

DCC SCHOOL OF THE BIBLE
CHRISTIAN ETHICS:
THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT AND BEYOND
SYLLABUS FOR SPRING 2005

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In this class we will study the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) with the goal of applying its principles to our Christian lives today. It is the goal of this class that the student (1) understand Jesus' teaching in this part of Scripture, (2) be able to apply the principles to his or her life as a disciple, and (3) be able to teach others to do the same.

TEXTBOOKS:

- (1) *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount: The Bible Speaks Today* by John R. W. Stott (Downer's Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1978)
- (2) *Evangelical Ethics: Issues Facing the Church Today*, by John Jefferson Davis (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, Second Edition, 1993)

PLACE AND TIME: Arvada Building, 8-9AM Sundays beginning March 13.

REGISTRATION: By phone or E-mail, Call Glenn at 303-460-7398 or glg9@aol.com

COST: If taken for Credit: Only the cost of the textbooks. If you Audit there is no cost.

EXPECTATIONS: **Auditors:** Attend each class, take notes, participate in discussions

Credit: For those who want to dig deeper and/or receive credit toward the Certificate In Biblical Studies or the Diploma in Teaching and Ministry, the following is required:

- (1) Read through and meditate on the Sermon on the Mount at least 4 times, attend each class or listen to each cassette,
- (2) read the assigned pages in the two text books,
- (3) and write a 3-5-page paper summarizing the major issues surrounding one of the ethical issues John Jefferson Davis writes about in his chapters 2-10 of his book *Evangelical Ethics*.
- (4) **OPTION:** A limited number of students can substitute a 10-minute oral presentation to the class as a substitution for number (3) above. If you wish to do this, please let me know as soon as possible.
- (4) **OPTION:** Verbatim memorization of Matthew 5 can be substituted for number 1 and 3 above.

OUTLINE OF THE CLASS AND ASSIGNED READING

Class 1: Introduction to Ethics and Matthew and the Sermon on the Mount.

Read: Stott pp. 1-29; Jefferson, Chapter 1 (Dimensions in Decision Making)

Class 2: The Heart Orientation of the Jesus' Disciple

Read: Matthew 5:1-16; Stott pp. 30-68; Jefferson, Chapters 2-3 (Contraception and Reproductive Technologies)

Class 3: The Heart Orientation toward Righteousness and Anger

Read: Matthew 5:17-26; Stott pp. 69-86; Jefferson chapters 6-8 (Abortion, Infanticide, Euthanasia, Capital Punishment)

Class 4: The Heart Orientation Toward Sex and Marriage and Divorce

Read: Matthew 5:27-32; Stott pp. 86-99; Jefferson Chapters 4-5 (Divorce, Remarriage, Homosexuality)

Class 5: The Heart Orientation of Honesty and Love for Enemies

Read: Matthew 5:33-48; Stott pp. 100-124; Jefferson Chapters 9-10 (Civil Disobedience,

Revolution, War and Peace)

Class 6: The Heart Orientation of Giving, Prayer, Fasting, and Personal Treasure

Read: Matthew 6:1-24; Stott pp. 125-159

Class 7: The Heart Orientation of Seeking God's Rule in Your Life, Judging Others, and the Golden Rule

Read: Matthew 6:25-7:12; Stott pp. 159-192

Class 8: The Heart Orientation of Embracing the Narrow Way, Recognizing False Prophets, God Knowing You, and Being a Wise Builder.

Read: Matthew 7:13-29; Stott pp. 193-222.

CLASS I: INTRODUCTION TO CHRISTIAN ETHICS AND MATTHEW

I. Christian Ethics: What does that mean?

A. **Ethics definition**: From the Greek “ethos” (*εθος*) means “custom” or “law”. The English word can mean “manner of life’, ‘conduct’, ‘custom,’ or ‘practice’ as prescribed by some competent authority¹. It is also defined as “The study and philosophy of human conduct, with emphasis on the determination of right and wrong.”²

B. **Ethics determination**. As can be noted from the above, ethics involves the determination of right and wrong conduct and is based on some **authority or standard**. There are many authorities upon which people make decisions regarding right and wrong. They include but are not exhausted in the following:

1. Self, what I think
2. Pleasure, hedonism, what I feel, if it feels good it is right
3. Government laws, what civil *authorities* establish
4. Situations, Joseph Fletcher and “situational ethics” based on love but no rules to define what “love” is, standard is different in each situation
5. Societal norms or etiquette
6. Religious teaching, Religious books, Religious leaders
7. Ethnic or family social expectations from ethnic leaders or parents
8. God, gods, men (emperors, dictators)
9. Other things

C. **Christian Ethics**: “Christian” can be defined as “of Christ”. Christian ethics then would be the determination of right and wrong conduct based on Christ. Christian ethics is based on the **person** of Jesus Christ and involves his teachings (God’s word, the Bible), his actions, and his nature. Christ is God (John 1:1) and reveals God’s nature (John 1:18). “Accordingly, what God is in his character, and what he wills in his revelation, defines what is right”³

D. **We will be looking at Jesus’ teaching on The Sermon on the Mount and its contribution to Christian ethics, i.e., right and wrong according to Christ.**

¹ This definition is from Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. , *Toward Old Testament Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 2.

² From *Funk and Wagnalls Standard Encyclopedic Dictionary* (Chicago: J. G. Ferguson Publishing Company, 1972), 218

³ Kaiser, p. 3.

II. Introduction to Matthew

A. Matthew was written by Matthew, a Jew, to Jews

B. I see *three* major themes in the book: A look at the whole

1. **The theme that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the Messianic King, the son of David, the Son of God, the one who fulfills the Old Testament.** This can be seen by looking at the quotations from the OT. This is a major way to persuade the Jews from their own Scriptures about Jesus as the promised Messiah. Matthew's fulfillment passages concerning Jesus:
 - a. 1:23: Jesus fulfills Is. 7:14 (born of a virgin and called Emmanuel)
 - b. 2:6: Jesus fulfills Mic. 6:2 as the ruler/shepherd coming out of Bethlehem
 - c. 2:15: Jesus fulfills Hos. 11:1 (Out of Egypt did God call his Son)
 - d. 4:15: Jesus fulfills Is. 9:1, 2 (As the great light to the Gentiles)
 - e. 5:17, 21ff. Jesus says he came to fulfill the OT Law and teaches as one with authority, "you have heard, but I say to you".
 - f. 8:17: Jesus fulfills Is. 53:4 (He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases)
 - g. 10:36-36: Jesus fulfills Mic. 7:6 (He came to bring a sword not peace)
 - h. 12:18-21: Jesus fulfills Is. 42:1-4 (He came as God's chosen servant, who had God's Spirit, who proclaims justice and gives hope to the nations).
 - i. 12:40: Jesus fulfills Jonah 1:17 (He fulfilled the Jonah type of being 3 days and 3 nights in the heart of the earth like Jonah was 3 days and 3 nights in the whale)
 - j. 13:14-15: Jesus fulfills Is. 6:9-10 (He spoke in parables and fulfilled the prophecy that they would be ever hearing but never understanding).
 - k. 13:35: Jesus fulfills Ps. 78:2 (He spoke in parables as predicted)
 - l. 21:5: Jesus fulfills Is. 62:11/Zech 9:9 (He rode into Jerusalem on a donkey as a King)
 - m. 21:9: Jesus fulfills Ps. 118:25-26 (They shouted Hosanna to the son of David and blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord)
 - n. 21: 16: Jesus receives praise from children and fulfills Ps. 8:2.
 - o. 21:42: Jesus is rejected by the Jewish leaders and fulfills

Ps. 118:22-23.

- p. 22:44: Jesus implies that he, the Christ, is David's Lord and fulfills Ps. 110:1.
- q. 26:31: Jesus quotes Zech 13:7 concerning the shepherd being stricken and the sheep scattering when he dies. This is fulfilled at his death.
- r. 27:9-10: The passage from Zech. 11:12-13 and Jer. 32:6-9 is fulfilled when Judas pays 30 pieces of silver to betray Jesus
- s. 27:46: Jesus quotes Ps. 22:1 noting that that Psalm is fulfilled which is filled with things that happened at the cross, at Jesus' crucifixion. Jesus fulfills what is written in this great Psalm.

2. The theme of the Kingdom of Heaven.

- a. **The nature of the kingdom.** For the Jews in Jesus' day the term "kingdom of heaven" was synonymous with "kingdom of God" but they preferred the term "heaven" as they preferred to avoid using God's name so they would not take it in vain. **The term "kingdom" in the first century meant more active "reign" than "realm".** That is, the term kingdom was a term for the active rule of God. So the coming of the kingdom of heaven was the coming of God's rule in the hearts and lives of people more than a conquering of the physical world and setting up a physical kingdom. This physical kingdom, one which would physically rule over people, was what the Jews expected in Jesus' day. They expected the Messiah to liberate them from the physical rule of the Romans. Jesus makes it clear that his kingdom is not the type they expected, not a physical kingdom rule forcefully imposed on people. It was rather a rule to proceed out of the hearts of men.
- b. **The kingdom or rule of God was near,** repentance is necessary. Only then could true rule of God come in person's life (3:2; 4:17; 10:7)
- c. **The kingdom or rule of God was present with Jesus** as it came with Jesus and his miracles (12:28)
- d. **Entrance is qualified** (5:3, 10, 20; 7:21; 19:14; 21:31)
- e. **It is given to people** (13:11) and can be opened up to people with the keys (16:19)
- f. **It has various spiritual characteristics** (Matt. 13)
- g. **The guardians and administrators/custodians of the kingdom can be thrown out and the kingdom can be taken away from them** (8:13; 21:43).

h. The kingdom is also future (8:11; 16:28; 25:34; 26:29).

Hence you have the present and future rule of God as the meaning of the term “kingdom of heaven.” Extreme Dispensationalists (e.g., Schofield Bible) believe only in the future kingdom and relegate passages such as the sermon on the mount to the future and are not for us today. Most present day Dispensationalists do not go that far and make it somewhat applicable to today.

3. The Anti-Jewish-Leader polemic. One of Matthew’s strongest themes is how he shows that the Jewish leaders’ (Scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodians) rejection of Jesus as the true Messiah, the rightful King, and their refusal to accept His teachings, caused God to debunk them and reject them as the custodians of the rule of God, the custodians of the kingdom of God. The following represent part of that theme:

The following summarizes this polemic:

Throughout the Gospel of Matthew Jesus is seen in polemical conflict with the Jewish leaders. The conflicts are many. In his birth he is presented by Matthew as a new ruler who is “born King of the Jews” and thus a direct threat to King Herod who is also King of the Jews (Matthew 2:1-12). In Matthew 5:17-20 Jesus implicitly condemns the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees⁴ as falling short of entrance into the kingdom of heaven. In Matthew 9:1-8 Jesus rebukes the Scribes for accusing him of blasphemy in his assertion of his authority to forgive sins. In Matthew 9:10-13 and 12:1-8, Jesus rebukes the Pharisees twice for not understanding that God desires “compassion and not sacrifice”.

⁴ The relationship of the Scribes to the Pharisees is excellently evaluated in Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), 233-267. Jeremias describes that the Pharisaic Scribes (we must note that not all Scribes were members of the Pharisees, i.e., Sadducee Scribes existed as well) were “the *leaders* and influential members of Pharisaic communities” (254), their power was a result of their “knowledge alone”, and their influence over the people was “not that the scribes were the guardians of tradition in the domain of religious legislation, and because of this, could occupy key positions in society, but rather the fact, far too little recognized, that they were the guardians of a secret knowledge, of an esoteric tradition” (237). As keepers of these secrets, which could only be given to those “authorized” (i.e. their selected immediate disciples), they were “venerated, like the prophets of old, with unbounded respect and reverential awe . . . , their words had sovereign authority. The Pharisaic communities especially gave their scribes unconditional obedience” (243). On the background of the Pharisees, see Josephus *Antiq.* 13.5.9; 13.10.5-6; 17.2.4; 18.1.2; *War* 1.5.2-4.

Jesus implicitly condemns the Jewish leaders as having failed to do their shepherding duty over his sheep in 9:25-37 (this on the heels of the Pharisees claiming he casts out demons by the “prince of demons”,⁵ 9:34; cf. 12:24). Immediately following this charge, Jesus chooses his Twelve Apostles to do the shepherding job that was not being done by the Jewish leaders (10:1-11:1). In response to the Pharisee’s claim that he healed a blind and mute man by “Beelzebul” (12:24), Jesus warns them that their statement is really blasphemy against the Spirit and would not be forgiven. He follows up by calling them a “brood of vipers” and “evil” (12:33-34). Jesus, in response to the request of the Scribes and Pharisees for a miraculous sign brands them as a “wicked and adulterous generation” (12:38-45; 16:1-4). Next we see Jesus condemning the Scribes and Pharisees as “hypocrites” who “break the command of God for the sake of” their tradition (15:3-9). They are accused of worshipping God in vain having their hearts “far from” him. The Pharisees are blind leaders of the blind and will be “pulled up by the roots” by the heavenly Father (15:13-14).

The teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees is “leaven” to be guarded against in 16:5-13. In Matthew 19:3-9, Jesus confronts Pharisees’ questions on the understanding of Moses’ command concerning divorce. It is noteworthy that Jesus said to them “Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard” (emphases mine) seemingly putting the Pharisees in the same camp as those with the hard hearts in Moses’ day. Several other times in Matthew these Jewish leaders seem to be put in another camp other than that of Jesus’ as can be seen from the phrases “their synagogues” or “your synagogues” (4:23; 9:35; 10:17; 12:9; 13:54; 23:34). Jesus confronts the indignance of the priests and Scribes toward the children in the Temple who are proclaiming him as Son of

⁵ Unless otherwise stated, English quotations from the Bible are from the New International Version.

David after his cleansing of the Temple (21:12-17) with Scripture directed against what they were doing.

In another place, the chief priests and elders in Jerusalem demand Jesus tell them by what authority he is doing the things he does. He rebukes them with the parable of the two sons showing them to be sons who say they will do God's will but do not do it (21:23-32). Jesus warns them that tax collectors and prostitutes are entering in the Kingdom of God ahead of them. Jesus then announces to the chief priests and Pharisees through the parable of the wicked tenants that ". . . the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit" (21:43). No longer will the Jewish leaders be custodians of the rule of God⁶. Their leadership authority is promised to end. Jesus continues to silence the opposition answering test questions from the Sadducees and Pharisees (22:15-46).

The last question dealt with in the gospel before chapter 23 is how the Son of David could also be David's Lord. Matthew writes, "No one could say a word in reply, and from that day on no one dared to ask him any more questions" (22:46). With this silencing of his critics, Jesus speaks to the crowds (which must have included some Scribes and Pharisees as the woe sections of verses 13ff suggest) and his disciples, in chapter 23, castigating the leaders for their sin and hypocrisy (chapter 23). Chapter 23 ends with a warning of Jerusalem's house being left to her "desolate" (23:38). Thematically, this chapter functions as a climax of Jesus' confrontations with Jewish Leaders. Then hard on the heels of this

⁶ See my exposition of the meaning of this verse in my unpublished Th. M. thesis *The Meaning of Matthew 21:43 and Its Role in the Development of the Rejection Theme of Matthew's Gospel*, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School Library, 1986. There I argue that Matthew 21:43 "functions as a clear statement of God's decision to transfer the administration of His rule from the Jewish nation to the Christian Church, the new *εθνος*".

chapter of woe is the prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem⁷, the coming of the Son of Man (chapter 24), and the final judgment (25:31-46). Jesus is then arrested by the chief priests and elders of the people, convicted of blasphemy before the leaders of the Sanhedrin, and given over to be crucified at the insistence of the chief priests and elders of the people (27:11-56). Jesus then resurrects and proclaims, “all authority in heaven and on earth has been given” to him (28:18). He then continues his mission of salvation through the disciples who are to go and make disciples of all nations (28:19). The authority of the Jewish leaders as custodians of the rule of God seems now to have been taken from their hands. Jesus and his followers are now in full control, in full custody of the kingdom, or rule of God.

4. All three of these major themes are found in the Sermon on the Mount

III. The Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5:1-2

A. Context, Discourse and Narrative, Mountain like Moses and Sinai.

B. Jesus sat down and opened his mouth and taught as an authoritative teacher in his day would have done.

⁷Jesus' descriptions of what is going to happen is so specific (verses 16-19) that D. A. Carson (*Matthew* in the Expositor Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984, 501)) states, “. . . they must be related to the Jewish War” and the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

CLASS 2: THE HEART ORIENTATION OF THE DISCIPLE OF JESUS: MATTHEW 5:1-16

I. **The Beatitudes: verses 3-12. Remember to try to think like the Jews of Jesus' day did when he presented this sermon to them. They were looking for a Messiah, a King to free them from Roman rule and to set up God's Kingdom. Jesus in verses 1-2 goes up on a mountain (compare Moses and Mt. Sinai), sits down, and opens his mouth and begins to teach them (these words indicate the posture of an authoritative teacher). Jesus then teaches them with power and authority (note Matt. 7:28-29) different from the Jewish Scribes. Jesus in verses 3-16 shows what type of heart will be part of his kingdom and what standards will bring glory to God.**

A. **The term "blessed"** is the Greek "makarios" as used here means more than "happy" as it is depicting what God thinks of the person, not the subjective feelings of the person themselves (Stott, p. 33). Carson (p. 131) states that the term here speaks of a man favored or approved by God. It is being in a state of God's approval. The nature of the blessing is stated in the second half of the verses which pronounce the blessing. **The disciple of Jesus wants to be favored by God and as such orients his heart, being, and strength toward that end: He is dedicated in his heart to be pleasing to God. What pleases God? The beatitudes give us the answer.**

B. Verse 3:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven".

a. The poor *in spirit* are those who are humble. Carson (p. 132) states, "To be poor in spirit is not to lack courage but to acknowledge spiritual bankruptcy". Many times it is the physically poor who really come to this point of realization of their total dependence on God. This manifests itself not only in one's attitude toward God, but also in one's attitude toward others. Those who see themselves as rich either physically or spiritually many times fail to see their own poverty (Carson, 132). Note Rev. 3:14-22. How do we keep a humble heart? Check our hearts. I meditate nearly every day on John 15:5c: "If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; ***apart from me you can do nothing***". I try to force my heart to really believe that without God I can do nothing at all. "Therefore let any one who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall" (I Cor. 10:12).

b. "For theirs is the kingdom of heaven". If you are humble, God's rule can flow through you. Remember Jesus' words in Matt. 18:3-4:

And he said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Therefore, whoever *humbles* himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Without humility one cannot partake in God's rule. The heart of Christ's disciple manifests total humility toward God and toward others.

C. Verse 4:

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted”

a. Bible commentators have studied these first two beatitudes and conclude that they “allude to the messianic blessing of Isaiah 61:1-3” (Carson, 133). Those verses state:

The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to ***the poor***. He has sent me to bind up the ***brokenhearted***, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favor and the day of vengeance of our God, ***to comfort all who mourn***, and provide for those who ***grieve*** in Zion-- to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of ***gladness instead of mourning***, and ***a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair***. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor”.

Note my emphases in bold, italics and underlined and the context of the messiah who will bring good news (the gospel) and righteousness. While the concept of any type of sorrow and grieving is not necessarily excluded from this blessing, the context and the cultural mind of the Jews of Jesus’ day depicts more a concept of realization of sin and repentance.

Stott (pp. 40-41) states it well when he says,

“It is plain from the context that those here promised comfort are not primarily those who mourn the loss of a loved one, but those who mourn the loss of their innocence, their righteousness, their self-respect. It is not the sorrow of bereavement to which Christ refers, but the sorrow of repentance”

b. These will be comforted. Comfort is done by someone coming to identify, encourage, and heal another. Those comforted are those whom God comes to encourage and heal, those looked upon by God with approval and favor and will have bestowed “on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of ***gladness instead of mourning***, ***and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair***. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor”. Compare Luke 4:17-21 where Jesus says he fulfills this Is. 61 passage. Note also the promise in Isa. 61 above concerning the Messiah, “to proclaim the year of the LORD’s ***favor*** and the day of vengeance of our God, ***to comfort all who mourn*** and provide for those who ***grieve*** in Zion” Carson states (p. 133), “The godly remnant of Jesus’ day weeps because of the humiliation of Israel but they understand that it comes from personal and corporate sins”. The Jews of Jesus’ day awaited the restoration of Zion (the re-establishment of God’s kingdom) and freedom from the rule of the Romans. But Jesus’ comfort goes deeper than just comfort from the rule of the Romans, He came to give salvation, comfort from one’s own sins but also comfort from the effects of the pain sin causes throughout the world.

Indeed, those who mourn over their sin and repent will be comforted. But that is not the full extent of the mourning heart. It encompasses the pain of others also, not just the pain of oneself and his/her own sin. Jesus manifested a mourning heart for others and the suffering they were going through, the state they were in because of sin, whether it was their own sin or the pain caused by sin of others and the world. This mourning would also therefore seem to include mourning over the state of others in grief. Note Jesus' distress over the downtrodden and helpless. Matthew states in Matt. 9:36: "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (His heart went out to them) and Matt. 11:28-30: 28,

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light".

In addition, don't forget the time that Jesus wept in John 11:35. There is a place for having a heart of grieving for others just like Jesus had. Jesus came to end all types of mourning as God will wipe away **every** tear (Rev. 21:4) from the eyes of those who follow Him. Mourning will end. Comfort will come.

The heart of a disciple of Jesus will mourn over his own sin and the pain sin in general causes upon all of humanity. The outcome of this mourning will be comfort, healing, hope, and salvation.

D. Verse 5

"Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth"

a. The term "meek" means "gentleness" and implies "self-control". Stott (p. 43) states that this "meekness denotes a humble and gentle attitude to others which is determined by a true estimate of ourselves." He goes on to say that Dr. Lloyd-Jones sums it up well when he states:

"Meekness is essentially a true view of oneself, expressing itself in attitude and conduct with respect to others . . . The man who is truly meek is the one who is truly amazed that God and man can think of him as well as they do and treat him as well as they do"

b. "Inherit the earth." This verse is an allusion to the Messianic Psalm, Ps. 37:9, 11, and 29: 9:

Verse 9: For evil men will be cut off, but those who hope in the LORD will inherit the land.

Verse 11: But the meek will inherit the land and enjoy great peace.

Verse 29: the righteous will inherit the land and dwell in it forever

The nature of the inheritance of land definitely has a spiritual dimension. Stott says (p. 44) “

The meek . . . although they may be deprived and disenfranchised by men, yet because they know what it is to live an reign with Christ, can enjoy and even ‘possess’ the earth, which belongs to Christ. Then on the day of ‘the regeneration’ there will be ‘new heavens and a new earth’ for them to inherit”.

Hence, Paul could say of himself in II Cor. 6:10, “having nothing, and yet possessing everything”. There is both a now and a not yet aspect of this inheritance. There is the contentment of now and the new earth and new heaven of the future for the meek, the gentle. This is in contrast to the fate of those who lack contentment, are harsh and tyrannical (Carson, p. 133) and rough in their dealings with others and with God.

The disciple of the kingdom, will have the self-control and a view of himself which enables him to be gentle and will inherit the earth, both in this present age and the one to come.

E. Verse 6:

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

a. This beatitude expresses the inner desire of a person yearning for a close pure loving (loving with all one’s heart, soul, and strength) relationship with God. Ps. 42:1-2 expresses it well:

“As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?”

Note also, Jer. 29:11; Prov. 2: 1-5.

It surely also includes the hunger and thirst for righteousness and justice in society, between individuals, and between men and God outside of one’ own relationship with God.

b. This desire, this hunger and thirst, will be satisfied.

One of the marks of the heart of a disciple of the kingdom, one in which God reigns, is a hunger and thirst for righteousness, a seeking to each day get closer to God and be like him. One who hungers and thirst like this will be transformed by God and become more and more like Jesus.

F. Verse 7:

“Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy”

- a. It pleases God and God looks upon us with favor when we show mercy (unmerited favor) to others (as well as ourselves!). Jesus came to reveal God’s nature. He was full of *grace and truth* (John 1:14-16). Jesus manifested *mercy*. Jesus brought a new law of freedom which triumphed over the sin and death. Note what James says in James 2:12-13 (emphasis mine):
“Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. **Mercy triumphs over judgment!**” “Mercy embraces both forgiveness for the guilty and compassion for the suffering and needy” (Carson, p. 134). Let us not be like the Pharisees in Matthew 23: 23 to whom Jesus said, “neglected the more important matters of the law--justice, mercy and faithfulness”.
- b. Only the merciful will receive mercy (Matt 6. 14-15).

The true disciple will have a heart to manifest mercy over judgment, as mercy will triumph over judgment. This will be mercy bestowed on others as well as oneself.

G. Verse 8:

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.”

- a. The pure in heart are those with “single mindedness” They have hearts “free from the tyranny of a divided self” (Carson, p. 135). (Compare James 1: 6-8). They have no ulterior motives, they are sincere in their devotion to Christ, and are dedicated to inner moral purity. They truly want to please God in their mind, with their hearts, and with their bodies. In them there is no deceit. They are totally sincere.
- b. They will see God. What a reward, to be in the presence of God and see him!

The heart of the disciple will not be divided. His heart will be fully committed to God and his will, not because he must but because he wants to. In his heart there will be NO deceit. He will not allow any competition from the Devil or his own self to come in and tarnish his desire to seek to please, love, and know God.

H. Verse 9:

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God”

- a. Those who make peace with others and between others are blessed. God looks upon them with favor. The greatest and really ultimate peace is the peace Jesus brings between men and God. This peace overflows to create peace between men. Jesus is the ultimate peacemaker, he is the Prince of Peace (Is. 9:6-7).⁸ Col. 1:19-20 states:

“For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making **peace** through his blood, shed on the cross”.

And in Eph 2:14-15 it states:

“For he himself is **our peace**, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, **thus making peace**”

The Gospel of Jesus brings peace to those who accept it. Hence Jesus, through evangelism, is the road to true peace to individuals and the world. **This is true heart peace, not just the absence of battle between two individuals. It is a true absence of emotional animosity between them.**

- b. They, the peacemakers, will be called sons of God, they will be like God in that they bring true peace to relationships. This is the message of the Gospel. Note what it says in Acts 10:34-36:

Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right. **You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, telling the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all**”.

We are to have shod our “feet with the preparation of the **gospel of peace**” (Eph. 6:15). The kingdom of Heaven is all about peacemaking and it is done through the sons of God bringing Jesus’ message to others.

The heart of a disciple of the kingdom, a disciple of Christ, will be to be a peacemaker, not just between individuals but between individuals and God. Hence they will be dedicated to spreading

⁸ Carson. 135.

the Gospel of Jesus Christ (evangelism) and his love to others. This is a mark of a true son of God. God will be ruling in his live to spread this message and life. Notice what the Scriptures say about being a son of God:

Gal. 3:26-27 states:

You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have **clothed yourselves with Christ.**

Romans 8:12-14 states:

Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation--but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, **because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God**

Notice the connection between living for Jesus (being led by the Spirit) and being a son of God. One of the marks of a son of God is being able to make peace with God and man, and between God and other men. This is all about the message of the Gospel of the kingdom or rule of God!

I. Verses 10-12:

“Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you”.

a. God approves of you even if others do not as you live for Christ. His favor is upon you when you are persecuted. Indeed “yours is the kingdom of heaven”. That is, God is indeed ruling through you if you are doing what you do because of Jesus and righteousness!

b. Yours is the rule of God. God is ruling and working through you and your reward in Heaven is great. You also are following in the footsteps of those Godly men who went before you. Jesus’ use of the term “me” in “because of **me**” sets himself up as in the same line as God’s prophets, but even more as the standard by which “blessedness” comes. **God’s favor only comes to one whose allegiance is to Jesus and is willing to suffer for Him.**

J. Verses 13-16:

"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men.

"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven"(emphases mine).

a. Salt, verse 13. "You are the salt of the earth". Stott (p. 59) states, "This means that, when each community is itself and is true to itself, the world decays like rotten fish or meat, while the church can hinder its decay".

Salt does not strictly speaking lose its saltiness. Carson (p. 138) states,

Above all, salt was used as a preservative. Rubbed into meat, a little salt would slow decay. Strictly speaking salt cannot lose its saltiness; sodium chloride is a stable compound. But most salt in the ancient world derived from salt marshes or the like, rather than by evaporation of salt water, and therefore contained many impurities. The actual salt, being more soluble than the impurities, could be leached out, leaving a residue so dilute it was of little worth.

We as Christians can only effect the world if we remain salty.

If our salt (which I think can be equated to the heart attitudes and orientation defined in the beatitudes) leaches out, we will not be good for anything in the kingdom. The function of salt is largely preservative. It prevents decay⁹. It halts sin.

b. Light: verses 14-16. "You are the light of the world". "The function of light is positive; it illumines the darkness" (Stott, p. 64). Light brings forth truth and all that is good. Indeed it exposes the bad but it also shines forth the good. As disciples allow God to rule in their lives, they **produce good deeds**, and since it is all done by God's rule and not of themselves, it brings praise to the Father in heaven.

It is interesting to me to note that the term light (phos, in Greek) is singular while the word "you" is plural. The scripture did not say you are lights, but light. You all are light. In other words the verse seems to be saying that we as a corporate body of disciples of Jesus together form the light God wants to shine in the world.

⁹ Stott, 64.

Summary: We have seen many heart attitudes which a disciple of Christ is to manifest if one is to be in God's favor, have his approval, and have God rule in his life. These include:

- 1. Having a heart of total humility, a realization and life of total dependence upon God**
- 2. Having a heart of brokenness over his own sins as well as the sins of others, a mourning over the sin and the pain it causes God and people in the world**
- 3. Having a heart of gentleness, which expresses self-control and respect toward God and others.**
- 4. Having a heart that hungers and thirsts for righteousness both for the person himself and for helping others to have this hunger and thirst**
- 5. Having a heart that manifests mercy toward others and toward oneself before bringing judgment and condemnation**
- 6. Having a heart of singleness, one which has no ulterior motive, one in which there is no deceit, one which loves God with all one's heart, soul, and strength**
- 7. Having a heart to bring the Gospel of peace to all men, to bring ultimate peace to everyone, both between God and man and between men.**
- 8. Having a heart that is loyal to Jesus and his righteousness even in the event of persecution and people defaming you**
- 9. Having a heart to be salt that keeps its saltiness, a determination to be a preservative in the world that keeps the decay of personal, corporate, and societal sin from progressing.**
- 10. Having a heart to be God's light, to shine forth his goodness through good deeds to the world so that it brings glory to Him.**

This is the kind of heart that brings God's favor, his approval, his blessing. One might even say it brings joy and gladness to the heart of God. May we seek with all our hearts to be what He wants us to be so he can be glorified and praised by all men.

CLASS 3: THE HEART ORIENTATION TOWARD
RIGHTEOUSNESS AND ANGER:
Matthew 5:17-26

I. The Heart Orientation Toward Righteousness: Matthew 5:17-20

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven."

A. Verses 17-18. Jesus did not come to "abolish" the OT (indicated by the terms "Law or the Prophets"). The term "abolish" is from the Greek word "kataluo" which means "destroy, demolish, dismantle, tear down, do away with, annul, make invalid".¹⁰ **No, Jesus came to "fulfill"**, a term which comes from the Greek word "pleroo", and means "make full, fill (full), fill (up), complete, bring something to completion, finish something already begun, complete, finish, bring to an end".¹¹ But how did he "fulfill", "complete", "make full", or "fill up" the Old Testament? Carson (p. 143-44) states:

The best interpretation of these difficult verses says that Jesus fulfills the Law and the Prophets in that they point to him, and he is their fulfillment. The antithesis is not between "abolish" and "keep" but between "abolish" and "fulfill".

Carson (pp. 143-44) goes on to quote Robert Banks¹² stating, "For Matthew, then, it is not the question of Jesus' relation to the Law that is in doubt but rather its relation to him!" Carson (144) goes on to say,

". . . the OT's real abiding authority must be understood through the person and teaching of him to whom it points and who so richly fulfills it . . . Jesus is not announcing the termination of the OT's relevance and authority . . . but that "the period during which men were related to God under its terms

¹⁰ Walder Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, translated by William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 415, hereafter cited as *BAGD*

¹¹ *BAGD*, 676-77.

¹² Robert Banks, "Matthew's Understanding of the Law: Authenticity and Interpretation in Matthew 5:17-20", *Journal of Biblical Literature* 93(1974): 226-42.

ceased with John” (i.e. John the Baptist) . . . and the nature of its valid continuity is established only with reference to Jesus and the kingdom.”

This means that (1) “. . . Jesus is not primarily engaged . . . in extending, annulling, or intensifying the OT law, but in showing the direction in which it points on the basis of his own authority”, (2) the fact that Jesus said he came to fulfill the OT shows that “Jesus presents himself as the eschatological goal of the OT, and thereby its sole authoritative interpreter, the one through whom alone the OT finds its valid continuity and significance” (Carson, 144).

Jesus, the Messiah, the true King of the Jews, the Christ of God, reveals what the OT pointed towards and becomes the only true interpreter of it. Everything in the OT, every smallest letter, every least stroke of the pen is fulfilled in Jesus. Jesus is Lord, only what he says is valid.

Note the progression in the Sermon:

Verses 1-10 are **third person**

Verses 11-16 are in **second person**

Verses 17ff take up Jesus in the **first person** “Truly I say to you”.

Jesus becomes the standard for the way the OT should be seen and understood! Basically Jesus’ interpretation of the OT is how the OT commandments should be understood and followed.

B. Verse 19: “Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven”

Anyone who breaks the least of the OT commands (as Jesus reveals them) and teaches others so, will have God’s rule the least in their lives.

Anyone who practices and teaches the OT commands (as Jesus reveals them) will have God’s rule flowing through them greatly.

C. Verse 20: Our righteousness (as Jesus defines it) must surpass that of the Jewish leaders, their Scribes and Pharisees) or we will not even enter the Kingdom of Heaven. That is unless we have Jesus’ righteousness, we will not enter into the relationship with God that allows him to express his rule through us. He will not rule in and through us. We will not be a part of his Kingdom, his active rule.

The disciple’s righteousness must be Jesus’ righteousness, not that of our own. It must be a righteousness that is defined through the fulfillment of it all, i.e., the person of Jesus the Messiah. Only through Jesus will the whole OT come to fulfillment. Only through Jesus will the rule of God be manifested. Only through

Jesus will that relationship with God come about. Indeed he is the Messiah, the Savior of the World, only in him is there reward in Heaven (verse 7).

Do you incorporate Jesus as the truth, the life, and the way? Is he absolutely Lord? Is he the one through whom you interpret the Old Testament?

II. The Heart Orientation Toward Anger: Matt. 5:21-26:

You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, "Raca", is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell. "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift. "Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still with him on the way, or he may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. I tell you the truth, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.

A. Verses 21-22: The Antitheses begin

"You have heard . . . but I say to you". (the "I", "ego", is emphatic in Greek).

Jesus begins to teach what the Law really means. He is not criticizing the OT but is criticizing the understanding of the OT which "many of his hearers had adopted". (Carson, 148).

The antitheses exemplify "what Jesus demanded is the righteousness to which the law truly points" (Carson, 147). Jesus as the fulfiller shows the real meaning of the law, the heart level of which the Law aimed.

1. True righteousness in the command "do not murder" and the concept that who ever murders "will be subject to judgment" is to be seen in the orientation of the heart.

Jesus demands that the command be understood deeper. He demands that "any one who is angry with his brother" will suffer judgment! This goes to the heart level! Anger is an emotion attitude which will be judged by God. "Anger is murderous in principle" (Carson, 148).

Jesus says that if you call your brother "Raca" (contextually it means "out of anger") you will be answerable to the Sanhedrin (the Jewish high court). Or if you call someone "you fool" you will be in danger of the fires of Hell. "Raca" is word of insult and in Aramaic means "imbecile", "fool," "blockhead" (Carson, 149), or "empty-head, numskull, fool".¹³ The term "fool" comes from the Greek word "more" (from which we get "moron") means "you fool" or "you stupid". It is an attack on the person, an attack on one's intelligence, something given them by God. It could also mean a person of "moral apostasy, rebellion, and wickedness" (Carson, 149). In this

¹³ BAGD, 741.

case it is an attack on one's character. These are words of insult coming out of anger and hate which can be judged via the Sanhedrin but which will be judged on the last day of judgment and may put someone in Hell. Insulting remarks reveal what is in the heart toward another person. All types of hate and bigotry would be included including racism and also just calling someone a name with malice.

The ground of all this comes from the nature of Man. Man is made in the image of God and, as such, an assault on man from anger is an assault on God with anger

Gen. 1:26-27 states:

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

Gen. 9: 5b-6 states:

. . . from each man, too, I will demand an accounting for the life of his fellow man. "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man.

It is because of man's nature (he is made in the image of God) that murder is so evil. **It is an attack on God!** Jesus states that anger which causes slander or defamation of another being in God's image is just as bad as the actual murder and will put someone in Hell.

We must look at our hearts and see if there is any hurtful way in us. Do we get angry with others? Do we insult them in our hearts? Do we insult them in our thoughts? Do we call them "stupid" or "fool", "blockhead"? Do we thus insult and defame the character of God?

2. True righteousness will be present in one's heart when he

a. Seeks reconciliation with his brother/sister quickly when learning his brother/sister has something against him. All anger must be resolved quickly even if it is from someone against you. Anger toward another or toward you is an affront against God because we are made in His image.

b. We seek this reconciliation before offering anything to God. We cannot love God and harbor anger against one another.

III. Application of this to today: Murder, hate, abortion, euthanasia, infanticide, some forms of birth control, some reproductive technologies, etc.

A. The issue all centers around how one sees a human being

Three major positions on abortion:

1. abortion on demand: Fetus is not a person, the determination of

right and wrong center around the cost/benefit calculation of the woman's (or father's or family's) benefit (Davis, pp. 132-33). Fletcher said if a child's IQ is 20 or below the child is not a person. Also, it is said that the fetus is not a person until the moment of birth and the umbilical cord is cut.

2. The abortion "on indications" position. This position sees the developing embryo as a human but questions about physical and genetic defects in the unborn child should come into play to determine if abortion will benefit the "fetus, parents, society" etc. (Davis, p. 132), e.g. cases such as anencephaly, or a fetus having some major brain deficiencies. "In making a decision in such cases, a balance needs to be struck between the human potential of a deformed child and the impact that having such a child would have on the family unit. Some families are not able to cope with such challenges, and a reluctant compromise must be adopted, in Jones view, to terminate the pregnancy." (Davis. 133).
3. The "life-of-the-mother" position. In this position, "only in those rare cases where continuation of the pregnancy would present a threat to the mother's life would abortion be morally justified" (Davis, p. 133. Eg. tubal pregnancy, etc.).
4. The Bible: Do not commit murder. What is in the heart?
 - a. Nowhere does the Bible give a technical definition of personhood but "the Scriptures do assume a fundamental continuity between prenatal and postnatal human life." (Eg. Ex. 21:22).
 - b. Man is made in God's image and anger or murder of one of another human being is an attack on God (Gen 1:27).
 - c. The image of God seems to be present in unborn human beings (Ps. 139:13-14; Jer. 1:5; Luke 1:44; and Ps. 51:5
 - d. Science shows that when sperm and egg unite, a genetically unique human being comes into being. At that time "the unborn child is an individual in his or her own right, with a separate and distinct life trajectory." (Davis, p. 135)
 - e. The "prehistory of the Son of God on earth begins not when he is 'born of the Virgin Mary,' but when he was 'conceived by the Holy Spirit'" (Davis, 135). Like his, our human history begins at conception.
 - f. The Bible does not support the "quality of life ethic" but the "sanctity of life ethic", not "cost-benefit to us" but "image of God" nature of a human being.

B. Other issues such as infanticide, some contraceptives (e.g., IUD), euthanasia all center around the same issue: "the image of God". Man is not to be lord of his own life. Rather the Christian "sees human life as a gift of God,

to be held in trusteeship throughout man's life on earth". "You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So, glorify God in your body" (I Cor. 6:19b, 20). (Davis, 173). "Determination of the moment of death is God's prerogative, not man's (Job 14:5)" (Davis, 173).

**CLASS 4: THE HEART ORIENTATION TOWARD
SEX, MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE
Matthew 5:27-32**

I. Lust and Adultery

"You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery. But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman *lustfully* has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, 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. And if your right 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 go into hell.'" (Emphasis mine). Matthew 5:27-30.

A. Lust:

In this passage Jesus quotes from the Law (Exodus 20:14; Deut. 5:18) but again focuses on the heart. He goes beyond the actual physical act of adultery (which means to have sexual relations while married with someone you are not married to) and states that "lust" is the same thing. The term "lust" is the Greek word *epithumeo* which means "*desire, long for . . . of sexual desire*"¹⁴. If we lust sexually after someone it is sin of the same nature as actually having illicit sex with them!¹⁵ It is so important to stop lust that Jesus teaches that it should be handled in a radical manner, i.e., gouge out your eye, or cut off your right hand so you don't go to hell. "We can commit adultery in our *hearts* or minds".¹⁶ We need to guard our hearts by beginning with our eyes and minds (cf. Job 31:1, 7, 9) and take every thought captive and bring it under the lordship of Christ (I. Cor. 10:5). How are you doing on controlling your eyes? Your thoughts? Your lust? Do you avoid pornography, sexually explicit movies, internet temptations? How far are you willing to go to keep from this sin? Jesus says heaven and hell are at stake!

B. Homosexuality. A form of sexual lust today which is becoming more and more prevalent is homosexuality. It is a form of *porneia* (see discussion below). The Bible is clear that it is a sin and not acceptable before God (Note the passages mentioned below and especially Romans 1:24-27). Davis summarizes it well (p. 109):

¹⁴ BAGD, 293. This word does have a range of meaning that is beyond sexual desire but here in this context is definitely sexual desire.

¹⁵ Carson, p. 151, makes the note that this verse that the phrase "**anyone who looks at a woman *lustfully***" should be translated "so as to get her to lust". He says, "The evidence for this interpretation is strong . . . The man is therefore looking at the woman with a view to enticing her to lust. Thus, so far as his intention goes, he is committing adultery *with her*, he makes her an adulteress. This does not weaken the force of Jesus' teaching; the heart of the matter is still lust and intent."

¹⁶ Stott, 87.

With respect to I Corinthians 6:9-10 and I Timothy 1:10 Michael Ukleja writes, “Only wild speculation can avoid the conclusion that Paul knew exactly what he meant and how he should be understood when he used these terms.” Both the Old and the New Testament are unequivocal in their teaching that homosexuality is contrary to the moral law of God, and only the most forced and arbitrary modes of biblical interpretation can conclude otherwise.

II. The OT and the Jews on Divorce and Remarriage

"It has been said, 'Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.' But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to become an adulteress, and anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery". (Emphasis mine). Matthew 5:31-32

The concept of the “certificate of divorce” comes from Deut. 24:1-4. It states:

If a man marries a woman who becomes *displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce*, gives it to her and sends her from his house, and if after she leaves his house she becomes the wife of another man, and her second husband dislikes her and writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, or if he dies, then her first husband, who divorced her, is not allowed to marry her again after she has been defiled. That would be detestable in the eyes of the LORD. Do not bring sin upon the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance. (Emphasis mine).

Carson states that this OT passage says that if a man divorces his wife “because of ‘something indecent’ (not further defined) in her, he must give her a certificate of divorce”, and if she then becomes another man’s wife and is divorced again, the first man cannot remarry her. This double restriction—the certificate and the prohibition of remarriage—discouraged hasty divorces. Here Jesus does not go into the force of ‘something indecent.’ Instead he insists that the law was pointing to the sanctity of marriage.¹⁷

- A. Jesus and the Jews of Jesus’ day.** The Jews had two main views of divorce.
- The Shammai view was the more strict which taught that the only ground for divorce was something “indecent”(Deut. 24:1), and defined it as a “grave matrimonial offence”¹⁸.
 - The Hillel view was very lax. Josephus states that they believed that the

¹⁷ Carson, 152.

¹⁸ Stott, 93.

term “indecent” meant “any cause whatsoever”¹⁹ It could be even something as trivial as burning his food!

c. Jesus preached that the “except” clause only was for the case of porneia which seems to put him in the Shammai camp. However there was a difference between Jesus and the Pharisees (both the Shammai and Hillel camps). Stott²⁰ lists three different foci Jesus had that differentiated him from the Pharisees:

(1) *The Pharisees were preoccupied with the grounds for divorce; Jesus with the institution of marriage*

(2) *The Pharisees called Moses’ provision for divorce a command; Jesus called it a concession to the hardness of human hearts (Matt. 19:7)*

(3) *The Pharisees regarded divorce lightly; Jesus took it so seriously that, with only one exception, he called all remarriage after divorce adultery.*

B. Jesus on Divorce and Remarriage

1. The NIV translates the **exception** as “marital unfaithfulness”.

The exception clause is repeated in Matt. 19:9:

Jesus replied, "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery. (Emphasis mine).

The Greek term is *porneia* means “*prostitution, unchastity, fornication, of every kind of unlawful sexual intercourse*”²¹.

“*Porneia* means ‘unchastity’, some act of physical sexual immorality” (Stott. 97).

The following is an e-mail that I received from a friend with my discussion on the definition of porneia:

Hey there Mr. Glenn,

Hope all is well with you brother. Just a quick bible question. Do you have any idea why the NIV translated *porneia* as *sexual immorality* instead of *fornication*? It seems to make it more vague in explaining just what is meant by it. I have had two people ask me about it--in a manner that they were thinking it might be okay to have sex before marriage, as that is not as against the morals of society today as it may have been then. Yikes. Can you clear up any confusion on that one? Or can you help me understand the meaning of the word more than Vines or Thayer might explain. Is

¹⁹ Stott, 93.

²⁰ P. 94-95.

²¹ BAGD, 699-700.

it really clear that it means sexual intercourse outside of marriage? When you get a chance, please let me know your thoughts, Thanks again,

This inquiry involves the following questions and concerns:

Why do you think the NIV translates it sexual immorality?

Why not translate it fornication?

How should morals of society come into the picture?

How do you determine normativity?

Consider its implications in Gal. 5:19

It changes the parameters of sin. How would you study sin differently with someone? How would it affect repentance?

Consider its implications in Matthew 19:9.

If it meant only fornication, how would you understand this verse?

Here is the quick answer I gave him:

Dear _____,

Wow! What is the mind of those in the church coming to? How much will we be influenced by the world? I have become convinced that we need some ethics classes!

Bauer (*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other early Christian Literature*, s.v. "πορνεία") says it means "prostitution, unchastity, fornication, of every kind of unlawful sexual intercourse." Moulton and Milligan (*The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament*, s.v. "πορνεία") states: "Porneia originally meant 'prostitution,' 'fornication,' but came to be applied to unlawful sexual intercourse generally. It was a wider term than moicheia" (adultery) "embracing the idea of 'barter,' 'traffic' in sexual vice, though in the OT there was a tendency to assimilate in some respects the two terms . . ."

Did you look at the *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (NIDNT)? NIDNT (vol. 1, pp. 497ff) discusses how in classical literature, the word group describes "various extra-marital sexual modes of behaviour in so far as they deviate from the accepted social and religious norms (e.g. homosexuality, promiscuity, paedophilia, and especially prostitution)".

In the LXX (Septuagint, OT Greek) it translates the word in Hebrew (זָנָה) which means "to commit fornication". Brown, Driver, Briggs (*Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*) under זָנָה define it as "commit fornication, be a harlot" (p. 275). Look up fornication in an English dictionary and see what the dictionary gives for that. My dictionary says "Voluntary sexual intercourse between unmarried persons" (*Funk and Wagnalls Standard Encyclopedic Dictionary*, s.v. "fornication").

The New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis (p. 1123) says this Hebrew word in the ancient Near Eastern use meant "commit fornication" in many of the various cultures of the day. In the OT it is used mainly in a metaphorical way but is "a broad term for sexual misconduct, including adultery . . . and may at times be synonymous with adultery" . . . " זָנָה has two related but distinct meanings: to fornicate or have illicit sex, and to practice prostitution, i.e., offer sex for hire". In later Jewish Rabbinic language the term "is to be understood as including not only prostitution and any kind of extramarital sexual intercourse . . . , but also all marriages between relatives forbidden in Rab. law. . . Incest . . . and all kinds of unnatural sexual intercourse . . . were

viewed as fornication (porneia)." In the New Testament it included prostitution and adultery (extramarital sexual intercourse). In Paul the word group "*porne*" denotes any kind of illegitimate sexual intercourse."

My understanding of "illegitimate" is its connection with marriage which involves the uniting of the gametes as seems to be indicated by the noun gamos (γάμος) and the verb gameo (γάμω). I think when we lose the distinction between marriage and porneia, there is no distinction, marriage is dissolved, it is not special. Sex is only legitimate when it is between two married persons (even those who had more than one wife in the OT seemed to need marriage to make legitimate their union). If not, why marry at all? This is the position our world is coming to: Living together without the commitment of marriage. Family is affected too. When God created marriage in Gen 1 it was so that there could be a new family (leaving and cleaving). Sex produces offspring and it was intended to be offspring in a family, a marriage which has a father and a mother, not just any Tom, Dick, or Harry with Jane, Melissa, or Judy who happen to get together for sex. The fabric of this and every society is at stake here!

My understanding of porneia is as follows:

It originally mainly meant fornication (sex outside of and before marriage) but by the time of Christ it included all types of sexual sin including adultery but never lost the concept of fornication. Its meaning was just broadened. Its semantic range simply enlarged over time, hence the translation "sexual immorality". It in no way suggests that fornication is OK. NO. I have found nowhere that the term lost that meaning but rather gradually gained a greater semantic range.

Again, the sanctity of marriage is at stake here. It is being attacked here in a manner similar to the sanctioning of homosexuality! Why would not that be OK too? What is illicit sex? Is it only when we break human laws? In some societies then rape is OK (e.g., Iraq under Hussein).

There is a commitment issue here in the area of sex and it involves the physical act of intercourse (as well as other areas of purity)! What does "purity" mean then?

The fact that our laws do not consider it wrong does not mean that it is not. Roman laws I don't think would see sex before marriage as wrong either, but the NT still sees it as wrong (otherwise I Cor. 5 might be OK even if it is incest (so what?)), it is still fornication (voluntary sex between two unmarried persons).

There are a lot of other words that lose their meaning if we see sex before marriage as OK including lust (can you have lust if you can have sex with anyone you want?). Why even prostitution is OK then since it is between two consenting adults even if money is involved.

Hope this helps.
Glenn

Stott (pp. 96-97) concludes,

“The only situation in which divorce and remarriage are possible without breaking the seventh commandment is when it has already been broken by some serious sexual sin.”

Davis (p.87) concludes:

“In view of the New Testament usage it seems best to take the term in the wider sense of unchastity that includes ‘every kind of unlawful sexual intercourse’.”

C. Paul on Divorce and Remarriage

Paul, in I Cor. 7:10-15 seems to indicate another “exception” for divorce. The passage states:

To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband. But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife. To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord): If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him . . . But if the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace.

The issue revolves around the meaning of the terms “separate” (*chorizo* in Greek) in verse 10 and the term “bound” (*douloo* in Greek) in verse 15.

Davis (p. 89-90) summarizes the issues well. He states:

In speaking of divorce in relation to ***Christian couples*** (vv. 10,11), the apostle refers to the teachings of Jesus (“not I, but the Lord”). Does the verb “separate” (*chroizo*) in verses 10 and 11 mean “separate” in our modern sense, or divorce? While in the Septuagint *choristhenai* is used of separation of place, in the Greek papyri it is clearly used as a technical term for divorce. The term is linked in the immediate context (v. 11) with *aphiemi*, which clearly means divorce. In Matthew 19:6, “let not man separate” (*anthropos me chorizeto*) is in antithesis to “what God has joined together” (*ho oun ho theos sunezeuzen*), and clearly divorce and marriage are in view. Paul, who traveled extensively, was no doubt aware that in the Gentile world the wife had the legal right to initiate a divorce proceeding. These considerations make it clear that Paul is in fact referring to divorce in verses 10 and 11.

In verses 12-16 the apostle addresses the issue of ***mixed*** marriages. Even in spite of the religious incompatibility involved in such a relationship, the believing spouse is not to seek a divorce (vv. 12-14). But if the unbelieving partner insists on divorce, the believer may acquiesce; in such a case, the believer is not bound (v. 15). What is the exact force of the language “not bound” (. . . has not been enslaved. . .)?

Some interpreters have argued that the language implies that the believer may acquiesce in a divorce when the unbelieving partner insists upon it, but that the right to remarry is not necessarily included. This, however, seems inconsistent with the forceful language of not being “enslaved” by the conflicts of the unworkable mixed marriage.

In Romans 7:2, 3 Paul uses similar language in relation to marriage, speaking of being “bound” . . . and “released” . . . from the relationship. In this text “not bound” is equivalent to “release,” and the one who is “released” is free to remarry (v.3). The implication is that the one who is

“not bound” in I Cor. 7:15 is likewise free to remarry . . . The conclusion, then, is that in the case of desertion by an unbelieving spouse, the Christian may acquiesce to divorce and subsequently may remarry. (**Emphases mine**).

Davis goes on to define “desertion”. He states (p. 90) that “physical abandonment of the spouse and long-term absence from the household would certainly qualify as desertion . . .”

D. Conclusion.

From the above scriptures, it would seem that divorce is permissible only in two cases:

(1) sexual immorality

(2) desertion by the unbelieving spouse

Even then, the Scripture only says divorce is permissible not obligatory.

Also, remarriage would seem to be permissible for the offended party. The offending party would seem to be able to remarry too if there is repentance and restitution.

The marriage bond should not be taken lightly. God says, “I hate divorce” (Mal. 2:16).

**CLASS 5: THE HEART ORIENTATION OF HONESTY
AND LOVE FOR ENEMIES
Matthew 5:33-48**

I. Honesty: Matthew 5:33-37 reads:

"Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not break your oath, but keep the oaths you have made to the Lord.' But I tell you, Do not swear at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne; or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. Simply let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.

A. In this passage, the context suggests that Jesus' aim is (1) not primarily to condemn all oaths, but to expose the Scribes' and Pharisees' misuse of them and (2) to instill in men a godly righteousness in the form of truthfulness and honesty in character and speech. So great would this truthfulness be that oaths would become, not unlawful, but unnecessary.

B. Jesus does not seem to have abolished all oaths as he himself and early Christians took oaths.

Carson (p. 154) states:

Many groups (e.g., Anabaptists, Jehovah's Witnesses) have understood these verses absolutely literally and have therefore refused to even take court oaths. Their zeal to conform to Scripture is commendable, but they have probably not interpreted the text very well.

In support of this, note the following (realizing that the context is "antithetical" with respect to the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees and, as such, must be seen in light of what they were doing with oaths. See my commentary below in the next page on Matt. 23:16-22):

1. Jesus took an oath when he responded to the High Priest in Matt. 26:63-64:

The high priest said to him, "I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." "Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied

His response was a statement under oath.

2. God also "swears": Note Gen. 9:9-11; Luke 1:73; Acts 2:27-31. Carson (p. 154) notes, that God swears "not because he sometimes lies, but in order to help men believe (Heb. 6:17)".

3. The early Christians took oaths: Note Paul's example in Rom. 1:9; 2 Cor. 1:23; I Thess 2:5, 10.²² "God is my witness" is a form of an oath.

4. "The contextual purpose of this passage is to stress the true direction in which the OT points—viz., the importance of truthfulness. Where oaths are not being used evasively and truthfulness is not being threatened, it is not immediately obvious that they require such unqualified abolition"²³

²² Carson, 154.

²³ Carson, 154.

Stott summarizes this well. He says (p. 102),

What Jesus emphasized in his teaching was honest men do not need to resort to oaths; it was not that they should refuse to take an oath if required by some external authority to do so” . . .

Modern application is not far to seek, for the teaching of Jesus is timeless. Swearing (i.e., oath-taking) is really a pathetic confession of our own dishonesty”

Jesus’ main emphasis in this whole chapter is on the heart. Is deceit in your heart? Or is the desire to be in the light in your heart? The key is to be totally honest in one’s heart, mouth, and life. Don’t have in your heart the desire to tell a lie. If you ever take an oath, determine if you are doing it because you sometimes tell lies and because your yes is not always yes and your no, no. Your integrity is at stake here, and, as his representative, so is God’s.

C. Is lying ever OK? Is all lying wrong? For example, was Rahab wrong in Joshua 2 (esp. verses 4-6)? This is questioned especially in light of the fact that Rahab is lifted up as having great faith in this situation in Heb. 11:31.

There are several views in the world on this which people have espoused:

1. Antinomian view: Lying is neither right nor wrong. “Just because it is right for you does not mean it is right for me”. Might makes right or I make right.
2. Generalism or pragmatism: Lying is generally wrong. Lying can be right if it gives a good end. Here the end justifies the means. There is no morality in the means to an end. Hence God is locked out of the morality of the process to the end desired.
3. Situationalism: Lying is sometimes right depending on the situation. Love is the only law not truth telling. But here the definition of “love” is at stake.
4. Unqualified Absolutism: Lying is always wrong. This law is absolute. Results are never to be used to determine if lying could be right.
5. Conflicting absolutism: Lying can be ok if it comes out of a situation in which two laws are in conflict. One then must break the lesser law and ask for forgiveness. Do the lesser of two evils. I.e., it is still wrong but not the greatest wrong in that situation.
6. Graded absolutism: Lying is sometimes right based on God’s nature. Follow the higher law, that of mercy and innocence. This law has the greater moral duty than telling the truth to those who are guilty. You are not wrong in this case and do not need to confess a sin or ask for forgiveness.

What would you say about Rahab’s lie?

D. The Pharisees taught that some oaths were OK to break and others were not. These leaders had many things by which they swore and made many rules concerning them by which one is liable only when he swore by certain things. Note Matt. 23:16-22:

“Woe to you, blind guides! You say, ‘If anyone swears by the temple, it means nothing; but if anyone swears by the gold of the temple, he is bound by his oath.’ You blind fools! Which is greater: the gold, or the temple that makes the gold sacred? You also say, ‘If anyone swears by the altar, it means nothing; but if anyone swears by the gift on it, he is bound by his oath.’ You blind men! Which is greater: the gift, or the altar that makes the gift sacred? Therefore, he who swears by the altar swears by it and by everything on it. And he who swears by the temple swears by it and by the one who dwells in it. And he who swears by heaven swears by God’s throne and by the one who sits on it.”

E. Extra Reading: The following is from my commentary written on Matt 23 on the above Matt 23 passage:

**Woe #3: The Sin of being Blind Guides who Make Rules
which Circumvent Truthfulness and Exclude God from Speech.**

The first two woes emphasized the sins of the Scribes and Pharisees, which, in denying Jesus' Messiahship, excluded their followers from the kingdom of heaven and made them into sons of Hell. The second two woes focus on what they did to the Law and how they, in their blindness, made detailed rules on minutiae and neglected the greater things of the Law.

The third woe deals with the Scribes' and Pharisees' teaching concerning the taking of oaths. The passage states:

Woe to you, blind guides! You say, "If anyone swears by the temple, it means nothing; but if anyone swears by the gold of the temple, he is bound by his oath." You blind fools! Which is greater: the gold, or the temple that makes the gold sacred? You also say, "If anyone swears by the altar, it means nothing; but if anyone swears by the gift on it, he is bound by his oath." You blind men! Which is greater: the gift, or the altar that makes the gift sacred? Therefore, he who swears by the altar swears by it and by everything on it. And he who swears by the temple swears by it and by the one who dwells in it. And he who swears by heaven swears by God's throne and by the one who sits on it (verses 16-22).

The term for taking an oath, *ομνυω*, "to swear, take an oath"²⁴, is only found in Matthew here in this passage and in 5:34, 36; and 26:74. In Matthew 5:34, 36, Jesus abolishes oaths on the grounds that taking oaths tends to make truthful statements relative. In other words, an oath can tend to emphasize that one is telling the truth more than a simple yes or no. Hence, if truthfulness has been preempted by oath taking (that is lying is allowed unless

²⁴ Bauer, 568.

one takes an oath) then the oath taking must go and truth remain²⁵. The issue there is not that oaths are evil but they had become so in that they tended to allow one to be free to lie unless he took an oath²⁶. One's "yes" or "no" were no longer "yes" or "no". As Carson states²⁷, verses 20-22 here provide the "rationale" for 5:33-37. The Scribes and Pharisees had made oral traditions which allowed one to lie without being held accountable. For instance Shebuoth 4:13 states:

(If a man said) "I adjure you", or "I command you", or "I bind you", they are liable. (But if he said,) "By heaven and by earth", they are exempt. (If he adjured them) 'by *Alef-Daleth*' or "by *Yod-he*" or 'by Shaddai' or 'by Sabaoth' or 'by the Merciful and Gracious' or 'by him that is longsuffering and of great kindness', or by any substituted name, they are liable. If a man cursed (God) by any of these he is liable. So. R. Meir. But the Sages say: He is exempt. If a man cursed his father or mother by any of these names, he is liable. So R. Meir. But the Sages declare him exempt.²⁸

Another example is Shebuoth 3:3-4,

(If he said,) "I swear that I will not drink", and he drank many liquids, he is liable only on one count; (but if he said,) "I swear that I will not drink wine or oil or honey", and he drank (them all), he is liable on each count. (If he said,) "I swear that I will not eat", and he ate foods which are not fit for eating, or drank liquids which are not fit for drinking, he is not culpable. (If he said,) "I swear that I will not eat, and he ate carrion or *terefah*, or forbidden beasts or creeping things, he is culpable; but R. Simeon declares him not culpable."²⁹

This type of exemption/non-exemption in taking oaths is very common in the oral Law of the Pharisees³⁰. One was allowed to lie depending on the type of oath he took, the words he chose, and the context in which it was taken.

²⁵ Carson, 153, states the issue well: "If oaths designed to encourage truthfulness become occasions for clever lies and casuistical deceit, Jesus will abolish oaths (v. 34). For the direction in which the OT points is the fundamental importance of thorough and consistent truthfulness. If one does not swear at all, one does not swear falsely."

²⁶ There does not seem to be a contradiction here with Matt 5 and 23 on oaths. On this, see Carson, 479, and Davies and Allison, 290 (see note 32 below for the bibliographic information on Davies and Allison..

²⁷ 479.

²⁸ Danby, *The Mishna*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 415.

²⁹ Danby, 412

³⁰ See the Mishna tractates Shebuoth and Nedarim.

Jesus, here in Matthew 23: 16-22, highlights this blindness and even calls those who hold to this type of casuistry “fools”³¹. The Scribes and Pharisees had evidently³² taught that swearing by the temple or the altar meant nothing (*ουδεν*) but if one took an oath by the gold of the temple or the gift on the altar he was to be held accountable (*οφειλει*)³³. A possible reason behind this rule is provided by Paul S. Minear when he writes:

We are obviously dealing with highly developed casuistry in oath-making. Where verbal oaths provide the chief bond of security, the precise location and accessibility of the surety become important. The scribal interpreters of the Torah are accused of teaching that one set of oaths (e.g., the temple, the altar) is not binding, presumably because if a debtor defaults, his creditor cannot place a lien on the surety. The other set of oaths is binding because the gold or the gift on the altar can be seized in compensation for broken pledges.³⁴

If this view can be assumed, then rules for oaths had been reduced to economics and legal/financial issues while truthfulness and honesty were thrown out in these situations³⁵.

Jesus argues that this is foolish because the temple is greater than the gold and the altar is greater than the gift placed on it. Not only that, Jesus argues that God is connected to the temple. Thus all oaths are binding because they relate to God³⁶, the one who sits on the throne (vs. 22). The Scribes and Pharisees by their casuistry, had (perhaps inadvertently?) left God out of the picture. Since God does not allow lying, all oaths are

³¹ “*Μωροι*”, which means foolish or stupid ones, cf. Bauer, 533. This does not contradict Jesus’ command to not call any one “fool” in 5:22 because the context of 5:22 deals with stating the word from unrighteous anger with the view of insulting the other person. (See Carson, 148-149, on this). Jesus here is simply stating a fact out of righteous anger.

³² W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (ICC Commentary Series. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1977) 290-293, correctly indicate that of the specific type of oaths here criticized by Jesus, we have no extra-biblical evidence.

³³ This Greek word means “owe, be indebted . . . be obligated”, Bauer, *BAGD*, 603.

³⁴ “Yes or No: The Demand for Honesty in the Early Church”, *Novum Testamentum* 13 (1971):4

³⁵ As such, this may also be related to Jesus’ charge that the Scribes and Pharisees are full of greed in verses 25-26 and his reference to their blindness there.

³⁶ Davies and Allison, 290.

binding³⁷ and truthfulness³⁸ is to be the rule. There are to be no binding and non-binding oaths. Doing otherwise comes from foolish and blind hearts.

The Pharisees, in this passage, are charged not only with being blind and foolish but also for being blind *guides* or leaders³⁹ (*οδηγοι*). Jesus has just spoken in the first two woes about what the leadership of the Scribes and Pharisees does to their followers. He now illustrates what he had pointed out earlier to his disciples in this Gospel, 15:1-20 (in a passage that also deals with oral tradition circumventing a command of God). The Pharisees and Scribes are blind leaders of the blind. “Leave them,” he said, “they are blind guides. If a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into a pit” (15:14). In pointing out these specific points of their blindness here in Matthew 23 (using the same words “blind” and “guides” in a woe passage), he points out again that their leadership is doomed.

There are therefore several sins of the Scribes and Pharisees⁴⁰ revealed in this woe: The sin of making rules that allow people to be free from accountability to truthfulness, the sin of leaving God out of the picture, and the sin of willingly being blind leaders. Behind these outward sins are the heart sins of foolishness and blindness, hearts unwilling⁴¹ to see and which embrace foolish ways.

37 Donald A. Hagner, “Matthew 14-28.” *Word Biblical Commentary. Volume 33B*. (Dallas: Word Books, 1995), 672, states, “The conclusion is . . . clear: the implied distinctions are unjustified, and thus all oaths must be honored. Oath taking is always in effect an agreement in God’s presence.”

38 Davies and Allison, 292, state, that the whole point here does not relate to the Temple cult (with this Carson, 479, agrees). Rather “the whole point is . . . rejection of the distinction between binding and non-binding oaths, which distinction implies that not all assertions are equally bound to the truth.”

39 Bauer, 556.

40 Evidently, not all Jewish groups were guilty of this type of sin regarding oaths. For instance, the Essenes are described by Josephus (*Wars 2: 135*, William Whiston, *Josephus: The Complete Works*. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1988), 727), “. . . whatsoever they say also is firmer than an oath; but swearing is avoided by them. And they esteem it worse than perjury; for they say, that he who cannot be believed without (swearing by) God, is already condemned.” Thus the Essenes tend to agree with Jesus and his teachings.

41 They are unwilling as can be seen from their earlier encounters with Jesus and their lack of repentance.

II. The Heart Orientation to Love One's Enemies.

A. Matthew 5:38-48 reads:

"You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you. "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect".

B. In commenting on Verses 38-42, Stott (p. 113) states concerning this antithesis that:

Jesus was not prohibiting the administration of justice, but rather forbidding us to take the law into our own hands. "An eye for an eye" is a principle of justice belonging to courts of law. In personal life we must be rid not only of all retaliation in word and deed, but for all animosity of spirit. We can and must commit our cause to the good and righteous Judge, as Jesus himself did, but it is not for us to seek or to desire any personal revenge. We must not repay injury but suffer it, and so overcome evil with good. . . .

So the command of Jesus not to resist evil should not properly be used to justify either temperamental weakness or moral compromise or political anarchy or even total pacifism. Instead, what Jesus here demands of all his followers is a personal attitude to evildoers which is prompted by mercy not justice, which renounces retaliation so completely as to risk further costly suffering, which is governed never by the desire to cause them harm but always by the determination to serve their highest good.

Our hearts need to be those which will be able to turn the other cheek, give to those who want to sue us, to be willing to give to those who ask of us and wants to borrow from us. If someone forces you to go one mile, offer to go two. All these are examples of the heart of sacrificial love and mercy toward even enemies, the same heart Jesus has toward us! The question is not so much "Would you be able to do this?" as "Is your heart to do this?"

C. What about if a governmental law is evil? Do we resist that? Do we turn the cheek on that? E.g., what about the holocaust in Germany? There is a place it seems

for civil disobedience as even the early apostles said “We must obey God rather than men.” Davis gives what some call “criteria for justified acts of civil disobedience”. They are as follows⁴²:

First, when the civil authority *commands* the believer to personally do something the Scripture tells him not to do, or *forbids* the believer to do something the Scripture tells him to do, the believer *must resist*.

Secondly, there are times in which it may be *permissible* to engage in civil disobedience “even when the state did not require one *personally* to violate an explicit teaching of Scripture”. Davis summarizes them as follows⁴³:

1. The law being resisted must be unjust and immoral, clearly contrary to the will of God.
2. Legal means of changing the unjust situation should have been exhausted
3. The act of disobedience must be public rather than clandestine or secret.
4. There should be some likelihood of success.
5. Those who consider civil disobedience should be willing to accept the penalty for breaking the law.

D. Verses 43-48:

1. Jesus here focuses on the heart. We need to be like God (who gives the sunshine and rain on both the righteous and unrighteous) and love our enemies. What is our heart concerning those who persecute us or are our enemies? Do we do good to them like God does to his enemies? Do we pray for them?
2. What about war? Can it ever be just? Or is total pacifism the only option open for Christians and Governments who propose to be under God. Read about the different views in Davis, chapter 10, “War and Peace”
3. Verse 48: How is one to be *perfect*? There are two contextual understandings of this verse. This verse is at the end of the antitheses, so it could refer to all the foregoing antitheses from 5:21-47. In that case it would mean that we need to have the perfect “heart”, one free from hate, anger, lust, deceit, and retaliation, and desirous of extending love, mercy, and grace to all. I am leaning, however (contra Carson), toward understanding it only in reference to this last antithesis on love. I do so because of the repetition of the words “heavenly Father” in the immediate context. This would make “perfect” refer to perfect “love”. The understandings are not totally contradictory, however, because perfect love would demand the type of heart that is advocated by Jesus in 5:21-47. Actions are not the focus, but the heart.

⁴² These following criteria come from Davis, 196-198. There are differing views on this however. Please consider them also in Davis, chapter 9.

⁴³ Ibid.

The point I think we can glean here with respect to the antitheses is that their emphasis is on the heart not perfect actions. Jesus is going behind the actions to teach about the righteous heart, something which the Scribes and Pharisees did not have and thus would not “enter the Kingdom of Heaven” (5:20)

CLASS 6: THE HEART ORIENTATION OF GIVING, PRAYER, FASTING, AND PERSONAL TREASURE: MATTHEW 6:1-24

I. Introduction: Jesus has just finished his antitheses and now turns to another issue of unrighteousness and religious hypocrisy: Doing things in order to be seen by men.

Matt. 6:1 states:

"Be careful not to do your `acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven."

- A. This verse summarizes the main issue Jesus will be dealing with in three areas of righteous living: Giving alms, prayer, and fasting (verses 2-18).** Carson states (p. 162), "Jesus is not so much dealing with a different kind of righteousness⁴⁴ or mere acts of righteousness as with the motives behind righteous living". Again, as in the rest of the Sermon on the Mount, the issue is the HEART.
- B. It is important to note that Jesus assumed and expected that we would be involved in each of the areas of giving alms, prayer, and fasting** as each one begins with "When you . . ." not "If you . . ."
- C. Jesus calls those who give alms, pray, and fast "for the purpose of being seen by men" and bringing glory to themselves "hypocrites" (verses 2, 5, 6).** This is the hypocrisy of desiring self-glory not God's glory. Here is an excerpt from my paper dealing with what hypocrisy is in Matthew entitled "The Sins of a Failed Leadership: A Commentary on Matthew 23" (January 9, 2004):

The term "υποκριτης" (hypocrite) has the meaning of "pretender, dissembler" and "play-actor"⁴⁵. The common conception today that it means "saying one thing and doing another" or "not practicing what one preaches" does not seem to be the meaning in Matthew⁴⁶ nor does not seem to fit into the social milieu of the Gospel⁴⁷. The use of the term in Matthew has a strong emphasis on the inner heart (related to God) verses the outward acts (related to man)⁴⁸. In other words a more complete definition of

⁴⁴Some commentators (including Stott, pp. 125-126) attempt to divide the righteousness spoken of in chapter 5 and here in 6 into two categories of "moral" (i.e. righteousness dealing with moral duties of kindness, purity, honesty, and love) and "religious" (dealing with religious "practices"). This division is artificial however and I agree with Carson (p. 162) that this is "overstepping the evidence".

⁴⁵ Bauer, *BAGD*, 853.

⁴⁶ See M. A. Powell, "Do and Keep What Moses Says (Matthew 23:2-7)." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 114 (1995): 423.

⁴⁷ Powell, 424

⁴⁸ Note Matthew's use of the term in 6:2, 16 (where he emphasizes that hypocrites do something to be seen by men and to show others something about themselves rather than doing something to be seen by God), 7:5 (where the sin in their own life (i.e. one's own inner relationship with God) needs to be removed before they see clearly to help others), 15:7-8 (where they serve outwardly their tradition but do not have hearts close to God), 22:18 (where the Pharisees and Herodians in their hearts lay plans to trap Jesus (which would be an affront to God) deceitfully disguised in an outward question (something that would persuade people)), 24:51 (where those who are "wicked", who are put in charge of the masters servants, plan evil things against those

hypocrisy as used in Matthew would seem to be not “as a discrepancy between word and deed but rather as a discrepancy between the inward nature observed by God and the outward appearance observed by others”⁴⁹. The inward nature of hypocrisy is not to glorify or follow God as much as it is to glorify or follow self or men (in some way).

Let us not be hypocrites! Let us not be like the Pharisees!⁵⁰ Let us have a heart that desires to give God all the glory and not seek glory for ourselves!

II. Your Heart and Your Giving.

Matt. 6:2-4 states:

"So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth; they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

- A. The word for “alms” (“give to the needy”, NIV) is the Greek *ἐλεημοσύνην* (eleemosunen) which means “*kind deed*, then specif. *alms, charitable giving*” (BAGD, 249). Giving alms is basically charitable giving mainly to the poor and does not have to be limited to money. Stott states (p. 127), “. . . to give alms is to seek to serve our neighbor, especially the needy”.
- B. Jesus’ point here is that we need to have the heart to give to the needy without any heart desire for recognition to be given to us. We are not to do acts of mercy with the heart desire of being honored for it. If we do, we will be honored by men but not by the Father.
- C. Is there a contradiction with being light and salt (5:16) in which we are to do things to be seen by men? No! There is no contradiction when one understands that the reason for giving in “secret” here is the heart issue of wanting to be honored for your good deed. If your heart is right, (i.e., you are not doing it for the honor of men), then you don’t have to do it in secret. If, however, you have problems with your heart being in the right place, then indeed do it in secret. This will be a way of training your heart to be godly. Stott (p. 127) quoting A. B. Bruce states concerning these two seemingly contradictory statements, “. . . we are to ‘show when tempted to *hide*’, and ‘hide when tempted to *show*’”. Letting your light shine means that you let God’s work through you shine. This means that those works need to be public. But if we are tempted to boast or get honor from them, then we need to hide

servants (i.e., sin against God and his people in an attempt to wield authority over others; an authority not rightly given to them) in the time of the master’s absence (i.e., they are acting deceitfully in the Master’s absence), will be thrown into the place of weeping and gnashing of teeth), and the uses of the word in Matthew 23 (in which the hypocrites do not enter nor do they allow people who want to enter to enter the kingdom (13), they in their zeal of heart go to extremes to convert someone but make him twice a son of hell (vs. 15), they intensely try to follow the minutia of the law but miss the most important parts (vs. 23-24), their outsides seem clean and beautiful but their hearts (inside) is unclean and full of wickedness/lawlessness (vss. 25-28), and they shed the blood of the prophets, yet deny (for outward show or justification) that they are of a piece with their forefathers in this (vss. 29-32)).

⁴⁹ Powell, 423.

⁵⁰ A good book to read that examines Phariseism of today and helps each of us see it in ourselves is Tom Hovestol, *Seeing Ourselves in the Pharisees: Extreme Righteousness* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1997).

and do them in secret so we do not have glory brought to ourselves. What is your heart thinking or feeling when you do any good deed? Is it totally devoted to God receiving the glory? If not then this is an area you can grow in, an area in which you can learn how to deny yourself by not thinking about yourself but only God and His glory.

III. Your heart and Your Prayer

A. Do not pray to be seen by men: Verses 5-6 state:

"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 men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. 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".

The highlight and center point of this passage is that we need to crucify the heart attitude of *loving* "to be seen by men". If this is where we are at spiritually then we need to force ourselves to pray in secret. **We need to deny our old nature the practice and especially the heart of self-glory.**

B. Do not approach God with meaningless or repetitious prayers. Verses 7-8 state:

"And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him".

1. We are not to "babble". This is the Greek word "battalogo" which means "babble, speak without thinking".⁵¹ Stott (p. 144) states that what Jesus is prohibiting here is "any kind of prayer with the mouth when the mind is not engaged". He goes on to include prayers such as those in Transcendental Meditation, mindless use of the Rosary, but also any mindless or mind wandering prayer in which one is praying just to pray while the heart is far from him. We must not lapse into "religious jargon" and "empty phrases". The Father is personal and wants us to be personal and sincere in our speaking with him. Can you imagine speaking to any person on earth (your parent, your boss, your friend, a stranger) face to face and just babble meaningless phrases?? God should not be treated this way either!
2. Jesus is not forbidding long prayers or all repetition. Carson states (p. 166), Jesus is not condemning prayer any more than he is condemning almsgiving (v.2) or fasting (v. 16). Nor is he forbidding all long prayer or all repetition. He himself prayed at length (Luke 6:12), repeated himself in prayer (Matt. 26:44 . . .), and told a parable to show his disciples that "they should always pray and not give up" (Luke 18:1). His point is that his disciples should avoid meaningless, repetitive prayers offered under the misconception that mere length will make prayers efficacious. Such thoughtless babble can occur in liturgical and extemporaneous prayers alike. Essentially it is thoroughly pagan, for pagan gods allegedly thrive on incantation and repetition.

⁵¹ BAGD, p. 137.

C. Jesus gives a model prayer: How you should pray is shown in verses 9-15

"This, then, is how you should pray: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins".

Jesus teaches us to focus on the following content and heart orientation.

Notice, Jesus says this is "how" not "what" you should pray:

- 1. Our Father.** This is a personal address to God. You do not find this type of address to God in the Old Testament. "Not till Jesus is it characteristic to address God as 'Father'".⁵² "Our" emphasizes the relationship we have with Jesus. He is our (Jesus' and his disciples') Father. This is very personal. He is "our" Father. Do you have this in your heart when you pray or is God just someone you don't really know?
- 2. Hallowed be your name.** This emphasizes the need for us to have a heart of respect for who God is which is represented by his name. His name is holy, set apart for honor, glory, praise, etc. (cf. Rev. 4:11). Do we respect him, even his name?
- 3. Your kingdom come.** Kingdom in Matthew means "rule more than realm". Hence this is a request that God's rule be extended over the earth. That would include our own lives, that of our family, that of our neighbors, our country, and the world. Is our heart for God extending his rule to the world?
- 4. Give us today our daily bread.** We need to see ourselves as dependant on God. He wants us to ask him for our needs. He cares for us!
- 5. Forgive us as we forgive others.** We need to ask for forgiveness. We are not perfect. We need to be forgiven every day. But we need to realize that God will not forgive us if we do not have a forgiving heart. Do we forgive others. If not we need to do so before asking God to forgive us. Is there anyone you have not forgiven?
- 6. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the Evil One.** We need God's protection. Let us pray for it. Do we see ourselves as totally dependent? on God? Do we have a heart that wants so badly to overcome temptations that we ask God for help?

⁵² Carson, 169.

D. The following on prayer in the Bible is from Rolan D. Monje, a Filipino teacher:

PRAYERS IN THE BIBLE

Rolan D. Monje, July 2004

A few months ago, I felt that God was calling me to a deeper prayer life. I decided to meditate on the prayers of the prophets. Also, I found it helpful to study out the prayers of Christ. As I dug deeper, I ended up surveying the whole Bible on the subject of prayer. One thing is certain: the Bible has more than enough references to prayer-commands, records, examples, and allusions to show that God desires to have a prayerful people. It was both a sobering and inspiring study for me.

In the following sections, you will find listed the various prayers mentioned in the different parts of the Bible. I hope that this summary will encourage you to also study out prayer in the Bible. This will surely enrich your walk with God. Here are some helpful study questions when you look at prayers in the Bible:

1. What caused the person to pray?
2. What was the condition of the person's heart when he/she prayed?
3. Why was the prayer answered (or not answered)?
4. What can I learn here about God's character?
5. Is there anything I can change in my prayer life based on this example?

A. Prayers in the Pentateuch

The books from Genesis to Deuteronomy mention prayers of many different kinds. Although collectively the first five books comprise what is called "The Law", it is not just a cold, legal document. Principles and patterns of prayer (non-legal in nature) stand out. Most of the prayers are requests and pleas, but there are also praises and complaints:

1. Cain's prayer is the first one mentioned in Scripture. In Ge 4:13-15, he cried out to God as he bore the consequence of his sin.
2. Abraham has several times of prayer recorded in his storyline. He prayed for a son in Ge 15:1-9), and for different people as well: for Ishmael in Ge 17:20 and for Abimelech in Ge 20:17. Another time he prayed for the city of Sodom (Ge 18:23-33).
3. Hagar is recorded as praying for deliverance (Ge 16:7-13).
4. Lot bargained with God regarding his escape plan in Ge 19:20.
5. Abraham's servant (possibly Eliezer) sought specific guidance from God in Ge 24:12-52. This is a great example of specific, pointed prayer.
6. Rebekah cried out to God concerning her pains in pregnancy (Ge 25:22-23).

7. Jacob, finally facing up to his faults, pleaded for deliverance from Esau (Ge 32:9-32; 33:1-17).

8. Moses had a whole lot of prayers lifted up to God. In Exodus, Moses asked for help at the Red Sea (Ex 14:15-16), at the waters of Marah (Ex 15:25), at Horeb (Ex 17:4-6), and in the battle versus the Amalekites (Ex 17:8-14). In Numbers 11, he went to God concerning the grumbling of the Israelites for flesh (Nu 11:11-35) and in the chapter following in behalf of Miriam's leprosy (Nu 12:13-15).

Questions for reflection:

1. How does our character affect our prayer life?

2. How did God train Israel to be prayerful? Note: Aside from these examples, the Israelites are also mentioned as having "cried unto the Lord" (Nu 20:16; De 26:7). This means that they had prayed although the actual words of their prayer were never recorded. In each case, Israel is presented as helpless without God, and it is He who is ultimately the Savior of the nation. Without divine intervention, sure ruin would have come to Israel.

Suggested topics for study: How Moses spoke with God, Jacob's "habit" of altar-building; Abraham's call and prayer life, How God trained Israel to pray

B. Prayers in the History Books

More detailed prayers are given in the history books. Interwoven within the annals of ancient Israel are the lucid narratives of men who sought a deep relationship God. More pronouncedly than the Pentateuch, the History books portray the connection between a man's leadership and his prayer life. Also, with David as a chief example, the History books give greater detail into how God's people made various requests to God. It is clear that those who rely on God receive favor. Some of their prayers are listed below:

1. Joshua prayed a unique, radical prayer for the sun to stand still (Jos 10:12-14). This chapter displays God's power over creation in behalf of man.

2. Gideon, before his debut as Israel's leader, asked for a sign of dew (Jdg 6:36-40). The chapter actually records more appeals for proof of God's approval. Gideon's confidence in God's promises needed boosting.

3. Manoah asked for guidance about his child, saying "teach us how to bring up the boy". This prayer about raising Samson was heard by God (Jdg 13:8-9).

4. Samson begged for strength for one last time, gaining retribution for his demise (Jdg 16:28-30).

5. Hannah asked for a child after many years of being barren (1Sa 1:10-17, 19-20).

6. David has a well-recorded prayer life. His prayers include inquiring whether Keilah would be delivered into his hands (1Sa 23:10-12), inquiring about Ziklag (1Sa 30:8), asking whether he should enter Judah after Saul's death (2Sa 2:1), and asking whether he should go to war against the Philistines (2Sa 5:19-25). Some of David's other prayers are found in the Psalms (e.g. Ps 118:5; 138:3).

7. Solomon prayed for wisdom at the start of his reign (1Ki 3:1-13). He also prayed at the dedication of the temple (1Ki 8:23-53; 2Ch 6:14-42).

8. Hezekiah prayed to God for a chance to serve a longer time (2Ki 20:2+). Hezekiah reminded God of his faithfulness, both in his personal conduct and in his righteous deeds, and of his wholehearted devotion to God. Earlier he had prayed for deliverance from Sennacherib (2Ki 19:14-20; 2Ch 32:20-23).

9. Elijah's life was built on prayer. Only by asking God was the widow's son raised (1Ki 17:22). At the famous challenge of Mt. Carmel, God answered his plea for fire on his sacrifice (1Ki 18:36-38). Elijah's prayers also affected the rain (1Ki 17:1; 18:1, 42-45; Jas 5:17).

10. Elisha is recorded as praying to God to open the eyes of his servant. He later leads the Syrian army to submission (2Ki 6:1, 17-20).

11. Jabez implored for prosperity in 1Ch 4:10.

12. Abijah asked for victory over Jeroboam (2Ch 13:14-18).

13. Asa asked for victory over Zerah (2Ch 14:11-15).

14. Jehoshaphat asked for victory over the Canaanites (2Ch 18:31; 20:6-7)

15. Jehoahaz asked for victory over Hazael (2Ki 13:4)

16. Manasseh asked for deliverance from the king of Babylon (2Ch 33:13, 19)

17. Ezra prayed to God upon hearing of intermarriage among the people (Ezr 9:5-6; 10:1)

18. Nehemiah opened his account with prayer (Ne 1:4-11). The book has several other prayers and references to prayer (e.g. 2:4).

Aside from the individuals mentioned above, several groups are mentioned as lifting up prayers to God. The Reubenites pleaded for deliverance from the Hagarites (1Ch 5:20). The priests also offered prayer in behalf of the people in 2 Chr 30:27. Although not as specific about prayer, the people of Judah are mentioned to have sought God "with their whole desire" (2Ch 15:15). Upon returning from the Captivity, the Jews also offered up prayers to God while fasting (Ezr 8:21, 23).

Suggested topics for study: Joshua's Radical Prayer, Nehemiah's prayer life, The Heart of David in prayer, Ezra's prayer in Ezra 10, Prayer and Faithfulness

C. Prayers in the Prophets & Psalms

The prophets acted as God's spokesmen for many centuries. For sure it was vital for these men to have a dynamic walk with the Lord. The instances of prayer mentioned in the prophets--books from Isaiah to Malachi--are few but significant. Of course, it would be impossible for these men to remain in their vocation without powerful prayer. I am sure that many prayers of the prophets were left unrecorded. In Isaiah 6 for example, the prophet has a discourse with God in a vision. Elsewhere in the

book he does not actually pray to God, but prayer his is mentioned in 2 Ki 20:11. Here are some of the instances of prayer mentioned in the prophets:

1. Jeremiah prayed to God, seeking reassurance for his "risky" purchase of land (Jer 32:16-25). This section records an intense conversation between God and the prophet.
2. Ezekiel bargained for another way to bake bread (Eze 4:12-15). This had a spiritual significance in his life as a prophet.
3. Daniel was known for his consistent prayer life (Da 6:10-11). He prayed for divine revelation and interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Da 2:19-23) and also interceded for the people (Da 9:20-23).
4. Jonah found himself praying from inside a big fish (Jnh 2:1+).
5. Habakkuk questioned God as he complained and lamented (Hab 1:2+).

Questions for thought:

1. What was the role of prayer in a prophet's life?
2. What could have been some of the prophets' difficulties in prayer?
3. What can I learn from the prayers of the prophets?

All the Psalms could be read as "lifting up hearts before God." In this way, the Psalms present a valuable treasure trove of prayer. The Psalms represent the whole range of human emotion and teach us how to express ourselves to God at different times. That is why the Psalms are so "relatable" to us. By reading through the Psalms, meditating on them, and reciting them aloud, we learn to communicate with God the way his ancient peoples did.

D. Prayers of the New Testament

The New Testament chronicles a lesser number of prayers than the Old. Because of the letters however, we are given richer insight into how the apostles prayed: their content and manner. Here are some prayers recorded in the NT, with the prayers of Christ reserved for later:

1. Zechariah prayed for a son (Lk 1:13).
2. Anna served God with fasting and prayer (Lk 2:37).
3. Paul asked to be delivered from death (2Co 1:9-11).
4. Stephen prayed as he neared death (Ac 7:59-60).
5. Paul and Silas were praying in prison, being heard by the other inmates (Ac 16:25).
6. Peter prayed for the dead Tabitha (Ac 9:40). Another time he is went up on the roof to pray (Ac 10:9).

7. Cornelius' piety was shown by his prayers (Ac 10:30).

In Acts, the disciples are seen praying for Peter's protection (Ac 12:5-17). This shows that there was an atmosphere of prayer in the church (check out the role of prayer in Acts 1, 6, and 13). After the gospels and Acts, the Epistles hold a vast number of prayers penned by the authors. These give us insight into how the Apostles prayed. See for example Paul's prayers: for Ephesians (Eph 1:15-19; 3:14-19), for Philippians (Php 1:3-5, 9), for Colossians (Col 1:3, 9), for Thessalonians (1Th 1:2; 3:10, 12-13; 5:23; 2Th 1:11-12; 2:16-17; 3:5, 16), for Onesiphorus (2Ti 1:16, 18), for Philemon (Phm 4).

The prayers of Christ deserve special attention. Not only are they frequent and varied, but they uniquely open a window into the very heart of God. The prayers of Jesus are moving and gripping. They teach us how to approach God humbly yet forcefully.

Here are some passages describing the prayer life of our Lord:

1. Jesus began his day early with prayer (Mk 1:35). This reflects discipline and dependence.
2. Jesus sought to have private times with God, especially in the mountains (Mt 14:23; Mk 1:35; 6:46; Lk 5:16; 6:12; 9:18, 28-29).
3. Jesus' custom was giving thanksgiving before eating (Mt 14:19; 15:36; 26:26-27; Mk 6:41; 8:6; 1Co 11:24).
4. Jesus depended on God in times of distress (Jn 12:27; Heb 5:7). He showed this at Gethsemane (Mt 26:36-44; Mk 14:32-35; Lk 22:41-44; Heb 5:7) and on the cross (Mt 27:46; Lk 23:34, 46).
5. Jesus blessed children (Mt 19:13, 15; Mk 10:16).
6. Jesus prayed for his disciples, just like he told Peter (Lk 22:31-32). He also prayed for all believers (Jn 17:1-26). This reflects his big heart for people.
7. Jesus had specific requests to God. He presented his desires at the grave of Lazarus (Jn 11:41-42). He also prayed for the Comforter, the Holy Spirit (Jn 14:16).

A study of Jesus' prayer life shows how mortal man can have a dynamic relationship with God. Jesus' prayers, whether on a mountain (Mt 14:23; Mk 6:46; Lk 6:12; 9:28) or in the wilderness (Lk 5:16), give us great insight into true personal worship with God. His example of prayer was one-of-a kind. It is evident from the gospels that Jesus believed in prayer, told men to pray, and prayed a lot himself. Jesus' teachings matched his own superlative example; I would say he was the most "prayed up" man ever. His prayers were frequent, sincere and personal. Jesus understood that the Father sought worshippers and that our worship satisfies His loving heart. That is why his prayers pleased God; they met God's desire. This was the new spiritual worship that Jesus described to the Samaritan woman. Because God is Spirit, we must worship in spirit. As God is, so His worshippers. Anyone who prays more like Christ is on a good spiritual track.

Closing Thoughts

The Bible has so much about prayer that a whole lifetime would not be enough to exhaust the learning and the experience. Praise God that he has given us every day of our lives to enjoy our relationship with him. I pray that this summary of prayers in the Bible will inspire you to grow in your own prayer life. A close walk with God is a priceless gift.

A growing prayer life is worth the time and effort. Even the chance to approach God is something we don't deserve. To have a "good talk" with the Lord is better than anything in the world. There is nothing as fulfilling, as enjoyable, or as powerful.

III. Your Heart and Fasting. Matthew 6:26-18 states:

"When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men 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".

A. Again, the issue is that when we fast we must guard our hearts against wanting to "show men" that we are fasting.⁵³

B. Purposes of fasting include:

1. "To indicate and foster self-humiliation before God, often in connection with the confession of sins (.e.g., Neh. 9:1-2; Ps. 25:13; Isa. 58:3, 5; Dan. 9:2-20; 10:2-3; Jonah 3:5; Acts 9:9)"
2. "To lay some special petition before the Lord, sometimes out of anguish, danger, or desperation (Exod. 24:18; Judg. 20:26; 2 Sam. 1:12; 2 Chron. 20:3; Ezra 8:21-23; Esth. 4:16; Matt. 4:1-2; Acts 13:1-3; 14:23)"
3. For "Christian self-discipline" (I Cor. 9:24-27; cf. Phil. 3:19; I Peter 4:3).
4. To be able to share one's "food with the hungry (Isa. 58:1-7)"⁵⁴

Is your heart oriented toward fasting?

C. Below is a study by Kelly Petre, a teacher in the Boston area, on fasting:

When You Fast...

by Kelly Petre

4/14/2004

The following is a study about biblical fasting. It can be looked over in ten minutes to get a feel for the subject, and yet has a lot of Scripture references for further study. Over the next week, take some time to read through the material before our time of fasting together. It is only necessary to read the highlighted verses; looking up the other references is optional. Studying 2-3 sections a day should give you three Quiet Times worth of material. May God bless you as you discover or deepen your understanding and practice of biblical fasting!

⁵³ This study was taken from the Metro Manilla Christian Church website.

⁵⁴ These purposes and quotes come from Carson, p. 175.

Motivation for Fasting

1. Read Zechariah 7:1-7. What was wrong with their motivation for fasting?
2. Read Isaiah 58.
3. True fasting always involves seeking God's face rather than His hand, the Blessor rather than the blessing. (Zech. 7:5)
4. You cannot blackmail, lead or barter with God through fasting (Is. 58:3); Instead, fasting is a time to seek a deeper understanding of God's will and a deeper experience of God's presence.
5. Fasting is not a religious substitute for right living. (Is. 58) Indeed, fasting has no intrinsic moral value of its own (apart from, perhaps, teaching us that we can be tougher on ourselves). Yet for the person who desires to live for God, fasting is an invaluable aid in drawing near to God.

Expectation of Fasting

1. Read Matthew 6:1-18
2. Notice that Jesus says "when" not "if":
6:2 "When you give to the needy. . ."
6:5 "When you pray. . ."
6:16 "When you fast. . ."
3. No one would consider prayer or contributing to the poor as "optional" elements of Christian devotion; they are assumed by Jesus to take place in the lives of his followers.
4. What is your mindset toward fasting? Is it an optional pursuit? An obscure, outdated practice? A rare exception? Jesus placed fasting in the same category of expectation as prayer and giving to the poor. It is simply assumed to be a part of our lives.
5. Read Matthew 9:14-15.
6. The Pharisees and John's disciples fasted regularly. When did Jesus predict that his disciples would fast?
7. The "bridegroom has been taken" and is no longer physically present among us. The time has now come for fasting in order to powerfully seek the presence of God!
8. Paul "often [went] without food." (2 Corinthians 11:27)

Fasting Defined

1. Fasting is voluntarily abstaining from that which is good in an effort to achieve something better.
2. Although one may choose to temporarily deny any number of things in order to draw near to God (i.e. sexual relations for a married couple, I Cor. 7:5), fasting in the usual sense is refraining from eating food.
3. The Bible describes three main forms of fasting:
 - a. The Normal Fast, involving the total abstinence of food. Luke 4:2 reveals that Jesus "ate nothing." Afterwards "He was hungry." Jesus most likely abstained from food but not from water.
 - b. In Acts 9:9 we read of an Absolute Fast where for three days Saul "did not eat or drink anything." The abstinence from both food and water usually lasted no more than three days (Ezra 10:6; Esther 4:16; Exception-Moses, Exod. 34:28).
 - c. The Partial Fast -- in Daniel 10:2-3 the emphasis is upon the restriction of diet rather than complete abstinence.

Occasions of Fasting

1. Fasting is the laying aside of food for a period of time when an individual is seeking to draw close to God.
2. Fasting was observed on occasions of:
 - a. public calamities- 2 Samuel 1:12, Esther 4:3
 - b. afflictions- Psalm 35:13, Daniel 6:18
 - c. private afflictions- 2 Samuel 12:16
 - d. approaching danger- Esther 4:16
 - e. appointing leaders- Acts 13:2, 14:23

- f. sending out missionaries- Acts 13:3
 - g. bereavement- I Samuel 31:13, 2 Samuel 1:12, 3:35, 12:16-25
 - h. impending judgment- Joel 1:14, 2:12, Jonah 3
 - i. undertaking great projects- Nehemiah 1:4
 - j. reading of Scripture- Jeremiah 36:6-10
 - k. going into battle- Judges 20:26-28
 - l. desiring safe journey- Ezra 8:21-23
 - m. becoming a Christian- Acts 9:9
3. The Bible records:
 - a. personal fasts- Matthew 4:2, Daniel 9:3, Exodus 34:28, etc.
 - b. group/community/church fasts- I Samuel 31:11-13, Matt. 9:14, Acts 13:1-3, etc.
 - c. national fasts- Judges 20:26, I Samuel 7:6, 2 Chronicles 20:3, Ezra 8:21, Esther 4:16, Jeremiah 36:9, Jonah 3, etc.
 4. Those who fasted were:
 - a. Men- Ezra 10:6, Nehemiah 1:4, Daniel 9:3, etc.
 - b. Women- Esther 4:16, Luke 2:37, etc.
 - c. Even Animals! - Jonah 3:9 (Probably not voluntary!)

Prayer and Fasting

1. Fasting is almost always mentioned in the Bible in connection to Prayer.
2. Read about David's prayers for friends and adversaries (Psalm 35:13, 109:24), Esther's and Nehemiah's prayers before entering to see the king (Esther 4:16, Nehemiah 1:4), Daniel's prayer for the deliverance of the captives (Daniel 9:3), or the church's prayers seeking God's direction for the church at Antioch (Acts 13:1-3). Fasting and prayer are mentioned hand in hand.
3. In what ways does fasting contribute to powerful and effective prayer?
 - a. Fasting shows God that a person is serious about his plea.
 - b. Fasting helps the person himself to be serious about his plea and to begin taking necessary steps to arrive at a solution.
 - c. Fasting can foster a clear-mindedness and focus during prayer.
 - d. Fasting keeps God and the purpose of our fast constantly before us. (It goes something like this for me: "I'm hungry. Why is that? I haven't eaten. Why is that? I'm fasting. Why is that? Oh, yeah! . . . 'Lord, hear my prayer. . . '")
 - e. Fasting puts an urgency to our appeals to God.
 - f. Fasting is humbling. It reminds us of our frailty. It allows us to again see our need for God's strength and power.
 - g. When in your hunger you cry out to God and in faith ask what is according to his will, it will come about. The prayer of faith does change things.

Right Approach to Fasting

1. Fasting is NOT for your viewing public.
 - a. Read Matthew 6:16-18.
 - b. Fasting should be sincere and "to your Father."
 - c. Fasting is an aspect of our personal devotion to God, as are prayer and giving to the needy, none of which should be done "to be seen by men."
 - d. This passage does not teach against group prayer, group fasting or even group giving. Instead, it warns against hypocrisy in prayer, fasting or giving, and over-concern with being viewed in a certain light by men rather than sincere approach to God.
 - e. Don't be weird. If someone asks why you aren't eating, or finds out about your fast, answer simply and truthfully - - you won't "lose your reward." The issue is whether you are purposely fasting "to be seen" by men or fasting to draw near to God.
2. Fasting should NOT make us somber and morose.
 - a. Re-read Matthew 6:16-18 and Isaiah 58:3-5.
 - b. If our fasting is sincerely toward God, we should not wear a sour demeanor that makes our fasting obvious to men.
 - c. Don't moan and groan about how hard your fast is. You should not penalize others by your personal decision to draw near to God!

3. Fasting should NOT make us self-righteous.
 - a. Read Luke 18:9-14.
 - b. True fasting promotes humility, not self-righteousness.
 - c. True fasting makes us realize our weakness and need for God, and is not itself something to take pride in. Be humble, and God will lift you up! (I Peter 5:6).
4. Fasting does NOT place God in your debt.
 - a. Read 2 Samuel 12:13-23.
 - b. David earnestly sought an answer from God through prayer and fasting, yet surrendered to God's will and sovereignty when his request was denied.
 - c. Fasting is not leverage to get our way with God; we must ultimately stay surrendered to his will and at peace with however he chooses to answer our prayers (accompanied by fasting, or not!).

Duration of Fast

1. A typical Jewish fast lasted one day, from sundown on one day until sundown the following day, or from morning to night. There are many examples of such fasts:
 - I Samuel 7:6; Nehemiah 9:1; Jeremiah 36:6, etc.
2. There are several examples of 3-day fasts or short fasts in preparation for decisive activity: Esther 4:16; Nehemiah 1:4, Daniel 10:2-3 (3 weeks), Saul in Acts 9:9, Antioch Church in Acts 13:1-3, etc.
3. There are 3 examples of 40-day fasts:
 - a. Moses- Exodus 34:28; Deuteronomy 9:9,18.
 - b. Elijah- I Kings 19:8.
 - c. Jesus- Matthew 4:1-2; Luke 4:1-2.
4. It is unwise to leave the duration of a fast vague or open-ended. The purposes and objectives of the fast should be as clear as possible. (Consider the unwise fast of Paul's Jewish enemies in Acts 23:12-35!)

Fasting Practicals

1. Fasting can be a challenging concept in a society that knows very little about self-denial and even less about true hunger. Don't let your lack of exposure to fasting deter you from experiencing the benefits of this remarkable discipline! Prayer times, reading the Bible and attending church are examples of spiritual activities that were foreign to many of us; yet we have acquired a taste for these things and reaped the benefits in our walk with God! The same is true of fasting - - start small and slowly make this discipline a vital part of your spiritual life!
2. There are certain physical benefits to fasting, although these are not the primary reasons for a spiritual fast. "Cleaning out" your system, eliminating toxins, weight loss, etc., are possible side benefits that may accompany a short-duration fast.
3. You may feel light-headed at times. Do not be alarmed, as this will usually go away quickly. Your body is able to survive and function quite well for several days without our American imperative "three-meals-a-day." Prayer can and will strengthen you powerfully!
4. If you have any medical challenges, you should consult a physician before fasting. Anyone considering a prolonged fast should not do so without seeking the advice of mature disciples (Proverbs 11:14, 12:15, 14:12, 19:20), and perhaps that of a physician.
5. For a normal fast, maintain your intake of water and clear liquids.
6. Your breath will smell bad. "Do unto others" by remembering such simple courtesies as brushing teeth, using mouthwash, carrying breath mints or spray, etc.
7. Do not binge or eat excessively when your fast is finished, or you will pay the consequences! Have a light meal to break the fast. The longer that you fast, the more gradual should be your return to regular eating habits.

Grow closer to God than ever before as you learn the power of fasting in your walk with God!

IV. Your Heart and Earthly Treasure: Matthew 6:19-24 states:

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. "The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness! "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money".

A. Key heart issues here include:

1. Do not lay up treasures for yourself. What is the purpose for what you have? Is it to advance the kingdom or rule of God or is it for yourself, just because you want it? This will indicate where your heart is.
2. If your heart is to lay up treasure in heaven, it will mean that you are focusing on God's glory, helping others, and advancing God's rule on earth.
3. Is your eye (heart) full of light or full of darkness? What do you see when you look at God or others? Is it what they can do for you, or what you can do for them. Is it how much you can get out of life or how much life you can give to others? Do you see God as someone to give you what you want or someone whom you want to serve? Do you see your job as just a way of making money to take care of you? Or do you see it as a way to take care of your family, God's family, and a way of serving him? Is your eye full of light or just has some light?
4. You cannot serve both God and money. God must be first and our money used for his purposes. But our hearts must be desirous of that. Is your heart desirous of surrendering everything you have to the service of God? Or is just part of your heart (or none of it) so? Where is your ambition?

B. Stott (p.154-155) states that this teaching of Jesus is not

1. A ban on possessions themselves
2. A ban on "saving for a rainy day" as Proverbs 6:6ff praises even the ant for storing up food in the summer for use in the winter and I Tim. 5:8 states that if you make no provision for taking care of your family you are worse than an unbeliever
3. A ban on enjoying the "good things which our Creator has given us richly to enjoy"

C. Rather, Jesus is teaching the following: He

forbids his followers . . . selfish accumulation of goods . . . ; extravagant and luxurious living; the hardheartedness which does not feel the colossal need of the world's underprivileged people; the foolish fantasy that a person's life consists in the abundance of his possessions; and the materialism which tethers our heart to earth.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Stott, 155.

CLASS 7: THE HEART ORIENTATION OF SEEKING GOD'S RULE IN YOUR LIFE, JUDGING OTHERS, AND THE GOLDEN RULE MATTHEW 6:25-7:12

I. Seeking God's Rule in Your Life: Don't Worry. Have Faith in God.

Matt: 6:25-34 states:

"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 important than food, and the body more important than clothes? 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? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life{Or single cubit to his height}? "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. 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, O you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

- A. **“Therefore”** in verse 25 ties this passage to the preceding. Jesus has just spoken about two treasures (one on earth and one in heaven, vss. 19-21), two eyes (one bad and one good, vss. 22-23), and two masters (God and money, vs. 24). You cannot serve both of any of these. What does one do then? How does one live?

Stott says (p. 161) in this passage (vss. 25-34),

Once again our Lord simplifies the issue for us by reducing the alternative possible life-goals to only two. He puts them over against each other in this section, urging his followers not to be preoccupied with their own security (food, drink, and clothing), for that is the obsession of ‘the Gentile’ who do not know him, but rather with God’s rule and God’s righteousness, and with their spread and triumph in the world.

Worry (or “fretting” as Carson puts it, p. 179) is a trusting in self and not God. It is a heart issue of lack of trust. Carson states (179), “. . . fretting . . . betrays a loss of faith”. He goes on to say (179), “The point here is not to worry about the physical necessities, let alone the luxuries implied in the preceding verses, because such fretting suggests that our entire existence focuses on and is limited to such things”. Common sense tells us that we cannot solve anything by worry or anxiety. It does no good to worry about your job, what people think, your health, an exam, etc. In fact “worry is a waste—a waste of time, thought and nervous energy” (Stott, 169). Stott (165-168), however, that this passage is **NOT** saying that (1) Christians are “exempt from earning their own living”, (2) that Christians are “exempt from

responsibility for others”, or (3) “exempt from experiencing trouble”. We are accountable and must be responsible in this life but we need not “worry”. He goes on to summarize this passage by stating (169),

To become preoccupied with material things in such a way that they engross our attention, absorb our energy and burden us with anxiety is incompatible with both Christian faith and common sense. It is distrustful of our heavenly Father, and it is frankly stupid. This is what pagans do; but it is an utterly unsuitable and unworthy ambition for Christian.

B. The nature of worry: Self-focus. In my experience with and battle against worry, I have found that it happens when I focus on myself and not on God. It has been an intense battle, a battle God is gradually helping me to win. I have not totally conquered it but as I learn how to turn things over to God and let him rule in my life, it is gradually being conquered. My heart wants to focus on ME instead of GOD. Jesus here has us focus on nature and on God and how he takes care of it. He takes care of the birds, the lilies, and the grass. The conclusion is that He will take care of us too! I remember when I was fretting terribly one time and my friend and mentor took me to the lakeside in Milwaukee and walked with me along the lakeshore noting the waves and the creation of God. It took the focus off of me and put it on God. It helped me to begin to cease my worry and trust in God. My heart needed that. I needed to surrender my security, well being, needs, and concerns to God and let him be God!

C. “Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness”. Seeking the kingdom is *not* equated with the “church” as we have been taught in the past. The church did not even exist yet when Jesus stated these words!⁵⁶ No, “kingdom”, while not excluding the church, means the “rule” of God. It is, in this context, allowing God to be King and rule in our individual lives instead of ourselves. If I can come to complete faith and trust in God, I will not worry and God will be LORD of that area of my life. To seek first God’s Kingdom is to seek first his RULE in my life. This would include also his “righteousness” which as we have seen in the Sermon on the Mount involves a righteous “heart attitude” not just actions. It is seeking to have the heart of love instead of anger, lust, desire for divorce, pleasing men, taking oaths to emphasize you are really telling the truth, wanting to be seen by and honored by men, hating your enemy, etc. This is the heart that is “righteous”. This rule and righteousness ultimately will temper our ambitions to not be worldly and as such will encompass and permeate the purview of our lives when fully embraced. As such Carson is correct when he states,

To seek first the kingdom . . . is to desire above all to enter into, submit to, and participate in the spreading the news of the saving reign of God, the messianic kingdom already inaugurated by Jesus, and to live so as to store up treasures in heaven in prospect of the kingdom’s consummation . . . To seek God’s righteousness is not, in this context, to seek justification . . . It

⁵⁶ Indeed the church is part of the kingdom of God in that it consists of those who have surrendered to his rule in their lives. But the rule of God is greater than the church and here is contextually talking not about the corporate body of Christ, but each one’s individual allowance of that rule in their personal life.

is to pursue righteousness of life in full submission to the will of God, as prescribed by Jesus throughout this discourse.”

Stott agrees and states (p. 170),

To ‘seek first’ this kingdom is to desire as of first importance the spread of the reign of Jesus Christ. Such a desire will start with ourselves, until every single department of our life—home marriage, and family, personal morality, professional life and business ethics, bank balance, tax returns, life-style citizenship—is joyfully and freely submissive to Christ. It will continue in our immediate environment, with the acceptance of evangelistic responsibility towards our relatives, colleagues, neighbours, and friends. And it will also reach out in global concern for the missionary witness of the church.

Seeking first God’s kingdom means seeking to allow him to rule every aspect of your own personal life AND so also to seek to spread that rule to all mankind and every aspect of the world.

II. Judging Others: Matthew 7:1-6.

This passage states:

"Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. "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? 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? 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. "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 then turn and tear you to pieces.

A. This is not an injunction that is meant to abolish all law courts because “the context does not refer to judges in courts of law but rather to the responsibility of individuals to one another” (Stott. 175).

B. This is not an injunction that is meant to “suspend our critical faculties in relation to other people”. As the whole, the Sermon on the Mount requires us to make judgments concerning others (e.g., our righteousness must surpass that of the Scribes and Pharisees (5:20), we are to judge that what was taught “of old” was incorrect and follow Jesus (“but I say to you”), we are not to be as the hypocrites as other are (6:2, 5, 16), we are to watch out for false prophets by recognizing their fruit (7:15-20), etc.)⁵⁷. No, rather we are to understand this, I believe, in the following manner:

1. Realize that you and I will be judged by the standards we by which we judge (as well as God’s standard), otherwise we are hypocrites. We must not

⁵⁷ Carson, p. 183, states that Jesus does not “forbid all judging of any kind, for the moral distinctions drawn in the Sermon on the Mount require that decisive judgments be made”.

condemn others for what we ourselves do or do not do.

2. We must judge ourselves first, seeing the planks in our own eye, seeing our need for those planks to be removed, and removing them before we attempt to take the speck out of our brother's eye. This is a heart issue. We must have the openness, desire, and humility to remove what is in our own eye (i.e., to see our own faults) in order to truly help the other person with even their specks. A heart of humility and repentance is necessary to truly help others in their need to change.
3. God does expect us to make judgments with this humble type of heart as he says "then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye". Hence we are supposed to make judgments, we are supposed to take specks out of our brother's eye. In fact we could not love any one if we did not do this! Those judgments (discipling moments if you will) will be from a personal experience of the truth, from personal battle with our own sin, practiced out of love for the other person, and for the advancement of God's reign and rule in that person's life.

It is hypocrisy to make judgments in any other way. The issue is not whether the other person has issues in their life that need to change but whether you are focusing on your life to let God reign in your life first so you can truly guide those who need help with God's rule in their lives. Where is your heart in all this? Are you quicker to judge and demand repentance from the hearts and lives of others than you are to judge and demand repentance from your own heart and life?

C. Verse 9.

1. This verse involves a chiasmic structure (a way of communicating in the ancient world in which first things mentioned go with last things mentioned and second things go with second to last things forming an χ , the Greek letter chi) where dogs go with "turn and tear you to pieces" and pigs (mentioned second) go with "trample them under their feet" (mentioned second to last).
2. "Sacred" and "pearls" (cf. Matt. 13:46, the pearl of great price), seem to be referring to all that Jesus has taught, especially, I would believe, the heart things in the Sermon on the Mount. This would be the good news of the kingdom, the good news of the reign or rule of God coming into the world and each person's life. This one would not cast before "dogs" and "pigs". Carson states (185), "dogs" and "pigs" refer
 . . . only to persons . . . who have given clear evidences of rejecting the gospel with vicious scorn and hardened contempt

Compare Jesus' lesson to his disciples in Matt. 10:14 and 15:14. Stott (p. 182) continues and says that "dogs" and "pigs" must be

 . . . those who who have had ample opportunity to hear and receive the good news, but have decisively—even defiantly—rejected it.

Evidently, we are to make this type of judgment and "shake the dust off your feet" (Matt. 10:14) and "leave them"(i.e., the dogs and pigs) (Matt. 15:14) at least until they change their attitude and heart.

III. How can we do all this? The Golden Rule

Verses 7-12 state:

"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. "Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? 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! So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets."

A. Scholars debate the connection between this and the verses which go before. It seems best however to see it as an answer to a question like "How can we do this?" Jesus, "having told his disciples the difficulties, now exhorts them to prayer" (Carson, 186). This type of life and heart can be accomplished, but it will have to come from God through prayer. God is the only means through which this can happen. We must depend on him.

B. Two heart concepts are necessary:

a. The heart to ask, seek, and knock. These words are commands. We must persistently ask, seek, and knock concerning how to let God's rule be present in our lives. If we do, God promises that it will be given to us, we will find, and doors will be opened. Are you willing to work hard seeking God to implement the heart things of the Sermon on the Mount into your life?

b. The heart to believe/trust that our Father in Heaven is a good parent (better than any good parent here on earth), a giver of good gifts and he will give them to those who ask (cf. James 1:5, 17). **He is faithful and will be good to you. That is his nature!** If I really believe that, I will be motivated to seek his help in my life.

C. The Golden rule. "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you".

1. This is the attitude, the heart we must have, to be able to fulfill the Law and the Prophets. Incredible! Jesus has come full circle from Matt. 5:17-19. He has summed it all up in this phrase! Everything he said in the sermon so far with respect to relationship with others is summed up in this statement. If you and I can do this, we will fulfill the Law and the Prophets. Jesus has expounded on the heart that fulfills the Law and the Prophets, has taught what it is, and how to get it (through prayer, seeking, asking, and knocking).
2. The Golden Rule was found in many cultures of Jesus' day. However, most every other culture's wording of it is negative. Jesus's Golden Rule is phrased positively. Note and contrast the following (from Stott, 190):
 - a. Confucius said, "Do not to others what you would not wish done to yourself"
 - b. The OT Apocrypha states, "Do not do to anyone what you yourself hate"
 - c. Rabbi Hillel (20BC) said, "What is hateful to you, do not do to anyone else. This is the whole law; all the rest is only commentary".

Jesus' rule would ban sins of omission, and make mandatory the good things you could do for someone, i.e., LOVE. This is how this verse fits with verses 8-11. It is

not just talking about not doing bad but is talking about actively doing good like God does as a good father. It is to be done “in everything”. Will our heart be to others like our Father’s heart is to us?

D. The following is my short review of an article by Johannes Nissen in a book entitled *The New Testament and Hellenistic Judaism*. He wrote about the distinctive character (over against other writings of Jesus’ day) of Jesus’ love command for both God and man. I wrote it in 2003. I hope it is helpful in some way.

“The Distinctive Character of the New Testament Love Command in Relation to Hellenistic Judaism” by Johannes Nissen, in The New Testament and Hellenistic Judaism, by Peder Borgen and Soren Giversen, Editors (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1997), 123-150

In this article Johannes Nissen studies Hellenistic Jewish backgrounds in order to delineate any distinctiveness or newness that Jesus brought to the love command as understood in his day. Nissen outlines four areas of distinctiveness. First, Jesus combined the love for God and neighbor into a “first” and “second” command which was “integral to an understanding of the Kingdom of God” (p. 129). Nissen states with respect to Mark’s gospel, “It is precisely this coherence of the twin commandments with the dynamics of the Kingdom, which constitutes the difference between the love command in the Gospels and the Hellenistic Jewish tradition” (p. 129).

Secondly, although the positive form of the golden rule was not unknown in Hellenistic Judaism, it “receives a new tone when Jesus says it” (p. 134). The new tone is the idea of “take what you *naturally wish* others to do for you as the criterion for your actual behaviour towards other people *no matter* how they behave towards you” (p. 134). This rule, as Jesus commanded it, was an injunction to do for others the good thing we wish for ourselves totally apart from the behavior we experience or expect from them (p. 134-135).

Thirdly, although the command to love one’s enemies was not unknown to Hellenistic Jewish writings, Jesus’ use of it was radical in its uncompromising and unconditional nature. Nissen states (p. 140), “. . . to be told to love your enemy *as such*, without qualification, goes beyond any known Jewish maxim—even if there are noble examples in Jewish as well as Christian history of individuals having achieved it.”

Fourthly, Christ is seen as the motivating power and pattern for this love command. Jesus gave a “new” command to love as he loved. Jesus is the “life model” of what it means to love. “He is a living parable of non-resistance to evil and love of enemies” (p. 141). Jesus gave his life for us. In the same way we are to give our lives for one another. Nissen summarizes, “The love command is not unique in the history of ideas; what is new is the relationship to Jesus Christ who calls forth a new world, a new community which makes love possible” (p. 150).

CLASS 8:
THE HEART ORIENTATION OF EMBRACING THE NARROW
WAY, RECOGNIZING FALSE PROPHETS,
GOD KNOWING YOU, AND BEING A WISE BUILDER
Matthew 7:13-29

I. In this section of Scripture, Jesus, having laid out the heart disciples must have to follow him and participate in the rule of God, now basically calls for a decision. He does this by painting four descriptions of two alternative ways to live and encouraging his listeners to choose the way of life. These four descriptions are as follows:

- 1. Two gates and roads (the broad and the narrow), verses 13-14**
- 2. Two prophets or two trees (the false and the true, the bad and the good), verses 15-20**
- 3. Two knowings (knowing God and God knowing you)**
- 4. Two foundations (rock and sand)**

As Carson (p. 188) states, all four of the above

“focus on eschatological judgment and so make it plain that the theme is still the kingdom of heaven. But if some will not enter it (vv. 13-14, 21-23), the sole basis for such a tragedy is present response to Jesus’ words.”

A. The Two Gates and Roads.

Matthew 7:13-14 reads:

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

Stott notes (p. 193),

What is immediately striking about these verses is the absolute nature of the choice before us. We would all prefer to be given many more choices than only one, or better still to fuse them all into a conglomerate religion, thus eliminating the need for any choice. But Jesus cuts across our easy-going syncretism. He will not allow us the comfortable solutions we propose. Instead he insists that ultimately there is only one choice, because there are only two possibilities to choose from.

Jesus says there are only two roads, only two gates. There is only one road or entrance into “life” and only a “few find it.”

One way is “broad”. It is “spacious and accommodates the crowd and their baggage” (Carson, 188). The other way is narrow and restrictive, one in which you cannot take your baggage.

Stott (p. 194-196) divides these verses up into four aspects:

1. **There are two ways.** The broad or easy way and the narrow or hard way. He states,

. . . revealed truth imposes a limitation on what Christians may believe, and revealed goodness on how we may behave. And in this sense it is 'hard'. In another sense . . . Christ's hard and narrow way is also to be welcomed as his 'easy yoke' and 'light burden'.

Which way has your heart embraced to follow?

2. **There are two gates:** one that is wide and one narrow. Stott notes that there is no limit to the baggage or luggage we take along with us through the wide gate, we need leave nothing behind. Sins come with us easily. The narrow gate however is something you have to "find". Through this gate we can take no baggage, we must leave everything behind! We must deny ourselves and rid ourselves of sin and enter by Jesus. John 10:9 states, "I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved".

Which gate has your heart embraced to enter?

3. **There are two destinations:** one that leads to destruction and one to life, Heaven or Hell. The choice is yours. There is no Purgatory!

Has your heart embraced this by seeking to "find" the destination of eternal life?

4. **There are two crowds:** The huge and the small. Only a few will find the way to life. It will not be a big crowd. However there will be a very large crowd who enter Hell.

Which crowd is your heart set on being a part of?

B. The Two Prophets or Two Trees

Matthew 7:15-29 reads:

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

Jesus knew there would be false prophets, teaching false doctrines and living false lives, so he commands that we need to "watch out" for them. We must be fruit inspectors⁵⁸. Do not be deceived, if one's life and/or doctrine does not square with the

⁵⁸We are not to be "witch hunters" but to be on guard and look out for false prophets. Stott (p. 203) correctly states,

truth then you have discovered a false prophet.⁵⁹ Ultimately false prophets will produce bad fruit. Carson (p. 191) states,

Living according to kingdom norms can be feigned for a time; but what one is will eventually reveal itself in what one does. However guarded one's words, they will finally betray him (cf. 12:33-37; Luke 6:45). Ultimately false prophets tear down faith (2 Tim. 2:18) and promote divisiveness, bitterness (e.g., 1 Tim. 6:4-5; 2 Tim. 2:23), and various kinds of ungodliness (2 Tim. 2:16)

Stott outlines *two tests*:

- 1. Character and conduct.** This would include the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22ff) and Christ-likeness. If they do not depict these fruits and/or have the sins of the flesh (Gal. 5:19ff) then they fail the test.
- 2. Doctrine or Teaching.** Their teaching must square with the revealed word of God, the Bible. John commands us, "Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world". The test John has one apply is whether Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. This is a doctrinal issue. If they do not square with the scripture then they are false prophets. This necessitates however that the one doing the testing knows the truth of God's word!

Which tree are you? Good or Bad? Which prophet are you? True or false? Are you deceptive or desiring to cover up and pretend to be the good tree? Or is your heart one that is totally sold out to be the good tree and a good prophet? On the flip side, is your heart one which will prepare itself to be a "fruit inspector", to know God's word, to have the life of a true disciple, produce good fruit, and desire to protect the flock from the wolves? Where is your heart?

C. Two Knowings: You Knowing God and God knowing you.

Matthew 7:21-23 reads:

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 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 perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"

This warning of Jesus gives us no encouragement, however, either to become suspicious of everybody or to take up as our hobby the disreputable sport known as 'heresy-hunting'. Rather it is a solemn reminder that there are false teachers in the church and that we are to be on our guard.

⁵⁹ Already in the NT times there are several types of "false" or "pseudo" people. These include the Pharisees and Sadducees (Matt. 16:12), false apostles (II Cor. 11:13), false teachers (II Pet. 2:1) and even false Christs (I John 2:18, 22).

Jesus, like Paul⁶⁰, sees two aspects of “knowing”, two sides to a true relationship. Many people may “know” Jesus or God in the sense that they know about him, but that does not ensure that they are known by Him. They may even call him “Lord” and do miracles, drive out demons, and prophesy in his name, but that does not mean Jesus “knows” them. The scripture does not say that those who are in this state are few but “MANY”. The question here is not so much “Do you know God” as “Does God know you?” This Greek word here is *ginosko* which is translated “know”. This word in the Septuagint translates the Hebrew *yada*. The study of *yada* in the Hebrew Scriptures shows that it means “experiential knowledge”. Hence the issue is not if you or I have “experienced God” or have tasted of his grace (like I did when I initially “prayed Jesus into my heart”), but whether God has experienced us. We can be so deceived by just being involved in one-half of the relationship and thinking we are OK with God while he does not know who we are. In order to be known by God I Cor. 8:3 states we must love him. It reads, “But the man who loves God is known by God”. I was taught in essence that to love God was to “pray him into my heart”. How deceived I was! The Bible says, “This is love for God: to obey his commands”. I did not know that God had not commanded me to pray Jesus into my heart until later. I had experienced the love God had for me in his death on the cross for my sins but I had not obeyed him in his command to “repent and be baptized . . . for the forgiveness” of my sins (Acts 2:38). So, salvifically, God did not know me. I knew him in some ways (I was a preacher for 11 years, a teacher of the Bible, received degrees in the Bible, shared my faith, etc.) but he did not know me! Interestingly, God knowing us does not consist in perfect obedience. Rather, he wants to experience our heart. Deut. 8:2 states that God, speaking to those who wandered in the wilderness for 40 years, wants to “know (*yada*) *what was in your heart*, whether or not you would keep his commands”. So, God wants to experience our heart not just see our actions.

The key in this passage in Matthew is not just “doing the will of my Father in Heaven”. Surely casting out demons, etc, was God’s will. No, the key involves more than actions. It involves a good heart behind the actions that is experienceable by God. The whole of the Sermon on the Mount shows this emphasis. Jesus is concerned about having the correct heart. If we have the correct heart, the actions will follow (Mark 7:21; Matt. 15:8) and God will know you in a saving way.

God wants to experience what is in our hearts not just our actions! Does God know your heart? Do you know his? Do you come before God every moment of the day to present your heart to him for him to know and experience? Or do you just want him to notice your actions? Or are you afraid to let him know your heart and want to stay “under the radar”? Where is your heart? Is your heart desirous of God to experiencing it?

The following is an article that I wrote that explains this *yada*’ concept further:

⁶⁰ Note how Paul points out this dual aspect of relationship in Gal. 4:9, which states, “But now that you know God—or rather are known by God—how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles?”

YADA': ONE OF THE UNIQUE ELEMENTS OF TRUE CHRISTIANITY

By Glenn Giles
November 18, 2004

For many years I have been contemplating the special-ness of our movement in the area of the heart. When I came to our movement I found very special relational aspect of true Christianity. I have called it the “heart” ever since I was studied with in Milwaukee. What I experienced was different than I had experienced in any religious group before. It was, in fact, the difference between being a person who knew about God and had some association with him, and being a person who truly knows God through a true personal relationship with him. The things our movement has gone through the last 2 years has caused me to search the Scriptures to better understand that which I have been calling “heart”. In the last few months I have come to understand that the “heart” is what is involved in the OT concept of *yada'*, the Hebrew word for “know”. In this article I will attempt to explain that concept, a concept that I think distinguishes us from nearly all other movements of today that I am aware of⁶¹, a concept that I would urge everyone to hold on to and never surrender, a concept when experienced is basically the watershed of spiritual life and death.

Matthew 7:21-23 states”

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 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 perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers’” (emphasis mine).

For a long time I have felt this was talking about a personal relationship with God but did not understand the depth of what it meant until I studied out the Hebrew word *yada'*. The big question is “What does it mean to be known by God and to know God”?

The Greek word here in Matthew 7:23 is *ginosko*. Of the 946 times *yada'* is found in the Hebrew OT⁶² over 490 times it is translated by *ginosko* in the LXX (the Greek

⁶¹ That does not mean there are not those out there who have experienced what we (or I) have but that generally I am just unaware of them in my experience.

⁶²The information on Hebrew words occurrences in this paper are from John R. Kohlenberger III and James A. Swanson, *The Hebrew-English Concordance to the Old Testament With the New International Version* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 120, hereafter designated as *HECOT*. This reference in on page 617.

translation of the Hebrew Old Testament)⁶³. Hence *ginosko* is the major Greek word used for *yada*'. The Greeks however did not have a word that translates *yada*' with its full meaning. The closest term the Greeks had was *ginosko*. The Greek term *ginosko* designates predominately an intellectual concept which is not the predominate concept involved in *yada*'. The major emphasis of *yada* includes *subjective* dimensions of knowing not just the objective.⁶⁴ Groome states,

. . . in Greek philosophy *ginoskein* has a predominant meaning of 'intellectual looking at' an object of scrutiny and strongly connotes objectivity . . . For the Hebrews *yada*' is more by the heart than by the mind, and the knowing arises not by standing back from in order to look at, but by active and intentional engagement in lived experience . . . the Hebrews had no word that corresponds exactly to our words *mind* or *intellect*.⁶⁵

"*Yada*" has the basic meaning of "to perceive, know"⁶⁶. Its semantic range is broad and also embraces definitions such as "find out", "know by experience", "recognize", "acknowledge", "know a person, be acquainted with", "be skillful", "teach", "make known"⁶⁷, as well as "to notice", "learn", "to know sexually, have intercourse with, copulate", "to have experience", and "to take care of someone"⁶⁸. This word for the most part involves *knowledge gained through experience*⁶⁹. It thus basically indicates *experiential knowledge*⁷⁰. This is contrary to much of our modern day understanding of "knowledge" and its acquisition which largely involves pure thought by one's own contemplation or mere verbal transmission of information from teacher to student in a classroom setting. That is not to say that *yada*' does not include these types of knowledge and teaching but that it has as its major dimension *experientially gained* or *relationally gained* knowledge.

With respect to "knowing" God, the Old Testament use of this term is enlightening. Consider the following verses:

⁶³*Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, eds, translated by J. T. Willis (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), vol. 5, 453, hereafter designated by *TDOT*. Cf., Edwin Hatch and Henry Redpath, *A Concordance to the Septuagint*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983), vol 1, 267-70.

⁶⁴Thomas H. Groome, *Christian Religious Education* (San Francisco: Harper & Roe, 1980), 141.

⁶⁵Groome, 141. W. Schottroff (*TLOT*, vol. 2, 514) concurs stating:

. . . the meaning of *yada*' in Hebr. would be insufficiently stated if one were to limit it strictly to the cognitive aspect . . . without simultaneously taking into account the contractual aspect of the meaning, e.g., the fact that *yada*' does not merely indicate a theoretical relation, a pure act of thought, but that knowledge, as *yada*' intends it, is realized through practical involvement with the obj. of knowledge.

The New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis, 5 vols., edited by Willem A. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), vol. 2, 410, (hereafter designated as *NIDOTT*) also concurs stating, "The fundamentally relational character of knowing (over against a narrow intellectual sense) can be discerned, not the least in that both God and human beings can be subject and object of the vb."

⁶⁶*The Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, by Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, translated by Mark E. Biddle (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1997), vol. 2, 508, hereafter designated as *TLOT*.

⁶⁷Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs in *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976), 393-94, hereafter noted as *BDB*.

⁶⁸*TLOT*, vol. 2, 390-92.

⁶⁹Lawrence O. Richards, *Christian Education: Seeking to Become Like Jesus Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), 33.

⁷⁰There are only a relatively few times it means "intellectual" knowledge.

1. Jer. 16:21 states,
 "Therefore I will teach (*yada'*) them--this time I will teach (*yada'*) them my power and might. *Then* they will know (*yada'*) that my name is the LORD".
 Here knowing God comes from him causing them *to experience* his power and might.

2. Ezek. 30:8 states
 "Then they will know (*yada'*) that I am the LORD, when I set fire to Egypt and all her helpers are crushed".
 Here knowledge of God comes through experiencing his character of justice and wrath. This concept of "knowing that I am the LORD" occurs over 65 times in Ezekiel alone indicating relational knowledge coming through experiencing his judgments.

3. Hosea 2:19-20 states:
 "And I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and in justice, in loving kindness and in compassion, And I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness. *Then* you will know (*yada'*) the Lord" (NASB).
 Here one sees that knowing the Lord is a result of experiencing his righteousness, justice, loving kindness, compassion, and faithfulness.

4. Hosea 6:2-3 states,
 "He will revive us after two days; He will raise us up on the third day that we may live before Him. So let us know (*yada'*), let us press on to know (*yada'*) the Lord. His going forth is as certain as the dawn; And He will come to us like the rain, like the spring rain watering the earth" (NASB).
 Here knowledge of God is obtained through experiencing Him reviving them and giving them rain. They would not know God however if they did not press on in faithfulness to experience his character. Knowing God comes from experiencing God's faithfulness, mercy, and provision.

5. One of the most important passages in the OT is Jer. 31:34. It reads,
 "No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know (*yada'*) the LORD,' because they will all know (*yada'*) 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." (emphases mine).
 The word "For" here indicates that knowing the LORD comes about as a *result* of a person experiencing the LORD's forgiveness and his forgetting their sins. Knowing God thus comes by *experiencing* his grace.⁷¹

⁷¹To know God is, as Terence E. Fretheim states, "is to be in a right relationship with him, with characteristics of love, trust, respect, and open communication", *NIDOTTE*, vol. 2, 413.

All of these passages indicate knowing God involves interpersonal experience with his character. God is allowing people to know him through experiencing his character. Knowing God however also involves our response to him. It is associated with one's obedience to him (I Sam. 2:12; Job. 18:21), fear of him (I Ki. 8:43; II Chron. 6:33), serving him (I Chron.28: 9), belief in him (Is. 43:10), trust in him (Ps. 9:10; Prov. 3:5-6)⁷² confession of one's sin (Ps. 32:5), and knowledge of the Torah or his Word (Ps. 119:79)⁷³. It thus "involves not just theoretical knowledge but acceptance of the divine will for one's own life"⁷⁴.

Knowing God can be summarized as coming from one's personal life experience of the relational blessings or discipline of God as a result of one's trusting in and following him. Knowing God involves experiencing his character and willingly submitting to him as LORD.

So we see that when used in the New Testament, in a Hebrew context (Matthew was written to a Jewish audience), the word "know" (*ginosko* in Greek) takes on more than an intellectual concept. It takes on an experiential interpersonal relational meaning. So when we see the statement in Matt. 7:23, "I never knew you", it is not talking about intellectual knowledge but character or relational knowledge. This fits perfectly into the context of Matt. 7:15-23 which states:

Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize (*epiginosko*, an intensive form of *ginosko*)⁷⁵ them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize (*epiginosko*) them. "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 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 perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew (*ginosko*) you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

Our knowledge, our *yada'* of people, occurs when we experience their character (verses 15-20). You can be sure that people are false prophets if they do not produce good fruit. God's knowing of us also occurs by his experiencing our character (verses 21-23). Even though one might do things, things which are good, there can be an interpersonal relationship, a heart knowing, which is lacking. As is typical of Matthew, relationship with God was more than outward show or actions, it must involve the heart (e.g., Matt. 15:8-9).

God tests us to see what is in our heart to "know" us. Consider Deut. 8:1-2:

⁷² *TLOT*, vol. 2, 518.

⁷³ *NIDOTTE*, vol. 2, 413.

⁷⁴ *TDOT*, vol. 5, 478.

⁷⁵ This word is also, the majority of the time, the Greek translation of *yada'* in the LXX.

Be careful to follow every command I am giving you today, so that you may live and increase and may enter and possess the land that the LORD promised on oath to your forefathers. Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you *in order to know (yada')* what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his command (emphases mine).

Note the use of the word “know” here. Surely an all-knowing God “knew” what was in their hearts from an intellectual perspective! So what does this mean? Our study of *yada'* would indicate that God wanted to *experience* what was in their hearts through experiencing their obedience. This is how God knows them and can know us! It is not just about raw works but about relationship experienced through actions toward God and he toward us. He wants to know us personally and wants us to know him personally. He wants to experience our character. He wants to live out life with us it seems. Just as his love for us would not be real unless his heart and actions work together to allow us to experience his character, so our love for him is not real unless our heart and actions, work together to allow him to experience us. No wonder James 2 states that faith without works is dead and that works complete our faith! Works complete our personal relationship with God! They do not make us merit that relationship (that is a totally erroneous perspective). Obedience is our allowing God to experience us. This is how God *knows* us.

When I reflect on what I experienced in our movement it brings me great joy to see how those who studied with me prepared me to meet my God, prepared me to experience (*yada'*) Him, and prepared me to allow him to know (*yada'*) me! I am so glad they helped me dig deeply into what sin⁷⁶ I had so I could really experience His character of forgiveness, grace, and love. No wonder Jesus said, “. . . *he who has been forgiven little loves little.*” (Luke 7:47). The more we admit our sin, the more we will be able to love God, and know him, and God know us! I am so glad people helped me to come to a place of brokenness over my sin. God’s love became so real when that happened as I experienced his offer of grace in an incredible way. I am so glad that people helped me to understand that experiencing God involves listening to him through the reading of his word and that God experiencing me involves me praying and crying out to Him. No wonder David was a man after God’s own heart. I can see it in the Psalms where he opens up his heart to God and God experiences what is in his heart. I am so grateful that my leaders were hard on sin. They were protecting my *yada'* with God. I am so thankful that many of my disciplers in the past insisted on my obedience to God!⁷⁷ They were (whether or not they knew it) helping me with my *yada'* with God and others. I am so grateful that people who discipled me helped me to learn what total openness is and urged me to express it! Relationships do not exist without it whether they are relationships with others or with God. No wonder John 3:20-21 states:

⁷⁶ Most religious groups today do not do this and do not prepare people to *yada'* God, nor him to *yada'* them.

⁷⁷ I admit the way it was done was not always correct or for the right reasons as one tended to obey just because some one said to and not because it came from the heart, nor was there always an understanding of experiential/relational knowing of God. I do believe, however, that many began their Christian walk with *yada'* but gradually gave it up for serving and following men. I believe and pray that they can re-establish their *yada'* and if we can now look to the future through the concept of *yada'* and urge people to obey God as a way of knowing him and being known by him, we will save many from death and cover a multitude of sins (James 5:20).

Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever *lives* by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.

Living by the truth means you are open with your life. Your deeds are seen plainly, you are an open book to allow God (and others) to test your character and actions and work through you. *Yada'* helps make sense of this! Loving the light, loving Jesus, means being open and allowing others and God to experience your character.

It is no wonder Jesus could say in John 8:31-32, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. *Then* you will know (*ginosko*) the truth, and the truth will set you free". It is experiential knowledge that is spoken of here. Truth is to be experienced. Jesus is the truth and Jesus is to be experienced. Experiencing this truth will set one free. Holding to Jesus' teachings is the first step. It is a way of loving him! It is a way of having an interpersonal experiential relationship with God. Holding to his teachings makes you his disciple and this actively engages you in *yada'*!

Yada' helps me understand that loving God means obeying him. He indeed knows (*yada'*) us relationally when he is loved. He experiences our character when we love him. I Jn. 5:3 states, "This is love for God: to obey his commands". Love is connected with actions and heart and one's being. Mark 12:28-31 states,

One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?" "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. *Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.*' The second is this: '*Love your neighbor as yourself.*' There is no commandment greater than these.

The love God wants is not intellectual ascent but love that comes from all your heart, all your soul (person), all your mind, and all your strength. In other words, the love God wants to experience from us involves our whole being (including our body and its actions). To love someone else will also mean *that your heart, mind, soul, and body is involved just as when a person loves himself.* Loving someone is the act of allowing them to know you. Receiving love from them is an act of you experiencing or knowing them.

Are you engaged in *yada'*? Is God knowing you? Are you knowing God? What will God say to you on that judgment day? Will he say "I never knew you" or "I don't know you" or will he say "Well done, good and faithful servant! . . . Come and share your master's happiness!""? Are you letting God experience the real you? Are you allowing yourself to experience the real God?

Brothers and Sisters, this is, I believe, the greatest blessing I experienced as a result of those in our movement who disciplined me and studied with me. It helped me to know God and God me. It helped me to become a true disciple, a true son of God. It helped God to become my true father. I owe them my life. I owe God my life. I hope you have also experienced this blessing, this salvation. Let us never give up *yada'*!

**THERE ARE MANY ELEMENTS THE BIBLE SAYS HAVE
A PART IN ONE'S SALVATION. WE ARE REMISS TO LEAVE ANY OUT**

Salvation Involves:

Key: *God's part

** Our personal part

*** Other Christian's part

****Future aspect

1. ***Jesus:** Matt. 1:21; Lk. 1:77, 69; 19:10; Jn. 3:17; 10:9; 12:47; Acts 4:12; Rom. 5:9,10; I Tim. 1:15; Heb. 7:25; I Thes. 5:9; Heb. 2:10; 5:9
2. ******Perseverance:** Mat. 10:22; I Cor. 15:2; I Tim. 4:16
3. ****Discipleship** (denying self, taking up cross, following Jesus): Matt. 16:25, 19:25ff; Mk. 8:35; 10:26; Lk. 9:24; 18:26.
4. ******It is future** as well as present: Mt. 24:13; Mk. 13:13; Rom. 5:10; 8:24; I Cor. 1:18; I Cor. 3:15; II Ti. 4:18; James 4:12; Rom. 13:11 (cf. 6:2); I Thes. 5:8; Heb 9:28; I Pet. 1:5, 9, 10; II Pet 3:15.
5. ****Faith/belief:** Luke 8:12; Acts 16:31; Rom. 10:9 (belief in heart in resurrection), 10; I Cor. 1:21; Eph. 2:8; I Tim. 2:15; II Tim. 2:10; II Tim. 3:15; I Pet. 1:9.
6. ****Jesus knowing you.** Lk. 13:23. See also Matt. 7:21-23.
7. *****Christian/human involvement** (including "saving" others): John 5:34; Rom. 11:14; I Cor. 5:5; Acts 11:14; I Cor. 7:16 (saving husband or wife); I Cor. 9:22 (being all things to all people to save them); I Cor. 10:33; II Cor. 2:15; I Thes. 2:16; James 5:20; Jude 23; Acts 16:17; Heb. 2:3; Jude 3.
8. ****Calling on the name of the Lord:** Acts 2:21; Rom. 10:13
9. ****Self (personal) decision:** Acts 2:40; I Cor. 15:2; II Thes. 2:10
10. **Circumcision NOT involved:** Acts 15:1
11. ***Grace/mercy of God:** Acts 15:1; Eph. 2:5, 8; II Ti. 1:9; Tit. 3:5.
12. ****Confession of Jesus as Lord:** Rom. 10:9
13. ******The Message:** Acts 11:14; 13:26; I Cor. 1:18; 1:21; I Cor. 15:2; I Thes 2:16; Rom. 1:16; Eph. 1:13; Heb. 2:3.
14. ****Receiving the Gospel:** I Cor. 15:2; James 1:21.
15. ****Love of the truth:** II Thes. 2:10
16. ******Childbearing** (women saved through it): I Tim. 2:15.
17. ******Love:** I Tim 2:15
18. ******Holiness:** I Tim. 2:15
19. ****Baptism:** Tit. 3:5; I Pet. 3:21.
20. ***Holy Spirit:** Tit. 3:5; II Thes. 2:13.
21. ******Response/obedience (deeds):** James 2:14; I Pet. 4:18; Phil. 2:12.
22. ***Forgiveness of sins:** Luke 1:77.
23. ****Belief in your heart of Jesus' resurrection:** Rom. 10:10.
24. *****Envy can contribute:** Rom. 11:11
25. ******Distress:** II Cor. 1:6
26. ****(*)Repentance and Godly sorrow:** II Cor. 7:10.
27. ******Suffering:** Phil. 1:28.
28. ***Scripture:** II Tim. 3:15; I Pet. 2:2 (?)
29. ***Angels** involved perhaps (Heb. 1:14)
30. ******Milk/growth:** I Pet 2:2.
31. ***The Lord's patience:** II Pet. 3:15.

As you can see just from the study of one word alone (in verbal and noun form), salvation is many faceted and I think a many faceted whole. It would seem to be short sighted to include only one or a few of the things above (such as only belief or baptism or repentance) and say that this is what it takes to become saved. I was especially struck with item 7 and how many times Christian involvement is mentioned as being a part or vehicle for other's salvation.

H S A L V A T I O N
H E A R T

F A I T H

FORGIVENESS/GRACE

(MAN)

(GOD)

**Jesus offers himself
For our forgiveness**

INCOMPLETE Ja. 2:22 COMPLETE

MIND

ACTIONS:

- Belief begins ----- Hear the Word
- Receive the Word
- -Cut by the Cross
- Repentance-----Response/Confession of Sin
- Response/Decision to change life/prove repentance by deeds
- Surrender-----Confess Jesus is Lord/Be his disciple/Surrender everything
- Decision to reconcile-----**BAPTISM INTO CHRIST:**

FORGIVENESS
EXTENDED BY
GOD AND
RECEIVED BY
MAN

GOD GIVES US HIS SPIRIT

**RECONCILIATION OF GOD AND MAN
ACCOMPLISHED**

- Belief continues -----Follow Spirit's Lead
- Trust in the truth
- Hold firmly to the Word
- Repentance continues-----Confession of sin
- Change in life
- Surrender continues-----Not frightened/persevere
- Decision continues-----Watch life and doctrine
- Stand firm until the end
- Contend as one man
- Be Jesus' disciple/He is Lord

God remains merciful

God continues to
forgive

**AT DEATH WE ARE TAKEN TO HEAVEN
TO EVER BE WITH THE LORD**

D. Two Foundations: Rock and Sand

Matthew 7:24-27 reads:

"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. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

The wise person is one who not only hears Jesus' words but "puts them into practice". His house stands the test of the storm. The foolish man, on the other hand, hears the words of Jesus but does not act on them. His house does not stand the test of the storm. Stott states (p. 209),

. . . professing Christians (both the genuine and the spurious) often look alike. You cannot easily tell which is which. Both appear to be building Christian lives. For Jesus is not contrasting professing Christians with non-Christians who make no profession. On the contrary, what is common to both spiritual house builders is that they *hear these words of mine*. So both are members of the visible Christian community. Both read the Bible, go to church, listen to sermons, and buy Christian literature. The reason you often cannot tell the difference between them is that the deep foundations of their lives are hidden from view. The real question is not whether they *hear* Christ's teaching (nor even whether they respect or believe it), but whether they *do* what they hear. Only a storm will reveal the truth. Sometimes a storm of crisis or calamity betrays what manner of person we are, for "true piety is not fully distinguished from its counterfeit till it comes to the trial". If not, the storm of the day of judgment will certainly do so.

Are you a foolish or a wise builder? Will your house stand or will it fall in this life and in the judgment to come? Where is your heart in all of this? Is your heart to be a wise builder or is it lazy? Does it yearn to DO what you hear or is it not motivated?

This section ends the words of Jesus for the Sermon. Carson states (p. 194):

The sermon ends with what has been implicit throughout it—the demand for radical submission to the exclusive lordship of Jesus, who fulfills the Law and the Prophets and warns the disobedient that the alternative to total obedience, true righteousness, and life in the kingdom is rebellion, self-centeredness, and eternal damnation.

II. Jesus' Authority

Matthew 7:28-29 states:

“When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law”.

- A. Jesus’ authority was different from the “teachers of the Law”.** The teachers of the law would cite authorities and “received traditions”. “They spoke by the authority of others”,⁷⁸ especially well known Rabbis.
- B. Jesus’ authority was different even from the OT prophets** who said, “Thus says the LORD”.
- C. Jesus said “I say to you”.** He spoke only by *his* authority, not even saying “Thus says the Lord”, but “I” say to you. He uses the words “I”, and “me” to designate many aspects of his authority. Stott (pp. 213-222) believes that he claimed authority in the following ways:
- 1. He claims the authority of Teacher** in interpreting the Law of Moses
(Note the antitheses and the statement that he came to fulfill the Law)
 - 2. He claims the authority of being the Christ.** He knew he had come for a mission and it was the mission of the Messiah. He said “I have not *come* to abolish. . . but to fulfill”.
 - 3. He claims authority as Lord.** He did not rebuke those who addressed him as Lord. This was accepted by him as appropriate. He only rebuked them for their lack of relationship to him and not obeying him. He intended for them to allow him to be their Lord.
 - 4. He claims authority as Savior.** He knew the way of salvation and taught it. He could point to the narrow gate that led to life. He knew that those persecuted falsely because of “me” would have a great reward in heaven (5:11-12). He showed the disciples and others the way into the rule of God. The passage on Jesus knowing others implies that there were some whom he would know and would invite into the kingdom.
 - 5. He claims authority as Judge.** In 7:22-23 He sets himself up as the ultimate judge of who enters the kingdom of heaven
 - 6. He claims authority as the Son of God.**
He calls God “my Father” in 7:21 in a passage on judgment.
 - 7. He claims authority as God.** In 7:21ff and 5:11-12, “Jesus regarded obeying him as Lord and doing the Father’s will as equivalent” and thus put himself on a level with God. This is also seen when he claimed to be judge. In addition, it was his words that when followed determined if a person is wise and his house will stand.

Stott concludes (p. 222) that either these claims of Jesus are true or he was suffering from what C. S. Lewis called ‘rampant megalomania’.

⁷⁸ Carson, 195.

CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, the Sermon on the Mount focuses on the **heart it takes to be** a follower of Jesus, to enter into the reign of God, to fulfill the Law, to have righteousness that surpasses that of the Scribes and Pharisees, to love your neighbor, to receive a reward from the Father, to have treasure in heaven, to take the speck out of your brother's eye, to enter through the narrow gate, to produce good fruit, to have Christ know you, and to be a wise builder. These things of being are only possible through having the heart that Jesus describes. What is that heart?

That heart is one that is humble, mourns over one's own sin and sin in the world, will hunger and thirst after righteousness, will be merciful, will be pure, will be a peacemaker, will be willing to be persecuted for Jesus, will be willing to be salt and light, will accept Jesus as the Law's fulfiller, will crucify anger, lust, and any desire for divorce, will always let one's yes be yes and no be no, will be merciful and giving instead of full of vengeance, will love one's enemy, desire to be loving like the heavenly Father, will desire to give to those in need, pray, and fast without desire to be seen by men, will be forgiving, will want to store up treasure in heaven, desire to have an eye full of light, serve God and not money, will conquer worry by seeking first God's rule in one's life, will seek to take the log out of one's own eye so he can see clearly to take the speck out of his brother's eye, will not desire to give what is sacred to dogs or throw pearls of the kingdom to pigs, will ask, seek, and knock on the door of God to be able to live the life God wants, will trust that God is good and gives good gifts, will desire to enter by the narrow way, will watch out for false prophets and their bad fruit, desire to be a good tree, present his heart to Jesus so Jesus can know him, and want to be a wise builder by hearing and doing the words of Jesus. These are the desires of the heart of a true disciple, one who allows the rule of heaven to reign in his heart and life.

This summary is not intended to be overwhelming. The issue is not whether one is doing all these things perfectly but whether or not he desires in his heart to love God and to become what God wants him to be. One should not lose his joy of life by focusing on his shortcomings but enjoy life in the grace of God. Living in Christ means we depend on him to cover our shortcomings. We don't have to worry if our heart is for him, if our heart is oriented toward allowing him to know us. Remember it is a matter of "heart" not a matter of "perfection", as that is the focus of the Sermon on the Mount. You will find your joy in the Lord through the things of the heart, both yours and God's.