

A watercolor illustration of a mountain range in shades of blue and white, centered on the page. The mountains are rendered with soft, blended colors, giving them a misty, ethereal appearance. The peaks are jagged but softened by the watercolor effect. The overall composition is minimalist and serene.

SALT <sup>OF</sup> THE EARTH

A SERIES ON MATTHEW 5 - 7



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# SERIES INTRODUCTION

The ‘Sermon on the Mount’ is one of Jesus’ most famous sermons – have you read it before? It was addressed to his disciples and to all those who would seek to follow him; it’s Jesus’ sermon to us – his church – where we listen to him calling us to live lives that are being transformed by the reality of God and his kingdom.

In this sermon, we will hear Jesus calling us to be “salt of the earth” and “light of the world” (Matthew 5:13-14). Jesus is calling us to live radical, life-bringing, and distinctive lives. He is calling us to live a life of integrity – a life lived submitting to the upside-down blessings of God’s kingdom, and a life that’s being changed from the inside out. This is Jesus’ heart desire for us: He doesn’t want a single part of our life to escape the gravity of his life-changing and creative love. This is a big calling!

In this series, we need to be careful to hear Jesus’ teaching – not as a legalistic burden but as an invitation to live in grace. Jesus says his yoke is “easy” and his burden is “light” – “you will find rest for your souls” (Matthew 11:30).

But it is possible to receive Jesus’ teaching as a heavy burden. The heavy burden is to live life with the appearance of righteousness, while inwardly crippling under the dis-integration of the soul. The heavy burden is to live with the endless ticking, the restless murmur of the soul that seeks acceptance and validation but is never settled. How much

righteousness is enough? The heavy burden is to look within yourself, and find, as Augustine did, that "...I had turned myself into a famished land I had to live in" (*Augustine, Confession, 5.2; 2.18*).

Jesus' Sermon on the Mount will be experienced as deeply transformative when we first receive the remedy of grace and then pursue the design of grace. The remedy of grace is the work of Christ for the healing of our souls. Richard Lovelace, in his 1979 book, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life*, reflected:

"Only a fraction of the present body of professing Christians are solidly appropriating the justifying work of Christ in their lives...In their day-to-day existence they rely on their sanctification for justification...Few know enough to start each day with a thoroughgoing stand upon Luther's platform: 'You are accepted', looking outward in faith and claiming the wholly alien righteousness of Christ as the only ground for acceptance, relaxing in that quality of trust which will produce increasing sanctification as faith is active in love and gratitude." (Richard Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life*, P101)

Applying this to the Sermon on the Mount, it would be a mistake to imagine in our moments of sin, and in those times where we become aware of our failure to meet the standard of holiness displayed in Jesus' teaching, that we have lost the smile of God's face – as though our sin causes God to cease being our Father, and who now adopts the

posture of the Judge. The remedy of grace assures us: We are his Beloved.

But we also must not reject the design of grace – which is God’s transformative power to conform us to the image of Christ. God’s grace leads us to holiness, as Paul writes in Titus:

“For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age...” (Titus 2:11-12).

This series will challenge us to live in the remedy of grace and to pursue the design of grace – we are called to be holy. Together we come to sit at the feet of Jesus, our loving Lord, and embrace what we are declared to be - “salt” and “light”. It means by God’s mercy we will face the darkness in our heart and will come awake to the darkness in our world. It means our souls will ache for Jesus’ return, but in the meantime, we won’t be satisfied with the mere appearance of living under God’s rule. We will not squander those heavenly treasures Christ died to secure for our possession. Since we have experienced by faith the assurance of our destination, we strive forward in the power and hope of Christ’s resurrection life. Like Lazarus emerging from the tomb, still donning his grave clothes – by grace we will learn to live anew.

**Be Still** – In the hurry of life, it is good to be still and atune ourselves to God’s presence around us. This term, find a few minutes in your group time to be still, sit with what we have learnt, and enjoy God. On the next page are some ideas to help you start this practice.

**This Week** - is all about changing our lives so that we can more closely conform to the outline that Jesus gives for believers who are seeking to follow him. This is a week by week activity – changing our hearts and our lives as we learn from him.

**Preparation** is key – listening to the Talk and answering the questions before Growth Group are excellent ways to be ready for Growth Group

Utilise the **Leaders Guide** that will be sent to the Growth Group Leader each week – this will give background to the questions

There are more questions than is possible to discuss in one Growth Group event – so the Growth Group Leader or in some cases the Group can **select a smaller number of questions for discussion** together

There are **different types of questions** – so it is good to check every now and again that your group is discussing a range of question types

**Feedback** is helpful always - please email me with any time with your thoughts [andrapryde@livingchurch.org.au](mailto:andrapryde@livingchurch.org.au)

Because we live in such a distracted world, sitting in silence will feel uncomfortable at first. Your mind will wander, distractions will pull you away. Don't be discouraged, but as you feel yourself getting distracted, ask God to help you refocus on him.

Start small - a few minutes will seem long. Then build each week. Below are a few practices to help you get started. Begin by putting away your phones, have one person briefly pray asking God to quiet your minds and hearts.

#### **Breathing prayer**

*Spend this time removing yourself from hurry and busyness. Take deep long slow breathes, and focus on making them even. Release the constant chatter in your mind. Let each thought go as you breathe out, and focus again on your breathing.*

*If you start to find your mind wandering away from the breathing that's OK; try coming back to it by acknowledging God and refocusing on the breath.*

#### **Abide in the vine**

*Turn your focus to God's presence around you. If it's easier to picture this abstract thought, imagine God is sitting here in the room - in the chair across from you, or on the couch next to you. You might want to listen to him, or say something to him, or you may not want to do anything but sit in the room with him, and enjoy him.*



WEEK ONE

THE UPSIDE-  
DOWN KINGDOM

# NOTES

## Read Matthew 5:1-12

1. Matthew 5:3 introduces us to the Kingdom of Heaven. Read the following verses. What do they tell us about the kingdom of heaven?

Matthew 4:17, 23

Matthew 5:3, 10

Matthew 6:10

Matthew 7:21

Matthew 12:28

Matthew 13:31-33

2. Matthew 5:3-12 is called 'Beatitudes' – a Latin word meaning, "blessing". From your reading of Jesus' words, what does it mean for someone to be "blessed"?

How does this compare to what the world imagines as the 'blessed life'?

And how does knowing the gospel help us understand that we are 'blessed'?

3. As a group, reflect on these Beatitudes by answering the questions in the table below:

Beatitude	What surprised you?	What is it saying?	What are the consequences or outcomes?	How do you describe this to a believer?
Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven				
Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.				
Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.				
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.				
Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy				
Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.				
Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.				
Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven				



4. Tim Keller, in his book, *Hope in Times of Fear*, writes:

*“...when Jesus rose, he brought the future kingdom of God into the present. It is not yet here fully but it is here substantially, and Christians live an impoverished life if they do not realize what is available to them.”*

As you reflect on the Beatitudes, where are you most challenged to take hold of the present blessings that are yours in Christ?

Where are you most challenged to wait patiently for the future blessings that are yours in Christ?

## THIS WEEK

*What struck me about how this passage says I should live...*

*In response I need to change...*

*I will ask:*

*To keep me accountable and pray for me...*

# PRAYER

*Begin your group prayer time with a few minutes of silence and stillness, as you become aware of God's presence, and respond in your heart to what you've learnt today. Refer to the beginning of this companion for ideas to get you started*

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WEEK TWO

SALT OF THE  
EARTH

# NOTES

## Read Matthew 5:13-20

1. Look at verses 13-14. What does it mean for us to be the salt of the earth? What does it mean for us to be the light of the world?
2. There are warnings in these verses. What are they saying? What should we do?
3. In verse 16, Jesus says that when people see our good deeds, they will glorify your Father in heaven. How do we show that our church community – and the lives we live - is so distinctive? How should we encourage each other to live?
4. We are all subject to pressures in this world – how does your faith influence your response to those pressures?

5. Re-read verses 17-20, here we see the exceptionally high standard of God's law. How do you feel reading these verses? In what ways should we respond – individually? As a group of people called Living Church?

## THIS WEEK

*What struck me about how this passage says I should live...*

6. The Sermon on the Mount is teaching to believers - when Jesus spoke these words people who were not believers were listening in. How would you explain this passage of the Bible to someone who is not yet a believer?

*In response I need to change...*

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WEEK THREE  
LIVE WITH  
INTEGRITY

# NOTES

1. This passage will get us thinking about living with integrity. What do you think it means to live a life of integrity?

**Read Matthew 5:21-48**

2. Why is our integrity so crucial to our witness as people who are declared to be 'salt' and 'light' to the world?
3. In this passage Jesus gives us five examples of teaching that people had heard, but which Jesus wanted to correct. Why did Jesus feel it was necessary to challenge what the people had "heard" and then correct them?
4. Is Jesus making it harder for *them* to obey and please God? Is Jesus making it harder for *us* to obey and please God?

5. Look at each of the topics below. How does the gospel of Jesus change our attitude towards each of these?

Anger (verses 21-26)

Adultery/marriage (verses 27-32)

Truth-telling (verses 33-37)

Retaliation and revenge (verses 38-42)

Loving enemies (verses 43-48)

6. If Jesus calls us to live a new life marked by heart obedience – what does this new life look like at church?

What does this new life look like in the world?

Are there ways we can fake this new life that Jesus calls for here?

**Read Romans 3:23-24**

7. How should we deal with our own “falling short”?

How should we respond when we see our brothers and sisters “fall short”?

8. The Sermon on the Mount is teaching to believers - when Jesus spoke these words people who were not believers were listening in. How would you explain this passage of the Bible to someone who is not yet a believer?

## THIS WEEK

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WEEK FOUR  
FOR GOD'S  
GLORY

# NOTES



5. In this passage, Jesus refers to God as 'Father' ten times (6:1, 4, 6x2, 8, 9, 14, 15, 18x2). How do you feel when picturing God as your father?
  
6. And how might this loving relationship with our Heavenly Father change our temptations to be seen, noticed, approved, or accepted by others?
  
7. How might this loving relationship with our Heavenly Father change the way we give, pray, and fast?

8. In this passage we have seen that we can resist the temptation to be seen by others. But In Matthew 5 we are called to let our light shine and be salty "...let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven." (Matt. 5:16)? How do these two truths fit together?

## THIS WEEK

*What struck me about how this passage says I should live...*

9. The Sermon on the Mount is teaching to believers - when Jesus spoke these words people who were not believers were listening in. How would you explain this passage of the Bible to someone who is not yet a believer?

*In response I need to change...*

*I will ask:*

*To keep me accountable and pray for me...*

# PRAYER

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WEEK FIVE

TREASURES IN  
HEAVEN

# NOTES

## Read Matthew 6:19-24

1. Jesus sets before us a stark choice: To seek treasures on earth or treasures in heaven.

What might be the treasure on earth we are called to resist?

How do we know when earthly things have become our 'treasure'?

2. What might the heavenly treasures we are called to pursue be?
3. In verses 22-23, Jesus talks about our eyes being 'healthy' or 'unhealthy'; full of 'light' or full of 'darkness'. Why is he drawing attention to what we look at?

And what does this have to do with earthly or heavenly treasure?

4. Is it wrong to be wealthy? Is it good to be poor?

How is Jesus instructing us to handle our money?

5. In different seasons of life, we may find ourselves either comfortably well-off or facing financial difficulty. What are the special temptations we can face when we are well-off?

What are the special temptations we can face when we have financial difficulty?

6. How can our approach to earthly or heavenly treasure impact our witness as people who are declared to be 'salt of the earth'?

7. The Sermon on the Mount is teaching to believers - when Jesus spoke these words people who were not believers were listening in. How would you explain this passage of the Bible to someone who is not yet a believer?

## THIS WEEK

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WEEK SIX

SEEK THE  
KINGDOM

# NOTES

**Read Matthew 6:25-34**

1. See that verse 25 begins with ‘therefore’ - pointing back to remind us of what Jesus has already said. How does this help us understand his instruction for us to not worry?

2. Jesus paints four small pictures, what are we to learn from them?

	<i>What is he communicating</i>	<i>What are we to learn</i>
Verses 26 & 27		
Verses 28 & 29		
Verse 30		
Verse 32		

3. Do you think our culture is an anxious and worried culture? In what ways do you see our world consumed by worry and anxiety?

4. When we live consumed by worry, what does this show about what we think about God?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. Does the gospel free us from all worry?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. How would you respond to someone who says, “If you worry then you don’t trust God to take care of you and you have no faith.”?

**Read 1 Peter 5:7 and Philippians 4:6-7**

7. When you worry, where are you tempted to turn to self-soothe and to find comfort?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. From these passages, what should we do with our worry and anxiety?

9. The Sermon on the Mount is teaching to believers - when Jesus spoke these words people who were not believers were listening in. How would you explain this passage of the Bible to someone who is not yet a believer?

## THIS WEEK

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WEEK SEVEN

JUDGE NOT

# NOTES

## Read Matthew 7:1-12

1. Look at verses 3-5 where Jesus speaks about planks. What four things does he want us to do?
  - i)
  - ii)
  - iii)
  - iv)
2. Have you ever been in a situation where you have had a “blind spot”? How did you come to finally see?
3. How does the gospel of Jesus, lived out in Christian community, make it possible to remove our “blind spots”?
4. Look at verse 6 - Jesus now talks about “dogs” and “pigs”. Why might that be? What might he want us to understand? For us today, how do we discern those who may be “dogs” or “pigs” in our own culture?

*Being judgmental comes from a proud and critical spirit that seeks to condemn others. A judgmental person is quick to label others as the problem. Being discerning comes from slowing down to understand ourselves and the other person, and comes from a heart that seeks their good. Yet, discernment requires wisdom because we must decide whether the other person is a brother or sister who will listen (verse 5), or an animal who will stay stuck in their ways (verse 6).*

5. Is it possible to be discerning, without becoming judgmental? How do we do this?

## THIS WEEK

*What struck me about  
how this passage says  
I should live...*

6. In verses 7-12, Jesus calls us to prayerfully seek our Father in heaven who gives “good gifts” to those who ask. What does this have to do with being people of discernment, and planks in our eye?

7. The Sermon on the Mount is teaching to believers - when Jesus spoke these words people who were not believers were listening in. How would you explain this passage of the Bible to someone who is not yet a believer?

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WEEK EIGHT

CHOOSE LIFE

# NOTES

**Read Matthew 7:13-29**

1. Dig into what is going on in this passage:

<i>Reference</i>	<i>What is happening?</i>	<i>What is Jesus saying?</i>	<i>How are we to live?</i>
Verses 13 & 14			
Verses 15			
Verses 16-20			
Verses 21-23			
Verses 24-27			

2. Look at verse 14. Why do so few go along the narrow road and through the narrow gate?

3. What are some of the 'narrow road' decisions we must make each day?

4. What is the fruit that shows a person is a true or false prophet/teacher?

5. Verses 21-23 deals with people who appear to have faith in Christ, but really don't. Sometimes you may doubt whether your own faith is genuine – how do you know if it is?
  
6. What might you say to someone who fears they've never truly come to faith?
  
7. Look at verses 24-27. Viewed from the outside, the two houses may appear just the same. What difference does it make when your life is built on Jesus' words?
  
8. In what ways does knowing Jesus help you in times of trouble?

9. In verse 24 Jesus speaks about not just hearing his words, but also putting them to practice. As you reflect on the Sermon on the Mount, what are some of the things you are most challenged to 'practice'?

## THIS WEEK

*What struck me about  
how this passage says  
I should live...*

10. The Sermon on the Mount is teaching to believers - when Jesus spoke these words people who were not believers were listening in. How would you explain this passage of the Bible to someone who is not yet a believer?

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WEEK NINE

MAKE DISCIPLES

# NOTES

IN  
R  
E  
V  
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E  
W

1. What are your highlights from Sermon on the Mount?
2. What stood out to you?
3. What has had the biggest impact on your life?

**Read Matthew 28:16-20**

1. How is this passage connected to the Sermon on the Mount?
2. What are we taking out to the world and why would we bother?
3. Are churches being the “salt of the earth” if they are not making disciples?

4. How would you discern the effectiveness of a church in making disciples?

## THIS WEEK

*What struck me about  
how this passage says  
I should live...*

5. What do you think is the role of a Growth Group in making and teaching disciples?

6. What do you think is the role of Living Church in making and teaching disciples?

7. How can you be involved in making disciples?

*In response I need to  
change...*

8. Here, once again, Jesus is teaching to believers. How would you explain this passage of the Bible to someone who is not yet a believer?

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## **Salt of the Earth**

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**Living**  
**Church.**