

Be a Disciple of Jesus

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Matthew 5-7

What is essential material for a Christian's development?

If I am teaching a Bible course I would have in mind some essential material for my students to know. I might have certain books they are required to read. There would be subjects they must study. I would say the same is true when it comes to being a Christian. After conversion and the realization we must grow in Christ, we must come to the realization we are required to apply ourselves to some study. If there is any one thing I would consider to be essential for the Christian life, it would be the Sermon on the Mount.

Slide – Sermon on the Mount.

The Sermon on the Mount is found in Matthew chapters 5-7, and a more brief account in Luke 6. I consider Matthew 5-7 essential discipleship for all believers. It is Jesus' teaching on kingdom values and spiritual life.

Matthew 5:1-2 NIVO

Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, ² and he began to teach them, saying:

Jesus taught his disciples. He disciplined them. In that last chapter of Matthew, Jesus instructed his disciples to "make disciples." They were to do this by "teaching them to obey everything he taught them." (28:19-20) The disciples were to pass down discipleship to the next group; and they to the next group; and those to the next group... and so on.

Discipleship by study and learning is essential to the believer's life. The Sermon on the Mount is essential text for the student of Jesus.

There are other texts that can be considered essential material as well.

John chapters 14-16

Ephesians (What is likely a letter for basic instruction on Christianity by Paul)

So, today I want to introduce you to the Sermon on the Mount. Yes, all of it!!! (Actually, a brief summary of the Sermon. So, no you don't need to order pizza.) I want to give you a breakdown of the essential direction of Jesus' teaching.

Are you ready? Put on your seat belts.

1. Be the character of the Kingdom.

5:3-16

We start with the beatitudes. Beatitudes is like saying, you need a "be" with your "attitude." All of our statements will start with a "be" because Jesus is concerned with spiritual development we become.

Jesus gives us 8 "Blessings" plus the statements on being salt and light. In all of these the issue is one of taking on the **character of the kingdom**. Jesus came from the Father in heaven. He brings the perspective of the kingdom of God to us. The values of the kingdom are expressed in –

Humility – poor in spirit

Repentance – mourning for sin

Trusting / Waiting on God – is the idea of meekness (Read Psalm 37. David the warrior was meek because he waited on God to act. He was not weak nor passive.)

Hungering for moral rightness – gets God's attention.

Purity of heart – being free from mixed motivations within

Making peace between those who cannot get along is similar to Jesus the supreme peacemaker. He made peace on the cross.

Enduring hostility of the world – puts you in the company of Christ and the prophets.

We are to see ourselves as salt and light. The kingdom of God is in us as saved people. We need to protect its purity and allow God to use it to influence our world.

2. Be true to God's Laws.

5:17-48

Jesus reminds us he came to fulfill God's teachings not do away with them. He presses in on some of the Rabbi's teachings on the Law and takes them deeper, into the inner character of what God is striving for in the various laws. Jesus pushes the Laws deeper from outward, legal observance to the inner issues of the heart. For example:

Murder – it is not enough to be satisfied if we never killed someone, we are not to hate.

Adultery – it is not enough to that we never have sex with another man's wife, we are not to entertain sexual thoughts toward other women.

Oaths – God doesn't just want us to keep our promises, he wants us to simply be honest of our intentions. A yes or a no is all the word we need to give.

Stop seeking **revenge**. Show mercy to others because God is merciful. Our goal is to become like God. God wants us to possess inside us the nature of His kingdom. We must learn to allow God to remove the dross from the raw ore of our lives, to get there is not an easy process. We must submit our lives to God to become different. It takes a long time for this kind of change.

3. Be genuine in spirituality

6:1-18

One of the essential teachings in this next section is for us to put off the **hypocrisy of religious showmanship**. That is – doing religion to be seen - doing the faith in a way to get attention, approval, praise of others. Jesus gives us several examples for us to consider:

Alms – offerings to the poor. Don't draw attention to yourself when you do something good.

Prayer – public prayers. Again, don't draw attention to yourself as if you are the focus on what is happening. Are you seeking God's glory or are you trying to shine some glory on you for your performance?

Fasting – self-denial for prayer. It is not self-denial if you are promoting your self-denial.

Genuine spirituality focuses on the kingdom of God. Seeking God's kingdom orients us to the eternal existence, not puffing ourselves up for our "best life now."

4. Be secure in the Kingdom

6:19-34

Jesus teaches us to overcome fear and worry. It is a continuation of living for eternal values that we not allow our daily concerns to overwhelm our confidence in God. Jesus wants us to live in hope and confidence not fear and worry. In Jesus' day, food and clothing were not abundant. Nakedness and starvation were real issues. Yet, Jesus reminds us worry gains us nothing but indigestion. We must learn to have faith that God is our provider.

What is more important is that we are saved to belong to the eternal Kingdom of God. We are to seek the advancement of God's kingdom above all other concerns of life.

5. Be eternally wise.

7:1-27

Yes, be eternally wise. If we gain the world but do not get eternal life right, we have failed for all eternity.

Chapter 7 is about wisdom. It begins with wisdom for how we view others. Eyes that readily find the fault in others fail to see their own sinful condition. We see the speck in their eye while ignoring the log in ours. We are all sinners by nature. We are embraced by a loving Father who gives us mercy and grace. He who gives mercy expects mercy from us. Learning this is gaining wisdom from on high.

We must realize that the life of the kingdom of God is narrow – like a narrow gate. It is narrow for its entrance – restricted to faith in Jesus' death on the cross. Yet, what Jesus is trying to get us to realize here, is that the spiritual character of the kingdom is as narrow as God's holiness.

Like a camel that cannot enter the narrow passage of "eye of the needle" without shedding all of its baggage, so we too need a total inward moral and spiritual transformation. We are too easily persuaded that we are good in our own way of seeing ourselves. In reality, we are full of the baggage of our unredeemed nature. God can help us change our nature if we submit to his Holy Spirit. He will shed the bad baggage and replace it with holiness.

The reality is that we cannot fake our true spiritual nature. Just as a tree is known by the kind of fruit it produces, we too are known for the kind of spiritual-life that comes out of us. You know a tree by its fruit. It makes the fruit of its nature. An Osage orange tree will never produce oranges no matter how long you wait. You can put orange balls on a tree but it still will not be an orange tree unless in its inner nature it is an orange tree. People can fake their outward Christianity but the real nature always works its way out.

Finally, Jesus ends with an illustration to call us to respond to his teaching. One house is built on a foundation of a rock, the other of a foundation of sand. When the rain comes down, the sand shifts and the house built on sand falls. The wise builder builds on the foundation of putting into practice the teachings of Jesus. (Note in the illustration this is Jesus' point, not that

Jesus is the foundation). The unwise person hears Jesus' teachings, but never applies them to his life. The goal of learning as a disciple of Jesus is life transformation.

Be a disciple!

Discipleship requires study.

When I was in college, I had to train myself to study. Math, physics, and engineering required concentration. History required memorization. I learned to go to the library and go down into the lower level and find a place where there was no one else so I could be alone. There I could concentrate. I had to learn to be a student.

You must learn to be a student if you are going to be a disciple. It is a life-long study of life change. Not everyone is willing to do it. Remember the narrow gate? Many people turn around when they see what effort is required to get through. How about you? Will you be a disciple of Jesus?