

A vertical poster featuring a sunset over a city skyline. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a bright reflection on the water in the foreground. The sky is filled with soft, white clouds. A silhouette of a bird is in flight in the upper right quadrant. The text is overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif font.

**FOLLOWING**  
**JESUS**  
**INTO HIS**  
**SERMON ON THE MOUNT**

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# **FOLLOWING JESUS INTO HIS SERMON ON THE MOUNT**

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**“Discipleship is not an offer that  
[a person] makes to Christ.”**

**- Dietrich Bonhoeffer**  
*The Cost of Discipleship*

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

**– Matthew 7:28-29**

Introduction  
Darrell Johnson

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Over the next few months, we are in for a very challenging and transforming experience. We are going to meet together at the feet of the smartest, wisest, most merciful person who has ever lived. We are going to sit at the feet of Jesus of Nazareth and listen to Him preach His now famous Sermon on the Mount, recorded for us by the former tax collector Matthew in chapters 5 to 7 of his Gospel.

No other “sayings” have impacted the human situation the way Jesus’ “sayings” have. Whenever they have been taken seriously there has been a powerful release of new life, Kingdom life, affecting every dimension of our existence. No one can live for long in Jesus’ Sermon without being changed. And as I trust you will discover, the change engendered by His Sermon is toward becoming more truly human.

This Connection Group study guide is designed to work alongside the series of sermons I will be preaching Sunday mornings, January 8 through May 6 of 2012. This study guide will serve for the first six weeks of the series. The suggested format for interaction around specific texts assumes you have heard the sermon on the text(s) the previous Sunday.

Do not worry about “finishing all the questions.” The questions are offered as a way to help you, as a group, engage Jesus in His sermon. It is very likely that each group will actually end up grappling with different issues of discipleship that will emerge as you study and pray together.



It is crucial to keep two essential factors before you throughout the series.

One, the Person of the Preacher. Jesus' Sermon emerges out of His Person, out of His heart and mind, out of His vision of who we are and what the world is like and can be. Separate the Sermon from the Preacher and the Sermon loses its vitality and attraction. This suggests to me that it would be good for your Connection Group to begin each time together in worship, simply declaring again Who Jesus is.

Two, the Context of the Sermon. The Sermon only "works" because of the context in which Jesus preaches it. Separate the Sermon from the context, and the "sayings" become either frustrating idealism on the one hand, or oppressive legalism on the other hand. The context is Jesus' announcing His Gospel: "The kingdom of God has come near." Separate the Sermon from the good news of the arrival and in-breaking of the Kingdom, and the Sermon becomes an unrealistic ideal that we simply can never achieve, or it becomes something we feel we have to accomplish in order to know the King and His reign. This suggests to me that it would be good each time to have someone announce the Gospel again!

Here we go!



**“When Christ calls a [person], He bids [them] come and die.”**

**– Dietrich Bonhoeffer**  
*The Cost of Discipleship*

Study 1  
Matthew 4:12-5:1

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## **Study 1**

Last Sunday Jesus preached His Sermon “live” through Darrell.

What stood out to you?

What especially grabbed you?

What bothered you?

What made you say, “Whoa, I don’t know about that”?

What questions came to your mind?

Darrell emphasized how critical it is to keep hearing Jesus' Sermon in the original context in which He preached it. So in this first study, focus together on how Matthew describes the setting in 4:12-5:1.

Q1. 4:12-16.

What does Matthew's quoting Isaiah tell you about the context?

What does this suggest about how we are to hear/read Jesus' Sermon?

Q2. 4:17.

What does the word “repent” mean to you?

What does this suggest about how we are to hear/read the Sermon?

What does “is at hand,” or, “come near,” mean to you?

What does this suggest about how we are to hear/read the Sermon?

What does “Kingdom of Heaven” mean to you?  
(Same as “Kingdom of God”).

How does this understanding affect our listening to the Sermon?

Q3. 4:18-25.

This section describes some of the initial signs of the Kingdom.

List all the signs that Matthew names.

Where do you see signs of the Kingdom in our day?

Why do you think we do not seem to see more?



Q4. 5:1.

What does the fact that Jesus sits down on a mountain suggest about the Sermon?

That is, who in Biblical history might be being recalled, and what does this mean for who Jesus is and what His sermon is?

How does what you have studied together now shape the way you want to live tomorrow?

*Pray for one another along these lines.*



**“The first time I read the Beatitudes nothing makes sense; the second time I read them, nothing else makes sense!”**

**– G.K. Chesterton**

Study 2  
Matthew 5:1-12

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## **Study 2**

The focus for our time together is the opening section of Jesus' great Sermon. It is the section most people have heard; it is certainly the section most well-known.

Read together Matthew 5:1-12. Initial reactions:

Which Beatitude is most attractive to you today?

Which Beatitude is least attractive to you today?

Further reflection:

Q1. Darrell argued last Sunday that the word “Blessed,” in Greek ‘*makarios*,’ is wrongly rendered, “Happy.” Why? What is the basic meaning of the word?

Q2. He suggested that we can render it, “Right on,” or “Right side up,” or, “In sync.” Which of these makes best sense to you? Why? Can you think of yet another way of making the point?

Q3. Notice that the whole package of the Beatitudes is bracketed by “theirs is the kingdom” (verses 3 and 9). Why is this important?

Q4. Walk through each of the eight Beatitudes and suggest why each is a sign of or manifestation of the arrival and in-breaking of the Kingdom in and because of Jesus.

Q5. Walk through each of the eight “Blessings” (i.e. comfort, mercy, etc.) and suggest why each is a sign or manifestation of the Kingdom.

Q6. Where do you see “Beatitude-ness” in your life? Where do you want to see it?

*Pray together along these lines.*





**“Christians are ordinary people making  
extra-ordinary claims.”**

**– S. Radha Krishnan**

Study 3  
Matthew 5:13-16

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## **Study 3**

Briefly name some of the extra-ordinary claims we make about Jesus.

It is also true that Jesus makes extra-ordinary claims about those who know and follow Him!

Briefly name some of those claims.

Focus in your time together on the claims He makes about us in His Sermon, in Matthew 5:13-16.

Q1. What would people of the first century think about when they heard the word “salt”?

Q2. What would they think when they heard the word “light”?

Q3. What is Jesus saying about His disciples, His community, in claiming that they/we are “the salt of the earth.” What role(s) or function(s) is He claiming we are to play on the earth?

Q4. What is Jesus saying about us in claiming that we are “the light of the world?” What role(s) or functions(s) is He claiming we are to play in the world?

Q5. Where do you see this actually happening in our city?

Q6. Where does it need to happen?

Q7. Where is it not happening? And what does that suggest to you about our church?

*Pray together along these lines.*



**“Cheap grace is the grace we bestow on ourselves. Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession . . . Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.”**

**– Dietrich Bonhoeffer**  
*The Cost of Discipleship*

Study 4  
Matthew 5:17-20

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## **Study 4**

We focus now on what has been called “the theological hinge” of Jesus’ Sermon. For the rest of His Sermon, “righteousness” will be the key theme.

Read Matthew 5:17-20. Initial impressions:  
Notice how Jesus speaks of Himself in this text.

Notice how Jesus expresses His agenda for His ministry.



Deeper study:

In the first century, the term “Law” would be used in three senses:

- the sacrificial – animal sacrifice for atonement, etc.
- the ceremonial – food laws, etc.
- the ethical – the Ten Commandments, case laws, etc.

Q1. How does Jesus “fulfill” the sacrificial law?

Q2. How does Jesus “fulfill” the ceremonial law?

Q3. How does Jesus “fulfill” the ethical law?

Read Psalm 19 together.

Q4. Why does the Psalmist love God's law?

Q5. How would you express this to our contemporaries who, for the most part, are suspicious of "law"?

Q6. How do you read Matthew 5:20? In particular, how do you take the word “surpass” or “exceed”? How do you feel about what Jesus says?

Q7. The term “righteousness” means “right-relationship.” Does this help you understand what Jesus is getting at?

Q9. Where do you want to grow in “right-relationship”?

*Pray together along these lines.*



**“The followers of Christ have been called to peace . . . and they must not only have peace but also make it. And to that end they renounce all violence and tumult.**

**In the cause of Christ nothing is to be gained by such methods . . . His disciples keep the peace by choosing to endure suffering themselves rather than inflict it on others. They maintain fellowship where others would break it off. They renounce hatred and wrong. In so doing they over-come evil with good, and establish the peace of God in the midst of a world of war and hate.”**

**– Dietrich Bonhoeffer**  
*The Cost of Discipleship*

Study 5  
Matthew 5:21-26

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## Study 5

In the text of His Sermon on the Mount we consider today, Jesus now begins to spell out what He means by coming to “fulfill” the Law and the Prophets (5:17). What He says reveals just how much He knows about us and where we live!

Read together Matthew 5:21-26.

Remember: when Jesus says, “but I say to you,” He is not setting Himself against the Law as we have it in the Ten Commandments. Rather, He is speaking to distorted understandings of the Law.

Q1. In what way(s) were people of the 1st century playing games with the command not to murder? In what way(s) do we in the 21st century do this?

Q2. What does being angry have to do with murder? That is, why would Jesus quote the command about murder and then think right away about anger?

Q3. Note the escalation in the text, from the serious to the more serious. Why does this happen?

Q4. What does Jesus call us to do with our anger?

Can you share a time you did what He said to do?

How did it go?

Q5. Why does He call us to do it “quickly”? What are the consequences if we do not act “quickly”?

Q6. Why do we resist Jesus on this? And what can we do about it?



Remember again the context – the Kingdom has come!

*Pray for one another for courage to obey Him.*



**“I cannot keep a bird from flying over my head.  
But I can certainly keep it from nesting in my  
hair or from biting my nose off.”**

**– Martin Luther**

Study 6  
Matthew 5:27-30

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## Study 6

Given that what Jesus says in this text and the content we will consider in this study goes to sensitive places in our hearts, it may be beneficial to do the study in two phases. First, together as men and women; then men with men, women with women.

Read Matthew 5:27-30.

Q1. Do you see any connection between what Jesus says about murder-anger and what He says about adultery-lust? Or ask it this way: why would talking about murder-anger then lead Jesus to talk about adultery-lust? Clue: “righteousness” as “right-relationship.”

Q2. Do you think it is harder for us in the 21st century to follow Jesus on this than it was for people of the 1st century? Why or why not?

Q3. There is a fine line between “appreciation” and “lust.” What is the difference? And where is that line? Is it the same for all people? Is it the same for both sexes?

Q4. How are we to take Jesus’ prescription for lust? Actually pluck out our eye? Or is He saying something else? If so, what is He saying? And how might we live it out as rigorously as we would if we literally plucked out an eye?

**Men with men, women with women.**

Q1. What are the unique struggles we have with this issue?

Q2. Under what conditions is this struggle most fierce for you?

Q3. How can we pray for you right now?

Q4. Is there anything to which you would like us to hold you accountable?

*Pray for one another.*

*“Purify my heart, touch me with Your cleansing fire;  
Take me to the cross, Your holiness is my desire.  
Breathe Your life in me, kindle the love that flows from Your throne.  
Oh, purify my heart, purify my heart.”*

**Notes:**





**Notes:**