

MATTHEW 5

Startup: How do you think most people today would define true happiness in life?

SEEING WHAT'S THERE

1. What in this chapter do you think might be most surprising to a new Christian reading it for the first time?
2. Use any of the following verses to help you put together a definition for the word blessed, as it's used in verses 3-11 in this chapter: Ps 94:12-13; 112:1-3; 128:1-4, and 144:12-15; Jer 17:7-8; James 1:12; and Rev 19:9; 20:6, and 22:14.
3. How would you describe the basic mindset or attitude in life which Jesus is teaching in this chapter?
4. What teachings in this chapter do you find hardest to understand?
5. In verses 6,10, and 20, the word righteousness is given great importance. How would you define this word?
6. Suppose you were a Bible translator for a remote tribe on a faraway continent, and this tribe did not have any experience or knowledge of salt. How would you explain what salt is, so they could understand the meaning of verse 13?

7. Beginning with verse 21, six sections take up the rest of this chapter, and they all begin in much the same way. Notice this pattern as you take turns reading aloud the first two verses in each section: 21-22, 27-28, 31-32, 33-34, 38-39, and 43-44. From what you see in these verses, what is Jesus criticizing: the Old Testament law, or the people's understanding of the Old Testament law? (Explain your answer.)

8. In your own words, how would you explain the meaning of verse 48?

9. EYE FOR DETAIL—From what you recall seeing in this chapter, try answering the following question without looking at your Bible: What three words will complete this quotation from Jesus: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they..." (See verse 8.)

CAPTURE THE ESSENCE

10. What do you think is the Lord's intent as He gives us the standards for Christian living included in this chapter?

11. Would you say verses 3-10 are more about values and attitudes, or more about actions? Explain your answer.

12. From what you see in verses 3-11, express in your own words what Jesus is looking for in His followers.

13. Jesus tells us in verses 11-12 to be glad when we are persecuted. What good things does persecution accomplish in our lives?

14. What can we conclude about our purpose in life from verses 13-16?

15. In verse 17, Jesus said He came to fulfill the Old Testament Scriptures, and not to destroy or abolish them. What ways can you think of in which Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament, and why are these important?

16. If Jesus did not come to abolish or destroy the Old Testament Scriptures, does that mean they still apply to us today? Explain your answer.

17. How could you use verses 23-24 to help someone who told you about an offense that was committed against him by another Christian brother or sister?

18. From what Jesus says in verses 27-30, how do you think He would define the term purity of mind?

19. From the evidence you see in this chapter, how do you think Jesus would define the terms success and ultimate significance?

20. What are the most important things this chapter communicates about God's character?

FOR LIFE TODAY

21. If you were asked to summarize the most important "marks of Christian maturity" as taught in this chapter, which ones would you mention first?

22. Which of the qualities and conditions in verses 3-10 are the hardest for you to experience in your own life?

23. What implications do you find in verses 17-19 for the way we view the Scriptures?

24. Look again at verses 29-30. Do you think there's a danger of responding too drastically to sin? If so, how commonly does this seem to happen in the lives of Christians you know?

25. How would you use verses 31-32 to help a Christian who was considering divorce?

FOR GOING DEEPER

Look again at what Jesus said in verse 17, and compare it with the following list of passages. What do they reveal about how Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament Scriptures? —Matt 12:39-40; 13:13-15,34-35, and 22:34-40.

MATTHEW 6

Startup: What kind of responsibilities or relationships in life are the easiest for you not to be anxious and troubled about?

SEEING WHAT'S THERE

1. How would you describe the basic mindset or attitude in life which Jesus is teaching in this chapter?

2. What teachings in this chapter do you find hardest to understand?

3. Does the word righteous mean the same thing in verse 1 as it does in verse 33? (Explain your answer.)

4. Jesus speaks three times in this chapter about God's reward for those who please Him (verses 4,6, and 18). What do you think this reward is?

5. Review verses 5-15. From what you see here, what perspective does Jesus want us to have about prayer?

6. Review the "Lord's Prayer" in verses 9-13, then try restating it in completely different language, without using any words from the original (except those that are three letters or less). You may want to go around the group and have each person paraphrase one line from the prayer.

7. What do you think Jesus means in the last verse in this chapter when He says that tomorrow will "worry about itself" or "care for itself"?

8. EYE FOR DETAIL—From what you recall seeing in this chapter, try answering the following question without looking at your Bible: What five words will complete this quotation from Jesus: "For where your treasure is, there..." (See verse 21.)

CAPTURE THE ESSENCE

9. With verses 4,6, and 18 in mind, discuss how much you agree or disagree with this statement: It is only what we do privately for God that will bring us a reward from Him.

10. Think about verses 14 and 15. Why is forgiveness so important for us to practice in life?

11. In verses 22-23, what would you say the lamp represents, and what does the eye represent?

12. In verses 22-23 would you say Jesus' main point is more about salvation, more about spiritual understanding, or more about warfare against Satan? Explain your answer.

13. If you were asked to summarize the most important "marks of Christian maturity" as taught in this chapter, which ones would you mention first?

14. What are the most important things this chapter communicates about God's character?

FOR LIFE TODAY

15. On a scale of one to ten (one = "very poor," ten = "very fulfilling and meaningful"), how would you rate the quality of your "secret life" with God—the things you do in service to Him that only He really knows about?

16. How could you use verses 5-15 to help teach a new Christian how to pray?

17. Think again about verses 14-15. How hard is it for you to forgive others? How hard is it for you to ask for forgiveness?

18. What treasures would you like to be storing in heaven?

19. Is the "seeking" which Jesus mentions in verse 33 meant to be a lifelong seeking? If so, how much "finding" should we expect to experience in this life on earth? Will we ever be able to get by with less and less seeking?

20. What insight does this chapter offer regarding a godly perspective toward material possessions?

21. How could you use this chapter to help a new Christian who doubted his or her worth in God's eyes?

FOR GOING DEEPER

Compare verse 34 with Prov 27:1. What underlying principles would you say are the same for both verses?

MATTHEW 7

Startup: Talk about any memories you may have of not receiving something valuable simply because you failed to ask for it, or to ask for it enough.

SEEING WHAT'S THERE

1. How would you restate the "Golden Rule" (verse 12) in your own words?

2. In the familiar illustration which Jesus gives in verses 24-27, what does He mean by the "rock"?

3. How would you describe the basic mindset or attitude in life which Jesus is teaching in this chapter?

4. Which teachings in this chapter do you find hardest to understand?

5. EYE FOR DETAIL—From what you recall seeing in this chapter, try answering the following question without looking at your Bible: What is it that made the crowds of people so amazed or astonished by the teachings of Jesus? (See verses 28-29.)

CAPTURE THE ESSENCE

6. Once again, if you were asked to summarize the most important "marks of Christian maturity" as taught in this chapter, which ones would you mention first?

7. Verses 7-8 teach us to pray with confidence. What is the true basis of that confidence?
8. Do you think verses 21-23 were meant to scare us, to comfort us, or something else entirely? (Explain your answer.)
9. What are the most important things this chapter communicates about God's character?

FOR LIFE TODAY

10. If we fully obey verses 1-2, do you think it's a guarantee that we won't be unfairly criticized by others? If not, then what does this verse really mean?
11. Jesus tells us to ask and to seek and to knock (verses 7-8). Look together at each of the following verses in this chapter, and think carefully about what Jesus is teaching us there. Then express each one in the form of a model prayer that any Christian could use—or a prayer that specifically fits your life right now: verses 2,5,12,14,21, and 24.
12. Think about verses 13-14. What is "narrow" about the path in life which you have chosen?
13. Review verses 15-20. Has there been a time when you have followed these guidelines and have recognized false Christian teaching?
14. Look at the amazement or astonishment mentioned in verses 28-29. What surprises you about the teaching of Jesus?

FOR GOING DEEPER

Compare what verses 13-14 imply about our security in life with what verses 24-27 teach about the same subject. How do these passages complement each other?