**4 The Law of the King: The Sermon on the Mount (Part 1) *Matthew 5:1–6:18***

***Purpose:*** To learn how the law of Jesus reaches into our hearts and requires total obedience.

***Introduction***: C. S. Lewis was once criticized for not caring for the Sermon on the Mount. He replied, “As to ‘caring for’ the Sermon on the Mount, if ‘caring for’ here means ‘liking’ or enjoying, I suppose no one ‘cares for’ it. Who can like being knocked flat on his face by a sledgehammer? I can hardly imagine a more deadly spiritual condition than that of a man who can read that passage with tranquil pleasure.”

Lewis was right. Studying the Sermon on the Mount can be a devastating experience. It exposes the depth of our sin and the shallowness of our commitment. But the pain it inflicts is meant to heal, not destroy, us. In fact, the Sermon on the Mount could be called the Christian’s job description. It is the most complete summary we have of Jesus’ ethical expectations for his followers. Throughout church history it has been a helpful guide and a convicting challenge.

Jesus’ teaching about the behavior required of citizens of his kingdom is both comprehensive and intensive. He covers everything from personal relationships to religious responsibilities to daily needs of food, clothing, and shelter. The teaching is intensive: it is addressed not only to our outward behavior but to our internal motivations. This study looks at the first half of the Sermon on the Mount and Jesus’ teaching on motivation and religious responsibilities.

***Read:*** *Matthew 5.*

**1.** The Beatitudes describe the qualities Jesus requires of those who live as citizens of his kingdom (vv**.** [**3–12**](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt5.3-12)**)**. Describe those qualities in your own words.

**2.** Each beatitude comes with specific blessings. In what ways could a community possessing such blessings be described as rich?

**3.** Jesus compares his followers to salt and light (vv. **13–16**). What do these metaphors suggest about our role in society?

**4.** In the rest of chapter [5](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt5)Jesus discusses various misconceptions we might have about the Law (Old Testament Scriptures). Why do you think that Jesus stresses that he did not come to abolish the Law (vv. **17–20**)?

**5.** Jesus’ teaching on murder and adultery (vv. [**21–30**](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt5.21-30)**)** differs from traditional understanding. How would it clarify and cleanse the way the citizens of his kingdom are to live?

**6.** In verses [**31–37**](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt5.31-37) Jesus provides instructions on divorce and oaths (legal relationships) that confront Jewish tradition. How do his changes confront the issue of duplicity?

**7.** In verses **38–47** Jesus teaches on enemies and evil people. How does Jesus’ teaching shape the way his citizens respond to opposition?

**8.** Verse **48** summarizes the essence of what Jesus has been saying. What responses do you have to Jesus’ high standard?

**9.** *Read* [***Matthew 6:1–18***](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt6.1-18)***.*** Jesus shifts his focus from relationships to “religious obligations.” What do we learn about proper and improper motives from Jesus’ examples about giving, praying, and fasting?

**10.** Looking back on all you have read in the Sermon on the Mount, how are motives central to Jesus’ teaching on both relationships and religious acts?

**11.** How does Jesus’ teaching on motives address your experience of the Christian life?

***Personal Reflection.*** Godly men and women in the Old Testament considered God’s law a wonderful gift (as opposed to a burden or oppressive obligations). In your mind’s eye receive the gift of God’s law from him wrapped in colorful paper. Spend a few moments being thankful that he loves you enough to tell you what is best for you.

***Prayer:*** *Ask the Lord to work his character into your heart so that his light might shine from your life.*

***Later:*** The Ten Commandments could be described as the beatitudes of the Old Testament. They are the introduction and summary of what God required of Israel as his covenant people. Turn to Exodus 20:1–12 and read over the first five commandments. How does each one express the character of God? How might each one shape your character?