Study Guide: Sermon on the Mount – "Liars" (Matthew 5:33–37)

Sunday AM-November 15, 2026

Introduction

This study guide is designed to help you review and understand the lesson titled **"Sermon on the Mount - 'Liars' (Lesson 89)"** delivered at New Life in Benson. In this lesson, the speaker explores Matthew 5:33–37, where Jesus Christ confronts the deceitful oath-making practices of the scribes and Pharisees. The teaching places this passage within the broader context of the Gospel of Matthew, emphasizing the royal identity of Jesus Christ, His rejection by human religious systems, and His promised return.

Through this guide, you will examine the contrast between human legalism and God's absolute standard of righteousness. You will also learn about the "beatitude mentality" required of true believers who rely completely on the grace of Jesus Christ rather than their own self-righteousness.

Part 1: Short-Answer Review Questions

Instructions: Read each question carefully and write a clear answer consisting of 2 to 3 sentences based on the transcript context.

1. What memory verse from 1 Thessalonians 5:18 was recited by the congregation at the beginning of the service? Please describe the specific wording and command contained within this Scripture reference.
2. Who were Arlene Rush and Don, and what unique historical role did they play in the establishment of the local church body? How did the speaker describe their lasting testimony and example?
3. What are the three major, interwoven themes found throughout the Gospel of Matthew as presented in the sermon outline? Briefly describe what each of these three themes reveals about Jesus Christ.
4. How does the sermon describe the professional roles of the scribes and the Pharisees in ancient Jewish society? What kind of religious system had these two groups created together over many years?
5. In Matthew 5:33–37, what core topic does Jesus Christ address when speaking to His listeners? What four specific things does He explicitly command them not to swear by when making an oath?
6. According to Matthew 5:20, what requirement did Jesus Christ set for anyone seeking to enter the kingdom of heaven? How does this standard expose the inadequacy of the righteousness claimed by the scribes and Pharisees?

7. What contrast does Jesus Christ establish between traditional human teachings regarding oaths and His own command in Matthew 5:37? What does He state regarding any speech that goes beyond a simple "Yes" or "No"?
8. What Old Testament prophecy from Isaiah does Jesus Christ quote in Matthew 15:8–9 to describe the religious leaders of His day? What does this quote reveal about the difference between their words and their hearts?
9. What is a "beatitude mentality" as defined by the preacher in the sermon? What are four distinct attitudes or behaviors that characterize a person who lives with this mindset?
10. What statistic from the Pew Organization survey was cited regarding the percentage of Americans who identify as Christians? Why did the preacher express deep concern about the spiritual condition of many people included in this number?

Part 2: Answer Key

Instructions: The answers below correspond to the numbered questions in Part 1. Use this key to check your understanding.

1. **Answer 1:** The congregation recited 1 Thessalonians 5:18, which states, "in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." This verse commands believers to give thanks continually in all circumstances as part of God's divine will.
2. **Answer 2:** Arlene Rush and Don were early pioneers who had a strong influence on the establishment of the local church body. They were tremendous friends whose faith and firm testimony helped guide a unanimous decision among those seeking a new spiritual direction.
3. **Answer 3:** The three main themes are the King Revealed, the King Rejected, and the King Returning. These themes show Jesus Christ as the royal Messiah through His lineage and credentials, highlight how He was bitterly opposed and rejected by men, and point forward to His ultimate triumph when He returns to reign.
4. **Answer 4:** The Pharisees were a legalistic and ritualistic sect, while the scribes copied the law and functioned much like modern-day lawyers. Together, they established a subscriptural, man-made system of substandard ethics that allowed them to pridefully claim self-righteousness and spiritual perfection.
5. **Answer 5:** Jesus Christ addressed the topic of honesty versus lying, forbidding the practice of making deceptive oaths. He commanded His followers not to swear at all—neither by heaven, nor by the earth, nor by Jerusalem, nor by one's own head.
6. **Answer 6:** Jesus Christ declared in Matthew 5:20 that a person's righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees in order to enter the kingdom of

heaven. This statement proved that human achievement cannot meet God's standard, showing that absolute perfection must be granted through faith in Jesus Christ as a gift of grace.

7. **Answer 7:** Jesus Christ contrasted rabbinic rules with His divine instruction for absolute truthfulness in speech. He commanded, "let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No,'" warning that anything beyond these simple statements comes directly from the evil one.
8. **Answer 8:** Jesus Christ quoted Isaiah, saying, "These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men." This quote revealed that their outward words were hypocritical because their hearts were detached from God.
9. **Answer 9:** A beatitude mentality means recognizing one's complete spiritual poverty before God. A person with this mindset acts as a desperate beggar crying out for God's mercy, mourns over personal and national sin, remains meek before a holy God, and hungers and thirsts for true righteousness.
10. **Answer 10:** The survey indicated that 62% of Americans consider themselves Christians, dropping from 68% ten years prior. The preacher expressed concern because many of these individuals are "posers" rather than true possessors of faith, showing no sorrow for sin nor any genuine hunger for God's righteousness.

Part 3: Essay Format Questions

Instructions: Write a detailed, well-structured essay for each of the following prompts. Support your arguments using the facts and themes presented in the sermon.

1. **The Threefold Presentation of Jesus Christ as King:** Explain how the Gospel of Matthew presents Jesus Christ through the themes of the King Revealed, the King Rejected, and the King Returning. Use specific illustrations from the sermon transcript—such as His royal lineage, birth events, earthly rejection, and future return—to detail each aspect of His kingly identity.
2. **God's Absolute Standard vs. Pharisaical Legalism:** Compare the man-made religious system of the scribes and Pharisees with the spiritual standard required by Jesus Christ. In your essay, analyze the meaning of Matthew 5:20 and Matthew 5:48, explaining why human effort can never achieve the perfection required for the kingdom of heaven.
3. **Jesus Christ's Teaching on Truthfulness and Oaths:** Analyze Matthew 5:33–37 in detail. Explain why Jesus Christ strictly forbade swearing by heaven, earth, Jerusalem, or one's own head, and discuss what it means for a Christian's speech to be characterized by letting their "Yes" be "Yes" and their "No" be "No."

4. **Characteristics and Necessity of a "Beatitude Mentality":** Define the "beatitude mentality" as presented in the lesson and contrast it with modern societal attitudes. Describe the four key heart conditions associated with this mindset and explain why the preacher believes it is essential for true spiritual revival and national repentance.
5. **Exposing Hypocrisy and False Worship:** Using Matthew 15:8–9 as your primary focus, explain how Jesus Christ exposed the difference between outward lip service and inward heart devotion. Discuss how human traditions can render worship vain and detail what God truly desires from those who draw near to Him.

Part 4: Comprehensive Glossary of Key Terms

- **Beatitude Mentality:** A heart condition characterized by spiritual humility, wherein a person recognizes their utter need for God, cries out for His mercy as a desperate beggar, mourns over sin, remains meek, and hungers for divine righteousness.
- **Imputed Righteousness:** The perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ that is given as a free gift of grace to a believer through faith, since human effort can never satisfy God's holy standard.
- **Legalism:** A rigid system of man-made rules, traditions, and external rituals used by religious leaders to create a substandard ethical code while claiming personal spiritual perfection.
- **Oath:** A solemn or formal declaration calling upon a sacred object, place, or authority (such as heaven, earth, or Jerusalem) to guarantee the truthfulness of a statement.
- **Pharisees:** A prominent legalistic and ritualistic sect of ancient Judaism known for enforcing strict outward traditions and claiming high moral attainment.
- **Pew Organization:** A major American research entity cited in the sermon that conducts national surveys on demographic trends, including Christian self-identification.
- **Scribes:** Scholars and legal experts in ancient Israel responsible for copying, studying, and interpreting the law, working closely alongside the Pharisees.
- **Subscriptural Ethics:** Man-made standards of conduct that fall below the full, true moral requirements set forth in God's holy Word.

Part 5: Greek Words and Etymology

The sermon transcript references concepts and historical terms derived directly from the Greek language. Below is a guide to these terms, including their phonetic pronunciations, origins, and definitions.

English Term / Concept	Greek Source Word	Phonetic Pronunciation	Definition & Context
Gnostics [^1]	γνωστικός (Gnostikos)	**gno-stee-KOS**	Referring to an ancient religious movement claiming specialized, secret spiritual knowledge (gnosis). In the sermon, the Pharisees' pride in their self-defined spiritual knowledge was compared to the Gnostics.
Antithesis [^2]	ἀντίθεσις (Antithesis)	**an-TIH-theh-sis**	A direct contrast or exact opposite. Used in the sermon to explain how Jesus Christ was the absolute opposite of the legalistic Jewish religious system of His day.
Christ [^3]	Χριστός (Christos)	**kree-STOS**	Meaning "the Anointed One" or "Messiah." It is the title given to Jesus Christ, designating Him as the royal Monarch appointed by God.

Footnotes

[^1]: **Gnostics**: Derived from the Greek word gnostikos (γνωστικός), meaning "knowing" or "possessing knowledge," from gnosis (γνῶσις, knowledge). It refers to sects claiming exclusive, higher spiritual enlightenment. [^2]: **Antithesis**: Derived from the Greek prefix anti- ("against") and tithemi ("to place"), literally meaning "a setting against" or a direct opposition between two contrasting ideas or systems. [^3]: **Christ**: Derived from the Greek verb chrio ("to anoint"). In the New Testament, Christos (Χριστός) translates the Hebrew word Mashiach (Messiah), identifying Jesus Christ as God's Anointed King and Savior.