

LIFE GROUP

Leader Guide

PT 2

20 **GOD** 26

FIRST

MATTHEW 6:33



NAME _____

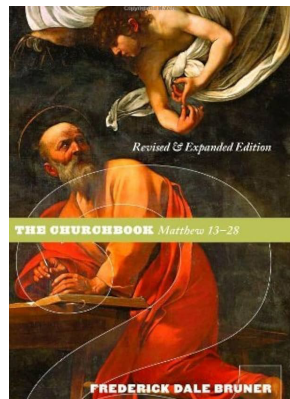


wentzville
CHRISTIAN CHURCH

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COMMENTARY FOR THIS MATTHEW STUDY



LETTER FROM ALEX

Hey WCC family,

I hope you've been enjoying our God-First series! One of my takeaways from this study is how practical and relevant Jesus' sermon still is today. It feels like his words could have been written yesterday! My prayer for your groups is that you will continue to be convicted by the Holy Spirit and drawn into the journey and joy of a God-First life.

The second half of this study will feel a little different. In part one, we studied Matthew 5, which primarily focuses on the what of the Christian life: what should we be doing if we want to live God-First. Chapter 6 focuses on the how. How do we live God-first? Jesus doesn't want us just doing what is right. He wants us to do it in the right way. Your group will spend a lot of time self-examining your heart, making sure you are living a God-First life in the right way.

Chapter 7 summarizes the sermon and then concludes with a series of warnings. We need to take these chapters seriously! Christ starts this message with the Beattitudes, an uplifting call to live a life of mercy. Chapter 7 concludes with a serious warning of what happens when we don't live a God-First life. If we take the sermon's contents seriously, we are building our lives on the rock and can withstand any storm. If we ignore them, we are building our lives on sand, ready to be blown over by any storm that comes. It's challenging stuff!

Enjoy the rest of this series. I can't wait to hear how God moves within your groups over the next month and a half. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to reach out to me at alex@wentzvillecc.org.

Thanks Everyone!
Alex Goff
Discipleship Minister

START TALKING (OPENING QUESTIONS)

1. Share about a time when you witnessed someone doing the right thing for the wrong reason. (For example: Someone recording a video of themselves feeding the homeless to get views on their social media.)
2. Why is our heart-motivation important when talking about doing good works? What is the danger of someone whose heart is in the wrong place?

START THINKING (DIGGING INTO THE TEXT)

1. At the start of Matthew 6, Jesus lays out three sets of teaching discussing how we can find ourselves doing the right thing for the wrong reason. The first good work Jesus teaches is charity. Have someone read Matthew 6:1. What is the good work mentioned and how are people misconstruing it?
 - a. The NIV uses the word seen in verse one. The Greek word for seen is the word theathênai, which is where we get the word theater. Jesus is talking about a theatrical righteousness in which you attempt to do dramatic, noticeable good.
2. Read Matthew 6:2-4. According to Jesus, what is the right way to practice this righteous act of charity?
 - a. Instead of making a scene when we practice charitable acts toward one another, we should strive instead to give secretly. It's not about us. When Jesus says, "Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing," he's advocating that we keep our minds off ourselves. Our charity (one hand) should not be linked to our perception of ourselves (the other hand).
3. Read Matthew 6:5-8. According to these four verses, what is the wrong way to pray?
 - a. Similar to the discussion on charity, praying to bring attention to oneself at most will only bring the reward of earthly attention. In verse seven, Christ addresses babbling prayers. In Jesus' time, certain pagan religions taught that prayer had to be long and drawn out in order to get your gods attention. Thankfully, the one true God knows what we need before we say it!
4. Reread Matthew 6:5-8. According to these four verses, what is the right way to pray and what reward does praying in that way bring?
 - a. God rewards our time of secret prayer. These moments bring life as we commune with our Heavenly Father and focus on him exclusively. Not only that, God wants to spend this time with us. We don't need to pray over and over to get His attention.

Note: The majority of our study will focus on the heart behind our righteous acts. We are not going to be focusing on the Lord's Prayer in verses 9-15. If you are interested in diving deeper into the Lord's Prayer, scan this QR code to access our study on the Lord's Prayer from our Bold Prayers series.



5. Read Matthew 6:16-18. How do these three verses tie back to the earlier themes laid out in Matthew 6.
 - a. God rewards our time of secret prayer. These moments bring life as we commune with certain religious figures in Jesus' day would perform while fasting: disheveling their hair, and disfiguring their faces. While the act of fasting is good, we shouldn't approach this practice with the goal of bringing attention to ourselves.

START SHARING (APPLYING THE TEXT)

1. This danger of self-focus can go beyond just charity, prayer, and fasting. Read the list of practices below and discuss how the danger of self-focus can sneak in.
 - a. A volunteer in the worship ministry leading on a song on Sunday.
 - b. A Sunday School teacher teaching a large class of people.
 - c. Someone who consistently gives offerings to their church.
2. Are there moments in your own faith journey where you struggle with self-focus? These are moments when you spend more time thinking about yourself rather than God. What does it look like for you?
3. What are ways you can grow in self-forgetfulness?

START DOING (LIVING OUT THE TEXT)

1. This week, commit to doing one of the three practices mentioned earlier (charity, prayer, or fasting). Keep your commitment to yourself, do it in secret, and be intentional about communing with God during and after the practice.

START PRAYING (PRAYING IN LIGHT OF THE TEXT)

1. Ask your group for prayer requests. Include in your requests our mission partner: Love the Lou. Love the Lou is a community development initiative that connects resources to the needs of St. Louis. During the constant process of growth and development, they strive to see St. Louis restored through transforming actions. Their goal is to live out Matthew 6:1-4, taking care of the needy within the city.

START TALKING

1. Share with your group a moment in your childhood or teenage years when you saved money for a long-time in order to purchase something. How long did you save and what did you buy?
2. With the items that everyone just shared, discuss what the state of those items are currently. For example, the first car you saved money to buy may be at a junk yard now!

START THINKING

1. Today, we are going to be talking about treasures and specifically the difference between storing up treasures on Earth and in Heaven. Read Matthew 6:19. Why is Jesus advocating against storing treasures on Earth? What happens to the earthly treasures we buy?
 - a. The hard reality of life is that no matter how shiny or enticing a toy, tool, or device may be, in the end, it will deteriorate over time. The things that so often capture our attention will one day fade, break, or be taken away.
2. Read Matthew 6:20-21 and Mark 10:17-22. What do these two teaching moments teach us about treasures in heaven?
 - a. Treasures in heaven are what endure beyond this life. When you give to the poor, it can make an eternal impact in their story. When you invest in the mission of God, it can change the trajectory of someone's eternal destiny.
3. Read Matthew 6:22-23. Read it again, but replace the word "body" with the word "life" and the word "eye" for the word "goal." In the NIV, it should look like this: The GOAL is the LIFE of the body. If your GOALS are healthy, your whole LIFE will be full of light. But if your GOALS are unhealthy, your whole LIFE will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness! With these changes, how do these verses connect back to Matthew 6: 19-21?
 - a. Our goals determine our life. If we make a goal of only storing up earthly treasures, ultimately our life in the grand scheme of time will be fruitless. If we make our goal living a God-first life, then our life can make an eternal difference in this world!

START SHARING

1. Matthew 6:24 says, "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money." (NIV) What does a life look like when it's devoted to serving money? Can you think of examples of this type of life within our world?
2. Oftentimes, the root of storing up earthly treasures is discontentment. On a contentment scale of 1-10, where would you place yourself (1 being never content and 10 being consistently content)? What is getting in the way of you having a higher number?
3. Pretend that Jesus is invited over to your home. While there, he points at an item you own and encourages you to sell it and give the money to the poor. Is there an item that you own that you would struggle giving up?

START DOING

1. This week, walk around your home and ask the Holy Spirit to bring to mind items that you can sell this week. Do your best to listen intently and not push off promptings no matter how severe they may be. Once you have those items in mind, work to sell them as soon as possible. With the money you raise, donate it back to WCC's Bold Future Campaign. You can donate to the Bold Future Campaign by going to our website. These donations will go toward expanding our building, which will allow us to invite more people and expand God's Kingdom in our community.

START PRAYING

1. Ask your group for prayer requests. Include in your requests our mission partner: Nathan and Amy Tuley. The Tuleys work with Pioneer Bible Translators; a mission centered on storing up treasures in heaven. Pioneer Bible Translators exists to disciple the Bibleless, mobilizing God's people to provide enduring access to God's Word. Their vision is to see transformed lives through God's Word in every language. Nathan and Amy work with all of PBT through the website, IT, and editing so the gospel can be shared with the world.

Note: Next week, your group time will look a little different. Read the intro to week nine's lesson and explain to your group what they will be doing next week.

Note: Today, your life group material will look a little different. Your group will be participating in a prayer experience this week. We are encouraging all group members, if able, to fast 24 hours leading up to your group's session.

If they aren't able to fast from food, consider fasting from something else (sugar, social media, news, etc.) Your group will participate in 20 minutes of group prayer and then you will spread out and do 25 minutes of individual prayer scattered around your meeting place.

Go slow through this! Take your time, listen, and open your ears to God speaking. After praying, get together to debrief what God was laying on your heart.

GROUP PRAYER (20 MINUTES)

1. Read Matthew 6:25-27 out loud as a group.
2. Silent Reflection.
3. Responsive Group Prayer: anyone can jump in and pray what God is laying on their heart from this passage.
4. Read Matthew 6:28-32 out loud as a group.
5. Silent Reflection.
6. Responsive Group Prayer: anyone can jump in and pray what God is laying on their heart from this passage.
7. Read Matthew 6:33-34.
8. Silent Reflection.
9. Responsive Group Prayer: anyone can jump in and pray what God is laying on their heart from this passage.

INDIVIDUAL PRAYER (25 MINUTES)

1. In prayer, we are led by the Holy Spirit to look deeper: deeper into the truth of His Word and deeper into our own hearts as He reveals to us those areas which we have attempted to hide away from His view and the view of others. Take time to allow Him to speak by His Word and by His Spirit as you journey deeper.

DIVINE READING

1. **Read:** Don't give in to the temptation to simply glance over these passages, some of which may be very familiar to you. Take time to read them and, in turn, allow them to read you. You may find it helpful to read each passage a few times, pausing each time before reading, and asking God to speak the truth of each word to your heart.
2. **Reflect:** After reading, allow time and space to reflect or ponder in your heart what you have just read. Allow God's Word to become His Word to you and illuminate the deep truth of the text by the Holy Spirit.
3. **Pray:** After you've read and reflected on the passage, move on to prayer. Through your spoken and written word, dedicate the truth of His Word to Him in your heart.
4. **Contemplate:** Contemplate on the truth of what has been revealed through His Word. God speaks: take time, listen, wait, and rest in the reality of His presence and the fullness of His love.
 - a. Scripture Reading: Philippians 4:6-7
 - b. Silent Reflection
 - c. Prayer and Journaling
 - d. John 14:25-27
 - e. Silent Reflection
 - f. Prayer and Journaling
 - g. 1 Peter 5:6-7
 - h. Silent Reflection
 - i. Prayer and Journaling

DEBRIEF

1. What do you feel like God laid on your heart through this prayer experience?
2. Is He calling you to start, stop, or change something about your life?

START TALKING

1. **We're going to start our lesson today by reading two hypothetical scenarios. The hope is that by the end of our study today, we will be able to give Biblical answers to each scenario.**
 - a. Scenario One: Dale, a leader of a life group, tells Marsha, a group member, that she can't invite her neighbor to church because of the public baggage and gossip associated with her neighbor's lifestyle choices.
 - B. Scenario Two: Dale, a leader of a life group, is moving to another state. Looking for someone to lead the group, he invites Marsha's neighbor to lead even though she's never been to church.
2. **Today we are going to be talking about judgement and discernment. If you had to try and define those two words, what would you say?**
3. **A common argument against Christians is that they are "judgmental" or "always imposing their views on others." Before we talk about the validity of this label, why do you think Christians have earned this label?**

START THINKING

1. **Read Matthew 7:1-2. What reason does Jesus give here to avoid judging others?**
 - a. Jesus is reminding the listeners that they will be judged by the same standard they apply to others. One of the reasons we are called to offer mercy (5:7) is because God shows mercy to us.
2. **Read Matthew 7:3-5. What do these verses reveal about human tendency? What do we have a tendency to do when evaluating ourselves and the others around us?**
 - a. Commentary from Commentaries: It is a law that we consistently undervalue the size of our own faults and overvalue the size of others.
3. **If Jesus stopped there, the listener could assume that all acts of evaluating someone are wrong. Read Hebrews 5:14, John 7:24, and Matthew 10:14 and 16. What do these verses seem to be communicating about discernment?**

- a. While believers are called to avoid judgement, we are also called to be discerning. As Christians, we don't want to be naive, blindly assuming that there is never a problem with any person or their character.

4. **With the previous three verses in mind, read Matthew 7:6. What do you think Jesus is saying here?**

- a. Christ is caveating what he just said in Matthew 7:1-5. While Christians are called to avoid judgement, that doesn't mean we drop discernment. A discerning person would know that it's unwise to give a dog something sacred or a pearl to a pig.

START SHARING

1. **Going back to our earlier acknowledgement that Christians may have the label of "judgmental", how can Christians grow knowing this label exists (using Matthew 7:1-5)?**
2. **Can you think of moments in your life where you had to use discernment with a relationship? What merited your discernment?**
3. **How do these six verses communicate the importance of grace AND truth?**
4. **Reread the two earlier scenarios and discuss a Biblical way to navigate them using Matthew 7:1-6.**

START DOING

1. **Take an inventory of your life and faith. Are there any logs that need to be removed? Spend some time in prayer asking God to bring to mind areas where you may be blind.**

START PRAYING

1. **Ask your group for prayer requests. Include in your requests our mission partner: Habitat for Humanity. Habitat for Humanity of St. Charles County believes that everyone deserves to have a safe and affordable place to live and raise a family. To that end, they build more than homes, they build communities and provide educational programs and support to ensure homeownership sustainability.**

START TALKING

1. What's a silly hot take you believe that goes against the majority? (For example: Pineapple on pizza is delicious!)
2. Do you personally struggle with going against the majority? Why or why not?

START THINKING

1. Today, we will discuss this truth that living a God-first life and following Jesus puts us in the minority. Read Matthew 7:13-14. What words or phrases stick out to you within these two verses?
 - a. The gate is narrow in the sense that Jesus alone is the gate. He is the only path toward life. "Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me'" (John 14:6). All other paths of life ultimately lead to destruction.
2. Jesus concludes the Sermon on the Mount by discussing three warnings. Three dangers that can pull us off the narrow road. We will discuss the first two today and look at the last warning next week. Read Matthew 7:15-20. Based on these verses, what are some defining traits of false prophets?
 - a. False prophets, while having the appearance of a Christ-follower, are ultimately wolves who pull us away from Jesus. The way to spot a wolf is by looking at the fruit of their life. Are they surrendered to the will of God living a God-First life like the one we see in the Sermon on the Mount?)
3. In the next three verses, Jesus describes people who think they are on the narrow road but are surprisingly left out of the Kingdom of Heaven. Read Matthew 7:21-23.
4. These verses seem to be communicating that it's possible to work for Jesus while not living under him. Describe scenarios where someone's life can look like this.

5. On its own, our text today can communicate the idea that our salvation is dependent on our works. Read John 5:22-24. What do these three verses communicate about salvation and how can you reconcile them with what Matthew 7:21-23 says about eternity?
 - a. Our salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone. The evidence of our salvation is a life submitted under the rule and reign of Jesus. For someone who does work for Jesus but never actually surrenders to Him, they missed what it means to believe in Jesus. Their heart still refuses to walk the narrow road.

START SHARING

1. Jesus relates our experience of following him as a narrow road. The ESV translation of Matthew 7:14 says, "For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life." In what ways have you experienced the difficulty of following Jesus along the narrow road?
2. The New Testament speaks about the danger of false prophets and false teachers. As a group, develop five strategies for spotting false teachers. Put the five reasons below.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
 - e.
3. In what ways have you been tempted to work for Jesus but not live under him? What would it look like for you specifically to live a more surrendered life?

START DOING

1. Evaluate the relationships within your family, friends, coworkers, and neighbors. Is there a way you've found yourself blending in within your relationships? What do you need to do differently to take the narrow road?

START PRAYING

1. Ask your group for prayer requests. Include in your requests our mission partner: Tim and Amy Maxson. The Maxsons work at Fellowship Dubai church in the Middle East and are making disciples of migrant workers. Their faith walking the narrow road stands out in a culture living differently. Pray that God would use them to continue expanding God's Kingdom throughout Dubai.

Note: As we wrap up our God-First sermon series, our final life group lesson will look a little different. Jesus concludes his Sermon on the Mount with a warning. He compares two different types of believers: one who hears the Word and responds and one who hears but does not act.

The Sermon on the Mount has been filled with calls to action. Your group is going to reread the Sermon on the Mount making a list of action steps that they feel God is calling them to take.

Follow the instructions below to lead your group through this experience.

1. **Read Matthew 7:24-27.**
2. **Notice that both the wise and foolish builders are ones that hear Jesus' words. What does that tell us about who the target audience is for these verses?**
3. **Individually, read Matthew 5. As you read the chapter, write below verses, phrases, or words that stuck out to you.**
4. **Going back over the verses, phrases, or words you wrote down, what action step could you take to obey Jesus' Words here? Write your answer below.**
5. **As a group, discuss what you wrote down and what action steps you can take.**

6. **Repeat steps 3-5 with chapters six and seven.**

7. **Finally, looking at all of the action steps you wrote down, pick one to apply to your life over the next two weeks. Have your group keep you accountable for this goal.**

8. **Close in prayer.**

Note: Your groups will be taking a two week break over Palm Sunday and Easter. Starting on April 12th, your group will be starting a three-week life-group series through heaven to wrap up the Spring. Remind your group of these dates and come up with a way to keep your group accountable in the goals they set of living a God-first life.

