

An online portion of *Sermon on the Mount: The Jesus Manifesto* (2008). You may purchase this book online for access to a detailed exposition of the Sermon on the Mount. www.jesuswalk.com/ebooks/manifesto.htm



Appendix 3: Inductive Bible Study Questions for the Sermon on the Mount

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Source: <http://www.jesuswalk.com/manifesto/manifesto-inductive-questions.pdf>

Most groups can use the questions contained in the online lessons or those in Appendix 1 of the book version. However, some groups may want to approach the Sermon on the Mount using an "inductive" approach, you are welcome to use inductive questions I prepared for a 1999 online Bible study. Note that that the inductive questions include 14 lessons, compared to the 13 lessons in my book and online study *Sermon on the Mount: The Jesus Manifesto* (2008)

Because these questions would add unduly to the length of this book, I have made them available online in PDF format to be duplicated at no additional charge. However, make sure that the copyright information appears at the bottom of each copy you make.

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1. Paradoxical People: The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-13)

The inner spirit and character qualities of Kingdom citizens are contrasted with the world's values.

Definition: "Synoptic Gospels." The first three Gospels often use very similar wording. They are called the Synoptic Gospels. The word "synoptic" comes from two Greek words *syn-*, "together" and *opsesthai*, "to see". It means "presenting or taking the same or common view." John's Gospel, on the other hand, is written by an eyewitness from a different perspective and in a different style. While we aren't going to be spending much time on the "synoptic problem," I want you to understand what I mean by the "Synoptic Gospels."

Level 1: Observation Questions. What does the text say?

1.1 In what kind of location was this teaching given? To whom was it given? (see also 7:28)

Comment: The word "Beatitude" comes from the Latin root *beatus*, "happy," from the past participle of Latin *beare*, "to bless." So the word "The Beatitudes" means "The Blessings." It is only a happy coincidence of the English language that the idea of be-attitudes or "attitudes of being" is suggested by the word Beatitude.

1.2 Each beatitude consists of two parts. What are these parts? Do ALL the consequences come to all those considered blessed? Or does a particular consequence follow a particular characteristic? What is the relationship of the Beatitudes to the Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23)?

Level 2: Interpretation Questions. What does the text mean?

2.1 (5:3) What does it mean "to be blessed"? Look up the word "bless" in an English dictionary.

2.2 (5:3) Why is it necessary to be aware of your spiritual poverty before you can become a Christian?

Comment: In Matthew's Gospel we encounter the phrase "kingdom of heaven" where the other Synoptic Gospels, Mark and Luke, use "kingdom of God." Matthew was written especially for Jewish Christians who tried to avoid uttering the name of God so as not to break the Third Commandment. It's kind of like using the expression "For heaven's sake!" to avoid using God's name wrongly.

2.3 (5:3) Is the Kingdom a geographic empire or the sphere of God's reign? What trouble would a proud person have submitting to a reign?

2.4 (5:4) What kind of mourning is necessary for a person to become a Christian? What kind of mourning is a common experience of Christians? (See Isaiah 61:2-3; Ezekiel 9:4.)

Comment: The word translated "meek" is Greek *praus*, meaning "'gentle, humble, considerate, meek' in the older favorable sense" (BAGD 698-699). This is confusing for us, since English has two definitions for "meek": (1) "enduring injury with patience and without resentment, mild," and (2) "deficient in spirit and courage, submissive." Jesus uses this word to describe himself in "... for I am gentle (*praus*) and humble in heart...." (Matthew 11:29)

2.5 (5:5) How does this sort of gentleness contrast with the world's ideal? How is humility important to Christlikeness?

2.6 (5:6) How can an intense desire for righteousness put you at odds with the world? What sort of righteousness is Jesus talking about, do you think? What promise are we given?

2.7 According to 5:7 and 6:14-15, will God be merciful to us if we don't show mercy? Why or why not, do you think? How does mercy agree with or run counter to the world's standards?

2.8 (5:8) WHY can people with a pure heart see, know, and discern God? Why can't "chronic" sinners see God? How do we obtain the pure or clean heart that Jesus describes?

2.9 (5:9) In what way was Jesus a peacemaker? In what ways can we be peacemakers? Why is peacemaking so God-like that those who practice it are termed "sons of God"?

2.10 (5:10-11) Why should we rejoice when we are persecuted? What keeps this from being some kind of sick masochism, or finding pleasure in pain? Why is the blessing "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" appropriate for the persecuted?

2.11 Why do you think Jesus made each of these Beatitudes a paradox?

Level 3: Application Questions. What Does It Mean to Me?

3.1 Without coming across as sounding like you're perfect (We know better!), can you share a story or two of how God helped you develop one of these counter-culture characteristics? How do these character qualities develop in a person?

3.2 Which of these characteristics of Kingdom citizens is the most difficult for you to take hold of? Why do you think that is?

2. Witnessing People: Living As Salt and Light In The World (Matthew 5:11-16)

Kingdom citizens carry on Israel's role of being a light to the nations.

Related songs: "Pass It On," by Kurt Kaiser, 1969; and "This Little Light of Mine, I'm Gonna Let It Shine."

Level 1: Observation Questions. What does the text say?

1.1 How does Jesus transition from the Beatitudes into his teaching on salt and light? What do vss. 11-12 have to do with vss. 13-16?

Level 2: Interpretation Questions. What does the text mean?

Comment: A proper amount of salt (sodium chloride) is essential to sustain life, so ancient peoples traded to obtain it. In Palestine, most salt came from salt caves in the area around the Dead Sea. Both ancient and modern peoples have used salt both as (1) a food preservative (so Plutarch and Baruch 6:28), and (2) to bring out the flavor of foods (Job 6:6; Colossians 4:6). It was also used to make covenants and mixed with sacrifices.

2.1 What kinds of foods do we preserve by means of salt today? In what sense are Christians the "salt of the earth" using the preservation analogy?

2.2 In what sense are Christians the "salt of the earth" using the seasoning analogy?

Comment: The salt the Palestinians obtained was often impure, mixed with alkali salts from around the Dead Sea. Water could leach out the sodium chloride, leaving the other salts intact, so that it looked like salt but tasted insipid.

2.3 What would be the symptoms of a Christian who has lost his "saltiness"? Is it possible for a believer to detect such symptoms in himself or herself?

Comment: The KJV translates Greek *luchnos*, "lamp" as "candle." This is a bit misleading to modern ears, since "candle" suggests to us long wax tapers with a wick protruding from the top. The word is better translated "lamp." Palestinian homes were commonly lit by small clay lamps which could be held in the palm of the hand. The most primitive consisted of a saucer to hold the olive oil, in which was immersed one end of a wick that lay in an indentation or spout in the rim. Later clay lamps were sometimes covered, with a hole in the top in which to pour the oil, and a hole at one side for the wick. A lampstand would elevate the lamp for greatest illumination within a room.

2.4 Why were ancient cities often situated on hills? How would this affect their visibility? How did a lampstand affect visibility?

2.5 In the parable of "the salt of the earth," Jesus warns of the danger of salt losing its flavor. In the parable of "the light of the world," he warns of lights being hidden under bowls. What dangers do these warn of in the life of a Christian disciple?

2.6 (5:13b) In what sense are saltless believers worthless?

2.7 (5:16) According to our text, what is the intended goal of a disciple's light-bearing? How does that bring glory to God?

2.8 Why are we tempted to curb our saltiness and hide our light? How does this relate to vss. 10-12? How does hiding our light affect the glory of God? Why must glory and suffering go hand in hand? Was Jesus' suffering necessary? Is ours? What does this have to do with Romans 12:2?

(Select ONE of the following to comment on)

2.9 EXTRA CREDIT. Which does the salt and light represent: deeds or words? Support your answer from the context.

2.10 EXTRA CREDIT. What is the proper role of Christian witness in a country where identification as a Christian means imprisonment or death?

2:11 EXTRA CREDIT. How do Christians fulfill God's mission for Israel to be "a light to the nations"? (Isaiah 42:6; 49:6; 60:3)

Level 3: Application Questions. What Does It Mean to Me?

3.1 Before what person or group of people is it most difficult for you to "let your light shine"?

3.2 We must walk a fine line. What ways have you learned to let your conversation be "seasoned with salt" (Colossians 4:6) without coming across as obnoxious or "holier than thou"? Describe what works for you.

3. Fulfillment of the Law (Matthew 5:17-20)

Does Jesus abolish the Law or fulfill it? He defines true righteousness.

For background on this passage, please read the Insight: "Introduction to the Religion of the Pharisees."

Level 1: Observation Questions. What does the text say?

1.1 In an English dictionary, look up the words "jot" and "tittle" (rhythms with "little," and is not to be mistaken for "title").

1.2 What people or groups are mentioned in this passage?

Level 2: Interpretation Questions. What does the text mean?

Comment: "The Law" refers especially the Torah or Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible. "The Prophets" include both the writings of the Prophets (what we call the major and minor prophets) as well as Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles (what we call the historical books). Jesus' phrase "The Law and the Prophets" refers to the whole of the Old Testament Scripture.

2.1 What would it mean if Jesus "abolished" the Old Testament requirements? What does it mean that he "fulfilled" or "accomplished" them?

2.2 In what sense did he fulfill the Ceremonial Law, or religious law that dealt with the temple and priests and sacrifices, with the forgiveness of sins and holiness before God?

2.3 In what sense did Jesus fulfill the Civil Law that pertained to property and marriage, to civil liability and inheritance, to the right of Israel's kings and the earthly theocracy of the nation of Israel?

2.3 In what sense did Jesus fulfill the Moral Law contained in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20), the Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4-5), and other passages -- the commandments that describe a person's actions and character before God?

2.4 Which of these have now been fulfilled? Which remain to be fulfilled? Which of these are obligatory for Christians today?

2.5 (5:19-20) The Pharisees were extremely scrupulous in their law-keeping. Why is Jesus so critical of their kind of righteousness? (For background and help with this question see "Insight: Introduction to the Religion of the Pharisees" above.)

2.6 Can you see any tendencies in the church today to effectively "abolish" the Old Testament from our Christian faith? Can you see any tendencies to reestablish legalism as the primary expression of the Christian faith? Can you see any tendencies to do away with moral expectations and obedience for Christians?

2.7 EXTRA CREDIT: Using ONLY Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount so far (5:1-20), what kind of righteousness that "surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law" is he promulgating? What does this righteousness consist of? (This is an exercise in understanding the Sermon on the Mount itself. For this question, please resist the temptation to quote from other passages in the New Testament. Fun, yes?)

Level 3: Application Questions. What Does It Mean to Me?

3.1 How does Jesus' demand for righteousness in 5:20 challenge you personally? Do you think he requires you to obey him? Or is he speaking of imputed righteousness only?

3.2 EXTRA CREDIT. (Okay, now we'll venture out of the Sermon on the Mount for a moment.) How does Jesus' teaching to Nicodemus the Pharisee on entering the Kingdom in John 3:3-8, relate to Matthew 5:17-20? How did this new birth bring something "new" into your life? (Please share what God has done in your life, but keep the length of this answer fairly concise. Also please avoid Christian "jargon" phrases and theological terminology, such as "Jesus washed me in the blood," and just tell us what happened to you.)

4. The Spirit of Reconciliation (Matthew 5:21-26)

Murder can be prohibited by law, but the law's spirit is reconciliation, which requires a changed heart.

This passage on murder is the first of six examples Jesus gives to illustrate the importance of the spirit of the law in contrast to the Pharisees' severely limiting its application by their "tradition of the elders." The other examples are: adultery, divorce, oaths, retaliation, and love for enemies.

Some concepts don't teach well through the inductive method, such as word definitions. So I'll supply some from the Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich, Greek-English Lexicon (Second Edition):

Phoneuo (vs. 21) - "murder, kill" (p. 864). *orgizo* (vs. 22a) - "be angry" (p. 579). *rhaka* (vs. 22b) - "a term of abuse, as a rule derived from the Aramaic [word meaning 'empty one'] found in the Talmud, 'fool, empty-head'" (p. 733-734). *moros* (vs. 23c) - "foolish, stupid" (p. 531). *Gehenna* (22) - "'Valley of the Sons of Hinnom,' a ravine south of Jerusalem. There, according to later Jewish popular belief, the Last Judgment was to take place. In the gospels it is the place of punishment in the next life, 'hell'" (p. 153)

Finally, let's refrain from discussing the issue of capital punishment, please. That is not the focus of Jesus' words in this passage.

Level 1: Observation Questions. What does the text say?

Comment: To better understand how the Bible uses the concepts of "anger" and "fool," we're going outside of the Sermon on the Mount for a couple of questions.

1.1 Anger is always a dangerous emotion. Look up the following verses. In some, anger is looked on as a sin, in others as a weakness, and in still others as appropriate.

Exodus 32:19; 34:6-7; Numbers 11:1; 20:10-11; 32:13; Job 5:2; Psalm 37:8; Proverbs 12:16; 14:17; 14:29; 15:18; 16:32; 19:11; 19:19; 22:24-25; 25:28; 29:22; Ecclesiastes 7:9; Jonah 4:2; Mark 3:5; 11:15-17; 2 Corinthians 12:20; Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 4:26, 31-32; Colossians 3:8; Titus 1:7; and James 1:19-20.

In general, what kind of anger is seen as sinful in these passages? How can we keep anger from becoming sinful?

1.2 The word "fool" or "fools" appears 56 times in the Book of Proverbs. Sample these passages in Proverbs 1:7, 22; 8:5; 10:18, 21, 23; and 15:5. In these verses from Proverbs, is being a fool a moral defect or a just excusable ignorance?

Level 2: Interpretation Questions. What does the text mean?

Comment: A.B. Bruce distinguishes between the word "Raca" and "fool" in this way: "Raca expresses contempt for a man's head -- you stupid!; [The Greek word] "more" expresses contempt for his heart and character = you scoundrel!" (Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels in The Expositor's Greek Testament, 1897, p. 107.)

2.1 Why does Jesus treat calling someone a fool in the same classification as murder?

2.2 Does this mean that murder is no worse than an angry insult in God's eyes?

2.3 Vss. 23-24 discuss some fault against one's brother. Vss. 25- 26 discuss settling a civil suit before going to court. What is the overarching theme of Jesus' teaching in our entire passage, vss. 21-26?

2.4 (23-24) Why shouldn't we worship while a brother has something against us (or us against them, Mark 11:25)?

Comment: Vss. 25-26 contain a mini-parable that assumes "your" adversary to be right in a civil suit that might result in "you" being thrown into debtor's prison. (Be careful, if you try to stretch the meaning of this parable you get into an interpretational quagmire.)

2.5 (25-26) What is the main point Jesus is making in this parable? How does this relate to the overarching theme of the whole passage?

2.6 How does Jesus' interpretation of "Thou shalt not kill" relate to Jesus' other teaching in this Sermon: Matthew 5:7, 9, 43-44; 6:14-15; and 7:1-2? (A general answer is enough; no need to tackle each verse.)

Level 3: Application Questions. What Does It Mean to Me?

3.1 How far should we go to bring about reconciliation with someone whom we have offended? Are there any situations that we shouldn't try to resolve? Or that we can't resolve?

3.2 EXTRA CREDIT: Share an example in your life where, by practicing biblical principles, you were able to bring about reconciliation with someone you had been at odds with. (Sharing what has worked -- and what hasn't -- helps us learn from our brothers and sisters how to live the Christian life.)

5. The Spirit of Marriage (Matthew 5:27-32 with 19:1-12)

Divorce had become a legal device. Jesus examines the heart of sex and marriage.

This section examines Jesus' teaching on sex and divorce. Hmmm. Pretty controversial topics. I pray that you will discuss them in a spirit of learning rather than a spirit of dogma, for you'll probably find some participants who disagree with you. Our job is not to convince one another, but to learn from Jesus. His teaching is our focus.

There is no way for us to be comprehensive on these subjects, and many books have been written to prove that. :-) But let's examine the text together, and seek to get our hearts and minds in tune with that.

I have prepared "Insight: Pornography and the Sermon on the Mount" (above). Men, in particular, tend to be tempted with pornography. You'll find a lot of helpful material linked to this page. If you are struggling with pornography, we support and uphold you. May this lesson bless you.

Many of you have been divorced and many have remarried. You may find some of Jesus' words personally troubling. I want you to know that I love you and accept you. Whether or not there was sin involved in your divorce and remarriage, that is behind you. Our purpose is not to heap guilt upon one another, but to understand Jesus' heart, and God's desire for marriage. I am privileged to serve a God who forgives, and forgives abundantly. Let us be gentle with one another, as Jesus is gentle with us -- even as he speaks his words to our hearts and reconciles us to his will and his mind.

Questions on Matthew 5:27-30

0.1 DEFINITIONS. Look up in an English dictionary the words translated "adultery" (5:27), "divorce" (5:31-32), "fornication" (KJV, 5:32), "eunuch" (19:12), "hyperbole," "chastity," "celibacy," and the verb "pervert," and write the definitions in your notes.

0.2 What is the point of similarity between adultery and lust? What is the difference? How does lust break the Tenth Commandment? (Exodus 20:17)

0.3 EXTRA CREDIT: God has given us a good and natural sexual desire for the opposite sex. How do we distinguish between that God-given sexual desire and forbidden lust?

0.4 What is wrong with pornography? Who are the victims of this "victimless" activity?

0.4 Sex is very closely tied to our core sense of person. This means that as we are healed in our view towards sex, it goes a long way toward making us whole inside. How would you counsel a brother who shared with you that he had trouble with pornography? How can you protect yourself against temptation over the Internet? At the beach or poolside this summer? With your TV?

0.5 EXTRA CREDIT. The pious and influential Christian teacher Origen (187-254 AD) castrated himself when he was young to avoid sexual temptation. Was he wrong to take Jesus' words literally (5:29-30 and 19:12)? If Jesus' words were intended as hyperbole, what did Jesus mean by them?

0.6 (5:27-30) The spirit of our age -- and the spirit in the Greek and Roman cities where Paul planted churches -- is very accepting, even approving, of lust. According to Jesus' words, how seriously are we to take lust?

Questions on Matthew 5:27-30

Level 1: Observation Questions. What does the text say?

Read: Matthew 5:31-32 and Matthew 19:1-12.

1.1 To whom is Jesus speaking in the Sermon on the Mount? In Matthew 19:1-9? In 19:10-12?

Level 2: Interpretation Questions. What does the text mean?

Comment: In the Middle East in ancient times divorce was common and taken for granted. This already widespread practice was regulated and therefore limited by Deuteronomy 24:1-4. Note that the only "command" in this passage is that a husband cannot remarry a wife whom he has divorced, after she has remarried, "after she has been defiled" (vs. 4). Nor could a husband just send his wife away casually. There was the requirement that the husband must write out a legal document called a "certificate of divorce" and give it to his wife (and then forfeit his wife's dowry, which made divorce too expensive for most husbands).

The allowable cause for the divorce, "because he finds something indecent about her" (NIV, vs. 1) was hotly debated -- in Jesus' day and in ours. Literally the word means "nakedness of a thing" and may be a technical term. We just aren't sure. (Sources: J.A. Thompson, *Deuteronomy* [Tyndale Old Testament Commentary series; InterVarsity Press, 1974], pp. 243-245. P.C. Craigie, *Deuteronomy* [NICOT, Eerdmans, 1976], pp. 304-306.)

In Matthew 19:1-12, the Pharisees are trying to put Jesus on the spot, and get him to make a controversial statement that would alienate people against him. The more lenient rabbinical school of Hillel interpreted Deuteronomy 24:1 as allowing divorce for any reason, even a wife spoiling her husband's dinner. The stricter school of Shammai believed it referred to only to adultery. (Leon Morris, *Matthew* [Eerdmans, 1992], pp. 479-480)

2.1 EXTRA CREDIT: (19:3-6) Does Jesus side with Rabbi Hillel or Rabbi Shammai? What exception does Jesus give to his prohibition of divorce? How does this exception relate to Deuteronomy 24:1-4?

2.2 Jesus appeals to Genesis 2:23-24 for his statement that the two will become one flesh (19:5). Question: Do people need to be Christians to be joined as one flesh? Is this making into "one flesh" accomplished by a religious ceremony or by natural law? Of those who have entered into a first marriage, what percentage do you think have been "joined together" by God, according to Jesus' statement in 19:6?

2.3 (19:7-8) According to Jesus, does the Mosaic law command divorce? Does it allow or regulate it? Why does it allow divorce at all?

2.4 (19:8b) What was God's original intention ("from the beginning") for marriage and divorce, according to Jesus?

2.5 (19:10) Why do you think Jesus' disciples reacted so negatively to his teaching? Did they misunderstand it?

2.6 EXTRA CREDIT: (19:11) Does vs. 11 refer to vs. 10 or to vs. 12? What difference would that make in the interpretation?

2.7 (19:12c) How might being a "eunuch" for the kingdom apply today? How can priests and nuns and other Christian workers benefit from celibacy? How can the kingdom benefit?

Comment: Though we can't get into the whole issue here, some feel that Paul indicates that desertion and divorce by a non-believing spouse is grounds for remarriage (1 Corinthians 7:12-16), an area Jesus hadn't commented upon. Please, however, let's NOT debate the matter in this study. Notice, also, that Paul underscores and agrees with Jesus' specific teaching in 1 Corinthians 7:10-11.

2.8 (19:9) Does a person who has remarried after a divorce that wasn't caused by marital unfaithfulness, live in a perpetual state of adultery? Should that person divorce or separate in order to get back into God's will? How can he or she get back into God's will, or is that no longer possible?

Level 3: Application Questions. What Does It Mean to Me?

3.1 What can you do in your marriage to fulfill God's original desire that you and your spouse be "one flesh." What kinds of things can you do to strengthen your own marriage relationship?

3.2 The Church has always been supportive of those who are hurting or scarred. In Christ, we help people make the best of what is sometimes a difficult situation. What can you do to extend Christ's healing love to someone who is struggling in his or her marriage? What can you do to bring healing to someone who is or was divorced?

6. The Spirit of Promising (Matthew 5:33-37)

In Jesus' day the Pharisees had developed an elaborate system of oath-taking. Jesus calls his disciples instead to truth-telling.

Level 1: Observation Questions. What does the text say?

1.1 What did the Old Testament have to say about swearing an oath? Give your summary of the teaching in Exodus 20:7; Leviticus 19:12; Numbers 30:2; and Deuteronomy 23:21.

1.2 Give some examples from Matthew 23:16-22 of how the teachers of the law and the Pharisees had corrupted oath-taking. What was the final result of the Pharisees' view of oath-taking?

Level 2: Interpretation Questions. What does the text mean?

2.1 (34-35) What is the common denominator of the oaths given in vss. 34-35?

2.2 EXTRA CREDIT: In light of the Pharisees' practices described in Matthew 23:16-22, how did Jesus' examples in vss. 34-35 speak to their error?

2.3 (36) What reason does Jesus give for not swearing by your head? Why is this a good reason not to take an oath?

2.4 (37) Given the misuse of oaths in Jesus' time, why does he say that "anything beyond this comes from the evil one"?

2.5 (37) Put vs. 37 in your own words, as if you were going to explain the sentence to your son or daughter.

2.6 EXTRA CREDIT: How do you explain Paul's and God's use of oaths? Do these break Jesus' statement in vs. 37? See Matthew 26:23-24; Romans 1:9; 2 Corinthians 1:23; 1 Thessalonians 2:5, 10; Philippians 1:8; Hebrews 6:17, etc.)

2.7 Is Jesus' prohibition on oath-taking absolute? For example, should you abstain from taking an oath in court or when being "sworn in" to civil office? Why or why not?

2.8 What sin is vs. 37 intended to prevent? How does observing vs. 37 fulfill the Spirit of the Law: love?

Level 3: Application Questions. What Does It Mean to Me?

3.1 When you make a promise to your spouse, or children, or boss, are you usually believed? Why or why not? What, besides taking an oath, might increase your credibility as a disciple?

7. The Spirit of Love (Matthew 5:38-48)

Pharisaic Judaism justified retaliation and hatred of enemies. Jesus looks to the spirit of the Torah: love.

The passage we are going to consider now is one of the most controversial and misunderstood parts of Jesus' teaching, where Jesus comments on the famous *lex talionis*, "law of retaliation," "An eye for an eye...." For example, from this passage issue teachings of pacifism and perfectionism. We'll need to study carefully if we are to get the full force of what Jesus' intends us to understand and practice.

Level 1: Observation Questions. What does the text say?

1.1 (5:38) Jesus recalls the law that the Pharisees loved citing: "Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth," a quote from Exodus 21:24; Leviticus 24:20; and Deuteronomy 19:21. Turn to Deuteronomy 19:15- 21 and read this in context. Is this law designed to be administered by a court or judge, or by an individual? Does it govern judicial action or personal action?

Level 2: Interpretation Questions. What does the text mean?

2.1 (5:39-42) Do Jesus' examples indicate personal action or judicial action? Is this the same or different than the intent of Deuteronomy 19:21? What difference would it make if it were the same or different?

2.2 (5:39) EXTRA CREDIT. Verse 39 has sometimes been used to teach pacifism in time of war. Do you think this passage, taken with other passages in the Old and New Testaments, seems to teach pacifism? Why or why not? (Please base your arguments on Scripture only.)

2.3 (5:38-42) If Jesus were teaching on retaliation and revenge rather than pacifism in vss. 38-42, how would you sum up his teaching in a single sentence? How does his teaching here compare to his teaching in 5:21-24?

2.4 (5:39-42) What do Jesus' examples or tiny cameos in vss. 39-42 have in common?

2.5 How do Jesus' examples in vss. 39-42 fulfill the principle he states in vs. 44 and 22:39?

2.6 EXTRA CREDIT. Someone has said that if we were to carry out vss. 39-42 literally, we would aid and abet evil. Do you agree? How should we take these examples: As case law? As hyperbole? As a series of aphorisms or adages? In another way?

2.7 If the principle that underlies vss. 39-42 is found in vs. 44 and 22:39, are there times we must defend ourselves physically against evil men in order to fulfill the principle? What might be some examples?

2.8 (5:43) In vs. 43, Jesus is quoting the way the Pharisees interpreted the law. How is their understanding a distortion of Leviticus 19:18?

2.9 (5:45) Of course, we can't be sons of the Father in the unique sense that Jesus was. But how can we be "sons of your Father in heaven" in the sense spoken of in vs. 45? What essential element of God's character are we expected to emulate?

2.10 (5:46-47) When is our love for our Christian brothers and sisters in danger of being as shallow as pagan love? What must we do to prevent this from happening?

Comment: The word translated "Be perfect" in vs. 48 is Greek *teleios*, "complete, perfect," from the verb "*teleo*, "bring to an end, finish, complete, carry out, accomplish" (Dictionary of NT Theology, 2:59-66). "*teleios* has the meaning 'having attained the end (*telos*) or aim'; if anything has fully attained that for which it is designed it is perfect. It can refer to the maturity of an adult man -- the end or aim of that to which the boy points" (Leon Morris, Matthew. Eerdmans, 1992, pp. 133-134, fn. 172).

2:11 (5:48) In the context, what do you think vs. 48 means for the Christian? Is perfection taught here? Does maturity express the idea best? How about the doctrine of "sinless perfection"? How does vs. 48 relate to 45?

Level 3: Application Questions. What Does It Mean to Me?

3.1 Have you ever acted toward an enemy in the way indicated in vss. 39-42? What happened?

3.2 EXTRA CREDIT. Argue for or against the following proposition: Martin Luther King, Jr. accurately taught his followers Jesus' teaching in 5:38-48 in the American civil rights movement of the 1960s.

3.3 Which enemies have been the hardest for you to love? Why? How has Jesus helped you to love them? How did it work out for you?

8. Piety in the Kingdom: Giving without Receiving (Matthew 6:1-4)

How to give in a way that pleases the Father.

Level 1: Observation Questions. What does the text say?

1.1 (6:1) Vs. 1 states the general proposition. Then in 6:2-18 Jesus gives three examples of how the proposition should work out in three areas of piety. What are those three areas of piety?

1.2 (6:1-18) What two elements do Jesus' instructions in each of these three areas have in common?

Level 2: Interpretation Questions. What does the text mean?

Comment: The word translated "Be careful" (NIV) or "Take heed" (KJV) is Greek *prosecho*, which means "to turn toward," specifically in this context, "to turn the mind to, attend to, be attentive to" (Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon*, p. 546). It serves to highlight the command which follows it.

2.1 What chief sin do these three commands address? What is the legitimate human need that this chief sin perverts?

2.2 How do these commands relate to "performing for the audience of One" (as Bill Hybels puts it)? What is the antidote for the chief sin addressed here?

2.3 This chief sin is very subtle. What are other ways we display this sin besides trumpeting our good deeds?

2.4 (6:3) What does the phrase mean, "Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing"? Is Jesus speak literally or figuratively? How can you tell?

2.5 (6:1-18) Jesus doesn't actually command alms, prayer, and fasting in these verses, or does he? For example, should earnest Christians fast?

2.6 Giving to the needy is often neglected among evangelical Christians. Read the following verses from the Old and New Testaments, and then write a short paragraph telling us what you have learned, and how it affected you. Leviticus 19:15; 1 Samuel 2:7; Psalm 10:14; 12:5; 35:10; 72:12-14; 82:3-4; 107:9; 146:7; Proverbs 13:23; 14:20-21; 14:31; 19:17; 19:22; 21:13; 22:2; 22:9; 23:21; 28:19; Ecclesiastes 5:8; Isaiah 11:4; Jeremiah 22:16; Ezekiel 16:49; Matthew 25:42, 45; Mark 12:43-44; Mark 14:7; Luke 4:18; and James 2:5. (To make it easy for you, I have listed the NIV text of these verses on a single page above.)

2.7 EXTRA CREDIT. Defend or rebut the following proposition: "We should support our government's activities in seeking to take care of the very poorest. To do so is a way of carrying out the spirit of the Bible."

Level 3: Application Questions. What Does It Mean to Me?

3.1 Which common church fundraising techniques break the principle that Jesus teaches in 6:1? Is it wrong to give a testimony on how tithing has blessed you?

3.1 How does Jesus' teaching on giving to the needy confront you and your attitudes toward your own self-worth, giving, and toward the needy? What will you do differently as a result?

9. Prayer and Fasting (Matthew 6:5-18)

The Pharisees' practice of prayer and fasting had lost the spirit of worship. Jesus teaches a new way of praying in the "Lord's Prayer."

Level 1: Observation Questions. What does the text say?

1.1 (6:5-6) In these verses, Jesus gives a negative "do not ..." and a positive "But when you pray...." Simply stated, what are the negative and positive commands in this pair?

1.2 (6:7-8) Here's another pair of positive and negative commands. Simply stated, what are the positive and negative commands in this pair?

Level 2: Interpretation Questions. What does the text mean?

2.1 (6:8) If God knows what you need before you ask him, why should you ask him at all? What sense does prayer really make? Are we mainly to talk for our own edification and encouragement? Why or why not?

2.2 (6:8) A similar question: Should you explain to God what you understand about the problem? Why or why not? EXTRA CREDIT: In your answer, what examples in the NT or OT support your position?

2.3 (6:9a) Does Jesus intend "The Lord's Prayer" to be a prayer we should repeat when it is time to pray? Or a model prayer which should serve as a pattern for our prayers? Support your position from the NT.

2.4 (6:9b) What is the significance of Jesus teaching us to pray to God as "Our Father"? Why mention "who art in heaven"?

2.5 (6:9c) Look up the word "hallowed" in a dictionary. Why do you think Jesus includes the phrase "hallowed be Thy name" in this prayer? What does it MEAN for God's name to be hallowed? How is this significant?

2.6 (6:10) What are we really praying for when we utter the words "Thy kingdom come...."?

2.7 (6:10) Why is it important to include the attitude of vs. 10 in every prayer we pray? How does this attitude relate to the degree of our Christian maturity?

2.8 (6:11-13) These three petitions are for our own needs. What three areas of our needs do they cover?

2.9 (6:11) How often are we to ask for the food we need? Why should we do that if we have a regular job? Where else in chapter 6 do you see the ideas of "today" or "tomorrow" discussed? What attitude does this petition teach us?

Comment: Three Greek words are used in relationship to sin in The Lord's Prayer in Matthew and Luke. Christians from different traditions use different words as they recite The Lord's Prayer.

"Debt" (Mt. 6:12), Greek *opheilema*, 1. "debt = what is owed, one's due." 2. In a religious sense debt = sin (as Aramaic *hobah* in rabbinical literature) (BAGD 598).

"Trespass" (Mt. 6:14-15, KJV), Greek *paraptoma*, "false step, transgression, sin" (BAGD 621), a compound word from *para* "beside or near" and *pipto* "to fall". Thayer (*Greek-English Lexicon*, p. 485) defines it as "a lapse or deviation from truth and uprightness; a sin, misdeed."

"Sin" (Luke 11:4), Greek *hamartia* "sin. The action itself as well as its result, every departure from the way of righteousness..." (BAGD 43-44). Literally, "a failing to hit the mark" (Thayer 30).

2.10 (6:12) Why would Jesus use the image of debt and debtor in The Lord's Prayer rather than the more common words for sin? Why do you think Jesus' parable in Matthew 25:18-35 uses the image of a debtor? How is this apt in light of our relationship to God?

2.11 (6:12, 14-15) How can praying The Lord's Prayer bring a curse upon an unforgiving petitioner?

2.12 EXTRA CREDIT: Argue for or against the following proposition: "In Matthew 6:14-15 Jesus teaches a righteousness based on obedience."

Comment: The word translated "temptation" is Greek *pierasmos*. It can mean 1. "test, trial," or 2. temptation, enticement" to sin (BAGD 640-641).

2:13 (6:13) How should we interpret the idea of temptation in vs. 13 in light of James 1:12-15? Are we praying for God to keep us from testing? Or from temptation? Or from succumbing to temptation? Or what?

2:14 EXTRA CREDIT: Which are the biblical reasons to fast? To encourage God to do something? To purify one's heart? To humble oneself? To rid the body of toxins? To lose weight? To draw close to God? How has fasting helped you?

Level 3: Application Questions. What Does It Mean to Me?

3.1 What lesson from your study of The Lord's Prayer stands out most in your mind today?

3.2 An "unforgiving disciple" is an oxymoron. In what area have you had the most trouble forgiving? What has helped you the most to move towards a forgiving heart?

10. Materialism: Temptation to Idolatry (Matthew 6:19-24)

It is possible to be possessed by getting ahead -- or greed. Americans, especially, are blind to this bondage. The next sections are on materialism. First, we'll study how materialism can lead to idolatry and greed. Next, we'll study how materialism can lead to worry. Make sure you grasp what God has to teach you out of these two sections.

Level 1: Observation Questions. What does the text say?

1.1 (6:19-24) List 8 to 10 keywords in vss. 19-24. (Hint: look for words that describe the theme or are repeated.)

1.2 What theme that runs through vss. 1-15 continues in vss. 19- 21? What ties these two sections together? (Hint: look at your key words.)

1.3 EXTRA CREDIT: Do a word study on the word "store". Does the Bible generally use the word favorably or unfavorably? For your convenience, you can find the verses listed at <http://www.joyfulheart.com/manifesto/store-verses.htm>

Level 2: Interpretation Questions. What does the text mean?

2.1 (Luke 12:15-21) Read the Parable of the Rich Fool. What did Jesus condemn him for? Storing his harvest? What is the key verse in this passage? What is the context of this parable? How does this relate to the Sermon on the Mount?

2.2 (6:19) Jesus says, "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth...." Is he speaking figuratively? Hyperbolically? Generally? Specifically? Is this a new teaching, or an old one?

2.3 (6:19-21) How does one "store up treasures in heaven"? What advantage does this have over accumulating earthly possessions?

2.4 (6:21) If you were to examine your values, how could you tell what your heart treasures most?

Comment: (6:22-23) The concept "The eye is the lamp of the body" is hard for 20th Century readers to comprehend. You can see in vs. 23 that the eye is seen as a kind of portal through which light or darkness can influence the body. Thus a "bad eye" (vs. 23) keeps the individual in spiritual darkness.

2.5 (6:22-23) How could a person be deceived into thinking that darkness was really "light"? What do you think the "good eye" represents? What do you think the "bad eye" represents? How does this relate to materialism, which is the context of the passage?

Comment: The word "Mammon" (KJV) is transliterated from an Aramaic word. It means "wealth, property" (BAGD 490). The NIV translates it "Money" capitalized, since it seems to be personified in vs. 25 in contrast with God.

2.6 (6:24) Can wealthy people serve God? Why or why not? How does the pursuit of wealth tend to keep people from God? (1 Timothy 6:6-10, 17-19) How does wealth sometimes serve as a substitute for God?

2.7 (6:19-21, 24) How can what we spend our time "storing" be an indicator of where our heart is? Of whom we are serving?

2.8 (6:24) Jesus seems to make it sound like you can't seek wealth and God simultaneously. Does he really mean this? Is this hyperbole? Figurative? Literal?

2.9 How could your desire for money damn you? How does careless spending make you "serve ... Money"?

Level 3: Application Questions. What Does It Mean to Me?

3.1 The love of money can be a pretty subtle thing. Describe a time in your life when you were deceived about this, and when the light in you was really darkness.

3.2 What do you need to do to "set your house in order" concerning your use of and attitude toward money?

11. Materialism: Temptation to Worry (Matthew 6:25-34)

If we aren't hoarding wealth, we can still be controlled by our worry about lack of possessions.

Materialism 1a. "a theory that physical matter is the only or fundamental reality and that all being and processes and phenomena can be explained as manifestations or results of matter" ... 3b. "relating to or concerned with physical rather than spiritual or intellectual things" (*Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th Edition, 1993, p. 717).

Level 1: Observation Questions. What does the text say?

Comment: The KJV uses the phrase "take no thought" a number of times in this passage, but that translation can be misleading. NASB and RSV use "do not be anxious;" NIV and NRSV render it "do not worry." The Greek word is *merimnao*, "1. have anxiety, be anxious, be (unduly) concerned" (BAGD 505).

1.1 (6:25-34) How many times in this passage does the word "do not worry/do not be anxious/take no thought" occur?

1.2 Why might "take no thought" be a somewhat misleading translation?

Level 2: Interpretation Questions. What does the text mean?

2.1 (6:25-30) You sometimes run across people who think God owes them a living. How would you answer someone who interpreted this passage as meaning that one did not have to work for a living?

2.2 (6:25-26) These verses are about food. What is the point Jesus is making?

Comment: (6:27) This verse has a word that can have two possible translations: Greek *helikia*, "1. 'age, time of life.' 2. 'bodily stature' " (BAGD 345). So KJV has, "... add one cubit unto his stature," while NIV and other modern translations are a bit more figurative: "... add a single hour to his life." No matter how you take it, the point is the same.

2.3 (6:27) What is the point of vs. 27, stated in your own words?

2.4 (6:28-30) These verses are about clothing. What is Jesus' point?

2.5 (6:30b) Jesus compares worry to "little faith." In what ways does worry undermine faith in the area of making a living and paying the bills?

2.6 (6:32) "Your heavenly Father knows that you need them." How is this clause a comfort to you?

2.7 (6:32) Why do you think Jesus mentions that "the pagans run after all these things"?

Comment: (6:33) Some later translations such as the NIV, RSV, and NASB do not include the words "of God," since they are missing in a number of early and important manuscripts (Aleph, B, etc.). However, in an interesting change of scholarly opinion, the editorial committee of the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament explains the absence of "of God" as an accidental scribal omission, and includes "of God" in their text, though in brackets to reflect some uncertainty. This is now reflected in the NRSV which restores the full phrase "kingdom of God."

Comment: (6:33) The word translated "be added" or "be given" is the future passive of Greek *prostithemi*, "1. 'add, put to'--a. of things that are added to something already present. ... 2. 'provide, give, grant, do' " (BAGD 718-719).

Comment: (6:33) The word translated "seek" is Greek *zeteo*, which means "1. 'seek, look for' in order to find ... c. 'investigate, examine, consider, deliberate' ... 2.a. 'try to obtain, desire to possess something,' b. 'strive for, aim (at), desire, wish,' c. 'ask for, request, demand something'" (BAGD 338-339). NRSV renders it, "But strive first for the kingdom of God...."

2.8 (6:33) This verse is well worth committing to memory. (You may have sung it to memory in the Karen Lafferty tune, "Seek Ye First".) But what does it mean in the context of worrying about food and clothing? Write your own paraphrase or explanation of its meaning. In what sense will food and clothes "be added" or "be given" to you? In what sense do we strive "first" for the kingdom?

2.9 (6:34) Do you think Jesus said this with a chuckle and a grin, or with a straight face? Why or why not? What does this saying mean, in your own words?

Level 3: Application Questions. What Does It Mean to Me?

3.1 How can Christians simultaneously be tempted with "serving Mammon" (6:24) and worrying about making ends meet?

3.2 What has been your biggest struggle with worry about material things? How has God helped you trust him more? Where do you still need some work in this area?

12. Judging Self and Others (Matthew 7:1-6)

The key question in this passage is: what does Jesus mean by "do not judge?" We'll examine the context to see what the possibilities (and impossibilities) are.

Level 1: Observation Questions. What does the text say?

1.1 (7:1-29) Read chapter 7 and briefly note each of the verses that require Christians to exercise their critical faculties. Example: (7:15) We are told to watch for and discern false prophets.

Level 2: Interpretation Questions. What does the text mean?

2.1 (7:3-5) Is there humor in this passage or is it just a good illustration? Why do you think Jesus compares a speck of sawdust with a plank or beam? What does the speck represent? What does the plank represent?

2.2 (7:4-5) Compare vs. 4 with vs. 5. When is it okay to remove a speck? When is it not okay?

2.3 (7:5) Jesus uses a very harsh word in vs. 5, "hypocrite," to refer to certain judgmental human beings. What is a hypocrite? Why is Jesus' label so fitting to the situation he describes?

2.4 Read Luke 18:9-14. In what ways (if any) is this parable a good illustration of Jesus' teaching in 7:1-5? In what ways (if any) doesn't the parable apply?

2.5 Read Luke 6:37-38. Here is a similar teaching as in our passage vss. 1-2. Luke 6:38 talks about kinds of measures. I think of sets of measuring cups and spoons in our modern-day kitchens. There are various sizes. How can measuring be both positive and negative?

2.6 (7:1) Now that we have tried to understand the context, what kind of judging does Jesus prohibit in vs. 1? What kind of judging isn't Jesus prohibiting? Paraphrase vs. 1 in your own words to show your understanding of what Jesus meant.

Comment: 7:6 is a difficult verse to interpret, since the context doesn't seem to help much. So we can't use the pure inductive method (understanding the meaning from studying the larger passage.) on it. I'll be leading you a bit more than usual to help you grasp it. Note that never in the Bible are dogs referred to as "man's best friend" or seen as pets. Rather they were scavengers in the towns and cities. We see verses like Proverbs 26:11 and Matthew 15:26-27. The Jews also used the word "dogs" to refer to Gentile outsiders (compare Philippians 3:2 and Revelation 22:15).

2.7 (7:6) What do dogs and pigs have in common when referred to in Jesus' day? What would holy food and pearls have in common?

2.8 Read Matthew 10:14; Acts 13:44-51; 18:5-6; and 28:17-28. In what kinds of circumstances did believers turn away from a continued sharing of the gospel? To what kinds of people did they continue their witness?

2.9 (7:6) Now try to paraphrase vs. 6 in your own words, bringing out your understanding of the passage.

2.10 (7:1-6) These verses are about relationships with two groups of people. What are these two groups?

Level 3: Application Questions. What Does It Mean to Me?

3:1 In what ways has God taught you the truths of vss. 1-5? Were these easy lessons or difficult ones for you?

3:2 How will your understanding of Jesus' teaching in vss. 1-5 affect the way you treat fellow Christians? How will they affect the way you tend to go easy on or justify your own pet sins?

13. Asking in Faith (Matthew 7:7-12)

Important lessons on praying with faith. Jesus' instruction for powerful disciples.

Level 1: Observation Questions. What does the text say?

1.1 (7:1-2) What do the words "ask," "seek," and "knock" have in common? What distinguishes them from each other? Does one word convey more intensity than another?

Level 2: Interpretation Questions. What does the text mean?

Comment: (7:7) In Greek, a command (imperative mood) can be given in two tenses: Aorist tense commands indicate an immediate and single action ("Shut the door!"). Present tense commands, on the other hand, carry the idea of continuous and habitual action ("Always shut the door!" or "Keep on shutting the door!"). Each of the commands in vs. 7 are in present tense imperative, and therefore stress continued, persistent action. William Barclay, (Gospel of Matthew, Volume 1, Daily Study Bible series, 1958), translates vs. 7: "Keep on asking, and it will be given you; Keep on seeking, and you will find; Keep on knocking, and it will be opened to you."

2.1 Jesus told two parables recorded in Luke's Gospel that underscore the principle taught in vss. 7-8. Read Luke 11:5-10 and Luke 18:1-6. What is the lesson both these parables teach?

2.2 (7:7-8) Teachers usually place stress on lessons their students have difficulty grasping. If vss. 7-8 are any indication, what lesson do Jesus' disciples have trouble understanding? What is the promise here?

2.3 (7:7-8) What do vss. 7-8 tell us about God? What do they tell us about man?

2.4 (7:9-11) What are the similarities between a loaf and a stone? Between a fish and a snake?

2.5 (7:9-11) Compare with Matthew 19:17 also. Do these verses view man as essentially good, essentially evil, or essentially God-like?

2.6 (7:9-11) What is the essential understanding about prayer that Jesus is communicating with this parable?

2.7 (7:12) In what way does the "Golden Rule" capsulize the message of the law and the prophets? EXTRA CREDIT: This seems like a different "summary" of the law and the prophets than Jesus indicated in Matthew 22:37-39. How is it the same? How are it different?

Level 3: Application Questions. What Does It Mean to Me?

3.1 Which of the two lessons about prayer and God has been most meaningful in your life? Why?

3.2 In what ways does the "Golden Rule" (7:12) help you make ethical decisions? Can you think of an example?

14. Discerning the True Way (Matthew 7:13-29)

All roads do not lead to heaven -- most lead to destruction. We conclude with warnings and the importance of life foundations.

Level 1: Observation Questions. What does the text say?

1.1 (7:13-29) One way to examine this section is by pairs of concepts. List all the pairs you find, such as: narrow gate, wide gate.

Level 2: Interpretation Questions. What does the text mean?

2.1 (7:13-14) What do these verses teach us about: personal choice and universalism (the teaching that all will be saved)?

2.2 If Jesus' teaching about the narrow gate and the narrow road to life is to be believed, what change should this make in your life?

2.3 (7:15-20) Look at a sampling of the kinds of false prophets or false teachers we see in the Bible: Matthew 24:24; 2 Corinthians 11:13; 2 Peter 2:1; 1 John 2:18, 22; Jeremiah 23:16-18, 22, 28; 8:11. Look these up and make notes. What kinds of false messages have these false teachers and prophets brought?

2.4 (7:16-20) Jesus says that one's inner self will eventually become apparent (Matthew 12:34). What kinds of "fruit" are clues to a false prophet?

Comment: In this conclusion to the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gives two insights into hearing and doing. Read both vss. 21-23 and vss. 24-27 in this light.

2.5 (7:21-23) How is it possible deceive yourself, so that you presume that you are "doing" when you are only "hearing"? (see James 1:22-25). How might it be possible to prophesy, drive out demons, and perform miracles in Jesus' name and not enter the Kingdom of heaven?

2.6 (7:21-23) What does Jesus require of his disciples? (see also John 15:14). Is there a kind of true Christian who believes but does not obey?

2.7 EXTRA CREDIT. How do you justify Jesus' teaching on doing the will of the Father as a requirement for entering the Kingdom of God, with Paul's teaching on salvation as a gift, not because of works, lest anyone should boast (Ephesians 2:8-10)?

2.7 (7:24-27) Which kind of house is easier to build? Why is "the rock" a good analogy for this teaching? Why is our witness more powerful when we're going through a storm?

Level 3: Application Questions. What Does It Mean to Me?

3:1 Are their false prophets or false teachers in your congregation you need to make your church leaders aware of? Why is this so important?

3.2 Are there sectors of disobedience in your life that Jesus is speaking to you about through this passage? What steps will you take as a result?