



## THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

*Lesson 5 – Study Questions*

*Matthew 7:1-29; 8:1-13*

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**Review:** *From your experience at the Cornerstone meeting last week, share something that helped build your faith.*

**NOTE:** Today's lesson includes the final chapter of the three in Matthew that record Jesus' words from the Sermon on the Mount. Luke provides a much shorter version that is referred to as the Sermon on the Plain (see [Luke 6:17-49](#)). Although the Bible is silent as to the exact location of the Sermon on the Mount, tradition indicates that it was given on Mt. Eremos, now referred to as the Mount of the Beatitudes ([Matthew 5:3-12](#)). It is positioned on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee between the cities of Gennesaret and Capernaum.

### DAY ONE

Read Matthew 7:1-6

1. Matthew 7 begins with the command "Stop judging, that you may not be judged." Jesus is not forbidding all judgments; rather, he is referring to hypocritical fault-finding. Have you recognized yourself being judgmental and what steps are you taking to avoid it in the future?

**NOTE:** Jesus is targeting our tendency to belittle others or to "criticize harshly or unfairly, without sympathy and understanding." Judgmental statements about other people set up a vicious cycle. "Gossipers become targets of gossip; critics must face being criticized, and so forth," Hans Dieter Betz points out. *Perotta*

2. In verse 2 we are warned that our actions come back to us in the same measure as they are given. Share an example of this from personal experience or observation.

**NOTE:** Regarding [Matthew 7:1](#), the Bible tells us to correct others and to help them grow on the basis of a recognition of the objective evil of their actions ([Matthew 18:15](#)), but without making judgments about their responsibility and culpability ([Luke 6:37](#)). Our personal experience...will teach us to be patient and compassionate with others, and to find ways of fostering their trust, their openness, and their readiness to grow. *Pope Francis*

3. Select and record one of the following verses that emphasizes the Lord's power as our ultimate judge.

Isaiah 33:22

2 Corinthians 5:10

Revelation 19:11

4. Read verses 3-5 in which we are told to correct our own lives (plank in the eye) before we try to correct the lives of others (splinter in the other's eye). What do you see as the key word in verse 5 that Jesus uses to describe self-righteous people?

**NOTE: Matthew 7:6 is considered a transitional verse and is, as our Commentary states, somewhat enigmatic. Refer to the Commentary, page 47, for further insights.**

5. CONNECTION: Being on the receiving end of judgment or criticism can be tough. Even constructive criticism may be hard to receive. However, there are times when good may come from a caring critique. Can you share a time when accepting criticism taught you something about yourself?

Read and record Colossians 3:16 and begin your prayer today asking that you open your heart to God's voice before you admonish or correct others.

## **DAY TWO**

**Read Matthew 7:7-12**

6. In verses 7-8 Jesus urges us to "ask, seek, and knock." What are God's promises to those who follow Jesus' urgings?

Ask-

Seek-

Knock-

7. Can you share an experience when you feel you received an answer to your prayers that clearly reflected the will of God?

**THINK:** In her “Letter Lessons,” Servant of God, Cora Louise Evans, shared this thought regarding knocking as a metaphor for prayer: “The master invited us all to knock, but there are many differences in the ways of knocking.” Think about the different ways you “knock” when speaking with God in prayer.

8. We love to give children gifts, usually knowing their wants and needs just as our gracious Father knows ours. In response to our prayers God will give us good things, according to his divine will. Record one of the following verses on prayer in alignment with God’s will:

Psalm 143:10

Matthew 26:39

1 John 5:14-15

9. In verse 12 Jesus presents the “Golden Rule” which follows Old Testament teaching, but extends it even further. Compare Matthew 7:12 to Leviticus 19:18 and comment on how you see Jesus’ teaching challenging us to go even further in showing goodness to others.

**NOTE:** The Golden Rule is similar to statements in the Old Testament (Tobit 4:15; Sirach 31:15) and other worldly religions. While normally a negative statement (based upon not doing to others) Jesus states it positively (CCC1970). *Ignatius Study Bible*

10. CONNECTION: “Treat others the way we want God to treat us. If we want God to bless us, we must bless others. If we want God to forgive us, we must forgive others. If we want God’s mercy we must show mercy. It’s that simple: simple, but not easy.” (*Living the Golden Rule, WCU Catholic Campus Ministry, 2022*). Share with your small group something you could do in the next week to fulfill the Golden Rule.

Living according to the Golden Rule is not always easy, but as Saint John Paul II said, “Remember that you are never alone, Christ is with you on your journey every day of your life!” Let this thought lead you into grateful prayer.

### **DAY THREE**

**Read Matthew 7:13-20**

**NOTE:** The Sermon ends with a series of antitheses (two gates, two ways, sheep and wolves, two types of trees, two foundations). All the images describe two types of disciples who, despite external similarities, live totally different lives before God.

**The two gates and the two roads are different metaphors for the same reality: the moral or immoral life between which each person must choose. *Meier***

11. Jesus exhorts us to choose life via the narrow way into the kingdom, laying out the decisions we must make regarding two ways to live, what our Commentary calls “dualistic contrasts.” In verses 13-14, Jesus describes “the narrow gate.” What do you think Jesus is trying to teach us with these verses?

12. In John 10:9 Jesus refers to himself as the gate and later as the way (John 14:6). Why do you think so few can enter the narrow gate?

13. With verses 15-19, Jesus begins a section warning of false prophets. St. John Chrysostom defines false prophets as “anyone who appears to be virtuous but in fact is not, and thereby misleads others.” (Harrington, Daniel J., S.J., *Matthew, Sacra Pagina*) Refer to the Commentary, page 48, and note how we are to determine the right leaders to follow.

14. The theme of good fruit will appear several times in Matthew. Record verse 20 (Good memory verse).

15. CONNECTION: The “fruits of the spirit” from Galatians 5:22 are: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. These are fruits that come from our spiritual life which we can share on a daily basis out of love for God and others. Consider and share an example of a good fruit given to you by the Holy Spirit.

Today pray St. Augustine’s prayer to the Holy Spirit, grateful always for the good fruits he has given you:

*Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit, that my thoughts may all be holy. Act in me, O Holy Spirit, that my work, too, may be holy. Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit, that I love but what is holy. Strengthen me, O Holy Spirit, to defend all that is holy. Guard me, then, O Holy Spirit, that I always may be holy. Amen*

## DAY FOUR

### Read Matthew 7:21-29

16. Jesus began describing a false versus a true disciple saying it is not enough to simply proclaim to be a Christian. Those who say “Lord, Lord” but do not do the Father’s will, will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Refer to the Commentary, page 49, and briefly note what the true disciple must do.

17. Jesus is very specific regarding false Christians, those who appear to be believers. Read and complete the following from verses 22-23:

Many will say to me on that day,

Did we not drive out demons in your name?

Then I will declare to them solemnly,

Depart from me,

**NOTE: Pseudo (false) Christians are not founded on the rock of God’s love, the rock of the Word of God.” They may have spoken in the Lord’s name and done mighty deeds but they didn’t listen and take his teachings into their hearts. *Pope Francis***

18. With verses 24-27 Jesus speaks of the two foundations (two builders, in some translations). This metaphor, which also appears in Luke, underscores the wisdom of listening to Jesus’ words and putting them into practice. Give an example of what it means to you to build your faith on “rock” versus “sand:”

Faith built on rock-

Faith built on sand-

**NOTE: To enter the Kingdom of heaven, to be holy, it is not enough, then, to speak eloquently about holiness. One has to practice what one preaches; to produce fruit which accords with one’s words... it is not enough just to pray and fast and hear Mass; God must find you faithful, like another Job or Abraham, at times of tribulation...A person who tries to put Christ’s teaching into practice, even if he experiences personal difficulties or lives during times of upheaval in the life of the Church, or is surrounded by error, will stay firm in the faith, like the wise man who builds his house on rock. *Navarre Bible***

19. Matthew concludes chapter 7 with “when Jesus finished these words,” a phrase which he will repeat at the end of each of the five great discourses included in Matthew. Read verses 28-29 and record the phrase or phrases that show the crowd’s reaction to his teachings.

**NOTE:** Most of their rabbis — as well as the Scribes, Pharisees and anyone who tried to teach the Jewish faith — would normally speak by citing passages from the Hebrew Bible or from the oral tradition of the rabbis. They were constantly using footnotes to ground the authority of what they were saying. Jesus didn't do that. He spoke as if he were the author — that's what it means to speak with authority. *"Amazed and Astounded," Catholic Preaching*

20. CONNECTION: The metaphor of "The Two Foundations" gives us an opportunity to evaluate our own "foundations." Our faith foundation, Jesus Christ, is the rock on which our faith is built. Think about your foundation and where and how it began. Share with your small group something about your own history that led you to build your faith on Jesus.

Read Colossians 2:6-7 and pray today that your foundation, built on faith in Jesus Christ, continues to strengthen.

#### **DAY FIVE**

**Read Matthew 8:1-13**

**NOTE:** Today's lesson begins with the recording of ten of Jesus' miraculous healings. "And so, St. Matthew, after giving the nucleus of Jesus' public teaching in the Sermon on the Mount (chapters 5-7) goes on now to gather a number of miracles to support our Lord's words. Some commentators call this section 'the works of the Messiah' paralleling what they called 'the words of the Messiah' (in the Discourse on the Mount) ...showing his divine authority over disease, death, the elements and evil spirits." *Navarre Bible*

21. Chapter 8 begins with Jesus coming down from the mountain followed by great crowds. A leper approached him and asked to be healed, saying "Lord, if you wish, you can make me clean," and Jesus healed the man. Under Jewish Law lepers were isolated from the community. Because they were "unclean" no one could touch them or they too would be considered unclean. What is significant about the way in which Jesus heals the leper?

22. After Jesus healed the leper he sent him to the Jewish priest, as was required by Jewish law. What is most interesting to you about Jesus' directive in verse 4?

23. In the second healing story Jesus entered Capernaum and is approached by a Roman centurion who wishes Jesus to heal his servant. Jesus answered, "I will come and heal him." What about the centurion's response (verse 8) shows his great faith?

24. In verses 11-13 Jesus contrasts the faith of this pagan centurion with that of the Jewish nation, for whom Jesus has come, but who will not accept him. What is the unique aspect of this miraculous healing from the Commentary, page 51?

25. CONNECTION: The Catholic Church verifies perceived miracles by an intense process to validate psychological and physical explanations. While most of us may not be involved in a validated miracle, we do find that we recognize answers to prayers and they are sometimes quite extraordinary. Share with your group a remarkable story of healing or an unexpected answer to prayer.

Read and record Mark 10:27 and write a prayer of praise for the power of our God.

### FINAL QUESTION for the WEEK

What was the most important message for you this week in reading or answering questions about Jesus' teachings and miraculous healings?

Read pages 47-51 in the *New Collegeville Bible Commentary: The Gospel According to Matthew* by Barbara E. Reid, O.P. The Cornerstone Catholic Scripture Study acknowledges that scripture quotations in this study are from the New American Bible, Revised Edition (NABRE) ©2010, 1991, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Inc., Washington, D.C. All Rights Reserved. Used by permission.

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