

Kingdom, Power & Glory



Willesborough Baptist Church

Small Group Study Notes - Studies 1-9

January to April 2012

Introduction:

Kingdom, Power & Glory is our new series of studies that will take us into the first six months of 2012. We will be engaging with the challenging teaching of Jesus in what is generally referred to as the **Sermon on the Mount**.

The phrase **Kingdom, Power and Glory** is found in the closing statement of the Lord's Prayer. You will probably not find it in the main text of your Bible but in the footnotes of Matt 6:13.

It may not have been part of the original prayer that Jesus offered in his teaching to his disciples but it does appear as an addition in the later manuscripts. The Church, down through the centuries, has included it in the proclamation of the Lord's Prayer within its liturgies. The words are accepted for they are not at variance with any OT or NT teaching.

It is a statement that reflects all that Jesus lived for and taught.

Kingdom, Power & Glory is certainly a summary of Jesus' ministry. It is a grand doxological statement - a compressed creed declaring how Kingdom, Power & Glory is not for some far-off future experience and expression but it is something for the now of today. It is not about future reward but present faith-filled reality.

There was always a stirring hope among many Jews of national renewal, restoration - the belief that God was going to act in sovereign mercy coming to his people in power and glory, something that would be a result of establishing his Kingdom on earth where the will of heaven would be done. In Jesus' day there were pious believers who longed for the coming of the Kingdom; there were others like the radical Zealots who wanted the Kingdom on their own terms and were prepared to do anything in order that the Kingdom would be established. Jesus comes, and teaches what the Kingdom really does involve, and that is what we will be unpacking.

Where God is present and active we have **Kingdom, Power & Glory**. The Kingdom is to be lived out in the Power of God and to the Glory of God.

In this series may we respond to what Paul suggests in **1 Thess 2:12** where he says '*...encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.*'

Alan - January 2012

1: Kingdom Come — Matthew 5:1-2

If there is one word that sums up the heart of Jesus' ministry it is the word '**Kingdom**'. It is a word that may be strange to our own ears but to the Jew in the 1st century it was a word that was daily on their lips as they prayed for God's Kingdom to come. God had promised through the prophets that he would come back and return to his people in power and glory. The Kingdom of God would be established on earth as it is in heaven. The idea of 'Kingdom' although used by Jesus was not coined by Jesus.

- Why not say the Lord's Prayer together as an opening prayer, and also making it a prayer for this new session of studies.

Listen to the DVD

Alan mentions how the message of **John the Baptist** was (Matt 3:2) '*Repent for the kingdom of heaven is near.*' Remember that the Kingdom of Heaven (in Matthew) is the same as the Kingdom of God (in the other gospels like Mark).

Jesus in Mk 1:15 '*The time has come*' he said '*the Kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news.*'

There are many other references (Matt 4:23; Lk 4:43) to Jesus' teaching and ministry that emphasise 'the Kingdom' principle that was to become reality through Jesus. Jesus is saying regarding the Kingdom - 'what you thought was sometime future is now here - because I am here.' It is within your reach.

The deliverance ministry of Jesus was a clear expression of the Kingdom coming in power, Luke 11:20.

The teaching ministry of Jesus has numerous illustrations of the Kingdom especially through the parables Jesus taught.

- Take a couple of the shorter parables and look at them in the light of the Kingdom life that Jesus was inaugurating in himself.
- Alan in the DVD suggested that you write down your own brief definition of the Kingdom. Maybe, you can do this now and then share with the group your definition.
My definition of the Kingdom _____

The Kingdom is all about the rule and reign of God. We are called to be kingdom people as followers of Jesus.

- Between now and next week - try to find a 15 min slot and read through all three chapters, Matthew 5-7 in order to get the feel of the whole message of Jesus.

Matthew 5:1-2 *Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them, saying...:*

The Sermon on the Mount has been described in glowing terms:
‘the supreme jewel in the crown of Jesus’ teaching’
‘the manifesto of the King’
‘the Magna Carta of the Kingdom’

- Jesus in Galilee went up on a mountainside and taught, Moses in Sinai went up on the mountain and received the Law from God.
What are some of the similarities and differences between Moses and Jesus on these two occasions?
In what way was Jesus referring to himself as being greater than Moses?

Jesus sat down and he taught two groups of people:

THE CROWD - there were a great number of people interested in hearing Jesus teach. He was getting well known in the region and he had recently had a successful preaching tour (Matt 4:23-25). People followed Jesus for many different reasons - often, for what they could get out of Jesus.

THE COMMITTED - Jesus did not pander to the crowds but set the level of commitment high. The whole sermon is about the cost of being a Kingdom follower and what it means to devote one’s life to the Kingdom vision of Jesus. It is important to realise that the Kingdom concept is far bigger than a personal relationship with Jesus for it embraced the very transformation of society.

- Was Jesus primarily communicating to the crowd or the committed? If it is just the one group that he was communicating to, how do you think the other group would have responded?

John Stott makes the comment that *‘The Sermon on the Mount is probably the best-known part of the teaching of Jesus though arguable it is the least understood, and certainly the least obeyed.’*

There is a powerful relevance for each of us today as we seek to apply the words of Jesus - and he was the one who wholly lived out his own teaching. It was **RT Kendall** who indicated his belief ‘that the Sermon on the Mount is in the main Jesus’ doctrine of the Holy Spirit. *It is our Lord’s teaching of the Kingdom: the way the Law has been fulfilled, how the Ten Commandments are applied by the Holy Spirit and what true godliness is.*’

- Remember to read the three chapters and pray that we might be able to embrace the Kingdom, encounter the Power and give God the glory! Maybe if you have time in your group scan through the headings of Jesus’ sermon. Share some of your expectations for this new series.

2: Kingdom Connection with God - Matthew 5:3-6

"If we today, are actually in the place where our Heavenly Father would have us be, then we are the children born of the same Incorruptible Seed [as the Lord Jesus]. He was the grain of corn which fell into the ground and died; but by His death, there sprang forth an abundant harvest of the same Seed which was planted! For by His atoning Sacrifice, He not only took from us our sin and iniquity, but made it possible for us to receive HIS INCORRUPTIBLE HOLINESS!.....When Jesus said, "Thy will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven," He did not mean that the physical, geographical continents and islands of the sea should walk in perfect obedience to the plans and purposes of God. That is to come in the day that is just ahead and the whole of the Earth will know the glory of the Lord! But our Lord meant that it was possible for the Will of the Father to be done in the Earth by us – even as that same Will is done in Heaven. The ears of the spirit are ever open to catch the Voice Divine and, in perfect obedience, that same Incorruptible Seed will walk in compliance with the Divine purpose. What a privilege to be HEAVEN DIRECTED in thought and word and deed!" From "Two Worlds" by Charles S. Price

In today's study we begin to look carefully at the Beatitudes; the collection of "blessed" sayings with which Jesus began His "Sermon on the Mount". Matthew chapter 5 begins with the words: *"Seeing the crowds, He went up on the mountain: and when He was seated, His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and taught them saying:"* Because these verses seem to imply that Jesus was speaking primarily to His disciples, and not to the crowd, many theologians deem this sermon to be information that, as Christians, we need to take close notice of. And this applies particularly to the Beatitudes, which have become so very familiar to us that they can easily be over-simplified or even used carelessly. We will not fall into this trap. We will prayerfully consider what Jesus wants to impart to us, His "Incorruptible Seed" – as Charles Price calls us in the above quote. Let us also recognise "What a privilege it is to be HEAVEN DIRECTED in thought and word and deed!"

DISCUSS Do you feel "blessed"? If so, what do you mean by "blessed"? Spend a few minutes thinking and talking through what this word "blessed" really means to you.

PRAY Give thanks to God for the many "blessings" that He has filled your lives with. Use some of the things you have discussed to make this prayer time a time of praise and thanksgiving.

READ Matthew Chapter 5 v 1 – 6. (Amplified Bible)

*“Seeing the crowds, He went up on the mountain: and when He was seated, His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying: **Blessed** (happy, to be envied, and spiritually prosperous – with life-joy and satisfaction in God’s favour and salvation, regardless of their outward conditions) are the poor in spirit (the humble, who rate themselves insignificant), for theirs is the kingdom of heaven!*

***Blessed** and enviably happy (with a happiness produced by the experience of God’s favour and especially conditioned by the revelation of His matchless grace) are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted!*

***Blessed** (happy, blithesome, joyous, spiritually prosperous – with life-joy and satisfaction in God’s favour and salvation, regardless of their outward conditions) are the meek (the mild, patient, long-suffering), for they shall inherit the earth!*

***Blessed** and fortunate and happy and spiritually prosperous (in that state in which the born-again child of God enjoys His favour and salvation) are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness (uprightness and right standing with God), for they shall be completely satisfied!”*

LISTEN TO THE DVD

THINK AND DISCUSS.

Traditionally, much Christian prayer tends to ask God to bless various things and people. We “bless” buildings, places and people. However, in Hebrew prayer, it is God who is blessed. The basic form of the *bracha* starts with *Baruch ata* (“Blessed art Thou”). This blessing is not an incantation used to get what you want, but rather an affirmation and acknowledgement of the sovereignty of God, the Giver. The Hebrew word for prayer – *tefilah* – actually means to judge oneself; this differs from the English word “prayer”, which means to beg. The Hebrew concept of blessing is about judging ourselves and being aware of whom God is, and that He is the Almighty Sovereign.

In Israel, if you ask someone how they are you may receive the answer: “*Baruch Ha Shem*” (Bless the Name” or “Bless God”). This attitude underlines the powerful biblical pattern of blessing that has undergirded Hebrew prayer; *bless the Name* because He is the author of life. So the answer really means, “I’m just fine, because of Who God is, bless His Holy Name!”

Have you ever really and truly considered that you are “just fine” simply because of Who God is, bless His Holy Name?

Conversely, in the Beatitudes God (Jesus) is “blessing” us! Go through the Amplified translation of these “blessings” and **begin to recognise just what Jesus is anointing you with:** how does that make you feel? Do you truly feel “happy, to be envied and spiritually prosperous – with life-joy and satisfaction in

God's favour and salvation, regardless of your outward condition"? Do you have a life filled with "blithesome joy"? Begin to discuss amongst yourselves how you really feel deep inside. This inner joy that Jesus is speaking about isn't based on your outward circumstances; it doesn't depend on whether you are happily married with the statutory 2.5 children, two cars, a nice house and good health. This kind of joy comes from deep within your spirit. Its power transcends all physical difficulties and problems, it – somehow – bubbles up full of meaning from that place within your spirit that you worship God. If you don't have that joy, that sense of being spiritually prosperous, then you need to study these Beatitudes and get back into that wonderful relationship that we all should have had when we first fell in love with Jesus.

Poor in Spirit. This first Beatitude is telling us that we need to cultivate the kind of humble attitude that makes us ever ready to learn from our amazing awesome God, and to always be prepared to change our wrong attitudes. That we need to be honest enough to accept that we still have a great deal to learn. It's saying that we long to have Jesus as Lord and King over our lives in every single part, because we know that He is the wise One Who is capable of sorting our lives out. The word "Humble" has got a bad press nowadays; it's not that hand-wringing kind of humble that Jesus is speaking of. He is telling us to be honest in our judgement of ourselves. Now, that's not always easy. We all tend to want to present a much nicer exterior to others than is really the case. To be "Poor in Spirit" is to truly "say it as it is!" How difficult do you find this to be?

Those who mourn. In your group try to admit to the things about yourself that you mourn over. So often the attitudes that we hate to see in our children are the very things that we are guilty of ourselves. Perhaps you might even dare to promise the group to try to put right those wrong attitudes, and then – over the next few weeks – monitor each other to see how you have progressed.

The meek. This can also be translated "long-suffering"! Being "long-suffering" presupposes that you have suffered for a long time! This kind of meekness doesn't have to surface only when there are great big instances of suffering. Sometimes the small niggly, irritating things can cause much long-suffering. Discuss together the kinds of things that irritate you, the sort of circumstances that make you "ratty" and difficult to get on with. Then, begin to think about how you can start to cultivate a "meek" spirit, and thereby begin to find yourself blessed by Jesus.

Hunger and thirst for Righteousness. This is probably the easiest one to understand. Surely we all want to be Righteous: it was the glorious righteousness of Jesus that attracted us to Him in the first place. In your group,

ask yourselves whether you really do “hunger and thirst” for it, though. Does, being in Right Standing with God top the list of your life priorities? Why not spend a little time thinking this through and then writing out a list of the priorities in your life. What is the most important thing in your life? Who and what comes first?

Is all this for here and now? It has been mooted by some theologians that all this wonderful blessing must be what we will receive when we get to heaven: that we will probably never experience such “life-joy and satisfaction” while we walk this earth. If this is true, then why did Jesus make such a point of explaining it all so succinctly to His disciples? Surely this was dangling an unobtainable carrot in front of the donkey! Jesus doesn’t behave like that, He never makes promises that He cannot fulfil, and there is nothing in this Sermon that gives us any reason to suppose that His blessings aren’t for the here and now.

Discuss within your group as to how you can encourage each other to enter more fully into the joy of the blessings of Jesus. How can your small company embrace all that Jesus has for you? What objectives can you suggest your group needs to support each other in making Jesus’ “attitudes” a top priority in your life?

PRAYER.

Lord, Jesus Christ, we know that You want to bless us abundantly, that You want our walk with You to be one of joy and fulfilment. Help us to put You first in our lives, to have the courage to place everything and everyone else as second to our love for You. Create in us the hunger and thirst for righteousness that we need to produce the kind of humble hearts that will give You joy in us. Holy Spirit, grant us hearing ears and willing spirits that we may hear Your voice and be obedient to Your guidance. Amen.

3: Kingdom Connection with Each Other

- Matthew 5:7-12

In Psalm 16 v3 the psalmist says these words: *“As for the Saints in the land they are the GLORIOUS ONES IN WHOM IS ALL MY DELIGHT”*

This was David’s view of God’s people – He loved them as people of the Kingdom. He saw them from God’s perspective and God’s perspective became his perspective. One Kingdom of God’s glorious people. They belonged to one another.

Jesus prayer in John 17 was for the Disciples and all who were to believe *“That they may be one, Father as you are in me and I am in you...”*

He also showed the longing of His great passion for the Church when He said these words: *“love one another. As I have loved you so you must love one another. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples if you love one another”*

At the heart of John’s letter in 1 John 4 v7 we have this heart cry *“Beloved let us love one another for love is from God, and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God”*

Again we read in Ephesians 4 v.32- *“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Be imitators of God as dearly loved children and live a life of love...”*

The first 4 Beatitudes in the last session dealt with our relationship with God. This session which looks at the next 4 Beatitudes deals with our relationship with one another. They challenge our heart condition spiritually, how we view others; how we respect them and how we respond to them.

We find the call of Jesus not only to a deeper inward spiritual life but also to letting that new life flow out to touch the Church and the community among whom we live. It is scarily practical!

The wonderful news we have from God is that BECAUSE we have become QUALITATIVELY NEW people and BECAUSE we are now in a true relationship with the Living God, OUR SPIRIT IS ALIVE TO GOD. The barrier has been removed and we have access to Him; the power of the Holy Spirit energises our spirit enabling us to live in His ways. This is kingdom life - the life of the King

working in and through us. AWESOME!

So Jesus' call to this way of living in relation to one another in these 4 Beatitudes is not a set of rules and regulations but as it is the 'normal' way the Holy Spirit works. He is saying if we are keeping in step with the Holy Spirit this is the way you will be led to respond. The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts and we are to let that love flow out to one another.

As we consider these matters may we be encouraged to continue to walk His way more and more.

Please read Matthew 5.7-12

Play the DVD

Questions for discussion:

1. What does it mean to be merciful? In what ways should it be seen?

Extra thoughts: Luke 6:36-37 Eph 4:32-5:1 Acts 9:36

2. What inward attitude of heart enables someone to be merciful?

3. What 'happiness' does God bring to those who show mercy?

4. What does it mean to you to be pure in heart in relation to others?

5. How do we gain a pure heart? How can we keep our motives pure?

6. How can we be peacemakers in the world, in the Church, in our relationships, and in the workplace?

7. What qualities do we need to be peacemakers?

Note the blessing is that we are called the Children of God, and not that we become children of God. i.e. we are recognised in the world for who we are.

8. Why do you think Jesus says we are blessed (happy) when we are persecuted...do we want troubles?

4: Kingdom Effectiveness - Matthew 5:13-16

One of the problems in reading the Bible today is that the huge changes in society that have happened over the last two thousand years makes it difficult for us to fully appreciate the true impact that the words of Jesus would have had upon his listeners: and that is particularly so in the passage we are looking at today. To obtain salt requires nothing more than a stroll around the supermarket and light is available at the flick of a switch. It was not so when Jesus spoke these words.

Read Matthew 5.13-16

Salt

Reflect for a few moments on the following:

The Afar people of Ethiopia trek for many days across the Danakil Depression, one of the most hostile environments on the planet, for one reason only: salt. Teams of Muslim Afar and Christian Tigrayans mine the salt for ten months of the year and then carry the salt blocks by camel train to the markets in Ethiopia's mountains. To the Afar the salt is their 'corn and their gold' obtained by enduring immense hardship.

- How might you feel as a member of the Afar people to be told that "you are the salt of the earth"?
- What difference does this make to how you think about this passage now?
- Make a list of some of the key uses for salt.

Begin playing the DVD now. You will need to pause the DVD in the middle so have your remote ready!

If you are reading this and the DVD is still running you have forgotten to press pause!

By now you will have a good appreciation of how important salt is now and has been both economically and culturally throughout the ages, and indeed was at the time of Jesus.

Light

Now we turn our attention to the second part of this section. It is somewhat ironic that in the modern industrialised world light pollution is a major problem – this was certainly not so when Jesus spoke these words. Having spent two

weeks recently walking through a remote mountainous region in Morocco where all the tiny villages were without electricity, and we relied on candles to see by once the sun had set, one begins to appreciate how important light is.

- Try to imagine yourself in a situation where you have no electricity where your activities are primarily regulated by the sun and artificial light is an oil lamp or candle. How does this change your view of this passage?

Now discuss some of the properties of light, not whether it's a wave or a particle – but rather what it gives us.

Play the second part of the DVD.

So what is Jesus saying here – it is momentous? Essentially He is telling his followers, including you and me, that without them the world is a tasteless, decaying, dangerous place; lacking in colour and depth!

This is intended to be a session with some practical consequences.

- Discuss honestly in your group what it means to you to be the salt and light of the world. Do you feel you are, if not why not? What can we do about it?

Clearly this is not something Jesus expects us to do on our own. The Holy Spirit dwells within each of us to enable us to live as God intends that we should. We may fail time and again but it should never prevent us pressing forward. You may wish in your prayer time to ask God to help you to do this.

- Make a list of some practical things you will do this week to be the salt and light of the world. Keep a record to share with the group how well it went.

Finally we cannot conclude this session without at least looking at the second part of verse 13. These are contentious words and their interpretation is to some extent determined by your own beliefs about salvation. My own position is that I believe that in the same way that God does not force anyone to come to Him neither does he force them to stay if they later reject Him. That is not the discussion for today and whatever your own view there is no doubting the seriousness of Jesus' words here. Ponder His words quietly in your own hearts as you work your way through the coming week.

5: Kingdom Righteousness - Matthew 5:17-20

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְיָ אֶחָד

Sh'ma Yis'ra'eil Adonai Eloheinu Adonai echad.
Hear, Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One.

בָּרוּךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד

Barukh sheim k'vod malkhuto l'olam va'ed.
Blessed be the Name of His glorious kingdom for ever and ever.

בְּתָאֵת יְיָ אֱלֹהֵיךָ בְּכָל לְבָבְךָ וּבְכָל נַפְשְׁךָ וּבְכָל מְאֹדְךָ

V'ahav'ta eit Adonai Elohekha b'khol l'vav'kha uv'khol naf'sh'kha uv'khol m'odekha.

And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

“And these words that I command you today shall be in your heart. And you shall teach them diligently to your children, and you shall speak of them when you sit at home, and when you walk along the way, and when you lie down and when you rise up.”

In the last study we looked at how, as Children of God, we are to influence the world around us. How; should we lose our saltiness, our ability to affect and persuade the world around us will be nullified. We learned that we are to recognise how important it is for us to be effective and committed followers of Jesus, and to remain consistent in our walk with Him.

We now come to the verses in Matthew 5 v 17 – 20; and here Jesus speaks of our Righteousness; of how we are to live lives that are so upright and worthy of Him that no-one can speak against us. Jesus said that He did not come to abolish the Jewish Law or the Prophets, but to fulfil them. Jesus came to bring to completion the moral precepts of the Law by teaching and expounding them more perfectly, and by substituting eternal rewards and punishments instead of the temporal ones stipulated in the Torah. Jesus fulfilled the Law by justifying us through faith, rather than by the strict observance of law; He “freed” us, something that Moses could never do.

But that doesn't mean that we are free to do whatever we like. The intimate relationship that we now have with God means that He has written His moral code, His law, on our hearts. We have the opportunity to become one with Christ

and the Father, just as Jesus prayed in John 17; and therefore there will be, within us, the hunger to become more like Christ.

PRAYER. Begin your study today with a time of prayer. Base your prayers around this short prayer by Graham Cray: -

“Lord, show me myself, I do not wish to live in delusion. Show me your grace, that I may have hope and be transformed.”

NOW READ. Matthew 5 verses 17—20.

Listen to the DVD

THE MESSIAH and the LAW. Everything in the Jewish faith turns on the “coming Messiah”. This longed for figure encapsulates the entirety of what the Jews wait for. It is, therefore, not surprising that the whole of the Old Testament focuses on that promised Saviour, and that “pictures” of Him are woven into every part of their belief system. Right from the beginning, the Book of Genesis, the Messiah is alluded to, and He is revealed throughout their Law and Prophets: even made known through their sacrificial system and the clothing the priests wore.

As we read the Old Testament we can confirm our faith in Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah of the Jews, proclaimed throughout history as the Saviour of the world. Recognising those amazing prophetic pictures of Who He would be and what He would do and say, must surely substantiate the faith we have in Jesus of Nazareth. No-one else in all history is able to fulfil all the many and various prophetic pictures of Messiah found in the Jewish faith except Jesus of Nazareth. How blest and privileged we are to have a personal knowledge of Jesus our Saviour.

But, this glance at the Jewish Messiah throughout the Old Testament is a study that is, perhaps, for a future date.

So, when Jesus said

“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 practises and teaches these commands will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven”

He was identifying with those commandments and revealing that breaking them was, in fact, a bit like breaking communion with Him.

Had you ever thought that when we ignore the commands of God, when we pay

little attention to the things the Bible teaches us, that we are in danger of alienating ourselves from the close Presence of Jesus?

Discuss in your group the fact that when we find ourselves in a spiritual desert that, perhaps, it would be sensible to try to find out whether we have grieved the Holy Spirit in any way. Whether we have slipped away from that whole-hearted walk with Jesus that we profess. Is it, perhaps, possible that for those of us who have never really felt a closeness with Jesus, our lives do not in fact reflect an honest and complete commitment to Him and His commands?

What can we do about this? How can we help one-another within our groups? What do you think our church family can do to help?

A PATTERN FOR LIVING. It is sometimes difficult to take on board exactly what obedience to the Law truly means. The Biblical Laws were written so many years ago, that we have to be sensible in interpreting them for today's world.

Discuss in your groups what Biblical Laws are almost impossible for us to obey in the 21st century. How do you think we can circumnavigate this mine-field?

When we look at Jesus, the Messiah, we see what obedience to the Law really means. When we watch Him caring for those who are sick, or see His compassion on those who are suffering; when we watch Him weeping over the waywardness of Jerusalem and hear Him speaking words of love and comfort to the widow and the orphan; then we begin to understand how we need to live in order to keep the Law and the Prophets. When we recognise the amazing vulnerability of this God-man as He submits to the wickedness of the whip and the cross; then we begin – just begin – to get a glimpse of the kind of unselfishness that God asks of us.

And Jesus said to them, *“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.”*

And Jesus says that to you and me too. Unless our righteousness surpasses the righteousness of those people that the world looks up to, then we too will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven. The criteria for being a Child of God is not to be the best human being that we can. No, the criteria is to have the life of Christ living within us, so that He can live out His righteousness through the vehicle of our lives.

“The Christian faith is not a resource for human self-improvement. It announces the end of fallen humanity, under God's judgement. It brings into being a new humanity.” (Graham Cray)

Once we recognise that, humanly speaking, we cannot keep the Law and the Prophets, once we accept that only Jesus can live that life of beauty and grace, then we can begin to enter into that “new humanity” that Graham Cray speaks about above.

DISCUSS.

1. What stops us from keeping the Law and the Prophets in their entirety?
2. What is it, within each of us, that holds us back from being totally obedient to the commands of Jesus?
3. What is the difference between a normal human life and the Christian life that Jesus demands of us?
4. If only Jesus can truly live the Christian life, then how do we allow Him into the core of our beings in order for Him to live that life in us?
5. What benefits are there to allowing Jesus to live in us? Tie your answers into all that you have learned from the Beatitudes.
6. Has this study made you long to have Jesus living, working, caring and blessing others within your daily life? If so, what are you going to do about it, and what can your small group do to help you in the future? Is there anything that you would like our church family to do to encourage you in this area?

PRAYER.

End your session today with prayers of repentance and petition. Asking God to forgive you for any backsliding that may have occurred in your life. Ask Him to ignite your heart and life to turn back to your First Love of Jesus, back to that wonderful sense of Jesus being the first and prime Love in your heart and life.

This kind of prayer should also become the main thrust of your personal prayer life. Promise yourself that you will spend real time during the coming weeks to seek again the fervent Love that getting close to Jesus brings. Ask Him to touch your inner spirit and bring it back to life, so that each and every day becomes a glorious opportunity to please and excite Him.

6: Kingdom Lifestyle - Anger - Matthew 5:21-26

The people who listened to Jesus were amazed at His words and they hung onto everything He said. "The crowds were amazed at His teaching because He was one who had authority and not as their 'Teachers of the Law'.

His words were not heavy and legalistic 'do this don't do that'. His words were gracious, life-giving and penetratingly true. His words had credibility, authenticity, wisdom, understanding full of spiritual perception and irresistibly refreshing.

He had been seeking through the Beatitudes to draw people to both a relationship with God and also a relationship with one another. Jesus begins building the basis for unity, harmony, love and peace between one another. Taking the Moral Law concerning MURDER and the justifiable judgement that falls upon one who commits such a crime, He SHOCKS the disciples by saying that ANGER IS AS SERIOUS A CRIME as Murder and also deserves judgement.

Murder being the OUTWARD PHYSICAL EFFECT of one man's anger/hatred against another, He reveals the INNER AND SPIRITUAL CARNAGE that anger DOES WITHIN a person; it is not a product of love which gives life. Anger held on to and also belittling, destructive, insulting words are against one PERSON and can destroy a person made in the image of God. It is not the way of love. It destroys that life within mentally, emotionally and spiritually and also has deep affect within our own lives. Outwardly both parties are also affected.

He turns the whole idea of anger upside down. Knowing WHO Jesus is - God manifest in the flesh - we know He knows what He is talking about. He exposes it for what it really is and its terrible destructive effect on lives. He wants hearts to be free of its grip by responding differently and letting love suffocate every wrong reaction instead.

Jesus then speaks of the seriousness of anger and its effect on the angry one:

1. 'anger' being subject to judgement'

2. saying 'Raca' (You are utterly worthless, I despise you) being answerable to the Sanhedrin

3. saying 'you fool' (you are stupid) as being in danger of the hell fire'. Does He mean that this will happen if I am wrongly angry or speak in an ungodly way to someone? NO but there can be consequences as mentioned.

The point He is making is that anger and saying these insulting things IS THAT

SERIOUS. It is not love and it is not God's way. HOWEVER JESUS SPEAKS OF A BETTER WAY, THE KINGDOM WAY: There is for me, the guilty one, both the way of REPENTANCE and the way of RECONCILIATION. See v 23/24
Thank You Jesus for your cross!!!

Of course some will correctly say that there is an anger that is justified in Scripture and that is quite right- you will no doubt want to discuss this also and balance this with all that is said. It does make me think though, that perhaps the anger I experience is rarely the good type and that I need as Jesus says to take the humble place.

There is much for thought and discussion, but I won't weary you any longer. May the Lord bless all your thoughts.

Please read Matthew Chapter 5 verses 21-25

Watch the DVD

Questions for discussion

1. How is anger related to murder? How can anger kill a person or a community?
2. How is downgrading a fellow human made in the image of God a form of murder. Any examples?
3. What causes most anger...When is anger not sin?
4. What are practical ways in which we can help control the powerful affect of anger?

7: Kingdom Lifestyle – Purity - Matthew 5:27-30

INTRODUCTION

Please read Matthew 5: 17-20 and 27-30. Maybe you would like to share with each other how you understand the latter passage. Now, please watch the DVD.

THE PASSAGE ITSELF

As mentioned on the DVD I don't believe we should take this passage literally. Rather, Jesus is making the point that it is not just the letter of the law that counts, but the spirit of the law. One may not have physically committed adultery, but if you've done it in your heart, in God's eyes it's the same. If anything, this passage and indeed the whole Sermon on the Mount makes it clear that we all fall short of the mark and that we need a Saviour!

However, this passage also makes clear that God desires from us that we live holy lives. As far as marriage and friendship are concerned this can be translated into commitment, being faithful, loving, and honouring the other person.

On the DVD I mention 5 ways that may help us to be faithful in marriage and friendship. This is by no means a complete list. Also, every marriage or friendship is different. But hopefully you'll find them helpful reminders.

The five principles are (please complete as you listen to the DVD):

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

1.RESPECT

Key to any relationship is respect. That means valuing the other person for what he/she brings to the relationship. What are the things you admire in your spouse or friend? It is also important to acknowledge that none of us is perfect. But rather than spending all our efforts on trying to change our spouse (with most likely only marginal effect) we do both ourselves and our spouse a favour by concentrating more on the positive things. You may even find that positive feedback may result in a change of behaviour.

The Back Pew – Jeff Larson



The teachings of Jesus regarding sin (Mt 5:27-30) inspired Salty Sam to REPENT in a very literal pirate way.

2. ACKNOWLEDGE VULNERABILITY

Even when we have accepted Christ as our Lord and Saviour we are still sinners. Never say that you won't be tempted. If the circumstances are right, I believe it can happen to any of us. Remember what happened to Peter when he said that he would never abandon Jesus. Only a few hours later the cockerel crowed. It is good to identify when or where you are most vulnerable as far as faithfulness in marriage is concerned. Is it when you are tired, or when you are on your own, or travelling, or is it the internet? Secondly, make sure you are accountable. Share with your spouse or with a friend and allow that person to ask questions.

3. INTIMACY

Emotional and physical intimacy are fundamental to marriage. It is helpful to recognise that men and women tend to be different in that respect. For most women emotional intimacy comes before physical intimacy. For most men it is the other way around.

Books that we have found helpful are:

Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus by John Gray

Why Men want Sex and Women need Love by Allan and Barbara Pease (not Christian, but light-hearted and funny)

A Celebration of Sex by Dr. Douglas E. Rosenau (Christian author)

The following YouTube videos are also worth watching (and very funny):

Men's and Women's brain <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AQ9L9YBJkk8>

A Tail of two Brains - Sex & Love http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ir_emvGwhmU

4. CELEBRATE DIFFERENCES

We are all different and there are different things that make us tick. On the DVD I mention the book from Gary Chapman, called the 5 Love Languages. The five love languages are:

- Words of Affirmation: using words to affirm the other person.
- Gifts: giving presents as an expression of love or appreciation.
- Acts of Service: doing something for the other person.
- Quality Time: giving the other person your undivided attention.
- Physical Touch: touching, hugging, kissing, etc.

Most of us have a preferred love language which we use to express love to others. It is also the love language we appreciate most when receiving love. Do you know your own love language and that of your spouse or friend?

Understanding which love language your spouse appreciates most and expressing your love using her/his language will mean a lot to that person.

INVEST

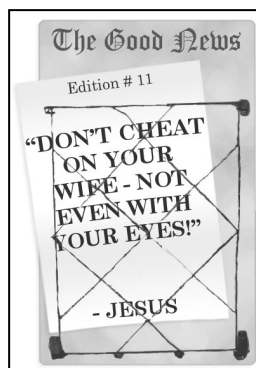
Marriage or friendship is not different from many other things in life. If we don't invest it'll wither. We start to take each other for granted and things can get boring and dull. It is therefore important that we keep working on our relationship and investing in it. Are you and your spouse investing enough in your marriage? Is perhaps attending the next marriage course something you should consider?

Questions:

- Do you agree with these five principles and/or could you think of others?
- Do you feel these principles can be applied to friendship as well? If so, how relevant are they?
- Which of the 5 do you find most challenging and why?
- Can you think of specific actions or an action plan that you and your spouse should undertake? Please write this down. Without necessarily sharing the action, please ask each other next time you meet if indeed actions have been followed up.
- Are these principles still relevant when you are in a failing marriage?

PRAYER

Please take time to pray together. There may be specific personal things shared in the group that need prayer. Please pray for your marriages and for your children. Also pray for the marriage course, that it may be a helpful and God-honouring event.



8: Kingdom Lifestyle - Faithfulness - Matthew 5:21-32

In our continuing study of the Sermon on the Mount, I have deliberately titled the sections 'Kingdom Lifestyle', for there is to be an alternative lifestyle that is revealed by the followers of King Jesus. There is a very different value system that is taught by Jesus - even in the last section, we saw how Jesus was pretty extreme as he spoke about gouging out your eye and cutting off your hand!

We come to a further section regarding human relationships and how faithfulness and loyalty needs to be at the heart of sustaining the relationship of marriage.

Listen to the DVD.

There are just a couple of brief lines in this section that has caused huge division of interpretation among Christians.

There are very few people who have not been caught up in the personal pain where family / friends have separated.

- Share within your group how you have coped with this whole subject of separation and divorce. What has helped you understand some of the wider issues that are involved?
What are some of the common reasons for divorce?
What about the increasing number of people who live together and then separate?

Matthew 5:31-32 *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.*

There is a longer section in **Matthew 19:1-12** that would be worth reading now in your group. Note how Jesus, instead of speaking about divorce, addresses what lies right at the heart of a marriage relationship before God.

The idea of a *certificate of divorce* comes from Moses in **Deuteronomy 24:1-4** where such a certificate could be issued on the basis of finding some 'indecenty'. There naturally came the endless discussion as to what was included in the scope of the word indecenty.

Divorce in the 1st century was a hot theological topic that divided. There were the two rabbinical schools - established a couple of decades before Jesus but their teaching remained.

There was the strict view of **Rabbi Shammai** who only allowed divorce on the

basis that indecency was adultery.

There was the lax view of **Rabbi Hillel** who argued for divorce on the basis of 'any cause' and this could therefore be a wife speaking disrespectfully to her husband, cooking a poor meal, burning the toast at breakfast. Hillel was known as the 'any cause' divorce rabbi and naturally he was the most popular rabbi! This links us into the question that the Pharisees asked in Matt 19:3 where they were trying to discredit Jesus by asking him whether he sided with rabbi Hillel - *'Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for **any cause.**'*

Jesus responds by refusing to side with Rabbi Hillel - indicating that he did not take a casual view of the break up of a marriage for any reason of personal dissatisfaction.

There are a couple of other passages where specific teaching about divorce is recorded:

- Paul makes a reference to divorce for the reason of abandonment by a nonbeliever (**1 Cor 7:17-25**)
- What about divorce on the basis of physical or emotional abuse?
- There is an interesting passage in **Exodus 21:10-11** that is worth looking at. These two verses indicate that divorce was allowed as a result of neglect. Note how it says that a slave wife has three rights within marriage - the rights to food, clothing and love. If these were missing then separation could take place.
The three rights are part of present marriage vows in the more formal language of 'love, honour and keep'.

Alan in the DVD spoke about the words of Jesus – *if a man decides to divorce his wife – and then she remarries*, [because that was the only option for her survival] – *then she becomes an adulteress...and the guy that she marries commits adultery.*

It appears that any other sexual union that cuts across marriage covenant is by definition adulterous. Those hearing Jesus failed to grasp this truth because they failed to understand the principle of marriage in the first place. Marriage is intended for life – it is about two becoming one flesh.

There were those who were listening to Jesus who had divorced according to Hillel and Jesus would say that they were not really divorced - they were still married!

Marriage is all about two becoming one. In divorce, we are seeking to 'un one' the two who have become one...you think it is easy, but does God think it is easy? In fact the principle that Jesus holds to is that you cannot 'un one' that which God has made one. *What God has joined together, let man not separate.* If 2 have become 1 can that 1 become 2 again?

- Alan mentioned the 'baggage' that is taken from one relationship to the next - baggage that is the result of two becoming one. What do you think can be some of the areas of such baggage?

Do take time to pray together as a group and particularly pray for marriages to be strengthened and renewed.

- The section in this study has been about faithfulness. What does it really take for couples to be serious about their vows to each other? What does it really say about this kingdom life that Jesus is talking about to raise the level of faithful trust in the most crucial of all relationships?

Dietrich Bonhoeffer 'Live together in forgiveness. Don't insist on your own rights. Don't blame each other, don't judge or condemn each other, don't find fault with each other, but accept each other as you are, and forgive each other every day from the bottom of your hearts.'

Gerard Kelly 'I was devastated when my parents' marriage fell apart. Emotionally, financially, socially my father's decision to leave my mother for a woman twenty years his junior brought havoc into our lives. To the very moment of her death 25 years later, my mother never entirely recovered from the break-up. I was ten years old, and the years of my adolescence were over-shadowed more than anything by the absence of my father. I will never underestimate the chaos that divorce can cause. But neither will I put it beyond healing. I have experienced grace beyond measure in the intervening years. My own marriage has been a source of healing. My children are a gift of inestimable worth. The ground that was scorched by the napalm-fire of rejection and abandonment has been replanted, and grows now with rich greenery of grace. Jesus may take a strong stance on divorce: but he reserves his greater strength for recovery and healing.'

9: Kingdom Lifestyle - Truthfulness - Matthew 5:33-37

The study this week is about the whole area of trust. Before you listen to the DVD introduction - discuss in your group where the challenges are regarding trust.

- What illustrations can you give that illustrate the need for trust in all areas of human relationships?
- Have you been on the receiving end of dishonesty? How did you cope with it and how did it make you feel?
- Do you think that honesty is lacking in our culture today?

As I write these notes there are several court cases where for instance the tapping of mobile phones of celebrities has taken place by reporters on national newspapers. Even in court you have to wonder whether the truth is being told!

Listen to the DVD

Read the words of Jesus again:

Matthew 5:33-37 *"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.

Jesus in this section talks about the way a Jew would seek to make his words more binding by declaring an oath - which was a promise linked to the name of God like, *I swear by God Almighty*. An oath that included the name of God meant that you were fully obligated.

Oaths were needed because of the tendency towards being liars.

- In the OT oaths were permitted **Deut 6:13**, but they were to be honoured. **Lev 19:12; Num 30:2; Deut 23:22.**

The Pharisees - wanted a loophole for they were prepared to make an oath but instead of making a particular promise in the name of God they would simply add - by heaven, or by earth, by Jerusalem.

This is where Jesus pours scorn on their action - for Jesus indicates how everything belongs to God anyway.

Jesus therefore says - although the law allows oaths, do not swear an oath in any form.

- This raises the whole question of swearing oaths in a court of law. There are some who would not be prepared to do so and take the alternative affirmation in court.

We find Jesus constantly raises the standard. Moses may say something specific about these areas but Jesus declares that we would not need oaths if our yes was yes and our no is no. This is where the kingdom value of truthfulness is highlighted with the call to be kingdom people of truth and integrity.

Alan in the DVD spoke about the phrase **my word , my bond** as the motto of the London Stock Exchange. This was so essential in the days before paperwork and electronic communications could track commitments people made.

There is the verse in James 5:12 where this principle is further underlined where he challenges the casual use of God's name...**Let your yes be yes, and your no be no.**

- What would life be like if our yes was yes and our no was no?
- In what way do we honour God's name in our speech and not like the Pharisees who used God's name in order that they might be honoured?
- What challenges does it bring to us as we face the implications of Jesus' teaching especially the statement '*anything beyond this comes from the evil one.*' [evil one could simply be translated evil.]
- Alan mentioned two challenging areas - the workplace and church. They are two very different areas of our lives. How do Jesus' words challenge us in these two areas?
- Take a look at the verse in **Ecclesiastes 5:2.**

The final challenge in the DVD was the verse from **Matt 12:36** where Jesus speaks of how one day we will have to give an account of all that we say. Remember that it is from the overflow of the heart that the mouth speaks.

The great preacher of the 19th Century, **George Macdonald**, wrote to his son saying '*I always try - I think I do - to be truthful. All the same I tell a great many lies!*'

OUTLINE OF THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Matthew chapters 5 - 7

- 5:1-2 Introduction
- 5:3-12 Our Character
- 5:13-16 Our Influence
- 5:17-20 Our Righteousness - six illustrations
- 5:21-26 Murder
- 5:27-30 Adultery
- 5:31-32 Divorce
- 5:33-37 Oaths
- 5:38-42 Retaliation
- 5:43-48 Love
- 6:1-4 Our Giving
- 6:5-14 Our Praying
- 6:16-18 Our Fasting
- 6:19-24 Our Ambition
- 6:25-34 Our Security
- 7:1-12 Our Relationships
- 7:13-23 Our Fruit bearing
- 7:24-28 Our Commitment

Kingdom, Power & Glory

The DVD introduction to the study series together with these study notes is brought to you by : Mavis Gibbs, Keith Gwilym, Alan Dinnie, Chris Lukkien and Laurie Martin.

- | | | |
|----------------|--|---------------|
| Study 1 | Kingdom Come (Matt 5:1-2) | Alan |
| Study 2 | Kingdom Connection with God (Matt 5:3-6) | Mavis |
| Study 3 | Kingdom Connection with Each Other (Matt 5:7-12) | Laurie |
| Study 4 | Kingdom Effectiveness - Salt & Light (Matt 5:13-16) | Keith |
| Study 5 | Kingdom Righteousness (Matt 5:17-20) | Mavis |
| Study 6 | Kingdom Lifestyle - Anger (Matt 5:21-26) | Laurie |
| Study 7 | Kingdom Lifestyle - Purity (Matt 5:27-30) | Chris |
| Study 8 | Kingdom Lifestyle - Faithfulness (Matt 5:31-32) | Alan |
| Study 9 | Kingdom Lifestyle - Truthfulness (Matt 5:33-37) | Alan |

The series is complemented by the Sunday Sermons that Alan will be preaching on the eight Beatitudes

If you missed a particular Sunday you can always listen to the message or download the message from the Church website