

Message Discussion Guide

CHAPTER 39: THE ETERNAL RAMIFICATIONS OF EXCEEDING RIGHTEOUSNESS

The Church at Brook Hills

Dr. Bart Box

October 17, 2010 Matthew 5—7

This guide is designed to help you facilitate discussion with your Small Group. Use it as a resource to lead your group in discovering and owning the truths of God's Word. There may be questions you do not want to use, and there may be instances when you just want to focus on a particular point or truth. Some questions may bring out emotions and cause people to dwell on their relationship with God. Your role is to facilitate this experience, not complete the discussion guide. Use this as a flexible teaching tool rather than a rigid teaching task list.

Connect . . .

Use one or both of the following options to introduce the discussion time to follow.

Option 1

Enlist volunteers to share the names and positions of people they have considered role models over the course of their lives. What qualities did they possess that caused you to look up to them? Have your role models changed since you were a child or a teenager? Why? Explain that in the context of today's passage, Jesus told the people that their most aspired role models, the Pharisees, had it all wrong. How do you think that message changed the way the people thought?

Option 2

Discuss what it takes for people to walk away from a church service saying, "That was a great sermon." Ask volunteers to share about a time when one particular sermon touched their lives in a much-needed or dramatic way. Explain that today's message focuses on the greatest sermon ever preached by the greatest Preacher of all time.

Review the Message . . .

The book of Matthew is named for its author, who was one of Jesus twelve disciples. The book was written in the first century A.D. to a Jewish audience, and Matthew's primary purpose in writing was to prove to these Jews that Jesus is their Messiah, the One True King. Before you begin the discussion, allow group members to take a few minutes to read through Matthew 5—7 on their own.

The Setting of the Sermon

- We must remember the context of the sermon in the gospel of Matthew.
 - Matthew begins by calling attention to the sins of God's people.
 - Matthew ends by calling attention to the death of God's Messiah.

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- We must remember the context of the sermon in the _____ **history** _____ of redemption.
 - Jesus is the long-awaited _____ **Messiah** _____ .
 - His is the long-awaited _____ **Kingdom** _____ .

Discussion . . .

- Try to put yourself in the Israelites' place. All of their lives, they had studied the Laws recorded in the Old Testament. Yet, their national history was one of failure to keep God's Law. They were looking for a Savior—waiting for their promised Messiah to come. Yet many of them were looking for an earthly savior to rescue them from the Romans and set up his kingdom on earth in Jerusalem. How does your understanding of Jesus' sermon change or deepen when you consider it through the Israelites' ears?
- What message was Jesus giving them in the Sermon on the Mount about the Law and the Kingdom of God?

Application . . .

- Why is understanding the context of any story important? How does context affect meaning?
- How have your awareness of your own sin and the death of God's Messiah for the sake of your salvation developed from our study of the Old Testament?
- How should the realization that Jesus will one day bring in His new Kingdom change the way you live?

The Subject of the Sermon

- Jesus demands a righteousness exceeding that of the scribes and the Pharisees.
 - Not more righteous _____ **deeds** _____ by human effort...
 - But more righteous _____ **hearts** _____ by divine grace.
- This exceeding righteousness is evident in our...
 - _____ **Attitudes** _____ .
 - We aren't seeking to keep the _____ **letter** _____ of the law.
 - We are seeking to obey the _____ **spirit** _____ of the law.
 - _____ **Affections** _____ .
 - We aren't seeking the _____ **applause** _____ of men.
 - We are seeking the _____ **heart** _____ of God.
 - _____ **Ambitions** _____ .
 - We aren't seeking the _____ **things** _____ of this world.
 - We are seeking the _____ **Kingdom** _____ of our God.
 - _____ **Admonitions** _____ .

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- **We aren't seeking the condemnation of our brother.**
- **We are seeking the purity of our souls.**

Discussion . . .

- Read through the Beatitudes (declarations of blessedness) in Matthew 5:3-12. List the characteristics of Kingdom members. How does this list contrast all kingdoms set up by humans on earth?
- Read Matthew 5:17-20. Focus on the phrase in your notes, "Not more righteous deeds by human effort . . . but more righteous hearts by divine grace." How are we, like the Israelites, tempted to look for a law to keep instead of a Savior to trust? How does having a Savior to trust change everything?
- Read Matthew 5:21-22. How did Jesus teach the people to look through the letter of the Law to the spirit of the Law in these verses?
- Read Matthew 6:1-4. What is the warning in these verses? Why is it wrong to let others know what you are giving away? Who is the Giver of the ultimate reward when you keep your giving between you and the Father?
- Read Matthew 6:31-34. How can a life focused on the things of the world drive us away from the things of God?
- Read Matthew 7:1-5. Does Jesus condemn judgment as a whole, or judgment that doesn't start in our own hearts regarding our own life? What happens to our attitudes when we focus on our own shortcomings before trying to help others? How can these verses be used as a way out of appropriately speaking truth into a friend's life? Why is humility important in the way we relate to each other?

Application . . .

- Look at the list of evidences of "this exceeding righteousness" (attitudes, affections, ambitions, admonitions):
 - **Attitudes.** Find verses in Matthew 5, 6, and 7 that prove that how we think is always at the heart of what we do.
 - **Affections.** In Kingdom life, is it possible to be both affectionate toward the world and affectionate toward God's Kingdom? Why or why not?
 - **Ambitions.** What drives "The American Dream"? How does this line up with God's Kingdom? What drives you as you work each day? Why is it important to surrender your entire life to God every single day?
 - **Admonitions.** What does it look like to seek purity in your personal life? What keeps us from seeking purity together as a Church? How does the way we relate to each other reveal what is going on in our own souls?

The Seriousness of the Sermon

- **There are only two...**

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- Roads .
 - One that leads to life .
 - One that leads to destruction .
- Trees .
 - One that bears good fruit.
 - One that bears bad fruit.
- Houses .
 - One that stands upon the rock.
 - One that crashes upon itself.
- There is only one Savior : Jesus Christ, King of the Kingdom!

Discussion . . .

- Read Matthew 7:13-14. Why do only a few find the narrow gate?
- Read Matthew 7:15-23. There are only two trees: one that bears good fruit, and one that bears bad fruit. Why are we tempted to think that there is a third tree that bears both? Why is this not possible?
- Read Matthew 7:24-27. What are the qualities of people who have built houses on the rock? Is it possible for houses built on sand to look like houses built on rock from the outside? What is the final determining factor for a life's foundation?

Application . . .

- Roads, trees, and houses . . . Objects we are familiar with on a daily basis. How can the simplicity of these objects help you be mindful of Jesus' sermon?
- Lead your group in a prayer. Ask them to close their eyes as you read the following questions, pausing appropriately:
 - Examine your life and the road you are on. How wide is the road that you travel on? Are you heading for life or destruction in the ways you have chosen?
 - Think about your life as a tree. What kind of fruit are you producing with your speech? With your attitudes? Ambitions? Affections? Admonitions? With how you spend your time? With how you spend your finances? With how you serve others? How should you live differently?
 - Examine your life as a house. Is your foundation on sand or on rock? What drives the decisions you make—things that are temporal or eternal? How have you placed your trust in Jesus' future Kingdom as you've built your life on earth?
 - Repent of any area God has shown you sin. Surrender your entire life to Jesus.

Close your time together by reminding everyone to go to www.radicalexperiment.org to look up this next week's Bible readings from Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John in preparation for next week's message.