

Jesus said what?!

difficult sayings from the sermon on the mount



ACC FAMILY,

Welcome to a journey where the words of Jesus will challenge us on a weekly basis. A journey where we will hopefully begin to question some of the assumptions we've made about how life works because of the culture we live in.

It is my prayer that as we walk through this together as a church and as a small group, we will all grow closer in our relationship with Jesus and with each other.

But the level to which you grow will match the level to which you commit. And so, I challenge you to commit.

Attend every service you can. Attend every group you can. Read the Scripture and answer the questions before you arrive for group. Come ready to listen, discuss, wrestle with what Jesus says, and allow His words to shape the way you live.

The time and attention we sow will directly correlate with what we reap. So let's commit ourselves to the journey and see what Jesus wants to do in us through His words.

SINCERELY,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D Terrell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and a stylized "Terrell".

DAVID TERRELL
DISCIPLESHIP PASTOR

INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

1. Jesus never called this teaching “The Sermon on the Mount.” That’s the name Christians eventually gave it based on Matthew’s description of where Jesus taught.
2. There are 107 verses. It is the longest continuous message given by Jesus.
3. It takes roughly 15-20 minutes to read the entire sermon out loud.
4. There is a remarkably similar sermon recorded in the Gospel of Luke, but it is shorter and occurs on a plain. Many scholars believe Jesus preached the same message in multiple locations.



5. Jesus teaches from a mountain, echoing the setting where Moses received the Law on Mount Sinai.
6. SECRET RELIGION - Jesus talks about giving, praying, and fasting in secret. He cares not only about what we do, but why we do it.
7. THE SERMON ENDS WITH A DECISION Jesus doesn't end by asking whether His listeners agree with Him. He ends by asking whether they will actually do what He says.

**THEREFORE EVERYONE WHO HEARS
THESE WORDS OF MINE AND PUTS THEM
INTO PRACTICE IS LIKE A WISE MAN WHO
BUILT HIS HOUSE ON THE ROCK.**

Matthew 7:24 (NIV)



WEEK 1

Matthew 5:21-26 (NIV)

“You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ 22 But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister, will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell.

23 “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, 24 leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.

25 “Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still together on the way, or your adversary may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. 26 Truly I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.

Discussion Questions

1. Jesus connects anger with murder. What do you think Jesus is trying to reveal about the relationship between our outward actions and the condition of our hearts?

2. Read James 1:19–20. What does James teach us about anger? Why do you think anger can feel justified to us even when it is producing something God does not desire?

3. Read Ephesians 4:26–27. What is the difference between experiencing anger and allowing anger to control us? When does anger begin to become spiritually dangerous?

4. Think about a time when you were angry with someone. What did your anger cause you to believe, say, or do that you might not have done otherwise?

5. Jesus specifically talks about being reconciled with others. Why is reconciliation so important to Jesus? What does unresolved anger do to our relationship with God and with other people?

6. Read Proverbs 15:1. How can the way we respond to someone else's anger either escalate or de-escalate a conflict?

7. Is there a difference between righteous anger and sinful anger? How can we tell which one we are experiencing?

8. Is there someone you need to forgive, confront, apologize to, or pursue reconciliation with? What would taking one step toward reconciliation look like this week?

WEEK 2

Matthew 5:27-32 (NIV)

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ 28 But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. 29 If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. 30 And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.

31 “It has been said, ‘Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.’ 32 But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, makes her the victim of adultery, and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

Discussion Questions

1. Jesus says that adultery can begin in the heart before it ever becomes an outward action. What does this teach us about how Jesus views sin?
2. Read Job 31:1. What does Job’s commitment to his eyes teach us about taking responsibility for what we allow ourselves to look at?
3. Read 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5. How does Paul describe God’s desire for our sexual lives? What does it mean to “control your own body in holiness and honor”?

4. Why do you think Jesus addresses the heart rather than simply giving people a list of behaviors they should avoid?

5. Jesus moves from lust to divorce in the same section. What connection do you see between Jesus' teaching on sexual desire, marriage, faithfulness, and the way we view other people?

6. Read Hebrews 13:4. Why does Scripture place such a high value on marriage and sexual faithfulness? How is that different from the way our culture often views sex and relationships?

7. What are some ways our culture has made it easier to objectify people or treat relationships as disposable? How can Christians resist that mindset?

8. What does pursuing sexual purity look like beyond simply "not committing adultery"? What changes when we begin asking Jesus to transform our desires, thoughts, and view of other people?

WEEK 3

Matthew 6:5-15 (NIV)

“And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. 6 But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. 7 And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. 8 Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

9 “This, then, is how you should pray:

“ ‘Our Father in heaven,

hallowed be your name,

10 your kingdom come,

your will be done,

on earth as it is in heaven.

11 Give us today our daily bread.

12 And forgive us our debts,

as we also have forgiven our debtors.

13 And lead us not into temptation,

but deliver us from the evil one.’

14 For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Discussion Questions

1. What stands out to you about the way Jesus teaches His followers to pray? What does the Lord’s Prayer reveal about what should matter to us?

2. Read 1 John 5:14-15. What does it mean to pray “according to his will”? How should knowing that God hears us affect the things we ask Him for?

3. Read James 4:2-3. What does James say can be wrong with our motives when we pray? How can we tell the difference between asking God for something we genuinely need and simply asking Him to give us what we want?

4. Read Psalm 66:18. What does this teach us about the relationship between unconfessed sin and our relationship with God in prayer? How should this affect the way we approach God when we know we have sinned?

5. Jesus specifically connects prayer with forgiveness. Why do you think our willingness to forgive others is so important in our relationship with God?

6. Are there things you tend to pray about—comfort, control, success, security, recognition, possessions, relationships, etc.? What might those prayers reveal about your heart?

7. Which part of the Lord's Prayer is easiest for you to pray sincerely? Which part is most difficult?

8. What is one change you could make to your prayer life this week that would help you become more aligned with God's will rather than simply asking God to align with yours?

WEEK 4

Matthew 5:38-42 (NIV)

38 “You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’
39 But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. 40 And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. 41 If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles. 42 Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

Discussion Questions

1. What is difficult about Jesus’ teaching in this passage? Which part is hardest for you personally to live out?
2. Read Romans 12:17-21. How does Paul expand on Jesus’ teaching about revenge? What does it look like to overcome evil with good?
3. Read 1 Peter 2:21-23. How did Jesus respond when He was insulted, mistreated, and unjustly accused? What does His example teach us about responding to people who hurt us?
4. Is refusing revenge the same thing as saying that what happened to you was okay? Why or why not?

5. What is the difference between seeking justice and seeking revenge? Why is it important for Christians to understand that distinction?

6. Why is retaliation so satisfying to us? What do we believe revenge will accomplish for us?

7. Think about a situation where someone has wronged you. What would it look like to surrender your desire to “get even” while still responding appropriately to the situation?

8. What would change in our relationships if Christians became known not for getting even, but for responding to evil with good?

WEEK 5

Matthew 5:33-37 (NIV)

“Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not break your oath, but fulfill to the Lord the vows you have made.’ 34 But I tell you, do not swear an oath at all: either by heaven, for it is God’s throne; 35 or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. 36 And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. 37 All you need to say is simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.

Discussion Questions

1. What do you think Jesus means when He says, “Let your yes be yes and your no be no”?
2. Read James 5:12. Why do you think both Jesus and James place such a strong emphasis on simply telling the truth rather than strengthening our words with promises, oaths, or exaggerated statements?
3. Read Ecclesiastes 5:4-5. What does this passage teach us about making commitments to God? Why should we take our promises seriously?
4. Why do people sometimes feel the need to convince others that they are telling the truth? What might that reveal about our character or relationships?

5. Think about the commitments you make—to God, your spouse, children, friends, coworkers, church, or yourself. How reliable would people say your word is?

6. Have you ever made a commitment with good intentions but later realized you couldn't or wouldn't keep it? What did that experience teach you about making promises?

7. How can Christians become people whose words can be trusted without needing to constantly explain, exaggerate, or defend themselves?

8. What is one area where you could become more faithful to your word this week?

WEEK 6

Matthew 6:16-18 (NIV)

“When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. 17 But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, 18 so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Discussion Questions

1. Jesus says, “When you fast,” rather than “if you fast.” What does that suggest about the place fasting should have in the life of a follower of Jesus?
2. Read Joel 2:12-13. What does this passage reveal about the purpose of fasting? Why is changing our hearts more important than simply changing our eating habits?
3. Read Isaiah 58:3-9. What does God say is wrong with fasting that is disconnected from how we live? What does this teach us about the difference between religious activity and genuine devotion?
4. Why do you think Jesus warns us not to fast in a way that draws attention to ourselves?

5. What are some things we might discover about our hearts when we intentionally go without something we normally depend on?

6. How can fasting help us recognize the difference between what we want and what we actually need?

7. What might make fasting difficult for you? What distractions, habits, comforts, or desires might fasting expose?

8. If you've decided to fast for a day, share which day with the group. What would you want your fast to accomplish spiritually, and what could you intentionally pray about throughout the day?

WEEK 7

Matthew 6:19-24 (NIV)

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

22 “The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light. 23 But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

24 “No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

Discussion Questions

1. Jesus says, “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” What do you think this means? Does our treasure reveal our heart, or can our treasure actually help direct our heart?

2. Read 1 Timothy 6:17–19. What does Paul tell wealthy Christians to do with their resources? How does this passage challenge the idea that having money is inherently wrong?

3. Read Luke 12:15. Why does Jesus warn us to guard against greed? What makes greed difficult to recognize in ourselves?

4. What are some ways people can unintentionally begin trusting money, possessions, careers, or financial security more than they trust God?

5. Jesus says that we cannot serve both God and money. What are some signs that money has moved from being something we use to something we serve?

6. How do saving, planning, and being financially responsible fit together with Jesus' command to store up treasures in heaven?

7. If someone looked only at the way you spend your time and money, what would they conclude you value most?

8. What is one practical way you could begin investing more of your time, money, or resources into things that have eternal value?

WEEK 8

Matthew 7:7-12 (NIV)

“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

9 “Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? 11 If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! 12 So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

Discussion Questions

1. Jesus repeatedly tells us to ask, seek, and knock. What does this teach us about the kind of relationship God wants us to have with Him?
2. Read James 4:2-3. How does this passage help us understand that not every request we make is necessarily a good request?
3. Read Philippians 4:6-7. What does Paul tell us to do when we are anxious or in need? How is prayer different from simply worrying about something?
4. Jesus compares God to a good Father who gives good gifts. What does this teach us about God's character? Why is it important that we trust God's goodness even when He doesn't give us what we ask for?

5. Think about something you have repeatedly asked God for. How has that experience affected your faith when the answer was “yes,” “no,” or “not yet”?

6. Why do you think we sometimes hesitate to ask God for things? Are there things you believe are too small, too big, or too selfish to bring to Him?

7. What is the difference between confidently asking God for something and demanding that God give us what we want?

8. What is something you need to bring honestly and persistently to God right now? How can you pray for it while also trusting His wisdom and goodness?

WEEK 9

Matthew 7:1-6 (NIV)

“Do not judge, or you too will be judged. 2 For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

3 “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? 4 How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? 5 You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.

6 “Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.

Discussion Questions

1. When people hear Jesus say, “Do not judge,” what do they often assume He means? What does the rest of Scripture suggest about that interpretation?

2. Read John 7:24. What does Jesus mean by judging “with right judgment”? How is that different from simply condemning someone?

3. Read Galatians 6:1. How are Christians supposed to respond when another believer is caught in sin? What does this passage teach us about the attitude we should have when confronting sin?

4. Jesus talks about removing the plank from our own eye before helping our brother with the speck in his. Why is self-examination so important before we confront someone else?

5. What is the difference between discernment, accountability, and condemnation? Why can it be difficult to know where the line is?

6. Why are we often better at seeing the failures of other people than we are at seeing our own?

7. What should we do when we believe someone is clearly making a sinful or destructive decision? What should determine whether, when, and how we speak into it?

8. Is there an area where you tend to be overly critical or judgmental of others? What might God want to change in your own heart before you address what you see in theirs?

WEEK 10

Matthew 6:25-34 (NIV)

“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? 26 Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? 27 Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?

28 “And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. 29 Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. 30 If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? 31 So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ 32 For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. 33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. 34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Discussion Questions

1. Jesus commands His followers, “Do not worry.” Why do you think worry is so difficult to stop even when we know God is in control?

2. Read Philippians 4:6–7. What does Paul tell us to do instead of being anxious? What is the connection between prayer, thanksgiving, and peace?

3. Read 1 Peter 5:6–7. What does it mean to “cast all your anxieties on him”? Why can surrendering our worries to God be so difficult?

4. Jesus points His followers toward God's care for birds and flowers. What do these examples teach us about the character of our heavenly Father?

5. What is the difference between wise preparation and anxious worry? How can we prepare responsibly without placing our trust in our preparation?

6. What does worry tend to make you focus on? How does Jesus redirect our attention toward God and His Kingdom?

7. What is something you are currently worried about that you need to surrender to God? What would it look like to trust Him with that situation today?

8. Jesus says, "Seek first the kingdom of God." What would change in your priorities if seeking God's Kingdom truly became your first priority?

WEEK 11

Matthew 7:15-20 (NIV)

“Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. 16 By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? 17 Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think Jesus warns His followers about false prophets? What makes false teachers especially dangerous?

2. Read 1 John 4:1. What does John mean when he tells Christians to “test the spirits”? Why shouldn’t Christians simply believe everything they hear?

3. Read Deuteronomy 13:1-3. What does this passage teach us about evaluating someone who claims to speak for God? Why isn’t impressive teaching or supernatural activity enough by itself?

4. Jesus says that false prophets may come in “sheep’s clothing.” What are some ways a person can appear trustworthy or godly without actually producing godly fruit?

5. What kind of “fruit” should we look for when evaluating a Christian leader or teacher? Consider both their teaching and their character.

6. Why can charisma, popularity, success, or a large platform sometimes make it difficult for us to critically evaluate someone’s teaching?

7. What responsibility do we have for the voices we allow to shape our beliefs? How can we become better at comparing what we hear with Scripture?

8. Who or what are some of the voices that most influence your understanding of God and Christianity? What would it look like to evaluate those voices by their fruit and their faithfulness to Scripture?

WEEK 12

Matthew 7:13-14 and 21-23 (NIV)

13 “Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. 14 But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

21 “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ 23 Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’

Discussion Questions

1. Jesus describes two gates, two roads, and two destinations. What does this imagery communicate about the seriousness of the choices we make?

2. Read John 14:15. What connection does Jesus make between loving Him and obeying Him? How does obedience fit into our understanding of what it means to follow Jesus?

3. Read James 1:22-25. What is the danger of hearing God’s Word without putting it into practice? How does this connect with Jesus’ warning about people who call Him “Lord” but don’t do what He says?

4. Jesus says that some people will call Him “Lord” and even point to impressive things they have done, yet He will say, “I never knew you.” What does this teach us about the difference between outward religious activity and genuinely knowing Jesus?

5. Why do you think the narrow road can be difficult to choose? What kinds of things make the wide road more appealing?

6. Read 2 Corinthians 13:5. What does it mean to examine yourself to see whether you are truly in the faith? How is healthy self-examination different from living in constant fear that God doesn't love you?

7. As you look back over the difficult sayings of Jesus we've studied in this series, which teaching has challenged you the most? Why?

8. If Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount is truly the foundation of our lives, what is one thing you need to start doing, stop doing, or surrender to God as a result of this series?

NOTES

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