



MOUNTAINS

THE MOUNTAIN OF THE SERMON

MATTHEW 5; 7

MAIN IDEA

Christ followers should receive the words of Jesus and put them into practice in their lives.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

One of the questions Christ followers continually ask is, “How am I supposed to live?” In our ever-changing world, it often seems like you get one thing figured out and then a new and unexpected circumstance arises. Imagine you were one of the disciples who had just been called to leave the life you knew and follow Jesus. That could definitely be overwhelming and cause a lot of questions. Jesus, of course, realized this and stopped with the disciples to teach them how to live their new lives. Jesus taught His Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5–7, which is full of practical instructions for believers.

- **What do you think the disciples may have been feeling right after being called to follow Jesus? Why?**
- **What does it say that Jesus took time to stop and teach them, and all the crowd that followed, about how to live this new life?**

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

> **Have someone in your group read Matthew 5:17-20.**

Sometimes we have preconceived ideas about what type of leader someone is but once we get to know that person and spend time with them, those ideas change. You may even have a different opinion after only hearing a person introduced and listening to them speak or teach. The experiences of leaders and the circumstances they have faced can affect how others perceive their leadership ability.

- **Have you ever experienced a change of opinion about someone after hearing details of their background? What changed?**

- **What was Jesus saying about Himself in these verses? Why?**

Notice that Jesus addressed the elephant in the room when He stated that He had not come to abolish the Law but to fulfill it. He knew what people would be thinking. So, He let them know that the Law was not under attack or in danger of being overthrown because He had come.

In fact, not only did Jesus confirm the Law, but He further reinforced the importance of living a righteous life. He took following the Law, with the right heart, to a new level as He pointed out the value of even the smallest word or brush stroke of Scripture as given by God and not diminished by the misinterpretation of any person.

- **Why was the Law such a big deal?**

- **How do you think this message of Jesus was received? What evidence do you have of this from other passages?**

- **How might Jesus's words have encouraged the people listening? How might it have challenged them?**

> Have someone in your group read Matthew 7:24-27.

- **What stands out to you about these verses? Why?**

This familiar portion of Scripture is a picture of the two choices we are all faced with. Will we be like the wise man or the foolish man? In making His point about how we are to live our lives, Jesus used an example everyone listening could relate to.

Anyone who has ever built a sandcastle at the beach can confirm the accuracy of the comparison between a house built on the sand and a house built on the rock (solid ground). Even if your sandcastle looks beautiful from the outside, it won't take much to topple it over because it has such a shaky foundation. The foundation matters, no matter how great the house looks.

How often have you heard of someone's life crumbling and been shocked because it appeared that they had it all together and were doing great? That's the point Jesus made. If you want to build your life like a wise person, your foundation is key. It doesn't matter what your life looks like on the outside, if your foundation is wrong, you will be in trouble when the storms of life come.

- **What are some wrong or foolish foundations people might try to build their lives on?**
- **Name some of the storms of life that arise to test our foundations.**
- **Why is the foundation most important when those storms arrive?**

> Have someone in your group read Matthew 5:1; 7:28-29.

Jesus gave more than just inspiring words; He lived out what He said and instructed us to do the same. When Jesus began this powerful sermon, Matthew 5:1 says “he went up on the mountain” and sat down. This was a common posture for a leader or teacher to take, and the disciples and others gathered to listen to Him teach.

Although He modeled some of the same characteristics as other religious leaders, Jesus taught with more authority and power than the people had ever experienced and by the end of the sermon they noticed the difference.

- **What did the people have to say about Jesus’s sermon at the end?**
- **Why do you think it mattered that they recognized His authority? Why does this matter for us?**

The people recognized Jesus’s authority after His sermon. Not many people obey the words of someone with no authority—but give a guy a striped shirt and whistle, and even a football player twice their size will obey. Note how a person with a

badge can command respect from all kinds of people. The key factor is authority. When you recognize the authority of Jesus, like the wise man, you should obey His instructions and build your house on the rock.

- **Would you say that you have respect for Jesus's authority? How does this show (or not)?**
- **How does thinking about Jesus's authority affect your decision making?**

APPLICATION

- **Evaluate the foundation of your life. Where are the weak areas that might crumble when a storm hits? How can you apply the teachings of Jesus to shore up that area and strengthen your foundation? Spend time praying specifically about this.**
- **In the month of March, seek an opportunity to have a spiritual conversation with an individual who does not have a relationship with Christ.**
- **Would you say that my (our) life is built on a wise foundation or a foolish foundation? What needs to change? How can we pursue that change?**

PRAY

Thank Jesus for being your teacher. Confess where you need to respect His authority more and ask for strength to change as needed.

MATTHEW 5:1,17-20

5:1-2. Jesus ascended a mountain when He saw the crowds because He deemed the mountainside to be a better setting for teaching a large group. As the new Moses, His delivery of God's message from a mountaintop provides yet another parallel with the ancient Moses. The Greek words translated He went up on the mountain are used three times in the Greek OT (Ex 19:3; 24:18; 34:2, 4), and all three fall in the section describing Moses's ascent of Mount Sinai. This fits with Matthew's repeated theme of drawing out parallels between Moses and Jesus. For instance, Jesus's birth paralleled several events surrounding Moses's birth. Herod attempted to kill the infant Christ by ordering the slaughter of Bethlehem's boys (Mt 2:16–18) much as Pharaoh ordered the execution of newborn male Israelites (Ex 1:15–18, 22). Furthermore, the angel's pronouncement that danger had passed ("those who intended to kill the child are dead," Mt 2:20) is a clear echo of Ex 4:19, "All the men who wanted to kill you are dead."

Notes:

5:17-20. Jesus defended himself against charges that He defied the law (9:3, 11, 14; 12:2, 10; 15:1–2; 17:24; 19:3; 22:34–36) by insisting that He came to fulfill both the Law and the Prophets, which together amount to the entire OT. The word fulfill may refer to fulfillment of OT prophecies (1:22; 2:15, 17, 23; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:35; 21:4; 26:54, 56; 27:9). This is suggested by the words all things are accomplished. However, it can also refer to obedience to God's commands (3:15). This additional meaning is implied by the reference to practicing these commands. Consequently, Jesus's words imply that He would fulfill all of the OT promises and obey all its commandments. The smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet is the yod, which resembles an English apostrophe. The stroke of a letter is a slight pen stroke that distinguishes similar letters. Jesus's statement shows that He regarded the

OT as accurate and reliable down to the smallest detail. In keeping with this conviction, Jesus taught that fidelity to the OT witness determines a disciple's stature in His kingdom. True fidelity to God's commands is made possible by God's miraculous work in a disciple's heart.

Notes:

MATTHEW 7:24-29

7:24-27. The adjectives wise and foolish describe a person's spiritual and moral state, not his intellect. Whether one is considered wise or foolish is determined by his response to Jesus's teaching. Since OT writers described God's wrath using the image of a great storm (Is 28:16-17; Ezk 13:10-13), the storm that destroys the house on the sand is a picture of divine judgment. Hence, the person who hears and acts on Jesus's teaching is prepared for judgment. The one who hears but doesn't act on Jesus's words will be destroyed in the storm of judgment.

7:28-29. Jesus amazed the crowds with an authority that surpassed that of other teachers. First-century Jewish teachers appealed to the authority of their rabbinic predecessors. However, Jesus introduced His teachings with the contrast, "You have heard that it was said ... but I tell you" (5:21, 27, 31, 33, 38, 43). By this Jesus made clear that He had the authority to interpret the law independent from and even contrary to the Jewish oral tradition and the most esteemed rabbis. The words when Jesus had finished are important for understanding the structure of Matthew's Gospel. See "Structure" in the Introduction to Matthew.