

“You Have Heard ...”



The Sermon on the Mount is not a set of rules and regulations – It is a picture of the life we will live when the Holy Spirit is having His unhindered way with us.

(My Utmost for His Highest, July 25)

Jesus was a law breaker. We don't think it was a big deal, because in our eyes, they were stupid laws anyway. But, it was monumental in His culture.

When confronted with it, He often justified it by pointing to the laws they were breaking. Almost like saying “you did it, so it's okay for me too.”

Here are a few examples – there are several more:

- He broke a law when He reached out and touched the man with Leprosy (**Matthew 8:1-5**) and when He touched the young man who was dead and getting taken out to be buried (**Luke 7:11-17**).
- When He was accused of breaking the law of hand-washing – didn't defend Himself but pointed out a law they regularly broke – one of the 10 commandments. (**Matthew 15:1-14**)
- When healing a man who was born blind, He spat on the dirt, made mud, smeared it over the man's eyes, and told him to go wash in the pool all the way across town – breaking numerous Sabbath laws and encouraged the man to do the same (**John 9:1 – 10:21**).
- When he healed the man at the pool he told him to pick up his bed and carry it home, encouraging him to break a Sabbath law (**John 5:1-47**).

It appeared to many, especially those who made a living studying and teaching the law, that He didn't care for the law much and broke it whenever it suited His purpose.

They were deeply troubled by this. How could Someone who broke so many of the laws they held sacred be from God?

The truth is, many of these laws had become a reason to ignore and marginalize people – a reason to stay away from undesirables. Others had become an excuse for selfishness and self-exaltation. And as a result, God's love and character were misrepresented.

The Depth of the Law

Not too far into *The Sermon on the Mount* (see [Matthew 5 – 7](#)), Jesus lays out His understanding of the law – which we probably should pay attention to. He is the One who wrote it on stone and gave it to Moses shortly after the Exodus from Egypt.

Beginning at [Matthew 5:17](#), Jesus said:

“Don’t think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or one stroke of a letter will pass away from the law until all things are accomplished.”

([Matthew 5:17-20](#), CSB)

Especially in light of those who thought He was careless with the law, He wanted to make His position absolutely clear. He did not come to change God’s law, He came to fulfill it and give it clarity. Not even a little dot or the crossing of a “t” would disappear until it accomplished what it was intended to accomplish.

Reading on at verse 19:

“Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commands and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever does and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.” ([Matthew 5:17-20](#), CSB)

And then He makes a statement that would have been absolutely astounding to the people who were listening:

“For I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never get into the kingdom of heaven.” ([Matthew 5:17-20](#), CSB)

They were the ones who appeared the most righteousness, and they were not shy about displaying it. Many of them were revered patriarchs. Most of them knew the entire scripture by heart – along with many of the commentaries on it.

If they were not righteous enough, who else had any chance for salvation?

Maybe you have asked that question, or some form of it for yourself.

1. Can I ever be as good as my spiritual hero?
2. Will I ever be good enough to be saved? How will I know when I’ve arrived?
3. If these guys who were so intimately acquainted with Scripture were not good enough, what chance do I have?

These are all important questions that need to be answered.

Not Just Killing

A few verses later, He tackles the sixth commandment. Reading at [Matthew 5:21](#):

“You have heard that it was said to our ancestors, Do not murder, and whoever murders will be subject to judgment ...”

So far so good. As far as I know, I’ve never killed anyone. Reading on:

“But I tell you, everyone who is angry with his brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Whoever insults his brother or sister, will be subject to the court. Whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be subject to hellfire.” ([Matthew 5:21-24](#), CSB)

Apparently, this commandment is not just about killing someone – it’s about all the feelings, thoughts, and comments that could lead you down that path.

Sinful acts happen because we have sinful hearts. All sin starts as a thought.

According to Jesus, this commandment is really about how we treat people. It is not just about taking away someone’s life, but includes anything we *say, do, or think* that *reduces the quality of someone else’s life*.

This includes

- ... the snide, sarcastic comments we make about people who may be different than us.
- ... those caustic statements we make online making fun of someone’s thoughts or putting someone down for what they believe.
- ... those times when we stand by and watch someone be bullied without stepping in to help.
- ... those times we talk about someone behind their backs or even lending support to it by not either saying something or walking away and refusing to participate.
- ... those time we lash out at someone who gets in the way of our desires or plans

And, the list could go on.

Jesus is saying that as His followers, we need to treat every person with thoughtfulness and respect: including, but not limited to those left-wing socialists, right wing fanatics, Muslim or Hispanic immigrants (whether they’re legal or not), those folk at the soup kitchen, and even those who might seem normal to us at first glance.

This is so important that Jesus said:

“So if you are offering your gift on the altar, and there you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled with your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift.” ([Matthew 5:21-24](#), CSB)

Making something right with another person is so urgent in Jesus' eyes that taking care of it immediately is of greater importance than being in church.

Why?

Because as His followers, things we have done to hurt other people reflect poorly on God and often are a barrier for them coming to Him.

Not Just Sex

Jesus also tackles the seventh commandment (see [Exodus 20:1-17](#)):

"You have heard that it was said, Do not commit adultery ..." ([Matthew 5:27-28](#), CSB)

Again, so far so good, I have never cheated on my wife. But, based on the last go around, I do have some apprehensions. Reading on:

"But I tell you, everyone who looks at a woman lustfully ..." ([Matthew 5:27-28](#), CSB)

My guess is, although I'm not an expert on this angle, it's possible for a woman to look at a man lustfully as well. In fact, I think it's possible to look at anyone lustfully. I don't think you're off the hook here just because you're not a man lusting after a woman – just saying.

"But I tell you, everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart ..." ([Matthew 5:27-28](#), CSB)

Apparently, adultery is not just about sex outside of marriage. This is not just about a physical act. This is about all the things we may feel, think or say that lead us down this path.

Sinful acts are the results of sinful hearts.

And again, this is about how we treat people. This is about viewing people as objects of pleasure; of making it just about a body with no consideration for the very real person who lives in that body.

It's about people using and abusing people. It's about the thousands of young people who find themselves in bondage to others being exploited because they are perceived as "attractive". It is about unholy fantasies that can grow into unholy actions.

The sin in our heart that we hide from everyone else, is just as much sin as following through with the actions.

This is serious enough that Jesus says extreme measures are warranted. He said:

"If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of the parts of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right

hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of the parts of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.” (Matthew 5:29-30, CSB)

I don't believe Jesus is advocating for us to actually gouge out eyes or cut off hands. He just wants you to realize you are dealing with an eternal life or death situation.

He is saying you would be better off as a quadriplegic – such as Joni Erikson Tada – and being saved than being healthy and strong and not make it to heaven.

A Heart Problem

What Jesus is really saying in all this is that sin is not a behavior problem, it's a heart problem.

You act sinfully because you cherish and nurture sinful thoughts – thoughts of anger, hate, disgust, lust, and the list could go on.

And what He essentially demonstrated with His comments on just these two commandments, is that you're not alone, every one of us has this problem.

The solution is not behavior modification. You will never be successful focusing on your behavior because your sinful heart will always betray you.

If we are focused on our behavior, the answer to the questions we asked earlier are:

1. It doesn't matter if you ever become as good as your spiritual hero – neither of you will ever be good enough.
2. You will never be good enough to be saved.
3. The Pharisees were not good enough to be saved because in all their gain of knowledge, they were focused on themselves and their hearts were still sinful.

Well, this is encouraging news.

A Heart Solution

In reality, it is. Remember what Paul said?

No one can ever be made right with God by doing what the law commands. The law simply shows us how sinful we are.

But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law ... We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ ...

For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for

our sins. For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood. (Romans 3:20-25, NLT)

Jesus is the solution for your sinful heart.

First of all, He frees you from the penalty of sin. He gives you His righteousness and takes your sinfulness so you stand before God as if you had never sinned. His perfect life covers your sinfulness.

And then He goes to work on your heart.

We find this promise in the book of Ezekiel. These words are not Ezekiel's interpretation of what God said, he is actually quoting God – this is His direct promise!

“Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean. Your filth will be washed away, and you will no longer worship idols. And I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart. And I will put my Spirit in you so that you will follow my decrees and be careful to obey my regulations.” (Ezekiel 36:25-27, NLT)

He does all the work here, you just need to stay with Him. He will clean you, give you a heart that wants to follow Him, and give you His Spirit to keep you on track.

The questions we asked earlier – the ones we answered so encouragingly a couple of minutes ago – have a different answer when you've accepted Jesus and are following Him:

1. If both you and your spiritual hero have embraced Jesus, you will both be considered perfect.
2. You don't have to worry about being good enough because your salvation isn't based on your goodness. It's based on Jesus' goodness. As long as you stay with Him, His goodness will take care of you!
3. The Pharisees were not good enough because they were counting on their goodness, which will never be enough. If you stay with Jesus, your chance of being saved is 100% – **He will always be good enough!**

Notes

Text you find in [this color](#) is a link to more information. It may take you to the Bible verse in context and/or in several different translations utilizing [BibleGateway.com](#). In some cases, it may take you to a website where there is additional information. And, it may take you to a PDF copy of previous sermons in this series.

Previous Sermons in this Series

- July 20, 2019: [Seek Ye First \(The Sermon, Part 1\)](#)
- July 27, 2019: [Blessed \(The Sermon, Part 2\)](#)
- August 24, 2019: [Salty Light \(The Sermon, Part 3\)](#)

Scripture References

Psalm 147:7-11 (NIV): *Sing to the LORD with grateful praise; make music to our God on the harp.*

⁸ *He covers the sky with clouds; he supplies the earth with rain and makes grass grow on the hills.*

⁹ *He provides food for the cattle and for the young ravens when they call.*

¹⁰ *His pleasure is not in the strength of the horse, nor his delight in the legs of the warrior; ¹¹ the LORD delights in those who fear him, who put their hope in his unfailing love.*

(Psalm 147:7-11, NIV)

Isaiah 58:1-14 (NLT): *“Shout with the voice of a trumpet blast. Shout aloud! Don’t be timid. Tell my people Israel of their sins! ² Yet they act so pious! They come to the Temple every day and seem delighted to learn all about me. They act like a righteous nation that would never abandon the laws of its God. They ask me to take action on their behalf, pretending they want to be near me. ³ ‘We have fasted before you!’ they say. ‘Why aren’t you impressed? We have been very hard on ourselves, and you don’t even notice it!’*

“I will tell you why!” I respond. “It’s because you are fasting to please yourselves. Even while you fast, you keep oppressing your workers. ⁴ What good is fasting when you keep on fighting and quarreling? This kind of fasting will never get you anywhere with me. ⁵ You humble yourselves by going through the motions of penance, bowing your heads like reeds bending in the wind. You dress in burlap and cover yourselves with ashes. Is this what you call fasting? Do you really think this will please the LORD?

⁶ *“No, this is the kind of fasting I want: Free those who are wrongly imprisoned; lighten the burden of those who work for you. Let the oppressed go free, and remove the chains that bind people. ⁷ Share your food with the hungry, and give shelter to the homeless. Give clothes to those who need them, and do not hide from relatives who need your help.*

⁸ “Then your salvation will come like the dawn, and your wounds will quickly heal. Your godliness will lead you forward, and the glory of the LORD will protect you from behind. ⁹ Then when you call, the LORD will answer. ‘Yes, I am here,’ he will quickly reply.

“Remove the heavy yoke of oppression. Stop pointing your finger and spreading vicious rumors! ¹⁰ Feed the hungry, and help those in trouble. Then your light will shine out from the darkness, and the darkness around you will be as bright as noon. ¹¹ The LORD will guide you continually, giving you water when you are dry and restoring your strength. You will be like a well-watered garden, like an ever-flowing spring. ¹² Some of you will rebuild the deserted ruins of your cities. Then you will be known as a builder of walls and a restorer of homes.

¹³ “Keep the Sabbath day holy. Don’t pursue your own interests on that day, but enjoy the Sabbath and speak of it with delight as the LORD’s holy day. Honor the Sabbath in everything you do on that day, and don’t follow your own desires or talk idly. ¹⁴ Then the LORD will be your delight. I will give you great honor and satisfy you with the inheritance I promised to your ancestor Jacob. I, the LORD, have spoken!” (Isaiah 58:1-14, NLT)

Jeremiah 31:33-34 (NLT): “This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time,” declares the LORD. “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. ³⁴ No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, ‘Know the LORD,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the LORD. “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.” (Jeremiah 31:33-34, NIV)

Ezekiel 36:25-27 (NLT): “Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean. Your filth will be washed away, and you will no longer worship idols. ²⁶ And I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit in you so that you will follow my decrees and be careful to obey my regulations.” (Ezekiel 36:25-27, NLT)

Matthew 5 – 7 (NLT): One day as he saw the crowds gathering, Jesus went up on the mountainside and sat down. His disciples gathered around him, ² and he began to teach them.

The Beatitudes

³ “God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.

⁴ God blesses those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

⁵ God blesses those who are humble, for they will inherit the whole earth.

⁶ God blesses those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they will be satisfied.

⁷ God blesses those who are merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

⁸ God blesses those whose hearts are pure, for they will see God.

⁹ *God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God.*

¹⁰ *God blesses those who are persecuted for doing right, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.*

¹¹ *“God blesses you when people mock you and persecute you and lie about you and say all sorts of evil things against you because you are my followers. ¹² Be happy about it! Be very glad! For a great reward awaits you in heaven. And remember, the ancient prophets were persecuted in the same way.*

Teaching about Salt and Light

¹³ *“You are the salt of the earth. But what good is salt if it has lost its flavor? Can you make it salty again? It will be thrown out and trampled underfoot as worthless.*

¹⁴ *“You are the light of the world – like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.*

Teaching about the Law

¹⁷ *“Don’t misunderstand why I have come. I did not come to abolish the law of Moses or the writings of the prophets. No, I came to accomplish their purpose. ¹⁸ I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not even the smallest detail of God’s law will disappear until its purpose is achieved. ¹⁹ So if you ignore the least commandment and teach others to do the same, you will be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But anyone who obeys God’s laws and teaches them will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.*

²⁰ *“But I warn you – unless your righteousness is better than the righteousness of the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven!*

Teaching about Anger

²¹ *“You have heard that our ancestors were told, ‘You must not murder. If you commit murder, you are subject to judgment.’ (Exodus 20:13) ²² But I say, if you are even angry with someone, you are subject to judgment! If you call someone an idiot, you are in danger of being brought before the court. And if you curse someone, you are in danger of the fires of hell.*

²³ *“So if you are presenting a sacrifice at the altar in the Temple and you suddenly remember that someone has something against you, ²⁴ leave your sacrifice there at the altar. Go and be reconciled to that person. Then come and offer your sacrifice to God.*

²⁵ *“When you are on the way to court with your adversary, settle your differences quickly. Otherwise, your accuser may hand you over to the judge, who will hand you over to an officer, and you will be thrown into prison. ²⁶ And if that happens, you surely won’t be free again until you have paid the last penny.*

Teaching about Adultery

²⁷ “You have heard the commandment that says, ‘You must not commit adultery.’ (Exodus 20:14)

²⁸ But I say, anyone who even looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹ So if your eye – even your good eye – causes you to lust, 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 hand – even your stronger hand – causes you to sin, 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 be thrown into hell.

Teaching about Divorce

³¹ “You have heard the law that says, ‘A man can divorce his wife by merely giving her a written notice of divorce.’ (Deuteronomy 24:1) ³² But I say that a man who divorces his wife, unless she has been unfaithful, causes her to commit adultery. And anyone who marries a divorced woman also commits adultery.

Teaching about Vows

³³ “You have also heard that our ancestors were told, ‘You must not break your vows; you must carry out the vows you make to the LORD.’ (Numbers 30:2) ³⁴ But I say, do not make any vows! Do not say, ‘By heaven!’ because heaven is God’s throne. ³⁵ And do not say, ‘By the earth!’ because the earth is his footstool. And do not say, ‘By Jerusalem!’ for Jerusalem is the city of the great King. ³⁶ Do not even say, ‘By my head!’ for you can’t turn one hair white or black. ³⁷ Just say a simple, ‘Yes, I will,’ or ‘No, I won’t.’ Anything beyond this is from the evil one.

Teaching about Revenge

³⁸ “You have heard the law that says the punishment must match the injury: ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’ (Exodus 21:24, Leviticus 24:20, Deuteronomy 19:21) ³⁹ But I say, do not resist an evil person! If someone slaps you on the right cheek, offer the other cheek also. ⁴⁰ If you are sued in court and your shirt is taken from you, give your coat, too. ⁴¹ If a soldier demands that you carry his gear for a mile, carry it two miles. ⁴² Give to those who ask, and don’t turn away from those who want to borrow.

Teaching about Love for Enemies

⁴³ “You have heard the law that says, ‘Love your neighbor’ (Leviticus 19:18) and hate your enemy. ⁴⁴ But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you! ⁴⁵ In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven. For he gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and the unjust alike. ⁴⁶ If you love only those who love you, what reward is there for that? Even corrupt tax collectors do that much. ⁴⁷ If you are kind only to your friends, how are you different from anyone else? Even pagans do that. ⁴⁸ But you are to be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.

Teaching about Giving to the Needy

6 *“Watch out! Don’t do your good deeds publicly, to be admired by others, for you will lose the reward from your Father in heaven. ² When you give to someone in need, don’t do as the hypocrites do – blowing trumpets in the synagogues and streets to call attention to their acts of charity! I tell you the truth, they have received all the reward they will ever get. ³ But when you give to someone in need, don’t let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. ⁴ Give your gifts in private, and your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.*

Teaching about Prayer and Fasting

⁵ *“When you pray, don’t be like the hypocrites who love to pray publicly on street corners and in the synagogues where everyone can see them. I tell you the truth, that is all the reward they will ever get. ⁶ But when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father in private. Then your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.*

⁷ *“When you pray, don’t babble on and on as the Gentiles do. They think their prayers are answered merely by repeating their words again and again. ⁸ Don’t be like them, for your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him! ⁹ Pray like this:*

Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy. ¹⁰ May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. ¹¹ Give us today the food we need, ¹² and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us. ¹³ And don’t let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the evil one.

¹⁴ *“If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. ¹⁵ But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins.*

¹⁶ *“And when you fast, don’t make it obvious, as the hypocrites do, for they try to look miserable and disheveled so people will admire them for their fasting. I tell you the truth, that is the only reward they will ever get. ¹⁷ But when you fast, comb your hair and wash your face. ¹⁸ Then no one will notice that you are fasting, except your Father, who knows what you do in private. And your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.*

Teaching about Money and Possessions

¹⁹ *“Don’t store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.*

²² *“Your eye is like a lamp that provides light for your body. When your eye is healthy, your whole body is filled with light. ²³ But when your eye is unhealthy, your whole body is filled with darkness. And if the light you think you have is actually darkness, how deep that darkness is!*

²⁴ “No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and be enslaved to money.

²⁵ “That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life – whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn’t life more than food, and your body more than clothing?

²⁶ Look at the birds. They don’t plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren’t you far more valuable to him than they are? ²⁷ Can all your worries add a single moment to your life?

²⁸ “And why worry about your clothing? Look at the lilies of the field and how they grow. They don’t work or make their clothing, ²⁹ yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are. ³⁰ And if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith?

³¹ “So don’t worry about these things, saying, ‘What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?’ ³² These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. ³³ Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.

³⁴ “So don’t worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today’s trouble is enough for today.

Do Not Judge Others

7 “Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. ² For you will be treated as you treat others. The standard you use in judging is the standard by which you will be judged.

³ “And why worry about a speck in your friend’s eye when you have a log in your own? ⁴ How can you think of saying to your friend, ‘Let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,’ when you can’t see past the log in your own eye? ⁵ Hypocrite! First get rid of the log in your own eye; then you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend’s eye.

⁶ “Don’t waste what is holy on people who are unholy. Don’t throw your pearls to pigs! They will trample the pearls, then turn and attack you.

Effective Prayer & the Golden Rule

⁷ “Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.

⁹ “You parents – if your children ask for a loaf of bread, do you give them a stone instead? ¹⁰ Or if they ask for a fish, do you give them a snake? Of course not! ¹¹ So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good gifts to those who ask him.

¹² “Do to others whatever you would like them to do to you. This is the essence of all that is taught in the law and the prophets.

The Narrow Gate

¹³ “You can enter God’s Kingdom only through the narrow gate. The highway to hell is broad, and its gate is wide for the many who choose that way. ¹⁴ But the gateway to life is very narrow and the road is difficult, and only a few ever find it.

The Tree and Its Fruit

¹⁵ “Beware of false prophets who come disguised as harmless sheep but are really vicious wolves. ¹⁶ You can identify them by their fruit, that is, by the way they act. Can you pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ A good tree produces good fruit, and a bad tree produces bad fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree can’t produce bad fruit, and a bad tree can’t produce good fruit. ¹⁹ So every tree that does not produce good fruit is chopped down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Yes, just as you can identify a tree by its fruit, so you can identify people by their actions.

True Disciples

²¹ “Not everyone who calls out to me, ‘Lord! Lord!’ will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter. ²² On judgment day many will say to me, ‘Lord! Lord! We prophesied in your name and cast out demons in your name and performed many miracles in your name.’ ²³ But I will reply, ‘I never knew you. Get away from me, you who break God’s laws.’

Building on a Solid Foundation

²⁴ “Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock. ²⁵ Though the rain comes in torrents and the floodwaters rise and the winds beat against that house, it won’t collapse because it is built on bedrock. ²⁶ But anyone who hears my teaching and doesn’t obey it is foolish, like a person who builds a house on sand. ²⁷ When the rains and floods come and the winds beat against that house, it will collapse with a mighty crash.”

²⁸ When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, ²⁹ for he taught with real authority – quite unlike their teachers of religious law. (Matthew 5 – 7, NLT)

Matthew 10:28-31 (NLT): “Don’t be afraid of those who want to kill your body; they cannot touch your soul. Fear only God, who can destroy both soul and body in hell. ²⁹ What is the price of two sparrows – one copper coin? But not a single sparrow can fall to the ground without your Father knowing it. ³⁰ And the very hairs on your head are all numbered. ³¹ So don’t be afraid; you are more valuable to God than a whole flock of sparrows.” (Matthew 10:28-31, NLT)

Matthew 11:28-30 (NLT): Then Jesus said, “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30, NLT)

Matthew 22:34-40 (NLT): But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees with his reply, they met together to question him again. ³⁵ One of them, an expert in religious law, tried to trap him with this question: ³⁶ “Teacher, which is the most important commandment in the law of Moses?”

³⁷ Jesus replied, “‘You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.’ (Deuteronomy 6:5) ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ A second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ (Leviticus 19:18) ⁴⁰ The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments.” (Matthew 22:34-40, NLT)

Matthew 28:18-20 (NLT): Jesus came and told his disciples, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. ²⁰ Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:18-20, NLT)

Luke 6:20-29 (NLT): Then Jesus turned to his disciples and said,

“God blesses you who are poor, for the Kingdom of God is yours.

²¹ God blesses you who are hungry now, for you will be satisfied.

God blesses you who weep now, for in due time you will laugh.

²² What blessings await you when people hate you and exclude you and mock you and curse you as evil because you follow the Son of Man. ²³ When that happens, be happy! Yes, leap for joy! For a great reward awaits you in heaven. And remember, their ancestors treated the ancient prophets that same way.

Sorrows Foretold

²⁴ “What sorrow awaits you who are rich, for you have your only happiness now.

²⁵ What sorrow awaits you who are fat and prosperous now, for a time of awful hunger awaits you.

What sorrow awaits you who laugh now, for your laughing will turn to mourning and sorrow.

²⁶ What sorrow awaits you who are praised by the crowds, for their ancestors also praised false prophets.

Love for Enemies

²⁷ *“But to you who are willing to listen, I say, love your enemies! Do good to those who hate you.*

²⁸ *Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who hurt you. ²⁹ If someone slaps you on one cheek, offer the other cheek also. If someone demands your coat, offer your shirt also. ³⁰ Give to anyone who asks; and when things are taken away from you, don’t try to get them back. ³¹ Do to others as you would like them to do to you.*

³² *“If you love only those who love you, why should you get credit for that? Even sinners love those who love them! ³³ And if you do good only to those who do good to you, why should you get credit? Even sinners do that much! ³⁴ And if you lend money only to those who can repay you, why should you get credit? Even sinners will lend to other sinners for a full return.*

³⁵ *“Love your enemies! Do good to them. Lend to them without expecting to be repaid. Then your reward from heaven will be very great, and you will truly be acting as children of the Most High, for he is kind to those who are unthankful and wicked. ³⁶ You must be compassionate, just as your Father is compassionate.*

Do Not Judge Others

³⁷ *“Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn others, or it will all come back against you. Forgive others, and you will be forgiven. ³⁸ Give, and you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full – pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, running over, and poured into your lap. The amount you give will determine the amount you get back.”*

³⁹ *Then Jesus gave the following illustration: “Can one blind person lead another? Won’t they both fall into a ditch? ⁴⁰ Students are not greater than their teacher. But the student who is fully trained will become like the teacher.*

⁴¹ *“And why worry about a speck in your friend’s eye when you have a log in your own? ⁴² How can you think of saying, ‘Friend, let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,’ when you can’t see past the log in your own eye? Hypocrite! First get rid of the log in your own eye; then you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend’s eye.*

The Tree and Its Fruit

⁴³ *“A good tree can’t produce bad fruit, and a bad tree can’t produce good fruit. ⁴⁴ A tree is identified by its fruit. Figs are never gathered from thornbushes, and grapes are not picked from bramble bushes. ⁴⁵ A good person produces good things from the treasury of a good heart, and an evil person produces evil things from the treasury of an evil heart. What you say flows from what is in your heart.*

Building on a Solid Foundation

⁴⁶ *“So why do you keep calling me ‘Lord, Lord!’ when you don’t do what I say? ⁴⁷ I will show you what it’s like when someone comes to me, listens to my teaching, and then follows it. ⁴⁸ It is like a*

person building a house who digs deep and lays the foundation on solid rock. When the floodwaters rise and break against that house, it stands firm because it is well built. ⁴⁹ But anyone who hears and doesn't obey is like a person who builds a house right on the ground, without a foundation. When the floods sweep down against that house, it will collapse into a heap of ruins." (Luke 6:20-29, NLT)

Luke 11:1-13 (NLT): Once Jesus was in a certain place praying. As he finished, one of his disciples came to him and said, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples."

² Jesus said, "This is how you should pray:

"Father, may your name be kept holy. May your Kingdom come soon. ³ Give us each day the food we need, ⁴ and forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. And don't let us yield to temptation."

⁵ Then, teaching them more about prayer, he used this story: "Suppose you went to a friend's house at midnight, wanting to borrow three loaves of bread. You say to him, ⁶ 'A friend of mine has just arrived for a visit, and I have nothing for him to eat.' ⁷ And suppose he calls out from his bedroom, 'Don't bother me. The door is locked for the night, and my family and I are all in bed. I can't help you.' ⁸ But I tell you this – though he won't do it for friendship's sake, if you keep knocking long enough, he will get up and give you whatever you need because of your shameless persistence.

⁹ "And so I tell you, keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. ¹⁰ For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.

¹¹ "You fathers – if your children ask for a fish, do you give them a snake instead? ¹² Or if they ask for an egg, do you give them a scorpion? Of course not! ¹³ So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him." (Luke 11:1-13, NLT)

Luke 11:34-36 (NLT): "No one lights a lamp and then hides it or puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where its light can be seen by all who enter the house.

³⁴ "Your eye is like a lamp that provides light for your body. When your eye is healthy, your whole body is filled with light. But when it is unhealthy, your body is filled with darkness. ³⁵ Make sure that the light you think you have is not actually darkness. ³⁶ If you are filled with light, with no dark corners, then your whole life will be radiant, as though a floodlight were filling you with light." (Luke 11:34-36, NLT)

Luke 12:22-34 (NLT): Then, turning to his disciples, Jesus said, "That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life – whether you have enough food to eat or enough clothes to wear. ²³ For life is more than food, and your body more than clothing. ²⁴ Look at the ravens. They don't plant or harvest or store food in barns, for God feeds them. And you are far more valuable to him than

any birds! ²⁵ Can all your worries add a single moment to your life? ²⁶ And if worry can't accomplish a little thing like that, what's the use of worrying over bigger things?

²⁷ "Look at the lilies and how they grow. They don't work or make their clothing, yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are. ²⁸ And if God cares so wonderfully for flowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith?

²⁹ "And don't be concerned about what to eat and what to drink. Don't worry about such things.

³⁰ These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers all over the world, but your Father already knows your needs. ³¹ Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and he will give you everything you need.

³² "So don't be afraid, little flock. For it gives your Father great happiness to give you the Kingdom.

³³ "Sell your possessions and give to those in need. This will store up treasure for you in heaven! And the purses of heaven never get old or develop holes. Your treasure will be safe; no thief can steal it and no moth can destroy it. ³⁴ Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be. (Luke 12:22-34, NLT)

John 6:28-29 (NLT): They replied, "We want to perform God's works, too. What should we do?"

Jesus told them, "This is the only work God wants from you: Believe in the one he has sent."
(John 6:28-29, NLT)

Romans 3:19-31 (NLT): Obviously, the law applies to those to whom it was given, for its purpose is to keep people from having excuses, and to show that the entire world is guilty before God. ²⁰ For no one can ever be made right with God by doing what the law commands. The law simply shows us how sinful we are.

²¹ But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago. ²² We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are.

²³ For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. ²⁴ Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins. ²⁵ For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood. This sacrifice shows that God was being fair when he held back and did not punish those who sinned in times past, ²⁶ for he was looking ahead and including them in what he would do in this present time. God did this to demonstrate his righteousness, for he himself is fair and just, and he makes sinners right in his sight when they believe in Jesus.

²⁷ Can we boast, then, that we have done anything to be accepted by God? No, because our acquittal is not based on obeying the law. It is based on faith. ²⁸ So we are made right with God through faith and not by obeying the law.

²⁹ After all, is God the God of the Jews only? Isn't he also the God of the Gentiles? Of course he is.

³⁰ There is only one God, and he makes people right with himself only by faith, whether they are Jews or Gentiles. ³¹ Well then, if we emphasize faith, does this mean that we can forget about the law? Of course not! In fact, only when we have faith do we truly fulfill the law.

(Romans 3:19-31, NLT)

Philippians 4:4-7 (NLT): Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again – rejoice! ⁵ Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do. Remember, the Lord is coming soon.

⁶ Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. ⁷ Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

(Philippians 4:4-7, NLT)

Philippians 4:4-7 (the Message): Celebrate God all day, every day. I mean, revel in him! Make it as clear as you can to all you meet that you're on their side, working with them and not against them. Help them see that the Master is about to arrive. He could show up any minute!

Don't fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns. Before you know it, a sense of God's wholeness, everything coming together for good, will come and settle you down. It's wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the center of your life. (Philippians 4:4-7, the Message)

1 John 2:9-11 (NLT): If anyone claims, "I am living in the light," but hates a fellow believer, that person is still living in darkness. ¹⁰ Anyone who loves a fellow believer is living in the light and does not cause others to stumble. ¹¹ But anyone who hates a fellow believer is still living and walking in darkness. Such a person does not know the way to go, having been blinded by the darkness.

(1 John 2:9-11, NLT)

1 John 3:11-19 (NLT): This is the message you have heard from the beginning: We should love one another. ¹² We must not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and killed his brother. And why did he kill him? Because Cain had been doing what was evil, and his brother had been doing what was righteous. ¹³ So don't be surprised, dear brothers and sisters, if the world hates you.

¹⁴ If we love our brothers and sisters who are believers, it proves that we have passed from death to life. But a person who has no love is still dead. ¹⁵ Anyone who hates another brother or sister is really a murderer at heart. And you know that murderers don't have eternal life within them.

¹⁶ We know what real love is because Jesus gave up his life for us. So we also ought to give up our lives for our brothers and sisters. ¹⁷ If someone has enough money to live well and sees a brother or sister in need but shows no compassion – how can God's love be in that person?

¹⁸ Dear children, let's not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions. ¹⁹ Our actions will show that we belong to the truth, so we will be confident when we stand before God. (1 John 3:11-19, NLT)

1 John 4:7-21 (NLT): Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God.

Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God. ⁸ But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

⁹ God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him. ¹⁰ This is real love – not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.

¹¹ Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other. ¹² No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us, and his love is brought to full expression in us.

¹³ And God has given us his Spirit as proof that we live in him and he in us. ¹⁴ Furthermore, we have seen with our own eyes and now testify that the Father sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. ¹⁵ All who declare that Jesus is the Son of God have God living in them, and they live in God. ¹⁶ We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in his love.

God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them. ¹⁷ And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect. So we will not be afraid on the day of judgment, but we can face him with confidence because we live like Jesus here in this world.

¹⁸ Such love has no fear, because perfect love expels all fear. If we are afraid, it is for fear of punishment, and this shows that we have not fully experienced his perfect love. ¹⁹ We love each other because he loved us first.

²⁰ If someone says, "I love God," but hates a fellow believer, that person is a liar; for if we don't love people we can see, how can we love God, whom we cannot see? ²¹ And he has given us this command: Those who love God must also love their fellow believers. (1 John 4:7-21, NLT)

E.G. White Resources

To get some additional insights into the Sermon on the Mount, you may find the book *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessings* helpful, as well as the *Desire of Ages*, Chapter 31.

Desire of Ages, pages 667-668: The Lord is disappointed when His people place a low estimate upon themselves. He desires His chosen heritage to value themselves according to the price He has placed upon them. God wanted them, else He would not have sent His Son on such an expensive errand to redeem them. He has a use for them, and He is well pleased when they make the very highest demands upon Him, that they may glorify His name. They may expect large things if they have faith in His promises.

But to pray in Christ's name means much. It means that we are to accept His character, manifest His spirit, and work His works. The Saviour's promise is given on condition. "If ye love Me," He says, "keep My commandments." He saves men, not in sin, but from sin; and those who love Him will show their love by obedience.

All true obedience comes from the heart. It was heart work with Christ. And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses. The will, refined and sanctified, will find its highest delight in doing His service. When we know God as it is our privilege to know Him, our life will be a life of continual obedience. Through an appreciation of the character of Christ, through communion with God, sin will become hateful to us.

As Christ lived the law in humanity, so we may do if we will take hold of the Strong for strength. But we are not to place the responsibility of our duty upon others, and wait for them to tell us what to do. We cannot depend for counsel upon humanity. The Lord will teach us our duty just as willingly as He will teach somebody else. If we come to Him in faith, He will speak His mysteries to us personally. Our hearts will often burn within us as One draws nigh to commune with us as He did with Enoch. Those who decide to do nothing in any line that will displease God, will know, after presenting their case before Him, just what course to pursue. And they will receive not only wisdom, but strength. Power for obedience, for service, will be imparted to them, as Christ has promised. Whatever was given to Christ – the "all things" to supply the need of fallen men – was given to Him as the head and representative of humanity. And "whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight." 1 John 3:22. ([Desire of Ages, pages 667-668](#))