/she give?
 - ♦ How did his/her comments expand or correct your application of the course?
 - ♦ Include the person’s name, occupation, and the length of the interview.
 - c. Section 3: Conclude with a synthesis of what you have learned. Answer the following:
 - ♦ If your mentor corrected any thoughts in your “Personal Reflection and Evaluation”, how do you feel about these corrections? Do you agree or disagree? Why?
 - ♦ Synthesizing your thoughts from section one and your mentor’s insight in section two, what final conclusions have you reached? How is this different from section one?
 - ♦ In light of the interview and further reflection, what additional, *specific* changes need to occur in your life and what *concrete* steps will you take to implement them?

NOTE TO STUDENTS: Your effort in this assignment will determine its benefit. If by the end of this course you have not yet reflected critically on your life in light of what you have studied, allow this assignment to guide you in that process. The instructor for this course will not score your essay based on the amount of spiritual fruit you describe; so do not exaggerate (or trivialize) what you have learned. **The primary grading criteria is that you have thoughtfully considered the principles of the course and realistically sought to apply them to your life.** If you have done this and met the minimal requirements (as noted above), you will earn the full points for this assignment.

Note on confidentiality: Perhaps the Holy Spirit is dealing with you in some very personal areas of your life. Because of this, your grader will keep your essay entirely confidential and either return or discard it.

Objective: to stimulate reflection and interaction on course principles in order to enhance personal spiritual formation.

Revised 10/05

5. Final Exam

At the end of the course the student will take an exam which will be over the lectures.

Course Grading

| | | |
|----|--------------------------------|----------------|
| 1. | Book Evaluations | 20% (10% each) |
| 2. | Term Paper | 35% |
| 3. | ITS Online Interactivity Forum | 5% |
| 4. | Spiritual Formation Project | 15% |
| 5. | Final Exam | 25% |

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STUDY LOG



The Sermon on the Mount



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This study log should assist you in a few ways. First, it provides you with a course overview at a glance. You can see the assignments and the course content to which they relate. Second, it provides you with an opportunity to plan your work so that you do not fall behind and sacrifice learning for cramming. Third, it provides both you and your instructor with a way to measure your progress at any given point in the academic term. IF you use this tool well, you may find that completing the course becomes much less stressful and much more beneficial to your learning.

| <i>Assignment</i> | <i>Target</i> | <i>Complete</i> |
|---|---------------|-----------------|
| <i>Identify your mentor for the Spiritual Formation Project right away.</i> | | |
| Lesson Completion | | |
| Lesson 1 | | |
| Lesson 2 | | |
| Lesson 3 | | |
| Lesson 4 | | |
| Lesson 5 | | |
| Lesson 6 | | |
| Lesson 7 | | |
| Lesson 8 | | |
| Lesson 9 | | |
| Lesson 10 | | |
| Book Review: Carson | | |
| Book Review: Patte | | |
| Term Paper | | |
| ITS Online Interactivity Forum | | |
| Spiritual Formation Project | | |
| Final Exam | | |

Course Completed _____ **!!!**

COURSE LESSONS

The Sermon on the Mount

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Lesson 1

Introduction/The Christian's Character (Matthew 5:1-12)

Introduction

Dr. Stott begins this course with a consideration of the Sermon's origin, setting, and authenticity. Stott considers other NT texts that traditionally have correlated with the Sermon on the Mount. Dr. Stott then begins his exposition with the Christian and the Beatitudes.

Learning Outcomes for Lesson 1

At the end of this lesson, you should be able to:

1. Summarize the basic content divisions within the Sermon.
2. Apply each of the Beatitudes to the Christian Life.
3. Compare and contrast the worldly standards of success with the standards of Christ.

Listen to Lecture 1

The outline given below is to serve as a content and note-taking guide. Along the way, questions have been inserted for your interaction and reflection.

INTRODUCTION (Matthew 5:1-2)

- A. Jesus' Withdrawal to the Mountain to Teach
 1. For private instruction with the disciples
 2. As possible parallel to Mount Sinai
- B. The Authenticity of the "Sermon"
 1. The comparison with Luke's "Sermon on the Plain" (Luke 6)
 2. Matthew 5-7 – not an editorial collection of various teachings of Jesus

3. Matthew 5-7 and Luke 6 – not alternate translations or versions of the same sermon
 4. Both “sermons” – summaries of the teaching at a protracted period of retreat
- C. The analysis of the “Sermon”
1. The Christian’s character (Matthew 5:3-12)
 2. The Christian’s influence (Matthew 5:13-16)
 3. The Christian’s righteousness (Matthew 5:17-48)
 4. The Christian’s different piety (Matthew 6:1-18)
 5. The Christian’s different ambition (Matthew 6:19-34)
 6. The Christian’s relationships (Matthew 7:1-27)
 7. The Conclusion: The two ways (Matthew 7:28-29)
- I. THE CHRISTIAN’S CHARACTER (Matthew 5:3-12)
- A. Introduction to the Beatitudes
1. The eight qualities, Christ’s description of all Christians
 2. The qualities commended: spiritual not social
 3. The “Beatitudes,” the comprehensive blessing of the Kingdom
- B. The Christian’s Relationship to God (Matthew 5:3-6)
1. The acknowledgment of spiritual poverty before God (Matthew 5:3)
 2. The repentance in sorrow before God (Matthew 5:4)

3. The gentleness before men due to posture before God (Matthew 5:5)
 4. The continued appetite for righteousness: moral and social (Matthew 5:6)
- C. The Christian's relationship to men (Matthew 5:7-12)
1. Mercy toward others, the evidence of repentance (Matthew 5:7)
 2. Purity in heart, sincerity and transparency (Matthew 5:8)
 3. Peacemaking, involving reconciliation not appeasement (Matthew 5:9)
 4. Persecution, a token of the Christian's genuineness (Matthew 5:10-12)

CONCLUSION: "Jesus Christ congratulates those whom the world most pities, and calls the world's rejects blessed."

Reflection Questions for Lecture 1

1. Discuss the possible “parallel” to Mount Sinai mentioned by Dr. Stott.
2. Briefly summarize Dr. Stott’s position on the authenticity of the Sermon on the Mount.
3. Compare and contrast the sermons in Matthew 5-7 and Luke 6.
4. What are some common characteristics shared within the “Beatitudes?” What applications can we make from discerning the meaning and purpose of the “Beatitudes?”
5. What made Christ’s description of the blessed person so radical and unexpected?
6. How might the “Beatitudes” be expressed in relationships within the Christian community? Have you seen them expressed well or poorly? Explain.

Lesson 2

The Christian's Influence (Matthew 5:13-16)

Introduction

In this lesson, Dr. Stott moves from the Beatitudes to a discussion of what it means to be “salt” and “light” in the world. The influence of the church in the world should be effective, preserving, and influencing for the Kingdom of Christ.

Learning Outcomes for Lesson 2

At the end of this lesson, you should be able to:

1. Explain Jesus' purpose in choosing the metaphors of “salt” and “light.”
2. Critique the success/failure of the church in fulfilling its call to positive influence.
3. Develop personal ownership of the church's social and evangelistic mission.

Listen to Lecture 2

The outline given below is to serve as a content and note-taking guide. Along the way, questions have been inserted for your interaction and reflection.

INTRODUCTION: Recapitulation of Lecture 1: The reversal of human standards as fundamental to Biblical Christianity

- II. THE CHRISTIAN'S INFLUENCE (Matthew 5:13-16)
 - A. Introduction to the *Salt* and *Light*
 1. The influence of the world's rejections upon the world
 2. Love: the Christian's only “retaliation” to persecution
 - B. The Metaphors of “Salt” and “Light”
 1. The necessity of their place in the home

2. The radical distinction of church and world pictured
 3. The characteristics of two communities expressed
 - a. The world
 - (1) The darkness of the world
 - (2) The deterioration of the world
 - b. The church
 - (1) Its illumination
 - (2) Its hindrance of social decay
- C. The “Salt of the Earth” (Matthew 5:13)
1. The affirmation: The church’s restraining influence
 2. The condition: The continued retention of Christian saltiness
 - a. The loss of saltiness due to contamination
 - b. The saltiness as committed Christian discipleship (cf. Luke 14:34)
 3. Christian influence dependent on the church’s being *distinct*, not identical
- D. The “Light of the World” (Matthew 5:14-16)
1. The affirmation: The church’s illuminating influence (cf. John 8:12; Philippians 2:15)
 2. The condition: The continued revealing of Christian light
- E. Three Lessons from the Metaphors
1. The fundamental distinction between the *church* and the *world*
 2. The responsibility of this distinction: The Christian revolutionary in an alienated world

3. The Christian's responsibility as two-fold
 - a. Salt as negative: to stop the spread of evil (a social responsibility)
 - b. Light as positive: to promote the spread of truth (an evangelistic responsibility)

Reflection Questions for Lecture 2

1. Describe the meaning of the metaphors of “salt” and “light.” What are any similarities/differences between Dr. Stott’s interpretation of the metaphors and what you may have typically thought about them?
2. According to Dr. Stott, what is the fundamental distinction between the church and the world?
3. Dr. Stott claims that, in light of Christ’s teaching, the Christian has a social responsibility and an evangelistic responsibility. Briefly explain the Christian’s social responsibility.
4. Evaluate the following statement in light of the meaning of these two metaphors. “This world is not my home; I’m just passing through.”

Lesson 3

The Christian's Righteousness (Matthew 5:17-30)

Introduction

In this lesson, Dr. Stott begins the discussion of the true righteousness that characterizes Kingdom people. You will begin to see how Jesus effectively fulfills the law as He speaks to the “heart” issues behind the Commandments.

Learning Outcomes for Lesson 3

At the end of this lesson, you should be able to:

1. Articulate what Jesus meant by fulfilling the law.
2. Compare/contrast the righteousness of the Pharisees with the righteousness of Jesus.
3. Explain the true meaning of the sixth and seventh commandment.

Listen to Lecture 3

The outline given below is to serve as a content and note-taking guide. Along the way, questions have been inserted for your interaction and reflection.

III. THE CHRISTIAN'S RIGHTEOUSNESS (Matthew 5:17-30)

A. Jesus and the Law (Matthew 5:17-20)

1. Jesus not negating the Law
2. Jesus fulfilling the Law
 - a. Completion of doctrinal instruction
 - b. Fulfillment of predictive prophecy
 - c. True interpretation of moral precepts
3. The continuance of Law
4. The consequence of Jesus' affirmation of Law

- B. The Christian and the Law (Matthew 5:21-48)
 - 1. Introduction to the “six antitheses”
 - a. Four arguments that Jesus does not oppose the Law
 - (1) From antithesis: Citation, the tradition’s distortion of Law
 - (2) From introductory formula: Reference to oral tradition rather than Scripture
 - (3) From the context (cf. Matthew 5:17-20)
 - (4) From the Gospels: Jesus’ submission to the Old Testament
 - b. The opposition to Pharisaic reduction of Law
 - (1) Pharisaic restriction of commandments: on murder, adultery, swearing, neighbor love
 - (2) Pharisaic extension of permissions on divorce, retribution
 - (3) The danger of Pharisaic reductionism in the church today
 - 2. The first antithesis: Murder (Matthew 5:21-26)
 - a. The sixth commandment speaking of murder specifically
 - b. Pharisees’ restriction to murder
 - c. Jesus’ extension to thought and word: anger and insult
 - d. Practical application: the need for immediate restitution illustrated
 - 3. The second antithesis: Adultery (Matthew 5:27-30)
 - a. Pharisaic restriction to act of adultery: external righteousness
 - b. Jesus’ extension to thought, imagination: internal righteousness
 - c. Practical instruction: The necessity to deal with the source of problems: i.e. eyes, hands
 - d. The appropriateness of Jesus’ instruction for today
 - (1) The contemporary assault upon the imagination
 - (2) The rule of Jesus: hypothetical, not universal
 - (3) The need for cultural amputation in light of eternity

Reflection Questions for Lecture 3

1. What is/are the consequence(s) of Jesus' affirmation of the Law?
2. What does it mean to say that Jesus fulfilled the Law? How, then, might we as Christians read and apply the Law?
3. Explain what Dr. Stott means by the danger of Pharisaic reductionism in the church. Do you see this as a legitimate danger? Explain.
4. State the "antitheses" of Christ on murder and adultery.
5. How do you see Jesus Christ as a fulfillment of the law with specific reference to his teaching on murder and adultery?

Lesson 4

The Christian's Righteousness (Matthew 5:31-48)

Introduction

In this lesson, Dr. Stott continues his comparison between Jesus' interpretation of the Law and the Pharisees' interpretation. Again, the "heart" issue behind the law is the emphasis. Divorce, swearing, retribution and loving are the primary themes in this portion of the text.

Learning Outcomes for Lesson 4

At the end of this lesson, you should be able to:

1. Explain the true intention of Jesus' discussion of divorce and the "exception clause."
2. Describe the Pharisaic distortion of the Mosaic legislation in reference to "swearing."
3. Apply the concept that it is God's prerogative alone to seek retribution.
4. Evaluate your concept of love and "neighbor" in comparison to the teaching of Jesus.

Listen to Lecture 4

The outline given below is to serve as a content and note-taking guide. Along the way, questions have been inserted for your interaction and reflection.

4. The third antithesis: Divorce (Matthew 5:31-32; cf. Matthew 19)
 - a. Exegetical background
 - (1) The exceptive clause (5:32), the original word of Jesus
 - (2) Unchastity, the only grounds for divorce
 - (3) The right to remarriage inevitably connected to divorce

- b. Historical background
 - (1) The Rabbinic controversy between lax Hillel school and rigorist Shammai school
 - (2) Jesus identified with Shammai school
 - c. Jesus' dissent from the Pharisees
 - (1) For Pharisees, Moses commanded divorce; for Jews, Moses permitted divorce
 - (2) Pharisees preoccupied with grounds for divorce
 - (3) Pharisees: an extension of Mosaic legislation; Jews: a restriction of Mosaic legislation
 - d. Lessons for today
 - (1) Grounds for divorce, the wrong place to begin discussion
 - (2) Our preoccupation with the Biblical doctrine of marriage and reconciliation
5. The fourth antithesis: Swearing (Matthew 5:33-37; cf. Matthew 23:16-22)
- a. Prohibition of perjury, the original intent of Mosaic legislation
 - b. The Pharisaic distortion of legislation
 - (1) The attention shifted from vow to formulas
 - (2) If divine name avoided, vows not binding
 - c. Jesus' understanding of legislation
 - (1) Reference to formulas concerning the divine person unavoidable
 - (2) The vow binding irrespective of formulas
 - d. Lesson for today
 - (1) No reference here to civil and judicial oaths
 - (2) Swearing with elaborate formulas, an admission of dishonesty

- e. Oaths in Scripture: not to increase God's credibility, but to confirm our faith
- 6. The fifth antithesis: Retaliation (Matthew 5:38-42)
 - a. The Old Testament background (Exodus 21:24)
 - (1) An instruction to magistrates
 - (2) Retribution, the basis for justice (cf. Genesis 9:6)
 - b. Pharisaic extension of Mosaic legislation for personal revenge
 - c. Jesus' interpretation of legislation
 - (1) No contradiction to principle of retribution (cf. Matthew 7:2)
 - (2) The principle not applicable to personal relationships
 - (3) Four illustrations
 - d. Lessons for today
 - (1) Not a basis for pacifism
 - (2) Not because vengeance is wrong, but because it is the prerogative of God, not man
- 7. The sixth antithesis: Neighbor Love (Matthew 5:43-48)
 - a. The Pharisaic restriction to one's own community
 - b. Jesus' extension of the commandment
 - (1) Definition of "neighbor" broadened
 - (2) God's love, the standard
 - (3) God's perfection, the standard

Conclusion: Christian righteousness is to exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees

Reflection Questions for Lecture 4

1. What does Dr. Stott mean by “unchastity” as the only grounds for divorce?
2. Describe the importance of emphasizing marriage and reconciliation rather than being caught up in a “grounds-for-divorce” discussion.
3. How do God’s oaths in Scripture increase our faith?
4. How did Jesus broaden the concept of “neighbor” in this sermon? How do you apply this definition of neighbor to your life?
5. Compare/contrast the legislated righteousness of the Pharisees with the expected righteousness of the Christian.

Lesson 5

The Christian's Religious Life (Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18)

Introduction

In this lesson, Dr. Stott discusses the Christian's call to be different from the Pharisees. Jesus captured the attention of everyone when he stated that the righteousness of the Kingdom exceeds that of the Pharisees. The application of that principle begins in the everyday life of the believer.

Learning Outcomes for Lesson 5

At the end of this lesson, you should be able to:

1. Articulate the central theme of the "Sermon" according to Dr. Stott.
2. Compare/contrast the concept of "motive" as it relates to the Pharisee and the Christian.
3. Resolve the apparent contradiction between Matthew 5:16 and Matthew 6:1-4.
4. Value God's reward for Christian piety as opposed to the Pharisee's reward for external piety.

Listen to Lecture 5

The outline given below is to serve as a content and note-taking guide. Along the way, questions have been inserted for your interaction and reflection.

- IV. The Christian's Religious Life (Matthew 6:1-6)
 - A. Introduction
 1. The location of this text within the "Sermon"
 2. The Christian's call to be different
 - a. The Old Testament background (Leviticus 18:3,4)
 - b. The central theme of the "Sermon"

3. The religious life (6:1-18) distinguished from the secular life (6:19)

B. The Christian's piety, compared to the Pharisees (Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18)

Introduction: Jesus not contesting the practices of giving, fasting, praying

1. Alternative forms of piety

a. The ostentations

- (1) Ancient Pharisee's ostentation
- (2) Modern Christian's ostentation

b. The secret

2. Alternative motivations of piety

a. The Pharisaical motivation: self-glory

- (1) As men-pleasers
- (2) As role-players

b. The tragedy of hypocritical motive: the destruction of the act itself

c. The Christian's motive: God's glory

- (1) The purpose and rationale of the act itself
- (2) The God who sees as guarantor of authenticity

3. Digression: the apparent contradiction between Matthew 5:16 and 6:1-4.

a. Two different aspects of Christian life in view: Good works (Matthew 5) and piety (Matthew 6)

b. Two different failures: cowardice and vanity

c. The object of both passages: God's glory

4. Alternative rewards of piety

a. The Pharisee's reward

- (1) His reward from men
 - (2) His reward paid in full
- b. The Christian's reward
- (1) The secret reward from God
 - (2) The reward, the consummation of the activity itself
 - (3) The reward, immediate and spiritual

Reflection Questions for Lecture 5

1. In the beginning of the lecture, Dr. Stott explains the central theme of the “Sermon.” What is this theme, and why is it central?
2. Explain the importance of motivation as it relates to Christian piety. In what ways have you seen/experienced the results of misplaced motives?
3. Why is Christian piety so often in danger of digressing into Pharisaism? How can we avoid this danger?
4. Do you agree with Dr. Stott’s reconciliation of Matthew 5:16 and 6:1? Explain.
5. How does Jesus’ teaching concerning rewards impact your walk with Him?

Lesson 6

The Christian's Religious Life: Cont. (Matthew 6:7-15)

Introduction

In this lesson, Dr. Stott compares the pagan way of prayer with the Christian's way of prayer. We find Jesus calling His people to the highest standard of purity in their motivation. The Lord's Prayer gives us the appropriate model for pious expression to God.

Learning Outcomes for Lesson 6

At the end of this lesson, you should be able to:

1. Evaluate your prayer life in order to remove the dangers of hypocrisy and verbosity.
2. Summarize the Lord's prayer in reference to its content and intention.
3. Articulate a Christian philosophy of prayer in accordance with the teaching of Jesus.
4. Appreciate the lofty standard which Jesus' righteousness brings to believers.

Listen to Lecture 6

The outline given below is to serve as a content and note-taking guide. Reflection questions appear at the end of the lecture outline for your consideration and interaction.

- A. The Christian's prayer compared to pagan piety (Matthew 6:7-15)

Introduction: Hypocrisy (Pharisaism), a misunderstanding of the *purpose* of prayer
Verbosity, a misunderstanding of the *nature* of prayer

1. The pagan way of prayer
 - a. Mindless, mechanical utterance of words
 - b. A low estimation of God

2. The Christian way of prayer: The Lord's Prayer
 - a. The address to God
 - (1) God, a personal Father
 - (2) God, a loving Father
 - (3) God, a powerful Father
 - (4) Jesus' intention that we recall the nature and character of God before we pray
 - b. The prayer of God's defendants: God's glory
 - (1) God's name: a prayer that in Christian lives, God's name be glorified
 - (2) God's kingdom: a prayer for the extension and consummation of God's kingdom
 - (3) God's will: a prayer that conditions on the earth may approximate those in heaven
 - c. The prayer of God's dependents: man's need
 - (1) Daily bread: the acknowledgment of God's interest in and provision for daily material needs
 - (2) Forgiveness: the acknowledgment of the soul's need for forgiveness and reconciliation
 - (3) Deliverance from evil: the negative and positive petition for moral deliverance
 - d. The Trinitarian theology in the three petitions concerning man's need

Conclusion: The Lord's Prayer, an expression of a deeply satisfying Christian philosophy

- Christians as God's defendants and dependents
- The Christian's motive: God's glory; his means: God's grace

Reflection Questions for Lecture 6

1. Compare the Pharisees' misunderstanding of prayer to that of the pagan.
2. Analyze the Lord's Prayer and briefly discuss what is said of God and man respectively. How have we in contemporary culture blurred the distinction between God and man?
3. How do we fulfill the roles as God's dependents and defendants?
4. What things ought to change in your prayer life as a result of this teaching?
5. How would you teach a child to pray? What might you tell him/her to include and to avoid?

Lesson 7

The Christian's Ambition (Matthew 6:19-34)

Introduction

In this lesson, Dr. Stott discusses the universal pursuit of treasure. Christian's are to seek treasures from above. In seeking this treasure, we must not be filled with anxiety because everything is in the hands of our loving God. If our ambitions are God-centered, we will lack nothing needed.

Learning Outcomes for Lesson 7

At the end of this lesson, you should be able to:

1. Explain the meaning of the prohibition against pursuing earthly treasure.
2. Analyze the metaphor of the eye in reference to human ambition.
3. Rest in the protection and provision of God who promises to give what we need.
4. Evaluate your commitments to determine whether you serve God or money.

Listen to Lecture 7

The outline given below is to serve as a content and note-taking guide. Along the way, questions have been inserted for your interaction and reflection.

- V. The Christian's Ambition (Matthew 6:19-34)
 - A. Introduction
 1. No dichotomy between private (6:1-18) and public (6:19-34) life
 2. The necessity of choice
 - B. Comparative durability: the treasures (Matthew 6:19-21)

Introduction: the assumption that everyone is amassing treasure

1. Earthly treasure corruptible
 - a. The prohibition not against:
 - (1) Possessions
 - (2) Investment of capital
 - (3) Saving
 - (4) Enjoyment of created things
 - b. The prohibition against self-accumulation of and preoccupation with material treasure
 2. Heavenly treasure incorruptible
 3. The importance of the heart being in the right place
- C. Comparative benefit: Ambitions (Matthew 6:22-23)
1. The eye, the lamp of the body
 2. The importance of the eye (ambition) being healthy
- D. Comparative worth: God and money (Matthew 6:24)
1. Slavery, the historical background
 2. Two alternatives, not three
 3. The intrinsic worthiness of God and worthlessness of money
- E. Comparative preoccupations (Matthew 6:25-34)
1. The wrong ambition: Anxiety (Matthew 6:25, 31, 34)
 - a. Anxiety incompatible with Christian faith
 - (1) Argument from human experience (6:25)

- (2) Argument from sub-human experience (6:26-30)
 - b. Three related problems
 - (1) This promise, no exemption from earning our living
 - (2) This promise, no exemption from responsibility to feed and clothe others
 - (3) This promise, no exemption from the experience of trouble
 - c. Anxiety incompatible with common sense (6:34)
2. The right ambition: To be God-centered (Matthew 6:33)

Reflection Questions for Lecture 7

1. What are examples of preoccupation with material treasure in your life? How can you turn these ambitions in the appropriate direction?
2. Discuss the historical background of slavery presented by Dr. Stott. How does this help your understanding of the word picture Jesus creates in this section of the “Sermon”?
3. Why is anxiety incompatible with the Christian faith?
4. At the end of the lecture, how does Dr. Stott describe what it means to be God-centered?

Lesson 8

The Christian's Relationships (Matthew 7:1-12)

Introduction

In this lesson, Dr. Stott moves to the last chapter in the “Sermon.” As Christians, we should allow God to take His rightful place in our lives as our ruler. We relate to Him as our Heavenly Father who is interested in our needs. Our relationship with Him should be reflected in how we relate to others.

Learning Outcomes for Lesson 8

At the end of this lesson, you should be able to:

1. Apply the intended meaning of Matthew 7:1 to your relationships with others.
2. Explain what Jesus meant concerning the “dogs” and “pigs” as it relates to the Gospel.
3. Evaluate your prayer life according to the standard in Matthew 7:7-11.
4. Practice the “Golden Rule” with greater understanding of its motivation and teaching.

Listen to Lecture 8

The outline given below is to serve as a content and note-taking guide. Along the way, questions have been inserted for your interaction and reflection.

VI. The Christian's Relationships (Matthew 7:1-27)

A. Relationship to the brother (Matthew 7:1-5)

1. Not to be a judge
 - a. Linguistic introduction
 - b. Not a suspension of critical faculties
 - c. A prohibition against condemnatory and censorious judging
 - d. Each man among the judged

2. Not to be a hypocrite
 3. To be a concerned and responsible brother
- B. Relationship to “dogs” and “pigs” (Matthew 7:6)
1. The connection between 7:1-5 and 7:6
 2. The identity of these “dogs” and “pigs” as hardened unbelievers
 3. The Christian not to cheapen the Gospel by offering it to these
 4. The vivid contrast between Holy message and unholy people
- C. Relationship to the Heavenly Father (Matthew 7:7-11)
1. The promises of prayer (cf. the pattern of prayer in Matthew 6)
 - a. Promises attached to direct commands
 - b. Promises expressed in universal statements
 - c. Promises illustrated by homely parallels
 2. The promises and the problem of unanswered prayer
 - a. Limitations on promises
 - (1) Promises not unconditional
 - (2) Prayer not magical
 - (3) Self-guarded against unwise prayer
 - b. God’s answer according to His wisdom and goodness
- D. Relationship to ALL men (Matthew 7:12)
1. The Golden rule, a new ethic
 2. The Golden rule, a high and flexible standard

Reflection Questions for Lecture 8

1. According to Dr. Stott, how should we apply the commandment in Matthew 7:1 to refrain from judging others? Do you agree with his interpretation? Explain.
2. Why are we not to cheapen the Gospel by offering it to “dogs” and “pigs”?
3. What are some problems or explanations of unanswered prayer?
4. How would you explain a supposed “unanswered” prayer to a person in your church going through tremendous crisis?
5. Dr. Stott articulates the Golden Rule as a “new” ethic and a “flexible” standard. What does he mean by these descriptions?

Lesson 9

The Christian's Relationships (Matthew 7:13-27)

Introduction

In this lesson, Dr. Stott continues the discussion of the Christian's relationships. In our walk of faith, we will be confronted with false teaching. The discerning Christian will be aware of these deceptions and avoid heresy. Being a follower of Christ is a wonderful privilege, yet it is a great responsibility.

Learning Outcomes for Lesson 9

At the end of this lesson, you should be able to:

1. Avoid common misinterpretations and applications of Matthew 7:13-14.
2. Test for deceptive teaching using the criteria set forth by Jesus.
3. Articulate the desired response to Jesus' teaching.
4. Value the importance of practicing the teaching of Jesus rather than simply hearing it.

Listen to Lecture 9

The outline given below is to serve as a content and note-taking guide. Along the way, questions have been inserted for your interaction and reflection.

- A. Relationship with fellow-pilgrims (Matthew 7:13-14)
 1. The necessity of choice
 - a. Two ways
 - b. Two gates
 - c. Two destinations
 - d. Two crowds
 2. Two cautions on the use of this text

- a. Against dogmatism on the number of the redeemed
 - b. Against speculation on the salvation of those who have not heard
- B. Relationship with the False Prophet (Matthew 7:15-20)
- 1. The connection of 7:13, 14 and 7:15-20
 - 2. The general warning against false prophets
 - a. The distinction of truth and falsehood
 - b. The vigilance demanded by the Christian
 - 3. The specific test for false prophets
 - a. Their fruit
 - b. Their character
 - c. Their teaching
 - d. Their influence
 - 4. The application of the test
 - 5. A caution against heresy hunting
- C. Relationship to Jesus Christ (Matthew 7:21-27)
- 1. Jesus' concern for the proper response to his teaching
 - 2. The warning against verbal profession alone
 - a. Contrast between saying and doing
 - b. A verbal profession: a good profession in itself
 - (1) Polite
 - (2) Orthodox
 - (3) Fervent
 - (4) Public
 - (5) Spectacular

- c. The profession inadequate; merely verbal; not moral
- 3. The warning against intellectual knowledge alone
 - a. Contrast between hearing and doing
 - b. The foundation; the quality of a Christian revealed only in crisis
- 4. The solemn responsibility of being a Christian

Reflection Questions for Lecture 9

1. Dr. Stott cautions against dogmatism on the number of the redeemed and against speculation concerning the salvation of those who have not heard. Why do you think Dr. Stott teaches against these things? Do you think we should heed Dr. Stott's advice? Explain.
2. What is the connection between Matthew 7:13-14 and 15:20? Why is this connection so important?
3. How does Dr. Stott articulate his caution against heresy hunting? Do you agree with his statements?
4. According to Jesus' teaching on the difference between hearing and doing, what could be said about the "carnal" Christian?

Lesson 10
The Christian's Religious Life
Matthew 7:28-29

Introduction

In this lesson, Dr. Stott concludes his discussion of the “Sermon.” The authority of Jesus Christ is completely unique because He is the Son of God. The Christian way of life is truly the only way for blessing and fulfillment. While believers are different from other men, they are identified by their likeness to God.

Learning Outcomes for Lesson 10

At the end of this lesson, you should be able to:

1. Explain the absolute uniqueness of the authority of Jesus Christ.
2. Appreciate Jesus' authority as something to rest within rather than to fear.
3. Demonstrate with your own life the appropriate distinction of being “like God.”
4. Value the Sermon on the Mount as an effective body of instruction for the daily life of today's Christian church.

Listen to Lecture 10

The outline given below is to serve as a content and note-taking guide. Along the way, questions have been inserted for your interaction and reflection.

- VII. Reflection Upon the Teacher and the Followers (Matthew 7:28-29)
- A. Introduction: Two common misconceptions
 1. With respect to the teacher
 2. With respect to his teaching
 - B. The uniqueness of the teacher: His authority

1. His authority as the Teacher (cf. 7:28, 29)
 2. His authority as the Messiah of Old Testament expectation (cf. 5:17ff)
 3. His authority as the Lord (cf. 7:21ff)
 4. His authority as the Savior
 5. His authority as the Judge (cf. 7:21-23)
 6. His authority as the Son of God (cf. 11:27)
 7. His authority as God Himself (cf. 5:11-12, 7:21, 23)
- C. The distinctiveness of Christians who follow the teaching
1. The negative distinction: not like other men
 2. The positive distinction: like God

Conclusion:

1. How to make the decision of such magnitude
2. Jesus' reason for making choice: The Christian way
 - a. The only way of blessedness
 - b. The only way to serve our generation
 - c. The only way to honor His name

Reflection Questions for Lecture 10

1. Dr. Stott introduces the lecture by discussing two common misconceptions about the teacher and his teaching. What are these misconceptions, and where do you see them in your life or church?
2. What was so scandalous about *Jesus* being authoritative? Why did the Pharisees have such a problem believing Him?
3. Is the believing community achieving the goal of finding its distinction with God? Is so, what have we done properly? If not, what can we do to revitalize this distinction?
4. The Christian way as the *only* way is an unpopular message today. How might you articulate the “narrowness” of Christianity to a typical postmodern audience?
5. List three to five key concepts that have impacted you the most as a result of this study. How will your spiritual walk be different from this point forward?