

Small Group Study Guide

A Vision for the People of God
Series: God's Stump Speech
Matthew 5:1-1; 7:24-29
From Sunday January 10, 2021

We are introducing a new sermon series on the Sermon on the Mount found in Matthew 5-7. Take a moment to pray for the Lord to direct your thoughts, conversation and response to the study.

Appetizer:

Activity: A stump speech is a political speech that is delivered by a politician that talks about their platform and policies that, if elected, they will institute. **Are there any "stump" speeches over the years that you remember, whether because they were controversial or memorable?** What struck you to about the speeches? And what struck you about the person that delivered the speech?

Reflection: The Sermon on the Mount is not a handbook or manual for explaining what we need to do as disciples. Some people have seen it as an "unreachable moral document", even suggesting that Jesus made rules and regulations that were impossible for us to achieve to remind us that we can only reach God through grace. However, that view tempts us to dismiss some of the jarring challenges that the speech states.

What the sermon basically represents is a vision of what it looks like to be a human when God is on his throne. Or, to put in in modern language, a vision of what the culture looks like when Jesus is Prime Minister.

Read: We start a reflection on the Sermon on the Mount by going to both the beginning and the end of the sermon. Please read Matthew 5:1-2 and then Matthew 7:24-29.

Question: Take a few moments to analyse Matthew 5:1-2. What details do you notice? What significance is found in the details? For instance, what comes to mind when you read that Jesus started teaching from the side of a mountain? What other Bible story does this remind you of? And why is it important for Jesus to be like that particular Bible story? (Hint: It's the story of Moses and the 10 Commandments)

Question: Now take a few moments to reflect on Matthew 7:24-29. What details stand out? What is the challenge represented in the story of the builders? And what does that mean for us when we read the Sermon on the Mount?

Question: The Sermon on the Mount is couched between two verses that almost say the exact same thing: Matthew 4:23 and Matthew 9:36. How are these verses clues to what the sermon on the mount is all about?

Main Course:

There are two key observations that come out of the passage that we read today:

1. **Jesus speaks directly as the voice of God**
2. **Jesus is calling people to do what he has taught.**

Question: The people were in awe with the teachings of Jesus, as he spoke with authority. It was as if he was creating a new law himself. Although followers of Jesus may take it for granted, when reading the Sermon on the Mount we have to come to terms with the teaching that is before us. **Whose authority is Jesus speaking with? And what does that tell us about the importance of His teachings in our lives?**

In our current society, there are a lot of competing views looking to have authority in our lives. Some of these views even claim to speak for Jesus. When it comes to our behavior, our way of dealing with the world, who or what is the authority in your life? **As a group discuss the topics, influencers, and movements that have authority in the church in North America today.**

Question: When Jesus ends his teachings basically saying that the ones who live by what he said are wise and the ones who do not live by what he said are foolish, he is presenting a strong challenge: his teachings matter. And when you come face to face with the teachings of Jesus you have to make a decision: Are you going to adopt some aspects of his vision for life or are you going to commit to the full vision?

In the sermon on the mount, Jesus sets himself up as a new Moses, who is introducing a new law, for a new people of God. **How is each aspect of this**

important? What does it mean to be a new Moses?
What does it mean to introduce a new law? And

Dessert:

If Jesus takes on the role as master teacher, than we need to take on the role as students. The stance of a student is to sit and to listen to the teacher.

In the week ahead take time to read Matthew 5-7.

Read it all in one sitting, and then read it again in a different Bible version. Jot down things that surprise you that you notice. Write down questions that may arise, and write down things that you come across that you are wrestling with. If you get a chance, share some of your observations with someone throughout the week, whether in an email or over the phone or over a coffee. It doesn't matter if you are sharing with a follower of Jesus or someone that has no faith. The Sermon on the Mount is a great discussion piece for anyone!