

## **Sermon on the Mount: The Jesus Manifesto Handouts for Group Participants**

If you're working with a class or small group, feel free to duplicate the following handouts in this appendix at no additional charge. If you'd like to print 8-1/2" x 11" sheets, you can download the free Participant Guide handout sheets at:

<http://www.jesuswalk.com/manifesto/manifesto-lesson-handouts.pdf>

### **Discussion Questions**

You'll find 3 to 6 questions for each lesson. Each question may include several sub-questions. These are designed to get group members engaged in discussion of the key points of the passage. If you're running short of time, feel free to skip questions or portions of questions.

1. The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12)
2. Witnessing People: Living as Salt and Light in the World (Matthew 5:13-16)
3. The Spirit of the Law and Reconciliation (Matthew 5:17-26)
4. Adultery, Lust and the Spirit of Marriage (Matthew 5:27-30)
5. The Spirit of Marriage. Jesus' Teaching on Divorce (Matthew 5:27-32,19:1-12)
6. The Spirit of Truthfulness and Love (Matthew 5:33-48)
7. Giving, Prayer, and Fasting (Matthew 6:1-8, 16-18)
8. The Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-15)
9. Temptation to Idolatry (Matthew 6:19-24)
10. Temptation to Worry (Matthew 6:25-34)
11. Judging Self and Others (Matthew 7:1-6)
12. Asking in Faith (Matthew 7:7-12)
13. Enter the Narrow Gate (Matthew 7:13-29)

## 1. The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12)

Q1. (Matthew 5:3-11) Each Beatitude consists of two parts. What are these parts? Why do you think Jesus made each Beatitude a paradox? What is the relationship of the Beatitudes to the Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23)?

Q2. (Matthew 5:3-4) Why is it necessary to be aware of your spiritual poverty before you can become a Christian? 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.)

Q3. (Matthew 5:5) How does this sort of gentleness contrast with the world's ideal? How is humility important to Christlikeness?

Q4. (Matthew 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 in this Beatitude?

Q5. (Matthew 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?

Q6. (Matthew 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. Witnessing People: Living as Salt and Light in the World (Matthew 5:13-16)**

Q1. (Matthew 5:13) In what sense are Christians the “salt of the earth” using the preservation analogy? In what sense are Christians the “salt of the earth” using the seasoning analogy?

Q2. (Matthew 5:13) What might 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? What do secular people notice about a “de-saltified” Christian? What do other Christians notice about you? Is it possible to “resaltify” your life?

Q3. (Matthew 5:14-15) In the parable of “the light of the world,” Jesus notes the stupidity of lights being hidden under bowls. Concerning what danger in the life of a Christian disciple does Jesus warn us in this parable?

Q4. (Matthew 5:13-15) How do verses 5:13-16 relate to 5:10-12? 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?

### 3. The Spirit of the Law and Reconciliation (Matthew 5:17-26)

Q1. (Matthew 5:17-20) Can you see any tendencies in the church today to effectively “abolish” the Old Testament from our Christian faith? What does a “Christian” legalism look like in a church? What does it look like in a church where there are no moral standards and no obedience expected of Christians?

Q2. (Matthew 5:21-22) Why does Jesus treat calling someone a fool in the same classification as murder? Does this mean that murder is no worse than an angry insult in God’s eyes? How would we act differently if we actually *believed* that angry attitudes towards others are viewed by God as murder?

Q3. (Matthew 5:23-24) What’s wrong with worshipping while a brother has something against us (or us against them, Mark 11:25)? What is the appropriate action for us to take? 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?

Q4. (Matthew 5:25-26) What is the point of Jesus’ parable of settling out of court? Who are we supposed to settle with, according to this parable? What does “settling” entail? What are the reasons that we should settle?

Q5. (Matthew 5:21-26) Verses 21-22 are about murder, anger, and insult. Verses 23-24 discuss some fault against one’s brother. Verses 25- 26 discuss settling a civil suit before going to court. What is the overarching theme of Jesus’ teaching in our entire passage, verses 21-26?

#### **4. Adultery, Lust and the Spirit of Marriage (Matthew 5:27-30)**

Q1. (Matthew 5:27-30; Exodus 20:17) What is the point of similarity between adultery and lust? What is the difference? How does lust break the Tenth Commandment?

Q2. God purposely created us with a good and natural sexual desire. How do we distinguish between that God-given sexual desire and forbidden lust?

Q3. (Matthew 5:28) What is wrong with pornography? What is wrong with going to prostitutes? Who are the victims of this “victimless” activity?

Q4. (Matthew 5:28) 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? With your TV?

Q5. (Matthew 5:27-30) The spirit of our age is very accepting and approving of lust. According to Jesus’ words, how seriously are we to take lust? How does agape love help us combat lust?

## 5. The Spirit of Marriage. Jesus' Teaching on Divorce (Matthew 5:27-32,19:1-12)

Q1. (Matthew 5:27-32; 19:1-12) With whom did Jesus side: 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?

Q2. (Matthew 19:4-6 quoting Genesis 2:24) 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 Matthew 19:6?

Q3. (Matthew 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? What was God's original intention ("from the beginning") for marriage and divorce, according to Jesus?

Q4. (Matthew 19:10) Why do you think Jesus' disciples reacted so negatively to his teaching on marriage and divorce? Did they misunderstand it?

**Warning.** Believing Christians disagree on some aspects of divorce and remarriage. In addition, many have been hurt in bad marriages and divorces. Be gentle, sensitive, and loving with one another – even if you disagree!

Q5. (Matthew 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?

Q6. 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 Truthfulness and Love (Matthew 5:33-48)

Q1. (Matthew 5:33-37) What does it mean: Let your “yes” be yes and your “no” be no? If we obeyed this command, what would be the result in our speaking? In our credibility?

Q2. (Exodus 21:24; Leviticus 24:20; Deuteronomy 19:15-21) What was the purpose of the “Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth” regulation? Is this law designed to be administered by a court or judge, or by an individual? Is it designed to govern judicial action or personal action?

Q3. (Matthew 5:39-42) What do Jesus’ examples or tiny cameos in verses 39-42 have in common? Someone has said that if we were to carry out verses 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?

Q4. (Matthew 5:38-42) If we were to assume that Jesus is teaching on retaliation and revenge rather than pacifism in verses 38-42, how would you sum up his teaching in a single sentence?

Q5. (Matthew 5:39-44) If the principle that underlies verses 39-42 is found in verse 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?

Q6. (Matthew 5:48) In the context, what do you think verse 48 means for the Christian? Is perfection taught here? Does maturity express the idea best? How about the doctrine of “sinless perfection”? How does verse 48 relate to verse 45?

## **7. Giving, Prayer, and Fasting (Matthew 6:1-8, 16-18)**

Q1. (Matthew 6:1-18) How do the commands in this section relate to “performing for the audience of One”? What is the antidote for the chief sin that is addressed here? In what ways do churches and non-profit organizations use this sin to motivate people to give?

Q2. (Matthew 5:42 and 6:1-4) How does Jesus’ teaching here and in 5:42 on giving to the needy influence you and your attitudes towards the poor? What will you do differently as a result? What keeps us from giving more to the poor? Is that a good enough reason?

Q3. (Matthew 6:5-7) Why does Jesus tell us to pray in secret? Though public prayer in church gatherings is commanded in scripture (Acts 1:14; 2:42; 1 Timothy 2:1), in which circumstances might public prayer in a church service be contrary to the spirit of Jesus’ instructions in these verses? How do flowery prayers hinder the development of disciples?

Q4. (Matthew 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?



## 8. The Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-15)

Q1. (Matthew 6:9) What about our lives and words "hallows" the name of our Father? What desecrates and besmirches it? How should we "hallow" the Father when we begin to pray?

Q2. (Matthew 6:10) In what sense are we asking that the Father's kingdom should come? Why are we asking for the Father's will to be done here on earth? How should this prayer affect our living?

Q3. (Matthew 6:11) Why do we seek to be independent of asking *anyone* for help? Why do we seek to be independent of God? Why should we ask God to "give" us daily bread so long as we can earn a living for ourselves?

Q4. (Matthew 6:12, 14-15) Why should we continually ask forgiveness? How can unforgiveness on our part block God's blessing? How can unforgiveness block God's forgiveness?

## 9. Temptation to Idolatry (Matthew 6:19-24)

Q1. (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?

Q2. (Matthew 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?

Q3. (Matthew 6:19-21) According to the Bible, how does one “store up treasures in heaven”? What advantage does this have over accumulating earthly possessions? Why are we uncomfortable with the concept of rewards in heaven?

Q4. (Matthew 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? Can wealthy people serve God in actual fact?

Q5. (Matthew 6:21, 24) The love of money can be a pretty subtle thing. Both the rich *and* the poor can love money. Can you describe a time in your life when you were deceived about this, and when the light in you was really darkness? According to Jesus, could desire for money damn a person (Luke 12:15-21)?

## **10. Temptation to Worry (Matthew 6:25-34)**

Q1. (Matthew 6:26-30) What point does Jesus make with his twin Parables of the Birds of the Air and of the Flowers of the Field? Is the point trivial or is it valid?

Q2. (Matthew 6:25-34) How many times in this passage does the phrase “do not worry,” “do not be anxious,” or “take no thought” occur? In what way does excessive worry border on sin? Are worry and trust exact opposites?

Q3. (Matthew 6:31-32) Why does Jesus mention the “pagans” or “Gentiles” in verse 32? What point is he making? How should a Christian differ from a Gentile, according to Jesus’ teaching in this passage? What emotional and faith effect does the phrase, “your heavenly Father knows that you need them,” have in your life?

Q3. (Matthew 6:33) What is the command in this verse? How must our seeking God differ from our seeking of food and clothing, according to this verse? What is the promise found in this verse?

Q5. (Matthew 6:34) Is there humor intended in verse 34? What is the point of Jesus’ joke here? What is the command in this verse?

## **11. Judging Self and Others (Matthew 7:1-6)**

Q1. (Matthew 7:1) Have you ever caught yourself severely criticizing another Christian behind their back – or to their face? What is the attitude that underlies censoriousness? How can the psychological concept of “projection” motivate harsh judgment? Why must Christians show love in the face of a brother’s or sister’s failing?

Q2. (Matthew 7:1-2) Read a similar passage in Luke 6:37-38. According to Matthew’s account, what is our fate if we measure out big heaps of judgment with a critical spirit? According to Luke’s account, how can measuring be both positive and negative? What should we measure out instead of judgmentalism?

Q3. (Matthew 7:3-5) What about this parable is humorous? 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? According to this parable, when is it okay to remove a speck? When is it not okay?

Q4. (Matthew 7:6) In Jesus’ day, what did dogs and pigs have in common? What would holy food and pearls have in common? 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?

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

Q1. (Matthew 7:7-8) 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? What is the significance of the present, continuous, imperative tense of these verbs?

Q2. (Matthew 7:7-8) Which lesson is taught in *both* the Parables of the Friend at Midnight (Luke 11:5-10) and the Widow and the Unjust Judge (Luke 18:1-6)? How do these relate to the commands in Matthew 7:1-2?

Q3. (Matthew 7:9-11). What do these verses teach us about God’s relationship to us? What do they teach about God’s characteristic response toward us? How does this differ from a cynical view of God? Why is a positive understanding of God important to be able to pray with faith?

Q4. (Matthew 7:12) In what way does the “Golden Rule” capsule the message of the law and the prophets? This seems like a different “summary” of the law and the prophets than Jesus indicated in Matthew 22:37-39. How are they the same? How are they different?

### 13. Enter the Narrow Gate (Matthew 7:13-29)

Q1. (Matthew 7:13-14) If Jesus' teaching about the narrow gate and the narrow road to life is to be believed, what change would this make in how you conduct your life? What difference would it make to how you witness to your neighbors? How might it affect your acceptance of Universalism?

Q2. (Matthew 7:15-20) Jesus says that one's inner self will eventually become apparent (Matthew 12:34). What kinds of "fruit" might be clues to a false prophet?

Q3. (Matthew 7:21-23) How is it possible to 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?

Q4. (Matthew 7:24-27) Does Jesus *require* obedience of his disciples? (John 15:14). Is there a kind of true Christian who believes, but does not obey? How do you justify Jesus' requirement of obedience with Paul's teaching that salvation is a gift, not because of works, lest anyone should boast (Ephesians 2:8-10).