

Purity & Integrity

STUDY 9

In South Africa, 4 in 10 marriages end in divorce before their 10th year. South Africa is the leading consumer of pornography in Africa and in the top 20 globally. Furthermore, we currently have the Zondo Commission to try and find out the “truth” behind state capture...

1. Why do you think this is the case? What do you think is the remedy?



Investigating

Keep in mind that Jesus told His disciples that their “*righteousness*” should exceed that of the Pharisees (Matt. 5:20). Furthermore, the hope within the Old Testament Law was that God would “circumcise” the hearts of His people, so that they would love Him (cf. Deut. 6:5; 10:16; 30:6). This the hope of the New Covenant (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezk. 36:26-27) ...

Read Matthew 5:27-37 ... Purity, Fidelity and Integrity

1. Discuss the following table...

What is the original command?	How does Jesus amplify this command?	How should we respond? (implications)	How does the Old Testament correspond?
V. 27	V. 28	vv. 29-30	<p>Genesis 3:6, “When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it.”</p> <p>Prov. 6:25 “Do not lust in your heart after her beauty or let her captivate you with her eyes.”</p>

V. 31	V. 32	Matthew 19:4-9	Genesis 2:24, <i>“That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.”</i>
V. 33		Vv. 34-37	Not applicable here



Thinking & Living

Notice, Matthew 5-7 is directed to Jesus’ disciples (5:1-2). Jesus repeats these points in Matthew 15:1-20 and 19:1-12 ...

1. According to Matthew 15:16-19, what is the heart of the problem? Why do people act lustfully, adulterously and dishonestly?

2. According to Jesus, where does the change need to begin? What is our hope for change?

- 3.** Jesus is using quite violent and vivid language in Matthew 5:29-30 regarding how we root out sin in our lives...
- What point is Jesus making about temptation and sin here?
 - How should we respond to something that we see or do that is causing us to sin?
 - Why is combating/killing sin in our lives not optional?
- 4.** How does Jesus' teaching to His disciples challenge ...
- Our casualness to pornography (whether videos, photos or novels), marriage and divorce?
 - Our propensity to "lie" (even white lies)?
- 5.** How will you apply Jesus' teaching on lust and marriage to (and keep one another accountable to) ...
- How you watch TV, use your smartphone or Laptop?
 - How you relate to the opposite sex?
- 6.** How will Jesus' teaching on integrity (vv. 33-37), change how you speak in your relationships (at home, church or work)?

Points to Pray...

(now and during the week)

- 1.** Reflect on Matthew 5:27-37 and pray that God would empower us by His Spirit to fight sin in our lives (even if we have to act radically) and to pursue purity, fidelity and honesty in our day to day life.
- 2.** Pray for Ithemba School: The children would return from lockdown period and dire circumstances. The impact would be immense on their lives.
- 3.** Pray for Friday Night Youth: Leadership and teenagers as they seek to rebuild after the lockdown.
- 4.** Continue to pray for our gap-years and internships (Joe Lyons, Carla Stephenson, Tim Gertzen, Stephan van Rooy and James Carter) as they serve at St. Peters Church. Pray that they would be rooted and established in love (Eph. 3:17) and equipped *“for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up...”* (Eph. 4:12-13)
- 5.** LIFE series: Pray for Jon as he looks for new opportunities to do LIFE at different places (Navy, Retirement villages, schools etc.). Pray for open doors. Ultimately, we want to see people know, believe, follow and be transformed by Jesus.
- 6.** LIFE @ Lunch: Praise God for the open door at False bay College to do LIFE during lunchtime (led by Tim Gertzen and Pastor Bheki Dikeni). 25 students came to the first LIFE @ Lunch. Pray for more relationships with students to form and opportunities for discipleship.
- 7.** Pray for one another. Pray for wisdom in our Fellowship Groups and as a larger church family in how we love and care for those in our family who are hurting in the areas Jesus highlights in Matthew 5:27-37.



A Pastoral Note on Lust, Adultery & Divorce



Sadly, Matthew 5:27-32 is addressing a serious sin issue prevalent in our own culture. Lust, divorce and adultery are major problems in our society. This is a sensitive and painful issue for many. So, keep the following in mind...

- 1** Jesus came to save: sinners (cf. Matt. 1:21; 9:13). There will be people in your Fellowship Group who might already be divorced (for legitimate or illegitimate reasons). There might even be those who have contemplated it or are contemplating it. Keep in mind that Matt. 5:27-28 makes all of us guilty of adultery and we should not presume that we are better (cf. Matt. 7:1-5). Recognize that all sin is nailed to the Cross. Jesus extends the gift of grace to all who come to Him in their brokenness. His grace, mercy and forgiveness does not necessarily remove all the consequences or memory of our sins, but in Him we can find healing and deal with our sins (cf. 2 Cor. 5:17-21; 1 Timothy 1:15-16).
- 2** Matthew 5:31-32 is not the only place where Jesus and the Apostles speak of marriage and divorce. In many ways, Matthew 5:31-32 is only possible where both spouses are truly followers of Jesus (having received the New Covenant). The ethic changes when a Christian is married to a non-Christian (1 Corinthians 7:12-16). There are “two kingdoms” at work in such a relationship (light and darkness). It is not possible to expect the non-Christian spouse to adhere to Jesus’ teaching, when they are already in opposition to Him.
- 3** We live a cultural environment of “*serial monogamy*”, where divorce is very permissible and acceptable. To some extent, the current common reason for divorce, “*irreconcilable differences*”, is not too dissimilar from Rabbi Hillel’s loose interpretation of divorce in Jesus’ day, who argued you can divorce for almost anything you felt was “*indecent*” in your spouse (Allison 1999:83). As Christians, we should be focused on “*marriage and reconciliation*”; as John Stott puts it, “*It is only when a person has understood and accepted God’s view of marriage and God’s call to reconciliation that a possible context has been created within which one may regretfully go on to talk about divorce*” (Stott 2008:98-99).
- 4** We should keep Matt. 5:29-30 (and Matt. 7:15-27) in mind. We should be aware that we live in a “Yolo” (you only live once) culture. Personal happiness now has become the ultimate “trump card” for any behaviour or decision. Jesus puts the emphasis on the right place: **eternity is more important**. It is better to pick up your cross and follow Jesus and gain eternity, than to deny the cruciform way of Jesus and lose eternity (cf. Matt. 10:38-39). We have an obligation to remind one another of our future hope; our eternal citizenship (Phil. 3:20-21).
- 5** Walk with one another. Resisting temptation and combating any sin is a struggle. Working through the complexity and darkness that sin creates is a journey that takes time. We are also called to help one another through this. Prayerfully reflect on Galatians 6:2, “*Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ*”.

The Perfect Way

STUDY 10

1. All of us have been hurt by someone. All of us have hurt someone. All of us have friends. All of us have “enemies”. How does one begin to break this cycle?



Investigating

Jesus calls His disciples (Matt. 5:1-2) to live in a way that exceeds the righteousness of the Pharisees (Matt. 5:20). As the fulfillment of the Law (Matt. 5:17-18), Jesus has been expounding various commands that relate to how we relate to the command, “*love your neighbour*” (Lev. 19:18) ...

Read Matthew 5:38-42... Revenge?

Keep in mind that the command Jesus cites is for the Jewish judiciary (Deut. 19:18-21), not for personal revenge...

1. Contrary to the idea of personal revenge (v. 38), list the things in vv. 39-42 which describe how Jesus’ disciples should respond towards those who are “evil” towards them.
2. How did Jesus demonstrate this in His own life? (Cf. Matthew 26:57-68; Luke 23:32-34)

Read Matthew 5:43-48... Love your enemies?

1. How is “what was being said” (probably by the religious leaders) different from what the Old Testament actually says in Leviticus 19:18? (v. 43)
2. According to Jesus, who is our neighbour? (v. 44)
3. What reasons are given in vv. 45-48 as to why the disciples should love in this way? (vv. 45, 48)



Thinking & Living

Notice how Jesus' teaching on commands to love one another end, "*be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect*" (v. 48). This same link is made in Leviticus 19 regarding being "holy" (Lev. 19:2) and loving your neighbour (Lev. 19:18) ...

1. How is being "holy" (being like God) and loving people linked?
2. According to the Apostle John, how do we know we know God and are becoming like Him?

"Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us." (1 John 4:7-12)

3. Think back to the relationship(s) you had in mind in the intro question... How should this passage shape your relationships?
 - How do you relate to those who are "evil" (in actions or words) towards you?
 - How do you relate to people you know don't like you?
 - How do you live and build relationships in a country where there is a lot of racial division and hurt?
4. How do Jesus' commands in vv. 38-48 help you to understand what Jesus' call, "whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me" (Matt. 10:38), entails?
5. Reflect on the words of the following hymn and the story of the author...

Aloud we sing the wondrous grace

*Aloud we sing the wondrous grace,
Christ to his murderers bare;
which made the tottering cross its throne,
And hung its trophies there.
"Father forgive," his mercy cried,
With his expiring breath,
And drew eternal blessings down
On those who wrought his death.
Jesus, this wondrous love we sing,
And whilst we sing admire;
Breathe on our souls and kindle there,
The same celestial fire.
Swayed by thy dear example, Lord,
For enemies we'll pray;
with love their hatred we'll reward
With blessings we'll repay.*

(Philip Doddridge, 1702-1751)

Philip Doddridge (1702-1751) belonged to what was called the “*non-conformist churches*” that were not associated with the Church of England; this made them the subject of much discrimination. It was in this difficult environment that Philip became a pastor and served for 20 years in the region of Northampton. He was also a keen supporter of the work of John Wesley and George Whitefield (who themselves faced much opposition). Later in life, Philip contracted tuberculosis. Sponsored by one of his patrons (Lady Huntington), Philip was sent to Lisbon (Portugal) to recover. He died in Lisbon after his arrival in 1751.

To accompany his sermons, Philip Doddridge wrote 400 hymns. These hymns were collected and published posthumously in the hymnal, “*Hymns, Founded on Various Texts in the Holy Scriptures*” in 1755. In many ways, his hymns were reflections on the Scriptures he preached, but also the life he experienced in following and suffering for Jesus.

Points to Pray...

(now and during the week)

- 1.** Pray that we would “*be perfect... as your heavenly Father is perfect*” (Matt. 5:48) in how we love one another, strangers and the hostile in the aftermath of the COVID-19 outbreak.
- 2.** Pray for the music teams (musicians, singers, sound desk, screen etc.). Praise God for our musicians and the privilege of gathering (which we lack during lockdown). Pray for them as we seek to get back into the rhythm of gathering together.
- 3.** Praise God for our media team (graphic design, podcasts, videos etc.) who have worked tirelessly during the lockdown period. Pray that they would be encouraged and continue to serve God’s family through their gifts.
- 4.** Pray for our mission partners. Every missionary we support would have been affected by the COVID-19 outbreak. Pray for God’s continued provision, protection and wisdom as they seek to witness to the Gospel in a time like this.
- 5.** Pray for Ubabalo neThemba Church: Pray for Pastor Bheki and the families in his church. Many of them have lost their jobs during the lockdown. Pray for God’s provision (in their daily needs and new job opportunities). Pray for wisdom for Pastor Bheki as he seeks to care and disciple the church through this time.
- 6.** Pray for Holiday Club: planning, preparation, the volunteers and the children coming. Pray that God would prepare their hearts to receive the Good News of Jesus.
- 7.** Pray for one another. Consider those in our church family you know who have lost someone recently. Pray for those who suffer tremendous loneliness during the lockdown period. Pray for wisdom in how we can show God’s love to them in this time.



How did Christians respond to plagues?



For most of us, the idea of a plague (like COVID-19) is quite novel. Very few of us would have any recollection of a global pandemic. Nevertheless, we do have the massive challenges of HIV-Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria in Southern Africa. We also had a cholera outbreak in the early 2000s. We are quick to forget that during 1999-2008, approximately 300 000 people died due to the government's denialism on HIV-Aids. So technically, plagues have been part of our daily lives for quite some time. The difference is that most of these plagues are not as closely followed on social-media as COVID-19. Even so, how have Christians responded to plagues throughout the centuries? Here are three examples...

1. The Plague of 249-262 A.D - Roman Empire

At the height of the plague, in Rome alone an estimated 5000 people died per day. Yet, what was striking about the plague was the difference between Christians and non-Christians. Bishop Dionysius of Alexandria writes that non-Christians, "pushed the sufferers away and fled from their dearest, throwing them into the roads before they were dead and treating unburied corpses as dirt, hoping thereby to avert the spread and contagion of the fatal disease" (Gallus to Gallienus, 7:21). Yet, this only aggravated the situation.

Conversely, Christians had a different response: *"Heedless of the danger, they took charge of the sick, attending to their every need and ministering to them in Christ, and with them departed this life serenely happy; for they were infected by others with the disease, drawing on themselves the sickness of their neighbours and cheerfully accepting their pains. Many, in nursing and curing others, transferred their death to themselves and died in their stead."* (Gallus to Gallienus, 7:21). Even so, this care for the sick (at personal risk to their own health) minimized the mortality rate among Christians.

2. The Black Plague of the 16th Century - Reformation

During the 15th-16th century, Europe was devastated by the Black Plague, which claimed a quarter of Europe's population. The plague also coincided with the Reformation and impacted most of the Reformers' ministries. For example, in 1519, the plague ravaged Zurich (Switzerland), the place where Huldrych Zwingli was a pastor. Ministering to the sick, Zwingli also contracted the *"Black Death"* (as it was called). Bedridden and clinging to life, Zwingli composed this hymn conveying his trust in Christ's resurrection power and God's sovereign purposes,

*“Help, Lord God, help in this trouble! I think death is at the door.
Stand before me, Christ, for you have overcome him.
To you I cry: If it is your will, take out the dart that wounds me,
nor lets me have an hour’s rest or repose.*

*Will you, however, that death take me in the midst of my days, so let it be.
Do what you will, nothing shall be too much for me.
Your vessel am I, to make or break altogether.”*

In 1527, the “black death” struck Martin Luther’s hometown of Wittenberg. Although many evacuated, Luther decided to stay to care for the sick and dying. To explain his position, Luther wrote a pamphlet in which he explained, *“I shall ask God mercifully to protect us. Then I shall fumigate, help purify the air, administer medicine, and take it. I shall avoid places and persons where my presence is not needed in order not to become contaminated and thus perchance infect and pollute others, and so cause their death as a result of my negligence. If God should wish to take me, He will surely find me and I have done what He has expected of me and so I am not responsible for either my own death or the death of others. If my neighbour needs me, however, I shall not avoid place or person but will go freely, as stated above...”*

Luther’s decision to stay and work through the epidemic put considerable strain on his family and his own personal health. To encourage himself, Luther turned to the Psalms; in particular Psalm 46. It was during this time that Luther composed his famous hymn, *“A mighty fortress is our God”*.

3. The Spanish Flu of the 20th Century (1917-1919)

What made this particular pandemic horrific was that it coincided with World War 1. Approximately 500 million people contracted the disease, with a 10% mortality rate. It is estimated that the pandemic killed more people than World War 1.

To curb the infection rate, many states in the USA banned all public gatherings; which included church services. Most churches happily complied with the restrictions. For example, Boston’s Newspaper The Globe’s front page on Monday described Sunday, 29 September, 1918, as *“the quietest Sunday Boston ever saw”*. Pastors had to find other mediums to teach their congregations. The Journal of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, reported that Pastors encouraged home worship and the reading of sermons in published newspapers; as one pastor put it, *“We worshipped God from house to house”*. Russel Street Church in Nashville approached the Red Cross, converting their building into a temporary hospital. Throughout the USA, Pastors and congregants served the sick and (like the early church in Dionysius’ and Luther’s era) many died caring for them.

How should we respond?

It is comforting to know that we are not the first (and most likely not the last) to go through a pandemic. We have a great cloud of witnesses who have gone before us, following Jesus in this cross-shaped life of suffering (cf. Heb. 12:1-3). Furthermore, the concept of self-isolation or social distancing is not new. This is a very normal practice in dealing with pandemics. Yet, here are some things we can learn from the past...

- 1. Self-isolation and caring for the sick go together:** It is true that Luther and Christians during the Spanish flu pandemic practised social-distancing and self-isolation. The aim was to protect those who were vulnerable and curb the spread of the plague. Yet, this is not all they did. They also stepped out to go and care for the sick. Isolate yourself from the healthy, care for the sick. Both are acts of love.
- 2. Trusting God's sovereignty and Christ's resurrection power in prayer:** Both Zwingli and Luther wrote hymns expressing trust in God's power and care to guide them through the plague. They also trusted that if God should "break" the vessel, they would be resurrected in Christ. They lived lives in prayerful dependence upon God the Father's goodness and wisdom. This is how we show our love for God in this time.
- 3. Find creative ways to worship and serve:** Luther used the Gutenberg press to spread his teaching on the plague. American pastors used the newspapers to publish their sermons. They used whatever means necessary to still instruct their churches. Christians also had to learn to worship at home as well. Today we have internet, the world web and social media. Most of us have access to smartphone apps and printed Bibles. In many ways, we should be able to be more "connected" than Christians in the past.
- 4. Be generous:** Luther opened up his home to care for the sick. Churches in the USA converted their buildings into temporary hospitals to accommodate the sick. Ultimately, resources were generously used to care for the sick and dying during a plague. All of this was only possible because Christians were sacrificially generous. The same applies to us.

In closing, learn from those who have gone before us. Gain wisdom and find encouragement from their example. It is now our time to be an example to future generations of what it means to pick up our cross and follow Jesus in the time of a plague (Heb. 12:1-3).

Authentic Worship

STUDY 11

1. Christians have often been labelled as hypocrites. Is this a valid accusation and why?



Investigating

Read Matthew 5:48-6:18...

1. What is Jesus warning against in 6:1?
2. What are the consequences for anyone who ignores the warning?
3. Notice, Jesus is sketching a contrast between how “hypocrites” worship and how He desires His disciples to worship. What are the differences?

Have a look at the table and how it breaks down the contrast. Note if there is anything unexpected that you did not pick up before.

	Alms	Prayer	Fasting
Negative prohibition			
Expectation	6:2	6:5	6:16
Bad example	6:2	6:5	6:16
Wrong motive: to be seen by others	6:2	6:5	6:16

Temporary reward	6:2	6:2	6:16
Positive prohibition			
Expectation	6:3	6:6	6:17
Good example: practising worship out of sight as God is out of sight. <i>(Keep 5:48 in mind)</i>	6:3-4	6:6	6:17-18
All-knowing nature of God	6:4	6:6	6:18
Good motive: eternal reward from God	6:4	6:6	6:18

The next study will be covering verses 7-17 on the Lord's Prayer.

4. What are the hypocrites working towards in their practice of worship according to this text? How does this contrast with the motives of the Kingdom of Heaven?



Thinking & Living

- 1.** Do Jesus' words in 5:13-16 contradict the message of this passage (6:1-18)?
- 2.** How does Jesus define what a hypocrite is?
- 3.** Have you ever seen live examples of the types of hypocrisy described by Jesus? What was that like?
- 4.** Spend some time reflecting on your own motives for acts of Christian worship and service.
- 5.** How do your prayer habits compare to those described in v. 5 and v. 6?
- 6.** Do you give money to others (via church giving or to support those in need)? How might you subtly start to "trumpet" about your giving?
- 7.** If you fast how can you take these verses into account?
- 8.** In what situations do you most frequently desire praise and recognition from people?

Points to Pray...

(now and during the week)

- 1.** Pray through the beatitudes (poor in spirit, mourn, meek and hunger for righteousness) in relation to what we have learned about hypocrisy. Pray that God would show and change us where we are more concerned about people's opinion of us than God's glory in what we do.
- 2.** Pray for Ubabalo neThemba Church. For Pastor Bheki and the church family as they tirelessly reach out to Masiphumalele; especially after their Easter outreach (which is a massive event in township culture).
- 3.** Pray for our children at Kids Church. They are learning about "Treasures in heaven" this week. Pray for the ministry at Fish Hoek Primary on Mondays at break - Scripture Union.
- 4.** Pray for our mercy ministries (False Bay Soup Kitchen, Arise, Loaves & Fishes, Loveline, Love meals etc.), that we would show acts of mercy not for the praise of men (Matt. 6:1-18), but for the glory of God (Matt. 5:16). Pray for everyone involved.
- 5.** Missions Partner: Greg and Carol Phillips serve at Mukhanyo Theological College. Praise God for the 90 students registered at the College. Pray for Greg and Carol as they seek to train and equip the students after the COVID-19 Lockdown.
- 6.** Pray for the AVM (13 May). It would be a time of encouragement as we look back at what God has done. Pray for a good attendance.
- 7.** Pray for small groups in Hood, Life @ Lunch (False Bay) and More-to-Life. Pray that this ministry would establish itself again after the COVID-19 lockdown. Also that past relationships would be rebuilt.
- 8.** Pray for one another. Take the opportunity to share your own struggles with Jesus' teaching in Matthew 6:1-18 and devote time to pray for one another.



Fasting today?



From Matthew 6:16 we get the impression that Jesus' disciples are supposed to fast, "And when you fast..." Again, we see Jesus saying that His disciples will fast in 9:15: "The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast." We also see examples of the early Church fasting in Acts (Acts 13:2; 14:23). Jesus fasted before being tempted by the devil (Matthew 4:2). Nowhere do we see an out-right command for Christians to fast in the New Testament, but it is almost assumed that we will fast.

What is Fasting?

So then, what exactly is fasting all about? Looking at why fasting is done in the Bible, we see people fast for different reasons. We see people fast as an expression of grief over past sins (Neh. 9:1), of dependence on God for future mercy (Ex. 24:18; Est. 4:16; Ezz. 8:21ff; Matt 4:1; Acts 13:1-3), of solidarity with the poor (Job 31:16; Is 58:1ff; Luke 16:19-31) or it can be a method to build up self-control (1 Cor. 9:24-27). Whatever the situation may be, each of those reasons for fasting have one thing in common: humility. To fast and to humble oneself before God are virtually equivalent terms (Deut. 8:2; Ps. 35:13; Is. 58.3,5). Thus, we can note that when we fast, it should be an exercise of humility.

Looking at Jesus' fast in Matthew 4:1-11 gives us further insight into what fasting is. John Piper says: "And what then was fasting for Jesus? It was both test and triumph. It was the test of his deepest appetite and the triumph of his hunger for God above all things. And therefore, it was also a triumph over Satan" (Piper: 1997, 61). We see our King experience testing in the ways that Israel was tested, and come out triumphant because of His love for the Father which was greater than His love for anything else. Fasting is therefore a way in which we display our love for God as greater than our love for anything else.

The principles of humility and of displaying our love for God are not always what motivates people to fast. In Matthew 6:16 we see people fasting for the praises of men and in Isaiah 58:3-4 we see people fasting for their own pleasure, to oppress others, and to quarrel and fight. In God's rebuke to those fasting in this way, He asks for a very different kind of fasting – different from what we would expect fasting to be. He says in Isaiah 58:6-9:

*"Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke,
to let the oppressed[a] go free, and to break every yoke?
Is it not to share your bread with the hungry
and bring the homeless poor into your house;
when you see the naked, to cover him,
and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?"*

*Then shall your light break forth like the dawn,
and your healing shall spring up speedily;
your righteousness shall go before you;
the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.
Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer;
you shall cry, and he will say, 'Here I am.'*

This surprising interjection from God demands that we rethink our assumptions of what fasting is. Suddenly our ideas of fasting being an individual exercise, a “me and God thing,” are blown out of the water. Acts 13:1-3 and 14:23 paired with this, prove that fasting is outward focused, others-centred and especially gospel centred.

Can Fasting Be Something Other than Abstaining from Food?

The passage from Isaiah raises questions about whether we can fast by doing different things other than abstaining from food. From that text the answer seems to be “yes.” Further, 1 Corinthians 7:4-5 says: “For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.”

This gives the impression that Christians can set aside other things that they may need in order to pray for a selected period (gotquestions.org).

Does God Reward Those Who Fast?

Yes, God does reward those who fast – this is clear from Matthew 6:18. However, scripture is clear that we cannot expect to receive things with wrong motives lurking in our hearts – if we ask with wrong motives, then we will not receive (James 4:3-4). So, we cannot expect to twist God’s arm with our devotion to Him through fasting – arm-twisting is a wrong and selfish motive. Our reward for sincere fasting will be the words of God saying: “Here I am” (Isaiah 58:9). John Piper puts it nicely: “Seeking from God the reward of God’s all-satisfying supremacy puts all other desires to the test” (Piper: 1997, 79). Let us be sure that we are desiring Him, this includes when we fast, and we will be rewarded with Him indeed.

Want to Know More?

If the above whets your appetite to know more about fasting and how to do it today, the book “A Hunger for God: Desiring God through Fasting and Prayer” by John Piper will hopefully give you deeper insight. Much of this has been formulated on the basis of Piper’s work.

“Our Father...”

STUDY 12

“Prayer is the chief exercise of faith” (John Calvin)

1. What do you think about this statement? Do you agree or disagree and why?



Investigating

Read Matthew 6:9-15... How you should pray...

1. How does vv. 7-8 relate to vv. 9-13? Why would Jesus need to teach the disciples to pray?
2. What is striking about the address “Our Father”? What type of relationship do the disciples have with God and one another? (v. 9)
3. What does the word “hallowed” mean? (v.9)
4. What are the requests made in the first part of the prayer (vv. 9-10)?
5. What should Jesus’ disciples pray for themselves in vv. 11-13? Put each prayer request in your own words...

Request	What it means in your own words
V. 11	
V. 12	
V. 13	

6. Notice how vv. 14-15 expand on the forgiveness theme in v. 12. This idea is also explored in Matthew 18:21-35. Why will God not forgive those who are not willing to forgive?

Matthew 18:21-35

Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?” Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.”

“Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold was brought to him. ²Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.

At this the servant fell on his knees before him. ‘Be patient with me,’ he begged, ‘and I will pay back everything.’ The servant’s master took pity on him, cancelled the debt and let him go.

But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins. He grabbed him and began to choke him. ‘Pay back what you owe me!’ he demanded. His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay it back.’

But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened.

Then the master called the servant in. ‘You wicked servant,’ he said, ‘I cancelled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. ³Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?’ ⁴In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart.”



Thinking & Living

- 1.** How does vv. 9-10 correct or help us see what we need to prioritise in our prayers?

- 2.** How does vv. 11-13 correct the following attitudes and ways of thinking...
 - a.** If I study hard enough, get a degree and a solid job, I will be able to get enough money to make sure I live a good life. To get what I need I just need to work hard.

 - b.** I am really a good person and deserve the best. I won't forgive that person who has hurt me. That person doesn't deserve it.

 - c.** You want to do the right thing? Well, just put your mind to it, create positive habits and soon you will be a good person doing good things. It is a matter of will and mind power.

- 3.** Each person in the Fellowship Group pick an aspect of Matthew 6:9-15...
 - a.** Praise God that He is our Father in Jesus

 - b.** Pray the aspect you picked for yourself personally, everyone in your Fellowship Group, our church family, Ubabalo neThemba Church and our missions' partners

 - c.** Get into the habit of praying through the weekly prayer points (after each study)

Points to Pray...

(now and during the week)

- 1.** Pray for our country in line with Matthew 6:9-13. So much has already happened in 2020...
- 2.** Pray for Ithemba School; that God would continually provide for their financial needs as they pursue His kingdom (Matt. 6:33). Pray for the parents of Ithemba School (their income would have been severely impacted by the COVID-19 lockdown)
- 3.** Pray for the Ascension Service (Thursday, 21 May). Pray that we would remain faithful to Jesus' commission to make disciples of all nations, teaching them to obey everything He has commanded us (Matt. 28:18-20). Keep Matthew 6:9-10 in mind.
- 4.** "I Believe" group: that newcomers would be rooted and established in the Gospel.
- 5.** Pray for Cutting-Edge (REACH Youth rally) happening at Somerset-West (happening 5 June). Pray for a good response from our teenagers, safe travels and blessed fellowship.
- 6.** Pray for Cool-Club and 7Up. It is double-up Friday. Pray for the children reaching out to their friends and inviting them to their Friday night youth groups. Pray for boldness, but also a good response.
- 7.** Pray for those in your group who are struggling. We can come to our Father for all our physical and spiritual needs (Matt. 6:11-13).



Our heavenly Father! hear

*Our Heavenly Father! hear
The prayer we offer now;
Thy name be hallow'd far and near,
To Thee all nations bow:
Thy kingdom come; Thy will
On earth be done in love,
As saints and seraphim fulfil
Thy perfect law above.
Our daily bread supply,
While by Thy word We live;
The guilt of our iniquity,
Forgive as we forgive;
From dark temptation's power,
From Satan's wiles defend,
Deliver in the evil hour,
And guide us to the end.
Thine then ever be
Glory and power divine;
The sceptre, throne, and majesty
Of heaven and earth are thine;
Thus humbly taught to pray
By thy beloved Son,
Through Him we come to Thee, and say
All for His sake be done!*

(Written by James Montgomery – 1771-1854)

James Montgomery was the son of Moravian missionaries. Both his parents died on the West Indies mission field a year from each other, while he was in boarding school at the Moravian school at Fulneck (Leeds). Their sacrifice and his upbringing gave him a zeal for missions and living out the Gospel. In particular, Montgomery had a deep concern for humanitarian causes such as the abolition of slavery, the exploitation of child chimney sweeps and attacking the Lottery. Later in life, James became the editor of Sheffield Iris for 31 years (1796-1827). Critical of the government of his time, James was imprisoned twice. Firstly, for publishing a song commemorating the "Fall of the Bastille" and secondly, for his account of the riot in Sheffield. Nevertheless, throughout his life he was a strong supporter of missions and the work of the Bible society. In many ways, James Montgomery sought to live out what we pray for in the Lord's prayer; that God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven; even if it meant opposition from the world.

Living for the Kingdom

STUDY 13

*“Why are so many of us working hard?
One reason is money. Everyone needs money.
Everyone needs to earn a living, but the endless hunger for
consumer goods means that we need more and more cash”*
(Journalist Charl Honore, 2004)

1. What do you think of this journalist’s observation?



Investigating

Read Matthew 6:19-24 ... Two treasures, Two eyes, Two Masters

Jesus has continually challenged His disciples to set their hearts on the future hope they have of the kingdom of heaven (cf. Matt. 5:3-10; 6:10); living for the reward of the Father (Matt. 6:3, 6, 18) ...

1. What does Jesus want His disciples not to do? Why shouldn’t they do it? (v. 19)
2. Instead of v. 19, what should His disciples live for? Why is this important? (vv. 20-21)
3. What relationship is there between our hearts (our inner self) (v. 21) and our eyes (what we look at or focus on), according to Jesus? (vv. 22-23)
4. Why should we be concerned about what our hearts treasure is and where our eyes are focused? (v. 24)

Read Matthew 6:25-34 ... Trust God, pursue the Kingdom

Jesus knows that the greatest reason people serve “money” is the false security that it brings. If we don’t pursue money, who will take care of us? This is what Jesus addresses next...

1. According to Jesus, what are the two reasons why people serve money rather than God? (vv. 25, 28, 30-31, 34)
2. Why is it foolish to worry or be anxious? (vv. 27, 34)
3. Why should we trust God to be able to provide for us? (vv. 26, 28-30, 32)
4. If we trust God as our Father, how should we live? (v. 33)



Thinking & Living

“The life of discipleship can only be maintained so long as nothing is allowed to come between Christ and ourselves... If the heart is devoted to the mirage of the world, to the creature instead of the Creator, the disciple is lost.”
(Dietrich Bonhoeffer)

1. How has this passage challenged and encouraged you in terms of...
 - a. What your priorities should be?
 - b. How you handle anxiety/worry in your own life?
 - c. How you should use your money/wealth/possessions?
 - d. How you can be an example to those around you regarding what a life looks like that seeks God’s kingdom?
2. How are the following conclusions a misinterpretation of Jesus’ words in vv. 25-34?
 - a. Birds and lilies don’t work or plan, so I don’t need to. God will provide.
 - b. As long as you pursue God’s kingdom you will have an easy life and not suffer.
 - d. If you pursue God’s kingdom first, you will get everything you want.

3. How are Jesus' words reassuring to us when we consider ...
 - a. The Water Crisis
 - b. The South African economy
 - c. The Corona Virus outbreak

4. Jesus wants us to reflect on where our hearts are when it comes to money or treasures on earth. So, reflecting on vv. 19-24...
 - a. What treasures are you devoted to storing up?
 - b. Where are your eyes focused?
 - c. How do your answers reveal who is your master?

5. How does Matthew 28:19-20 help us understand what it means to seek God's kingdom in this life? To what should we dedicate our lives?

Prayerfully read and meditate on 1 Timothy 6:6-10, 17-19 in your own time. Share with the group the next week what you have learned from it.

“Earthly possessions dazzle our eyes and delude us into thinking that they can provide security and freedom from anxiety. Yet all the time they are the very source of all anxiety. If our hearts are set on them, our reward is an anxiety whose burden is intolerable.”

(Dietrich Bonhoeffer)

Points to Pray...

(now and during the week)

- 1.** Look at Matthew 6:19-33. Identify an area Jesus speaks of that you know you are struggling with...
 - Take the time to confess your struggle with anxiety here
 - Pray that God would give you a bigger vision of Him as your Father
 - Ask God to help make you treasure what He treasures and to prioritise His kingdom
- 2.** Missions Partner: Cricket Meyer (Uyesu Unathi in Khayelitsha and Ana A Yesu in Malawi). Khayelitsha would have been deeply impacted by the COVID-19 lockdown. Pray for wisdom as Cricket seeks to live out Matthew 6:19-33 in that context.
- 3.** Pray for Holiday Club: specifically, for all the preparation in making it possible. Pray for a good response as the invitations go out. Only a few weeks away.
- 4.** Ithemba School: Praise God for all the volunteers who assist and read at the school. Pray that God will work through them in our children's lives and for the Lord to encourage the volunteers in the way they serve.
- 5.** Pray for More-to-Life and False Bay College Life @ Lunch: that those who expressed interest would continue to come and be disciplined in the teachings of Jesus (Matt. 28:18-20). Pray for continued good relationships with the staff at False Bay College (main contact retiring in June).
- 6.** Pray for Communion Services in Silvermine Village, Noordhoek Manor and Carlisle Lodge: for a continued open door in serving the frail, but also Gospel opportunities in sharing the good news of Jesus with those who might not know Him.
- 7.** Pray for one another, keeping in mind that our Father knows what we need even before we ask Him (Matt. 6:8, 32).



Seek Ye First

Our Heavenly Father! hear

*Seek ye first the kingdom of God
And His righteousness;
And all these things shall be added unto you.
Hallelu, Hallelujah!*

*Ask, and it shall be given unto you;
Seek, and you shall find.
Knock, and it shall be opened unto you.
Hallelu, Hallelujah!*

*Man shall not live by bread alone,
But by every word
That proceeds out from the mouth of God.
Hallelu, Hallelujah!
All for His sake be done!*

(Written by Karen Lafferty, 1948-)

Although growing up in a Christian home, Karen drifted from the Christianity and started working as a nightclub entertainer in New Orleans. Yet, through a Christian friend, Karen returned to the faith of her childhood and started following Jesus as a musician. She quit her entertainment job in 1971 and started teaching guitar, but only had three students. This change in life decision was costly; as Karen wrote, *“When my savings were all gone and I had no money to make my car payments, I became very discouraged and confused”*.

One evening at a Bible study at church, the topic of discussion was Matthew 6:33. Encouraged and challenged by Jesus’ words on seeking the Kingdom first, Karen went home, wrote the tune, recorded the song on a tape recorder and started singing the song. The following week she taught the song to her church family.

The song became popular and would later feature in numerous hymnals. Incredibly, due to its wide usage, the hymn “seek ye first” constitutes 40% of Karen Lafferty’s mission support, enabling her to serve in full-time ministry.

A Brief Guide to Christian Giving



As Christians we want our view of giving, money and possessions to be shaped by God's Word and not our increasingly materialistic culture. **During his ministry, Jesus Christ taught extensively about these things.** He warned clearly about the danger of loving money more than God; he urged his followers to store up eternal treasure in heaven; he lovingly taught about the importance of being generous with what God has given; he commanded his disciples to make the growth of God's Kingdom their priority in life.

So, here are some basic Biblical principles about giving:

1. Give because of the Gospel

This is the most important thing: we give in response to what God has given us. Christians are those who have grasped just how generous God was when he sent his Son to die as a sacrifice for the sins of the world. Christians are those who realise that *"though he was rich, yet for [our] sakes he became poor"* (2 Cor 8:9). And so, in response to the immense generosity of their Father God, Christians will in turn be givers. The Bible calls on each Christian to give (2 Cor 9:7).

2. Give generously & sacrificially

In the Old Testament, God commanded his people to give at least a tenth ('tithes') of all their produce to God, in joyful response to his blessings to them. Much of the tithe went towards supporting the priests and Levites who served them in God's work.

So, how much should "New Testament" Christians give? The New Testament never stipulates percentages but it is appropriate to take the 10% as something of a guide. After all, can you imagine the disciples (of Jewish background) giving less than their previous tithe after they became Christian? (i.e. After they realised that God had so generously given his only Son to die for them.)

But this 10% should be a starting point from which we then decide how generous we can be, rather than a legalistic figure to enforce. For very low incomes, 10% may be difficult to manage. But many in our church have been very blessed financially, and could even afford to give a higher percentage.

A good approach is to aim to make your giving sacrificial in some way. That is, we give beyond that point of comfort. Because God's giving to us was so sacrificial, it makes sense that our giving involves us accepting a personal cost. Our tendency may be to give only if there is something "left over" after we have decided what we want or need. It would be more in line with the Bible's teaching to first consider your giving, even though that may mean a sacrifice of some kind.

Notice how Jesus commends the poor widow (Mark 12:41-44). Her two copper coins represented a far greater sacrifice than what the rich had given. Jesus knew who had sacrificed more.

When we receive new income (a raise; a bonus; a liquidated investment) the Christian's response is not simply: "How can this raise my standard of living?" but "How can this raise my standard of giving?"

3. Give cheerfully & responsibly

We read in 2 Corinthians 9:7 that God loves a cheerful giver. According to Paul, the opportunity to give in support of the work of the Kingdom can be considered a grace from God. We can also give cheerfully knowing that generous, sacrificial giving is often God's way of helping us battle materialism and it leads to us storing up (real!) treasure in heaven.

In some practical advice about a collection for the Jerusalem poor, Paul says: "*On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made*" (1 Cor 16:2). This tells us that, as Christians, we need to plan ahead responsibly to give. This is an important matter and one which couples and households should discuss, pray through, plan for and act on.

That's one of the reasons why, at St Peters, we ask everyone to make pledges as to their intended annual giving. It will help us as a church plan our finances more accurately and it helps us all to be more responsible stewards of our own personal finances. Being intentional about giving ahead of time also helps you to examine how best to allocate the resources God has entrusted to you.

You may have recently become a Christian. You may have joined St Peters in the last few months and have not yet thought this through. You may have been here for ages and have just "never got around to it". You may think that the amount you can afford to give will make no difference. But the Bible is clear: every Christian should consider the gift of God's Son and, in response, give.

Finally, just consider the example of the impoverished Macedonian church, as described by the Apostle Paul: "*Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord's people.*" (2 Cor 8:4) What a thought! These Christians pleaded with Paul for the privilege of giving their money to a good Gospel cause. Now there was a group of Christians whose hearts were set on the things heaven! (Matthew 6:21)



St Peters Giving Details:

BANK ACCOUNT:

**St Peters Church Fish Hoek
Standard Bank
Account No: 270372806
Branch Code: 036009**

Matthew 7:1-12

Judging Others/ The Golden Rule

STUDY 14

1. How would you explain to someone what it means to “love your neighbour as yourself”?



Investigating

Read Matthew 7:1-12... How we love one another

1. How would you break this passage up into sections and can you give a 1-sentence summary for each of your sections?
2. Can you explain the illustration Jesus uses here in your own words?
3. What do you think Jesus is talking about in v6?
4. How do vv. 1-5 and v. 6 work together, without contradiction?
5. What does Jesus anticipate will follow his injunctions in 7:7?
6. Why does Jesus expect God to answer those who live in the kingdom (vv. 8-11)? What is their relationship with God?
7. In some ways the bulk of the Sermon on the Mount is a practical exercise in living life according to the Law in its greatest fulfilment (cf. 5:17-20). Where Jesus finishes demonstrating this in practical examples, he sums it up in a single maxim. How does he do this? (Matt. 7:12)
8. Having looked at each of these sections, could you give a sentence that summarises all of v1-12?



Thinking & Living

1. What should our attitude look like when it comes to the faults of others?
2. What motivates us, as citizens of this kingdom, to have this attitude?
3. How does Jesus exemplify 7:6? Can you think of examples in Matthew's Gospel where he is discerning, while remaining gracious and persistent?
4. The Reformer John Calvin said this: *"Nothing is better adapted to excite us to prayer than a full conviction that we shall be heard."* How do Jesus' words in vv.7-11 motivate you to pray?
5. If 7:12 is the Sermon on the Mount summarised, how can we apply it to scenarios that Jesus does not sketch for us? Try applying it to some of these examples.
 - a. A new mother joins St Peters. She comes with her children and is enjoying the service but struggles for transport and has not yet made any real connections.
 - b. Someone in the church has hurt you in the way they have treated you or another person. They have now approached you about serving under them.
 - c. You've been asked to supervise a new trainee at work, but you find them difficult to interact with and they continually undermine you and your position.

Points to Pray...

(now and during the week)

1. Reflect on Matthew 7:1-11...

- Is there something you need to confess to God about from this passage?
- Take the opportunity to pray for humility, meekness and wisdom in how you relate to Christians and non-Christians (Matt. 7:1-8)
- Pray for wisdom and change in the areas Jesus is highlighting for you

2. Consider Matthew 7:12...

- Pray for our mercy ministries, that they would be marked by this attitude, motive and love Jesus is describing
- Pray for Ubabalo neThemba Church, that Pastor Bheki and their congregation would be a shining light of showing this other-centered love in Masiphumalele
- Pray for St. Peters Church, that each member of our church family would be marked by this love ethic of loving others as we love ourselves.

3. Pray for Digging Deeper happening in June: for all the preparation, a great response, but also that everyone who comes will be equipped for every good work God has prepared for us (cf. Eph. 2:10; 4:12).

4. Pray for one another. Let Matthew 7:1-12's description of relationships guide you in your prayers for one another.



Be Perfect!

A call back to Genesis 1:26-27



In Matthew 5:48, Jesus concludes His words on the Law and the Prophets by commanding His disciples, *“Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect”*. This is clearly a standard or righteousness that *“surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law”* (Matt. 5:20). This command also echoes the Levitical command, *“Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy”* (Lev. 19:2). Yet, why this command to mirror God himself? Isn't that a bit too high? It would seem high, until you understand that Jesus is merely calling us to be truly human again; to be what God originally created us to be.

In Genesis 1:26-27, we read “Then God said, ‘Let us make mankind in **our image**, in **our likeness**, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.’

So God created mankind in **his own image**,
in the **image of God** he created them;
male and female he created them.”

Notice the repetition of the word “image” here. Also, notice the plural language of Genesis 1:26, *“Let us... in our... in our...”*. Although Genesis 1:26-27 does not unpack this mystery, Jesus will later reveal that before creation God was always Trinity (just read the upper room discourse of John 14-17 or John's prologue in John 1:1-18). In Genesis we see an incredible mystery revealed to us. God who is an eternal community of three persons (Father, Son and Holy Spirit), created a creature that will “image” or “mirror” God as Trinity. So, God created humanity as persons in community, “male and female he created them” (Gen. 1:27).

In John 17:1-26, we discover that God is an eternal community of Three persons, united in being, purpose, will and love. Each person of the Trinity being other-centered, loving and delighting in one another. Humanity was originally created to mirror/image/reflect God's character or Trinitarian community to His creation.

What we should recognize is that Jesus' command in Matthew 5:48 is really a command to be what we were originally created to be: **image bearers of God's other-centered love and community**. We have fallen short of our original design: to reflect God's glory (Rom. 3:23). Jesus has come to redeem His people from their brokenness (being shattered mirrors due to sin) and to restore us as God's image-bearers. Jesus' call to His disciples is a call for the original creation order to be restored. Jesus is calling us to be normal human beings again. To be human is to be what we were created to be: image-bearers of God. So, *“Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect”* (Matt. 5:48).

Matthew 7:13-29

Two Ways, Two Trees, Two Ends...

STUDY 15

“Let it be considered that if our lives be not a journey to heaven they will be a journey to hell.”

(Jonathan Edwards, 18th Century)

1. What do you think about this statement? How does it make you feel?



Investigating

Like the Old Testament prophets (cf. Deut. 11:26-27; 30:15; Josh. 24:15; Jer. 21:8), Jesus (who is the fulfilment of the prophets; cf. Matt. 5:17-20) concludes His sermon on the mount with a series of warnings, showing the crowds and disciples that there are only two ways of life guided by two voices and two ends ...

Read Matthew 7:13-14... Two Ways

1. What are the differences between the two ways (Jesus' way vs. the alternatives)?

Read Matthew 7:15-20... Two Voices & Two Trees

Each gate/way has its own prophets/voices guiding those who go on them. Jesus is the voice of the narrow way, but the broad way also has its voices ...

1. Who should we watch out for and why? (v. 15)
2. How do we discern someone being a “wolf”? (vv. 16-20)

Read Matthew 7:21-27... Two Ends/Builders

Jesus has already warned His disciples to consider their own lives prior to looking at the lives of others (Matt. 7:1-5). The frightful thing of a false prophet/disciple is that they don't know they are one ...

1. What do the "false" disciples/prophets base his/her confidence on? (vv. 21-22)
2. Who will "enter the kingdom of heaven" or stand in the day of judgment? (vv. 21, 24-25)
3. What is the end of the false prophet/disciple? (vv. 23, 26-27)



Thinking & Living

“But Christ's followers must ask by what ultimate criterion Jesus will accept or reject them. Who will pass the test, and who will not? The answer lies in the words of Jesus to the last of the rejected: ‘I have never known you.’ Here we are at last, here is the secret we have been waiting for since the Sermon on the Mount began. Here is the crucial question: has Jesus known us or not?”

(Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Cost of Discipleship*)

1. How does Jesus' teaching of the two ways correct the belief that "all roads lead to God" (pluralism)?

- 2.** Why are the following positions deceptive messages and ways of life?
- I believe Jesus is Lord, my sins have been forgiven, so it doesn't matter what I do or how I live. Jesus has died for my sins, I'm OK. God's grace covers all of it.
 - Some of Jesus' words are "archaic" or just "cultural", so we don't have to listen to them anymore. We live in the 21st Century and should reject the teachings of Jesus that belong in the 1st Century. We need to listen to what God has to say to us today.
 - Those people really are prophets. They said things about me I never revealed to them. They have healed people and driven out demons. The miracles prove that they are real prophets. They've got power. If you don't listen to them, you are "blaspheming against the Holy Spirit".
 - In the end, love wins. Ultimately, in some way, everyone will go to heaven and be with Jesus.
- 3.** How do Jesus' closing words here show that the Sermon on the Mount can't just be taken as another piece of famous oratory?
- 4.** How have Jesus' final words in this sermon challenged you personally? Given vv. 24-27, what is at stake as we read the Sermon on Mount, perhaps read and pray over it again in your own time.

*"Only he who believes is obedient;
only he who is obedient believes."
(Dietrich Bonhoeffer)*

Trust and Obey

*When we walk with the Lord in the light of His Word,
What a glory He sheds on our way!
While we do His good will, He abides with us still,
And with all who will trust and obey.*

Refrain:

*Trust and obey, for there's no other way
To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.*

*Not a shadow can rise, not a cloud in the skies,
But His smile quickly drives it away;
Not a doubt or a fear, not a sigh or a tear,
Can abide while we trust and obey.*

*Not a burden we bear, not a sorrow we share,
But our toil He doth richly repay;
Not a grief or a loss, not a frown or a cross,
But is blessed if we trust and obey.*

*But we never can prove the delights of His love
Until all on the altar we lay;
For the favor He shows, for the joy He bestows,
Are for them who will trust and obey.*

*Then in fellowship sweet we will sit at His feet,
Or we'll walk by His side in the way;
What He says we will do, where He sends we will go;
Never fear, only trust and obey.*

Written by J.H. Sammis (1846-1919)

The hymn "trust and obey" was written by Presbyterian minister J.H. Sammis (1846-1919). Although starting his career as a businessman, Sammis left the business world to become a pastor in 1880. During a D.L. Moody evangelistic rally, the musician Daniel B. Towner heard a young man give his testimony saying, "I am not quite sure - but I am going to trust and I am going to obey". Towner jotted the sentence down and sent it to Sammis (telling him the story). In response, Sammis wrote the hymn "Trust and Obey", published in 1887.

The hymn focuses on the blessing of believing and following God's Word. There are present blessings in faith-obedience, but ultimately the eternal blessing when we will "sit at His feet". In many ways, it is a reminder to us that trusting and following Jesus is the "blessed" life as described in the Beatitudes.

Points to Pray...

(now and during the week)

1. Reflect on Matthew 7:13-27...
 - Is there something you need to confess here?
 - Pray that God would protect our church family from “*false prophets*” (Matt. 7:15)
 - Pray that we would have discernment
 - Pray for people you know who might be basing their assurance on the wrong things (Matt. 7:21-23)
2. Pray for all the “Word” ministries at St. Peters & Ubabalo neThemba Church (Children & Youth Work; Fellowship Groups, Sunday preaching etc.). Pray that we would be faithful to what we have learned in Matthew 7:13-27.
3. “I believe” group: that everyone in the group would listen to the Word and apply its teachings about God in our day-to-day lives
4. Missions Partners: Pray for Explore (Nevil Carrington). Pray for all the facilitators who help those in the course discover the truth of God’s Word for themselves. Pray for the continued growth of this ministry throughout Africa.
5. Pray for the REACHSA music conference (happening in July). Pray that volunteers from the various REACH churches would be encouraged and equipped to better serve their church families.
6. Holiday Club: Pray for a good week of children’s outreach. Pray for safety, but especially for conversions; that children would “*enter through the narrow gate*” (Matt. 7:13) and hear Jesus’ words, put them into practice and do “*the will of my Father who is in heaven*” (Matt. 7:21, 24)
7. Pray for safe travels for those who might be going away during the holidays; that they would be refreshed and energised for the new term.
8. Continue to pray for one another. Pray that we would remain faithful in hearing “*these words of mine (Jesus) and put them into practice*” (Matt. 7:24)



