

# Kingdom, Power & Glory



**Willesborough Baptist Church**

**Small Group Study Notes - Studies 10-18**

**April to July 2012**

# 10: Kingdom Lifestyle - Love Your Enemies

## Matt 5:38-48

I want to start this study in a slightly oblique way by getting you to read Luke 10: 25-36 - the story of the Good Samaritan. You will see that Jesus told this story in response to the question 'Who is my Neighbour?' Notice that Jesus does not respond by giving a list of those who could qualify for that title. What does he do instead? What is He trying to say? Do not spend too long on this fascinating though it is.

Now read the passage Matthew 5: 43-48. In the light of the discussion above think about the question 'Who is my Enemy?'

**Now Start the DVD.** You will need to pause it mid-way through so have the remote ready.

### Story of Mary Foley



*"The first time I meet Mary Foley she is addressing a rapt group of 15- and 16-year-olds in a humanities class on forgiveness. Tall, handsome and quietly spoken, she begins the session by taking out a few photographs and pinning them to the whiteboard. "This is Charlotte, my daughter. She was no angel, she had her challenges, but she was loving and caring, and popular among her peers. And here's Charlotte, joking around with her friends."*

*After a moment's pause, Mary pins up the next picture – a girl with her hair scraped back who seems to stare defiantly out into the room. Mary turns towards the class, her voice softening with pity. "And this is Beatriz, who killed her."*

*To meet Mary Foley, 46, is to be convinced that forgiveness is entirely possible. She speaks with tenderness and sorrow for the trials of Beatriz's life that turned her, in Mary's words, "into a ticking time bomb". At the same time, she condemns the crime itself; she was angry when Beatriz recently applied to get her sentence reduced.*

*This does not mean that forgiveness is easy, quick or without its ambiguities. Rather, Mary describes it as a long road travelled – one that begins and ends with heartbreaking loss: "I have lost my eldest daughter. She has lost her life and her future. She will never have children. I will never have grandchildren. She will never look after me in my old age."*

*Mary, who has a teenage son and a younger daughter, does not shy away from her sadness. Standing before that humanities class, she cried openly, remembering Charlotte. You could have heard a pin drop. But, as she later tells the assembled teenagers, in the months and years following Charlotte's death, and with the help of her strong religious faith, she actively chose forgiveness, in part to help free herself "from the self-imposed prison of bitterness".*

*"When Charlotte was murdered, forgiveness did not enter my mind. For a long time, I wanted to know, who is this wicked girl that took my daughter? Who did this evil? My baby was gone. I was just coming to terms with the loss. I had to weigh things up, to really allow my emotions to take their course."*

*Now, Mary is a picture of serenity. "When you don't forgive, you allow that person to control your life. Your anger and resentment are controlling you. When you choose to forgive, you release yourself, to become yourself again." She says of other family members who have not forgiven Beatriz, "there's a lot of sadness and regret there – a lot of 'if onlys' in their lives.'"*

Extract from the Guardian on Line

There are many questions one could explore here, start with:

- What is your first thought when reading this?
- Does anything stand out for you – if so what?
- Why do such stories warrant the headlines?

- Why are we surprised, if we are, by them?
- Is it only Christians who exhibit this behaviour?

### **Resume playing the DVD**

Why do you think it important to begin this loving of ones enemies with an act of will? Does this mean that one must like ones enemies?

Spend a few moments in quiet reflection reviewing your own attitude to those who have done you harm. If you feel able share this with the group. If you have not done so already how might you begin to 'love your enemies?'

Continue to reflect on this in the week ahead as you seek to emulate the behaviour of Jesus who said of those who were crucifying Him 'Father forgive them....'

## 11: Kingdom Giving - Matthew 6:1-4

These powerful words of Jesus in this brief passage in Matthew again turned ideas upside down showing to the Disciples and any one else who may have been listening that Kingdom giving has a quality difference from all that they had seen and understood from their religious teachers.

It was not a word of rebuke to His disciples but here was the Good Shepherd guiding His precious flock into a safe path and into the rich pastures of kingdom ways and a life of fullness.

Although Jesus highlighted the errors of some of the self-righteous religious leaders it would have been with a sad heart that this word was even necessary; and it was to make sure that the disciples and all whom they would teach would experience the blessedness that He had already spoken so much about at the beginning of the Sermon on the mount. He was also showing that there is a difference between walking in the flesh and walking in the Spirit in the matter of giving to the needy and showing acts of mercifulness.

Here we see the heart of God revealed again-His love, mercy and compassion for the needy and His desire for better in their lives. We also see His desire that we share what He has shared with us; that we give as He has given and in that mercy the world might see something of the heart of our Heavenly father.

This is the God who gives and gives and gives again and here He calls His people to be LIKE HIM both in attitude and action. His teaching calls for action and not just education.

His words have TEACHING, WARNING, DIRECTION AND PROMISE all in 3 sentences.

We often reflect, quite rightly, on our financial giving to the work of the Church and it should always be so, but here we are looking at something different. Giving "alms" (mercifulness), to the needy can be expressed in a variety of ways whether money, food, goods, time, counselling. Our giving is to reach out to those inside the Church but also takes the opportunity to draw alongside those outside the church.

This we all do in some way, consciously and unconsciously and these words call us to review and remind ourselves that in this way we show Jesus to others and delight the heart of our Heavenly Father.

**READ NOW** Matthew 6 verses 1-4

## **NOW DVD TIME !!**

### **A FEW QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER.**

1. How can we respond in 'acts of mercifulness' (alms) when there is so much need. Is there a need for wisdom or caution or restraint?

2. There is a saying in the world that 'Charity begins at home' how far is this true?

3. How can we improve on our motives in giving should this be a problem.

4. How possible is it to give in various ways without the temptation to want appreciation or to be noticed?

5. Where is the difference between self-pride and joy in giving?

6. Is there anything wrong with wanting to be appreciated for acts of mercifulness?

7. What are your thoughts about the 'REWARDS' for acts of righteousness, kindness, What might the rewards be here on earth and in heaven?

8. In Acts 6 1-4 The early Church faced a problem of neglecting a part of the Church in acts of mercy. Do you think that this can be so today?

## 12: Kingdom Praying - Matt 6:5-15

*“To pray is to change. This is a great grace. How good of God to provide a path whereby our lives can be taken over by love and joy and peace and patience and kindness and goodness and faithfulness and gentleness and self-control.*

*The movement inward comes first because without interior transformation the movement up into God’s glory would overwhelm us and the movement out into ministry would destroy us.*

*A disciple once came to Abba Joseph (one of the desert fathers) saying, “Father, according as I am able, I keep my little rule, my little fast, and my little prayer. And according as I am able I strive to cleanse my mind of all evil thoughts and my heart of all evil intents. Now, what more should I do?” Abba Joseph rose up and stretched out his hands to heaven, and his fingers became like ten lamps of fire. He answered, “Why not be totally changed into fire?”*

From “Prayer” by Richard Foster.

*“Pray as you can, not as you can’t” - Dom Chapman.*

When you read that quote from Richard Foster’s book on Prayer, what did you immediately think? What did that little story about Abba Joseph’s disciple mean for you?

How comfortable and thankful did you feel when you read Dom Chapman’s little sentence?

Prayer always seems to divide the people of God into those who think they can pray well and those who know that they can’t! Strangely we all yearn for prayer and yet we all tend to hide from prayer! What very strange creatures we are. We believe that prayer is something we ought to do, and even something that we want to do; but somehow there is that enormous brick wall that stands between us and the prayer life we long for. Our lives seem to us a sad misery of prayerlessness. And this is true for everyone, even those who – over the millennia – have been considered as great prayer warriors.

That’s why, when we come to this passage of Scripture, we can breathe a great sigh of relief. Because here, Jesus – the one Who knows best of all about prayer – teaches us that it need not be the complicated business that we tend to make it. Here, Jesus tosses aside all our man-made convictions as to what prayer is and how we ought to pray. Christ, the Eternal Son of God, gives us a simple straight-forward model to base our prayer life on.

**NOW READ**, Matthew Chapter 6 v 5 – 15

**NOW WATCH THE DVD.**

**IN YOUR GROUPS....**

Take the “Lord’s Prayer” phrase by phrase and turn each expression into a short prayer. For example, if I take the first phrase I could pray it like this:-

*“Thank You that you really are my Father. My Heavenly Father, the One Who is Holy, Just and Pure. The One on Whom I can rely totally and utterly. Holy Father, I come to you today....”*

Now the next phrase is: “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” How will you turn that into prayer?

Once you have been through the whole pattern of the Lord’s Prayer you will have prayed exactly like Jesus was teaching His disciples to do. Every time you come to prayer in your own quiet time you will find that this pattern of prayer can be said in myriads of different ways, and each time your closeness to God will increase; and this closeness of relationship is what prayer is all about.

When I was a child, and my brother and I came dashing wildly in from school, my parents would stop us and say, *“This is not a madhouse! Now go out and come in again in a proper manner!”* Not something you hear very often nowadays. Later, when we had our evening meal, it wasn’t a TV dinner on our lap in front of the tele, and then a mad rush to see what’s on Facebook. No, we sat down for a family meal with no other distractions so that we could each retell all about our day. Again, not something that happens very often nowadays, but in some ways this is what Jesus is saying in verse 6. *“Don’t go dashing about here and there and calling out to Me in a haphazard way like that! Stop and quieten down. Let’s sit calmly together and then we can talk properly, and you can tell me all the things that you want to get off your chest.”* God values our time with Him probably even more than we value it.

What does your prayer life consist of? Do you just fit it in when it suits you, or do you make your time with God a priority?

What does prayer really mean to you? Is it just something that you feel you ought to do, or is it something that you really look forward to because it brings you peace and comfort?

What steps can you make to ensure that you and He have the chance to spend real quality time together?

Do you tend to recite the Lord's Prayer when you are stuck for something to say? Has it become a, sort of, rhyme that comes easily to mind? How will you change your attitude now?

It's funny how you can see a clear resemblance in old photographs between even great-grandparents and their descendants. Have you ever said, "Oh, he's just like his granddad!" or "She looks exactly like Aunt Jane used to at her age". Don't you sometimes wish you'd taken after good-looking Fred instead of crabby old Freda! It's all in the genes!

It's the same in the Kingdom of Heaven. We are supposed to carry the spiritual genes of our Heavenly Father, because His Son lives within us. That means that we are intended to be like Him.

So, Jesus says, you must learn to forgive just as your Father in Heaven has forgiven you. And the Amplified Bible adds that forgiveness is "forgiving other people's reckless and wilful sins, leaving them, letting them go, and giving up resentment."

Why do you think that it is imperative that we learn to totally and utterly forgive?

How difficult do you find it to forgive, and what particular sins do you think it's hardest to forgive?

Have you ever done something that someone else refused to forgive? How did it feel?

Is there something that you are still finding hard to forgive? Can your group help you to release this burden?

Is it necessary to tell your opponent that you have forgiven them? Suppose they have since died, is it still important to grant them forgiveness? Why?

What is it that makes us hang on to our resentments? We all tend to wallow in our self-pitying attitudes; why do we do it? How would we benefit ourselves if we were to "let go" of the bitterness that we feel when someone has hurt us?

Try to articulate what happens deep inside when there is anger, bitterness, resentment and unforgiveness festering there. What does it do to you, and how can you relinquish it?

As Children of God we are, supposed, to reflect the image of our Father in Heaven. Those outside the Kingdom are continually watching us to see how we react to different situations. Do you consider that you are a

good reflection? Why not encourage one another by telling how the others may have blessed you and how they reflect Christ even though they don't realise it.

As a Group why not try to make a prayer covenant with God. Use the following prayer, or something like it, to voice that covenant. Use it in your Group but also use it personally in your private prayer time. But, don't make this covenant unless you are really serious about trying to keep it.

### **PRAYER**

*"Blessed Saviour, I pace back and forth at the altar of commitment. I really do want a fixed habit of prayer. At least, that is what I want at the moment. I'm not sure if that is what I will want two weeks from now. I do know that without some kind of consistent communion with You I will not know holy obedience. So, as best I can, I promise to set aside time regularly for prayer, meditation and spiritual reading. Strengthen me in the covenant. Help me so to delight in Your Presence that I will want to come home to you often. In Your Name and for Your sake I make this covenant."*

AMEN

*From "Prayer" by Richard Foster*

# 11: Kingdom Fasting - Matthew 6:16-18

Have a quick round of word association in your group. What other words do you associate with the word “fasting”? Talk about what they mean and why they come to mind.

**Now watch the DVD introduction.**

Share with your group what you know about the Christian discipline of fasting. Also, share any concerns you may have or the questions you have because you don't know very much about it.

**Read Matthew 6: 16 – 18.** If someone in the group has an alternative to the NIV, read it aloud in that version as well.

**Discussion questions from the passage:**

- Jesus says, “When you fast”. He doesn't say “If you fast”. Does he expect his followers today to fast? Or was it just an accepted religious practice of the day? Or did he really mean to say “When you fast, if you do fast”? [See also Matthew 9: 14-15]
- Why does Jesus say it is hypocritical to fast publicly? What might be the reward for doing it that way?
- How does God know we are fasting if outwardly we look normal? How might he reward what he sees?

**Discussion questions about fasting:**

- How would you define fasting?
- How common is it these days? Why is that?
- Have you ever fasted in the past? If you want to share, tell the group why – or why not.
- Fasting is not just about going without food. List some things you could fast from nowadays.
- What spiritual principles are at work behind a time of fasting?
- Do you have any specific examples of situations that might prompt fasting? (Weight gain and over indulgence do not count.)
- What does the act of fasting communicate? Who to?
- What do we get out of it?

Jesus and his disciples were criticised for failure to fast, even though Jesus had fasted extensively in the wilderness (Matthew 4:2; Mark 1:13). Jesus' reply to this criticism was that his disciples would fast when the bridegroom was taken from them (see Matthew 9:14-15; Mark 2:18-19; Luke 5:33-35).

- What did Jesus mean by this?
- What is its significance today?
  
- Is there a place for “collective fasting” today? (ie. a group of people committing together to the same period of fasting.) What extra value might this have? Or is fasting a practice just for individuals?
  
- How does fasting relate to our spiritual focus as a church?
- How does fasting relate to your own future walk with God?

**For further study:**

Mavis has written a short paper on the value of combining prayer with fasting. It's available for download from the church website:

[http:// www.wbc-ashford.org.uk/res\\_personalstudy.html](http://www.wbc-ashford.org.uk/res_personalstudy.html)

## 14: Kingdom Ambition - Matthew 6:19-24

Either before you go to your group meeting or at your group meeting - take a couple of magazines, and for a few minutes take a look at the adverts you see.

- What is the overall message that the advertising pundits are seeking to communicate?

Everywhere you go and whatever you look at there is one message after another seeking to grab your attention. There are blatant adverts and commercials and then there are the more subtle adverts that even pop up on your computer screen because you recently did a Google search that remembers for you the interest that you have in a particular item.

- Relate a recent advert that you have seen and the impact that it has had on you.

There is a constant drivenness in life and this is seen particularly in the desire for more and the dissatisfaction that we have as we play the comparison game with others around us.

In our study today we are looking at the whole area of Kingdom Ambition.

### Listen to the DVD.

There is the call throughout the Sermon on the Mount and especially in this section to seriously consider where we are investing our lives.

Investment in the Kingdom of God will give us the best returns, for the benefits and dividends of this kind of investment go far beyond this life.

Jesus addresses the fact that our attitude to money, finance and temptations in life can easily distract us from our faithfulness to God.

### TWO TREASURES v.19-21

This is where we are called not to store up treasures on earth. It is when we think about treasure we are not talking solely about money and our personal finances. The teaching on treasure goes far beyond our personal bank account or the salary we earn to the power it exerts by promising far more than it delivers where your 'flexible friend' the credit card is not flexible and proves not to be a very good friend.

- What are some of the destructive elements that Jesus mentions and how can we interpret them for our own experience today?
- In what way do we find that our hearts follow our 'treasure'?
- Think about some of those who ministered to Jesus with their resources. There were a group of women who appear to have a measure of independent means where they could financially support Jesus

There are people like Joseph of Arimathea who made his own personal tomb available for Jesus.

- Why not take time to look at a few other scriptures that refer to the way we are to have a right attitude to 'treasure'.

When Jesus talks about laying up our treasure in heaven – he is not just talking about the life to come. Jesus had this understanding of the Kingdom coming in power in the present. In referring to heaven Jesus was speaking not so much about '*heaven up there*' but '*heaven down here*'; and not so much '*in the next life*' but in the '*now of today*'. The reason for this is that God is in the present 'down here' experience of life.

### **TWO LIFE GOALS v.22-23**

There is the contrast in this section of light and darkness – the world of a sighted person and the world of a blind person.

Eyes are the doorway giving entrance into our hearts. This is where we have to be very careful for the 'eye is the lamp of the body'.

- Take a moment within your group to share the effect of the 'eyes' bringing light to the whole body. Try to give some illustrations in order to apply this truth Jesus shares.
- In what way does the Kingdom of God according to Jesus, offer us a whole new way of seeing the ordinary things in life with a new perspective?
- A similar truth is shared by Paul in Philippians 4:8 (NLT) "And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honourable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise."

### **TWO MASTERS v.24**

There cannot be multiple ownership of our lives – Jesus declares that there can either be God or Mammon (money).

It is amazing how money can rule your life, boss you around, make its incessant demands. Money has power, it is no neutral medium.

- In what way do we see Jesus calling for a new degree of loyalty within the Kingdom of God?
- What happens when we succumb to allowing riches to become the focal point of life? Look up 1 Timothy 6:9-10.
- How are Jesus' words illustrated in the lives of some other biblical characters like Solomon (1 Kings 11:4); Gehazi (2 Kings 5:20ff); Demas (2 Tim 4:10)?

**Rob Warner** – ‘The term *Mammon* can be found in rabbinic writings with the neutral meaning; material possessions’. Jesus sharpens the term to mean ‘a driven love of material possessions’; that is materialism. Mammon should not be thought of as a named demonic power. Jesus is simply personifying the love of material possessions...he demands total allegiance and insists that materialism must be recognised as an implacable enemy of the kingdom of heaven.’

- Alan asked at the end of the DVD – in what way are you investing your life with God?  
What are your kingdom investments that will never lose their value?

## **FURTHER THOUGHTS TO PONDER**

**Dietrich Bonhoeffer** ‘Our hearts have room only for one all-embracing devotion, and we can only cleave to one Lord.’

**Martyn Lloyd Jones** According to our Lord here, these earthly, worldly things tend to become our god. We serve them; we love them. Our heart is captivated by them; we are at their service. What are they? They are the very things that God in His kindness has given man in order that they might be of service to him, and in order that he may enjoy life while he is in this world....what a tragedy; he bows down and worships at the shrine of things that were meant to be at his service. Things that were meant to minister to him have become his master.

**Take the opportunity to talk about** the recent political debate in the UK that is focused on the high International Development Aid that we offer to other countries when we have a down turn in our own economy.

The government has ring-fenced and raised the UK support to over £10.6 billion which happens to be .07 of GDP. It is a very controversial decision when there are many other government departments that are having their finances cut.

Do you agree with the present government policy? How does the teaching of scripture guide us regarding our responsibility to the poor globally?

A final verse to close on: Proverbs 4:23 (NLT)

**“Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life.”**

## 15: Kingdom Security - Matthew 6:25-34

In this study we're looking at "security" in the sense of freedom from worry or anxiety. The ability to feel secure in the knowledge of God's sovereign control and provision.

In current UK society there is a growing trend in the opposite direction to this kingdom security:

*"Since the onset of the credit crunch four years ago, cases of people being admitted to hospital for anxiety disorders and panic attacks rose by one third. Some experts believe the rise may be caused by individuals' worries about finances, job security and other concerns associated with the current economic situation." (NHS Information Centre)*

*"The use of anti-depressants to treat anxiety has risen by 26 per cent since 2007, with a total of 49.8 million prescriptions being written in 2010/2011 (an increase of 10.3 million since 2007/2008)." (The Co-operative Pharmacy)*

Discuss in your group whether this trend is borne out in your own awareness of situations with friends, family, colleagues, neighbours, etc.

In addition to the cases of worry and anxiety that need hospitalisation or medication, what are some of the lower-key symptoms that signal someone may be struggling in this area?

**Read Matthew 6: 25-34 and then watch the DVD introduction.**

**Discussion questions from the passage:**

- What is the basic principle Jesus is establishing in verse 25? What is the scope of this principle? Is it limited to food and clothing?
- Jesus cites the example of God's provision for "the birds of the air" in verse 26. What is the underlying principle here, in relation to the relative value of people in the eyes of God? See Matt. 10: 29-31.
- "God feeds the birds, but he doesn't throw it into the nest." Discuss.
- What is the answer to Jesus' question in verse 27? Why does this often not make a difference to whether we worry?
- In verses 28-31 Jesus links a high volume of worry with a low volume of faith. What is the underlying principle he is establishing? See 2 Corinthians 5:7; Hebrews 11:1
- Is worry the opposite of faith? Is it sinful to worry? See Romans 14:23

- In verses 32-33 Jesus contrasts kingdom living with the way of life of people who don't know God. How does "seeking first his kingdom" (v33) help us deal with worry and anxiety?
- To what extent do we obey Jesus' command in verse 34?

### **Discussion questions about kingdom security:**

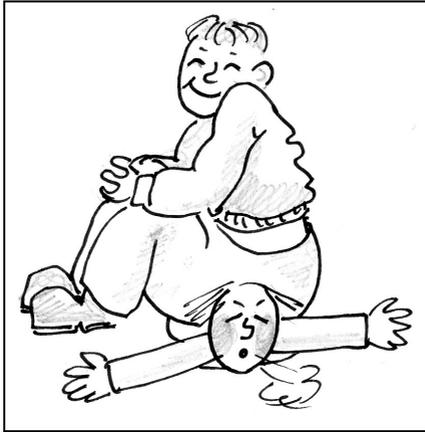
- "Let go and let God" is an expression of being secure in him, and knowing he is in control. It's far easier said than done – why?
- 1 Peter 5:7 says "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you." How does a deep awareness of God's passionate care help us to let go of anxiety? How can we develop that?
- What happens when resting in God doesn't seem to work? Do you have experience of that? How did it affect you? Consider Habakkuk 3: 17-19 and Job 1:21-22
- Share some of your own approaches to dealing with worrying situations. What are the key lessons from your own experience?
- How can we strengthen and support each other during times of worry or anxiety?

### **For further study:**

- Read and discuss the following passages, from The Message:  
*Don't fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns. Before you know it, a sense of God's wholeness, everything coming together for good, will come and settle you down. It's wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the centre of your life. (Philippians 4: 6-7)*

*Trust God from the bottom of your heart; don't try to figure out everything on your own. Listen for God's voice in everything you do, everywhere you go; he's the one who will keep you on track. Don't assume that you know it all. Run to God! Run from evil! Your body will glow with health, your very bones will vibrate with life! Honour God with everything you own; give him the first and the best. Your barns will burst, your wine vats will brim over. But don't, dear friend, resent God's discipline; don't sulk under his loving correction. It's the child he loves that God corrects; a father's delight is behind all this. (Proverbs 3: 5-12)*

## 16: Kingdom Relationships - Matthew 7:1-12



*“Now an eager contention arose among them (the disciples) as to which of them was considered to be the greatest. But Jesus said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles are deified by them and exercise lordship rule as emperor-gods over them; and those in authority are called benefactors and well-doers. But this is not to be so with you; on the contrary, let him who is the greatest among you become like the youngest, and him who is the chief and leader like one who serves. For who is the greater, the one who reclines at table (the master), or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am in your midst as One Who serves.”*

Luke chapter 22 v 24 – 27 Amplified Bible.

Relationships can prove to be a mine-field even within the Body of Christ. But, Jesus gave us the perfect example of how He expects us to relate to one another. In the Old Testament the Messiah is known as the “Servant King”, we sing a chorus to that end sometimes.

He is the King of kings yet the One Who is prepared to be vulnerable to the extent of an ignominious death on the cross! A death that meant that He was “hung up” naked for everyone to jeer at; and as gentiles we have no real understanding as to how appalling and outrageous that would be to a Jew. Being “hung up” like that was known as being cursed by God in the Hebrew faith. The

Servant Heart of our Lord took Him to the extreme of vulnerability and meekness. And He expects us to emulate that kind of attitude!

(see Deuteronomy 21 v 22 and 23; and 2 Samuel v 10 – 13)

How prepared do you think we are in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century to accept that we, too, must have just such a servant heart as Jesus? Discuss.

The passage of Scripture that we will be looking at today is primarily about judging other people. But sitting in judgment on someone else, judging, criticizing and condemning (as the Amplified Bible calls it) is tantamount to oppressing those we consider beneath us. Do you agree with this statement? Discuss.

Does the cartoon at the top of the page make you laugh, or does it make you think?

**NOW READ.** Matthew chapter 7 v 1 – 12.

**NOW WATCH THE DVD.**

In the DVD Mavis said that human civilization tends to mirror the pecking order of chickens in a flock. Do you agree? If so give examples of where and when this is prevalent.

In verse 5 Jesus said that we are “hypocrites” when we judge others without sorting ourselves out first. Do you think that we can be blind to our own faults, yet see other’s failures as blindingly obvious? You can have fun with this question; what about judging other people’s driving, for instance. How often do you condemn other drivers when you take risks yourself? How often do you “lose your cool” when going round junction 10!

But, seriously, this tendency to judge other peoples’ wrong attitudes can frequently be traced back to a sense of guilt in us, do you agree?

In a scale of 1 – 10, how judgemental do you consider yourself to be?

Verse 6 speaks of something that must have been very close to Jesus' heart. He obviously had a great concern that the Body of Christ, the Children of God, should present a good and right picture to those outside the Kingdom. How do you think the church sometimes "gives what is holy to the dogs"? Explain your reasons.

Read again verses 7 – 12. Once you have experienced the fact that God really does give us "good gifts" (the right equipping) to live as He wants us to; does this help you to stop judging other brothers and sisters in Christ? How can we encourage those who are young in their faith to understand how to receive from God all that they might need to serve Him in a manner that pleases Him?

### **SOMETHING TO DO AS A GROUP**

Verse 12 teaches us that to do to others what we would like them to do for us actually sums up the Law and the Prophets. Now, that's quite a statement. Why not copy this verse out, memorise it and put it either in your Bible or your pocket to help you live like Tom the Water baby did.

Or, simply, remember the name of Mrs DOASYOUWOULDBEDONEBY, and every time you begin to be judgemental remember Jesus' commandment.

### **PRAYER**

Father, as we remember how meek and loving Jesus was, and how He became so vulnerable that He was prepared to hang cursed on that tree; may we truly want to become like Him. Help us to relinquish any judgemental attitudes we might harbour, and grant us the grace to look at ourselves before ever we censure other people. May we learn to have the wisdom to come to You for all our supplies of Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Meekness and Self Control; particularly Self-Control. AMEN.

## 17: Kingdom Fruitfulness - Matthew 7:13-23

In this study we are thinking about fruitfulness in our kingdom LIFE and the passage in Matthew 7 v13-23 will highlight several aspects which we will consider a little later..

When Kingdom fruit is manifested in and through us, we are at our best - it is a sign of God's presence. If my life has the fruit of joy, it changes my perspective of everything; it bubbles over into others, and it fills our Heavenly Father with great pleasure. This applies not only to the fruit of the Spirit but the many other fruit mentioned in the Bible. When it is manifested in us it is GOOD fruit. This is what God intended from the beginning.

Jesus said: "By this is my Father glorified that you bring forth MUCH fruit and so show yourselves to be My disciples." I find it challenging to my commitment to Jesus –when I hear that the good type of fruitfulness brings my Heavenly Father glory. Is that not what it is all about.- glorifying Him!. So I ask myself; do I love Him enough to make sure that fruitfulness matters to me so that I can bring Him glory? It should. It should spur me on all the more to allow my life to change and please Him in every way .I know his way, when embraced, makes me whole.

But the challenge comes when I realise that as with everything in the Christian life there is a cost to the 'old self.' I have to come to the cross and yield up things that get in the way in order that His beauty might be seen in me through Kingdom fruitfulness.

It involves surrender, and resting in Jesus the Vine to be fruitful. To allow Jesus to supply the Holy Spirit to do His work through me.. No room for self-sufficiency here. To the cross that must go. John 15 4-6

It involves allowing our Heavenly Father the right and the power to rid me of the dead wood of unfruitful ways. I have to let Him have the heavenly pruning knife. How dear the dead wood seems sometimes, but it will never bear fruit ...only ugly decay; so He must be allowed to remove it. .John 15 1 The song says: "The dearest idol that I've known, whate'er that idol be' help me to tear it from Thy throne and worship only Thee" To the cross again!

It involves a dying to pride -for He says of the branch joined to Jesus the True Vine "for without me you can do nothing. "Ineffective in Kingdom purposes?..Well, yes ineffective. WITHOUT Jesus. He is my Life. John 15 5 The cross is the only way.

It involves allowing His WORD to penetrate deep into my heart and change my thinking and living. To let it abide there; to remain there.in the good soil of my redeemed heart and watered by prayer and the presence of the Holy Spirit to produce fruit for God.. John 15 7-10. See the very powerful promise.

So then, He looks for fruitful lives. It is His best for us. .His desire is for MUCH FRUIT and I want what He wants.

There is a wonderful promise given to Abraham which reflects God's heart for us all: "I will make you exceedingly fruitful....." May our hearts be warmed as God speaks to us..

**PLEASE READ\_** Matthew 17 verses 13-17 and John 15 verses 1-16

**PLAY THE DVD NOW**

**Questions for thought.**

- 1, How can we increase our fruitfulness if we feel it to be lacking in our lives?
- 2, What kind of fruit would you most like God to increase in you life?
3. Jesus said of the 'False prophets' "by their fruits you shall know them" What kind of fruit would make it clear that there is a problem?
4. As Christians we are 'Good Trees' (inwardly changed by faith in Jesus). How can we discover if we have some bad fruit from time to time? How easily can we remedy this?
5. In Colossians 1 v 10 Paul says that we can 'bear fruit in every good work'. How can we know if we are bearing good fruit in all we do?
6. In John 15 Jesus said that our Heavenly Father gets more glory when we bear more/much fruit (He says 'fruit' 'more fruit' 'much fruit').and Paul says we should try and find what pleases God. In what ways does it help to know that fruitfulness pleases/glorifies God?
7. In John 15, among other things, Jesus mentions the following aspects of being fruitful:
  - a .not going it alone v4
  - b. need for pruning v1-2
  - c. Abiding v5
  - d. keeping His word v7

Which if any do we find the hardest, and how can we help?

## 18: Kingdom Commitment - Matthew 7:24-29

We have come to the end of our long series in Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount.

- Share together for a few minutes some aspect that has stood out for you. What has been a helpful reminder? Is there something that you have specifically learnt?

### PLAY THE DVD

- Alan asks us to recall what your definition of the Kingdom of God was at the beginning of this series! Has your understanding changed at all as a result of our in-depth look at Jesus' teaching on Kingdom life?

As Jesus comes to the close of his message - he leaves his hearers with a story.

- Jesus was a powerful and effective communicator. He closes his message with a memorable story. Talk together for a few minutes on the power of story and why it is so effective as a communicating tool.

### It's all about hearing words!

Yet hearing words in Jewish understanding is much more profound than our understanding of words which we write or string together in sentences and therefore hear.

#### *Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine*

The daily Jewish confession of faith was the **Shema** (pronounced shmah). It is a word that means 'listen'. The Shema was recited daily by young and old – *Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one*. It was a daily affirmation of personal commitment to God that expressed the desire to love God wholeheartedly. It was this command that Jesus expanded upon with his link to *'love your neighbour as yourself'*.

This was the Torah, which we translate 'law'; it really means 'teaching'.

There was to be a hearing and a doing. Shema means more than just hearing words but listening intently, and doing of those words in obedience.

Jesus therefore declares not only the need to *hear these words of mine* (but to go further) **and put them into practice**.

Take a look at the response of the people to Moses' words (Exodus 24:7) *'then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people...'*

And the response of the people – *'We will do everything the Lord has said, we will obey.'*

Remember how the phrase *'Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear'* is often

repeated in scripture.

It crops up in the famous parable of the seeds, another story that Jesus told (Mark 4:3-20). The need was for the seed to fall into good soil in order to grow and get established. The implication is that in hearing and obeying we live out the word of the Torah, and Jesus is the living Torah.

In the parable, it is our hearts that are pictured in the various soils. In this final parable of the two houses at the end of the Sermon on the Mount we have the equivalent of the soil in the parable of the seeds.

**Two men who build two similar houses. The houses represent the lives of two people with different values, aspirations and beliefs. The focus is on the two distinctive foundations (sand and stone) that bring about two results. It is an incredibly simply story but with a powerful application. We are all in the construction business!**

- How do you see Jesus talking here not about material construction but the spiritual construction in our lives? We are all building, whether we recognise it or not, but the challenge is - how are we building?
- What do we learn from the contrast that Jesus makes with the wise and foolish builders? What is the real difference between the two builders?
- In what way are we to 'dig down deep' into the knowledge and understanding of God and his ways? How for instance does our grasp of Christian doctrine establish a stable foundation?  
This is where it is good to get a book like Jim Packer's *Knowing God*. It is a brilliant little book to help to grasp some of the key doctrines and build on the rock foundation of knowing God and strengthening our relationship with God in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- In what way do the 'storms' place a significant pressure upon our lives? Both faced the same storm - one was prepared, and the other unprepared. How can we make sure our foundations are adequate to ride out the storms?
- What can be some of the storms? – Alan mentioned a few in his talk.

Jesus said that in the world we would face tribulation—trials and suffering are guaranteed to touch us in some way. Paul testifies to a long catalogue of personal suffering for the gospel.

**The Sermon on the Mount is not just about entering the Kingdom but living in the Kingdom and allowing the Kingdom Life to frame all we say and do.**

We need to 'hear' and 'go on hearing' the word of God and allow that word to be the truth that becomes the foundation of our lives.

It is the wise man who listens to Jesus' words, allows those words to take root in their life by putting them into practice.

- Look at some of these verses - Romans 2:13; James 1:22-25; 2:14-20; 1 John 1:6

**Chuck Swindoll** challenges us from this section of scripture - 'Step back and take another look at the life you're building. How solid is it? How safe is it from the storms of life? Where are you most vulnerable to a washout? What could shore up that foundation? Take some time now to go before your Father with these questions and concerns, for He is the Master Builder and holds the blueprints for your life.'

**The final verses** summarize the remarkable response to Jesus' message.

There was a sense of amazement by those who heard Jesus speak and it was based on the way ***he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.***'

The amazement toward Jesus' words does not mean acceptance of those words and the full application of the truth.

May we through our extensive study of the Sermon on the Mount, be constantly amazed at Jesus' words as we apply them and live constantly building on the deep foundation.

A final reflection from **Phillip Greenslade's** little commentary on the Sermon on the Mount.

"How, then, does the Sermon on the Mount leave you?

I agree with the student who said at the end of Darrell Johnson's (professor at Regent's College, Vancouver) powerful lectures on the sermon: 'I can go to only one place in the Sermon - back to the beginning - and confess to being "poor in spirit".' To which Darrell Johnson replied: 'yes, and I stand there with you. I remind you only of this: that Jesus says to you "Blessings on you poor in spirit...the kingdom is yours."'





# 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, Laurie Martin & Mike Haywood

<b>Study 10 Kingdom Lifestyle—Loving enemies</b> (Matt 5:38-48)	<b>Keith</b>
<b>Study 11 Kingdom Giving</b> (Matt 6:1-4)	<b>Laurie</b>
<b>Study 12 Kingdom Praying</b> (Matt 6:5-15)	<b>Mavis</b>
<b>Study 13 Kingdom Fasting</b> (Matt 6:16-18)	<b>Mike</b>
<b>Study 14 Kingdom Ambition</b> (Matt 6:19-24)	<b>Alan</b>
<b>Study 15 Kingdom Security</b> (Matt 6:25-34)	<b>Mike</b>
<b>Study 16 Kingdom Relationships</b> (Matt 7:1-12)	<b>Mavis</b>
<b>Study 17 Kingdom Fruitfulness</b> (Matt 7:13-23)	<b>Laurie</b>
<b>Study 18 Kingdom Commitment</b> (Matt 7:24-29)	<b>Alan</b>

The series is complemented by the Sunday Sermons that Alan will be preaching on the Lord's Prayer

**LET'S PRAY AS JESUS PRAYED**

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

[www.wbc-ashford.org.uk](http://www.wbc-ashford.org.uk)