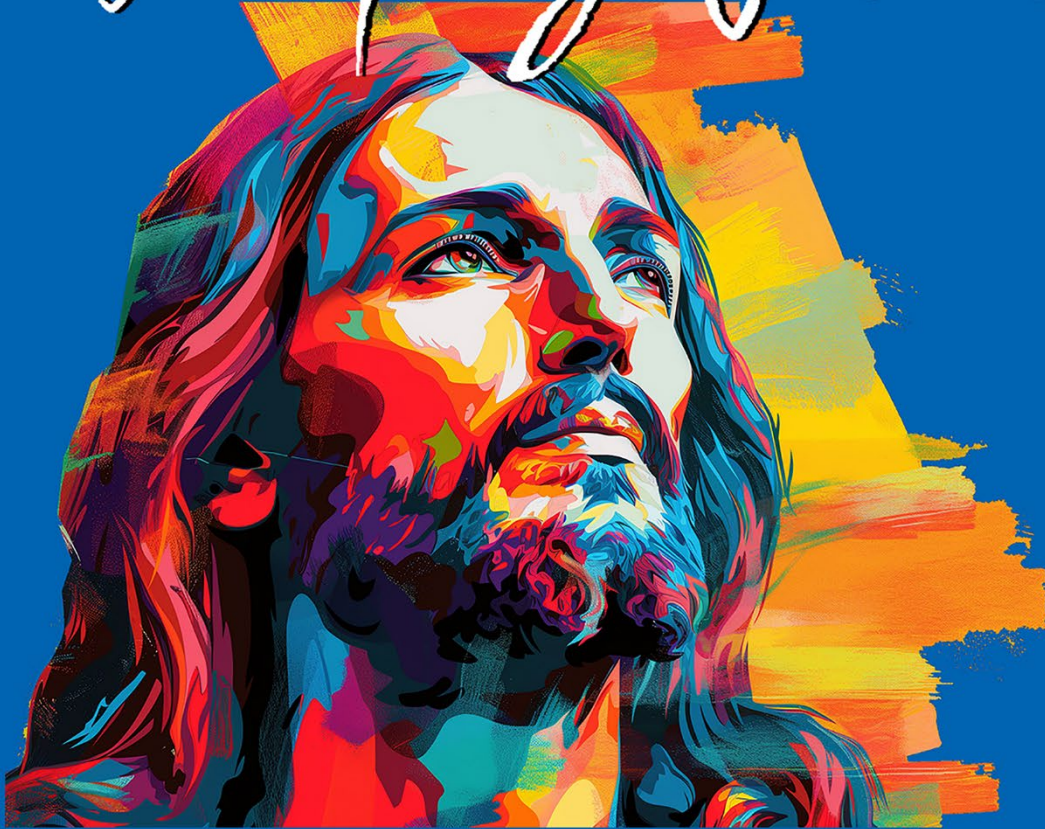


# *Finding Jesus*



Embracing the Complete  
Gospel of Jesus, the Christ.

## **Study Guide**

CHARLES S. STUART

# Let's Just Imagine!

Let's just imagine what might happen in our family, community, church, nation, and world if all believers **KINGDOM OF GOD ON EARTH!** helped usher in the

When people embrace their role in the Kingdom of God here on earth, their **EYES, EARS, MIND, HANDS, FEET & VOICE** will be used to reflect their faith.

They will use their **EYES** to look for needs that are unmet, and to watch over those in positions of authority.

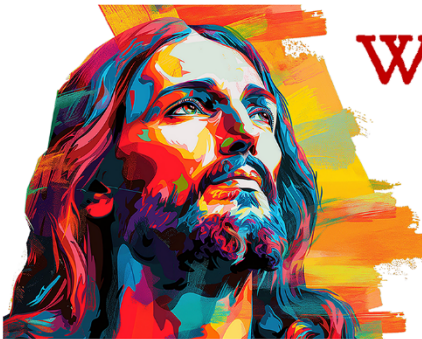
They will use their **EARS** to listen for the cries of those in pain, and to hear and address comments that demean those in need.

They will use their **MIND** to think of ways to get involved and to question for themselves what God would have them do for Him.

They will use their **HANDS** to do what is needed, remembering that it is through their hands that Jesus touches the "least of these."

They will use their **FEET** to go where needed...overseas, across the street or into the voting booth...to bring the Kingdom of God to those in need.

They will use their **VOICE** to speak up and out for those without a voice, and to hold those with power accountable to remember "the least of these" when making decisions.



**Wouldn't it be lovely to live  
in a world like that!?!**

*Charles Stuart*

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CHARLES S. STUART

## Study Guide

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## About the Author.

Charlie Stuart was raised in the church by faithful, loving parents whose lives of service to “the others” inspired Charlie and his five siblings to purpose their lives to serve others, particularly the “least of these.”



Charlie has been active in the local church all his life serving as: Deacon, adult Bible study leader (20+ years), member of a pastor search committee and all the other committees in the local church.

Charlie graduated from the University of Florida in 1973 with an undergraduate degree in Marketing, with a focus on Economics. He worked in the family's office products company for 16 years and spent the following 20 years as a professional speaker, author, and consultant.

He also made time to volunteer for 25+ years with the YMCA as a local board member and on national task forces for the YMCA of the USA.

Charlie and his wife Barbara have three grown children and six grandchildren. They live in Orlando (College Park), Florida.

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# *Finding Jesus*

Embracing the Complete  
Gospel of Jesus, the Christ.



FIFTH FOUNDATIONAL TRUTH

Embrace 'Sermon on the  
Mount' Character Traits.

## Foundational Truth.

### V. Embrace ‘Sermon on the Mount’ Character Traits.

#### The ‘Sermon on the Mount,’ full of nice ideas and good suggestions, or what Jesus expects of His followers?

Ask yourself, are teachings in the Sermon on the Mount on the same level of “God-inspired” instructions as the Ten Commandments? The Great Commission? The Greatest Commandment? John 3:16?

 I believe they should be. Unfortunately, most Protestants in America believe the Sermon on the Mount teachings are just nice words on how to live good lives, but not a mandate from the Son of God for changing our behavior.

In the Gospel of Jesus, Matthew records the Sermon on the Mount in three chapters (5, 6 & 7). The overall theme is to love one another as Jesus has loved us, and His words “turned the world upside down” by reversing what the culture then, and now, says about what is truly important.

Jesus taught, even commanded, that His followers should change from lives of obeying and doing a set of outdated laws to being followers who live the new Way...by the example Jesus set with His life.

The Sermon on the Mount was the second longest teaching of Jesus (the “Final Discourse” in John 13-17 is slightly longer). In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus concentrated His teaching on the people, not the religious leaders or even His closest disciples. Jesus spoke about the Kingdom of God on Earth.

 The contents of this sermon include famous sayings like the Beatitudes and the Lord’s Prayer, but taken as a whole, the Sermon on the Mount is Jesus’s framework for His follower’s life, actions, spirit, and thoughts.

## V. Embrace ‘Sermon on the Mount’ Character Traits.

I have heard sermons preached on “salt and light,” the Beatitudes, on “don’t be anxious” and “beware of false prophets,” one-at-a-time. This piecemeal approach is similar to a self-help seminar’s bullet points and misses the main point: be like Jesus!

### Follow His framework for living.

It would be beneficial to have sermons, or a series of sermons, on how the Sermon on the Mount may well be the definitive description for ushering in the Kingdom of God on Earth. Jesus taught exactly that way, to take His words as a *whole* and let them change how we act...and more importantly...how to be.

Fifteen-character traits have been chosen from the Sermon on the Mount that Jesus said should be evident in the lives of those who call Him “Lord, Lord.” Here are the seven found in the Beatitudes.

- |                                                                      |             |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| 1. “Blessed are the poor in spirit...”                               | Matthew 5:3 |
| 2. “Blessed are those who mourn...”                                  | Matthew 5:4 |
| 3. “Blessed are the meek...”                                         | Matthew 5:5 |
| 4. “Blessed are those who hunger and<br>thirst for righteousness...” | Matthew 5:6 |
| 5. “Blessed are the merciful...”                                     | Matthew 5:7 |
| 6. “Blessed are the pure in heart...”                                | Matthew 5:8 |
| 7. “Blessed are the peacemakers...”                                  | Matthew 5:9 |

Here are eight other character traits found in the Sermon on the Mount.

- |                                                                             |                 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| 8. “ <i>You are the Salt of the earth...</i><br>and the Light of the World” | Matthew 5:13-16 |
| 9. “Love your enemies and pray for<br>those who persecute you...”           | Matthew 5:43-48 |
| 10. “So, whenever you give alms...”                                         | Matthew 6:2-4   |

## Foundational Truth.

- |                                                                          |                     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| 11. "You cannot serve God and wealth."                                   | Matthew 6:19-21, 24 |
| 12. "So do not worry about tomorrow..."                                  | Matthew 6:25-34     |
| 13. "In everything do to others as you<br>would have them do to you..."  | Matthew 7:12-14     |
| 14. "Beware of false prophets..."                                        | Matthew 7:15-20     |
| 15. "Everyone then who hears these words<br>of mine and acts on them..." | Matthew 7:24-27     |

### The Beatitudes or the "Be-Attitudes?"

Knowing them is not good enough...Jesus expects us to be transformed from "knowing them" to "being and doing them."

It begins with believing the Gospel of Jesus, then living your life actively pursuing what Jesus taught – becoming a follower of Jesus ushering in the Kingdom of God on Earth.

In these seven Beatitudes Jesus does not condemn behavior but teaches His followers new principles for cultivating how to live, love, and act as they usher in the Kingdom of God on Earth.

#### "Blessed are the poor in spirit..."

5<sup>3</sup>"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 5:3<sup>1</sup>

When Billy Graham was asked, "What is the meaning of 'poor in spirit' in Matthew 5:3?" He answered:

What did Jesus mean? Simply this: We must be humble in our spirits. If you put the word 'humble' in place of the word 'poor,' you will understand what He meant.

---

1 Other version found at Luke 6:20.

## V. Embrace ‘Sermon on the Mount’ Character Traits.

In other words, when we come to God, we must realize our own sin and our spiritual emptiness and poverty. We must not be self-satisfied or proud in our hearts, thinking we don’t really need God. If we are, God cannot bless us. The Bible says, ‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.’

For those who think they know all the answers about God, think again, remembering *“Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall”* from Proverbs 16:18.

**“Blessed are those who mourn...”**

5<sup>4</sup>“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.”

Matthew 5:4 <sup>2</sup>

 Those who ‘mourn’ exhibit empathy...sharing compassion and understanding for others because they are created by God in His image. Sharing the sorrow, grief, and tears of the brokenhearted and giving the comfort of “being with them” in their despair.

**“Blessed are the meek...”**

5<sup>5</sup>“Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.”

Matthew 5:5

 The ‘meek’ are not weak...they are strong. The ‘meek’ embrace people for who they are...valued by God, Jesus, and His followers. Jesus often spoke of putting the needs, suffering, pain, and despair of others before Himself, and expects His followers to do the same.

---

<sup>2</sup> Other version found at Luke 6:21b.

## Foundational Truth.

In the Gospel of Jesus, recorded in Matthew, Jesus gives a wonderful definition of the quiet strength and power of being 'meek.'

11<sup>28</sup> "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup>Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am gentle (meek) and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup>For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Matthew 11:28-30

**"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness..."**

5<sup>6</sup> "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled."

Matthew 5:6<sup>3</sup>

Have you ever been hungry, truly hungry? I haven't, really. How about being so thirsty that you drink the standing water on a football field after a summer thunderstorm? I have been, and water never tasted sweeter.

Those hearing Jesus knew about hunger and thirst. They also knew about hunger and thirst for something other than food or water. The Jews of that time were a conquered people, living at the whim of the oppressive Roman state.

While Jesus knew of their physical suffering, He applied "hunger and thirst" as a metaphor for craving, desiring, yearning, or longing for "righteousness."

**"Blessed are the merciful..."**

5<sup>7</sup> "Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy."

Matthew 5:7

"Lord, have mercy" is our cry when we know we have wronged others in God's sight. There are many places throughout the Bible where this plea is heard.

---

<sup>3</sup> Other version found at Luke 6:21a.



## V. Embrace ‘Sermon on the Mount’ Character Traits.

Jesus sets being ‘merciful’ as an attribute He expects in His followers. Why? Because He is merciful, not punishing for wrongs committed against Him. The same can be said for God, and Jesus clearly spoke of ‘the Law’ as being applied without love or mercy by the church of His day.

 In Jesus’s world turned upside down we are to show our love for Jesus by taking undeserved punishment, by forbearing punishment for others when it’s in our power. In the Kingdom of God on Earth there is strength in mercy, and we are to show mercy to others as Jesus has shown it to us.

**“Blessed are the pure in heart...”**

5 <sup>8</sup>“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.”

Matthew 5:8

Here, Jesus uses language — ‘pure in heart’ — that for many, including me, addresses the idea of thinking pure thoughts, and that may well be. By linking this to ‘they will see God,’ He takes it to a spiritual plane.

 ‘Pure in heart,’ from God’s point of view, alludes to a deep commitment to align our heart with the heart of Jesus. We do this by keeping our role in the Kingdom of God on Earth front and center right where Jesus is. We also do this by putting aside any other thought that challenges our concentration on the heart of Jesus.

A parallel verse recorded in Matthew 6:33 echoes and reinforces this teaching.

6 <sup>33</sup>“But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”

Matthew 6:33

# Foundational Truth.

**“Blessed are the peacemakers...”**

5 <sup>9</sup>“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.”  
Matthew 5:9

Being at peace is important. In the Gospel of Jesus, in John 14:27, Jesus spoke of ‘peace’ in this familiar passage from the “Farewell Discourse” in the upper room.

14<sup>27</sup> “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.”  
John 14:27 <sup>4</sup>

We are to be at peace. But notice Jesus said ‘peacemakers’ not being at peace. Being a ‘peacemaker’ is different. A ‘peacemaker’ seeks to make peace possible in their own spirit and among those with whom they have a relationship.

The scene of Jesus’s arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane was full of fear, chaos, confusion, even anger, but certainly not peace. When Peter pulled his sword and struck one of those coming for Jesus, Jesus became a ‘peacemaker’ for that situation by standing between Peter and the crowd ordering that the sword be put away and then healed the injured man.

Perhaps that is a good definition for ‘peacemaker,’ one who stands between individuals, or groups, who are at odds with each other.

The “Good Friday Agreement” brought peace to Northern Ireland after decades of often bloody conflict. It happened when key parties on all sides finally came to the conclusion that the only solution was peace. The talks were chaired by the Honorable George J. Mitchell, special envoy from the United States, and leading ‘peacemaker.’

---

4 Additional scriptural background found at John 14:27-31.

## V. Embrace ‘Sermon on the Mount’ Character Traits.



There are others like him, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Pope Francis, Jimmy Carter, Desmond Tutu along with pastors, parents, teachers, and yes, even Little League umpires.

The “Prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi” offers an example of what a ‘peacemaker’ does. While there is no historical basis for St. Francis of Assisi being the author, it falls into the category of “something he would have said.”

Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace.  
Where there is hatred, let me sow love...  
where there is injury, pardon...  
where there is doubt, faith...  
where there is despair, hope...  
where there is darkness, light...  
where there is sadness, joy.  
O, Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek  
to be consoled as to console...  
to be understood as to understand...  
to be loved as to love.  
For it is in giving that we receive...  
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned...  
it is in dying that we are born again to eternal life.

**“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake...”**

5 <sup>10</sup>“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. <sup>11</sup>Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. <sup>12</sup>Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Matthew 5:10-12 <sup>5</sup>

---

5 Other version found at Luke 6:22-23.

## Foundational Truth.

This blessing in v. 10 is for Jesus's followers 'who are persecuted for righteousness' sake.' Who, then, are 'those who are persecuted' that Jesus refers to? Verse 11 holds the answer — those who are persecuted because they follow me.

Those listening who were already followers of Jesus already knew the answer, they felt...to some degree...the stares and glares for associating with this new preacher.

The others in the crowd may have heard 'persecuted' and identified with it as applying to them. After all, if you weren't Roman, you were 'less than,' and everyone knew it.

We know Jesus would not stand for persecution for others, especially the weak, the outcast, and women. But that is not what Jesus is saying here. He was speaking of those seeking to know about Him and those who were following Him, even though not fully committed to His way, yet.

Jesus expands on 'persecuted for righteousness' sake' by stressing 'revile you' and 'utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.' Let's explore ways the followers of Jesus are persecuted in America. I believe the biggest persecution faced by the followers of the Gospel of Jesus in America today comes from those who call themselves 'Christian' but disavow what Jesus taught in word and deeds.

We are called and commanded by Jesus to follow His teaching and example even...especially...when it costs us friends, reputation, jobs, or ridicule. It is our honor to stand up for the least and the lost in society; to speak up in favor of the oppressed and marginalized; to be the voice of justice for those persecuted by society, government, and churches who deny the 'least of these.'

## V. Embrace ‘Sermon on the Mount’ Character Traits.

As stated in the words of the prophet Amos, in chapter 5, verse 24, *“But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.”*

The gap between our own righteousness and God’s is filled and made whole by genuine belief in Jesus, the Christ – that Jesus was and is the Son of God; that He was killed and buried; that by the power of God’s love Jesus was raised from death; and that those who believe this receive, through the grace of God, a ‘clean slate’ removing all our shortcomings of righteousness to become eternally whole and one with Jesus and God.



Only God knows our heart. And knowing how we seek to bring righteousness to all people and situations, and when we don’t, God alone can judge whether our shortcomings come from outright deceit or willful ignorance which calls into question the sincerity of our belief; or honest failure redeemed by repentance and recommitment to pursue the life of Jesus.

### Other attributes from the ‘Sermon on the Mount.’

The next eight-character traits provide definitions for His Followers to embrace in their lives.

#### “Salt of the earth...and Light of the world...”

5 <sup>13</sup> “You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything but is thrown out and trampled underfoot.”

Matthew 5:13 <sup>6</sup>

Jesus uses metaphor to illustrate two important characteristics His followers should have – to be salt of the earth and light of the world. What did He mean?

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<sup>6</sup> Other version found at Luke 14:34-35.

## Foundational Truth.

Salt is necessary for our lives, and it was so in Jesus's time. Today, we mostly know salt through its use in flavoring food. By itself it is bitter. Properly applied, it accentuates the flavors.

In Jesus's day salt had basic uses beyond flavoring taste. It was rubbed into meat and fish as a preservative. Salt was vital to Jewish religious practice, used in sacrifices. It was also used as a weapon of destruction, sowing fields with salt to make them barren.

Applying these uses of salt to the lives of His followers, Jesus was saying His teaching should be evident in the culture through their lives. Because if we aren't making a difference in our culture, our families, neighbors, workplace, and communities then what value are we adding to the Kingdom of God on Earth?

5<sup>14</sup> "You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup> No one, after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. <sup>16</sup> In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven." Matthew 5:14-16<sup>7</sup>

In a world full of darkness Jesus's followers are to be "the light of the world." In today's America, not only is the Kingdom of God on Earth ignored, but it is also repudiated by all levels of society, even the church.

Being the light need not be a grand display, nor does it require advanced planning. It does require preparing for the singular opportunities that come our way as we do the everyday things in our lives. And it will only take a moment...and some courage.

When we hear something said by a family member, friend, co-worker, or stranger that challenges the reality of the Kingdom of God on

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<sup>7</sup> Other version found at Luke 8:16.

## V. Embrace ‘Sermon on the Mount’ Character Traits.

Earth — listen, then speak up. Your response can range from “I see it differently” to “that’s not what the Gospel of Jesus says.” Should follow-on discussion occur, don’t be silent or combative — do be ‘the light of the world...let your light shine.’

Jesus knew this would happen until His way became such a bright light that darkness disappeared in the hearts and souls of all. This begins with the confidence and courage of His followers to let their actions speak louder than the darkness.

### “Love your enemies...”

5 <sup>43</sup>“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ <sup>44</sup>But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, <sup>45</sup>so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. <sup>46</sup>For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? <sup>47</sup>And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? <sup>48</sup>Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

Matthew 5:43-48 <sup>8</sup>

I believe Jesus might have said something like this, “It has been said, ‘I am me and you are you, and I am better than you.’ But I say to you, ‘I AM Me and you are you, and you are better than Me.’”

In my opinion, the first statement above characterizes the sin of ego, where ‘I am better, smarter, richer, more respected, loved, and master.’ In these and many other ways our ego splits the world into ‘me vs. you’ and the ‘I’ always wins.

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<sup>8</sup> Other version found at Luke 6:27-28, 32-36.



## Foundational Truth.

In Mark 10:43b-45, Jesus said...

"...whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many."

Mark 10:43b-45

Here, Jesus told us that not only is He a servant of others, we are to be servants placing our own ego/self below others, seeing them as not potential enemies but as someone we honor as worthy just as Jesus does.

What Jesus said about 'love your enemies' selects a specific group among those to be served by His followers — our 'enemies.'

But 'Love' them? People listening then, and now, hear that and are startled and puzzled. Don't hate them, maybe, but 'Love' them?

Well, yes...that's what Jesus said. But what did He mean by 'Love' them? And who are 'your' enemies?

The 'Love' used by Jesus here is the same definition as 'loved' used in John 3:16 (*agapaó*). The only difference is that in John 3:16 'loved the world' is speaking of God's complete, self-sacrificing love for all humans; and the 'Love your enemies' Jesus described is the love His followers should have for other humans, even enemies.

Being human, however, we can only apply it imperfectly...but still we should try. To not try is to ignore Jesus and calls into question a believer's salvation commitment.

Matthew was written in koiné Greek where the word for 'enemies' is *echthρός*. Those listening heard the word as meaning '*someone openly hostile, animated by deep-seated hatred, implying irreconcilable hostility, personal hatred bent on inflicting harm.*'

After 2,000 years of translations the English word 'enemies' has definitions including *foe, adversary, opponent, antagonist, rival,*

## V. Embrace ‘Sermon on the Mount’ Character Traits.

*challenger, competitor, and opposition.* You’ll see that we read ‘enemies’ not so much as *‘personal hatred bent on inflicting harm’* but as *‘opponent or rival.’*

My conclusion is Jesus identified ‘enemies’ as those who have personal hatred toward His followers, not as those having strong disagreement.

The point is Jesus said His followers are to ‘Love’ those who are violently...in word or deed...against us. Imagine, then, how we are to ‘Love’ all the rest within our reach. And if we, sometimes, feel we may be the enemy...we must ‘Love’ ourselves as well.

### ‘Alms’-giving...

<sup>61</sup>“Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven. <sup>2</sup>“So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. <sup>3</sup>But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, <sup>4</sup>so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

Matthew 6:1-4

Most Protestant churches in America today do not stress ‘alms’-giving – individual-to-individual giving to “the least of these.” The giving that is encouraged is in the form of a tithe given to the church and occasionally giving for major financial needs like buildings or acquiring land.

## Foundational Truth.

'Alms'-giving was accepted and expected among the Jewish people listening to Jesus that day. It was their tradition. We know Jesus knew this tradition because He said 'when you give alms' – as written in almost all English translations – is presumptive.

'Alms'-giving, in a spiritual sense, connected the hearts of both the giver and receiver as God intended. Every person has something, and, in Jesus's Kingdom of God on Earth, all are to help others who have less.

Jesus also said that 'alms'-giving was to be done privately between the giver and the receiver to preclude any motivation to seek accolades from others. The accolade of God knowing of our love for Him and obedience to His Word is all that is needed.

Jesus also said, *'do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.'* At first glance this clearly supports giving privately. I think it has another meaning.

This illustration is another way to describe "muscle memory" – right-handed people throw a ball with their right hand without thinking; accomplished piano players, through long hours and years of practice, play simultaneously with both hands; mothers can hear their child's cry when others don't; and a follower of Jesus will go to the help of a stranger in peril without hesitation even if it is difficult.

When we condition our 'alms'-giving to be such a priority that we see and respond to the needs of those whose path we cross without debate or even thought, we are on the right path. It just becomes instinctive, something we do as naturally and genuinely as praying...or breathing. 'Alms'-givers reflexively respond to "the least of these" in the Kingdom of God on Earth.

## V. Embrace ‘Sermon on the Mount’ Character Traits.

“You cannot serve God and wealth.”

6<sup>19</sup>“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; <sup>20</sup>but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup>For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Matthew 6:19-21 <sup>9</sup>

Jesus’s first phrase – “*Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth*” – is clear. “Not means not.”

In Matthew ‘store up’ implies putting aside for another use, like Joseph ‘laid up’ the excess food from the plentiful harvests in Egypt to feed the people when famine came. Joseph used the plenty (the ‘treasure’) to give security to the people (not himself) for the glory of God.

Perhaps we can read this phrase like this, “Do not store up stuff (money, material things) selfishly to benefit yourself.” This requires sacrificial giving.

Jesus then said – “*but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven.*” So far, we have already discussed fifteen specific ways in the Sermon on the Mount to ‘store up for yourselves treasures in heaven’ with more still to come.

Jesus expects His followers to follow His Words and example. He used the Sermon on the Mount to tell the crowd listening how He expects them to live their lives. And through the Gospel of Jesus, He teaches the same for His followers today.

Living this way connects your heart to heaven, giving you an eternal perspective. It also blesses you while living on Earth as Proverbs 11:25 NKJV says, “*The generous soul will be made rich, and he who waters will also be watered himself.*”

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<sup>9</sup> Other version found at Luke 12:33-34.

## Foundational Truth.

6<sup>24</sup>“No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.”

Matthew 6:24 <sup>10</sup>

Jesus makes a practical observation that faces all of us...dealing with two opposing thoughts and resolving them by seeking the one that is righteous before God. Jesus's followers would need to have one driving thought...God...there could be no other.

It is a question of spiritual priority. Remember the climax of the rich young ruler story in Matthew 19:22, *“When the young man heard this word, he went away grieving, for he had many possessions.”*

Jesus used the word ‘treasures’ earlier but chooses a different word, ‘wealth’ here. The word used in the Koine Greek was μαμωνᾶ (mamōna), which was transliterated into English as mammon. Its original meaning was ‘idol’ in the context of ‘idol of riches.’

This verse would be better understood by inserting ‘idol of’ before the word ‘wealth,’ as in ‘idol of’ wealth, or money or mammon.

The use of the word ‘idol’ frames what Jesus said about two opposing thoughts more powerfully — *You cannot serve God and ‘worship an idol of’ wealth.*

Jesus was serious about those who desired wealth for wealth's sake. This was greed, and in hundreds of verses throughout the Old and New Testaments it is made clear that greed grieves God and Jesus.

This is not to say that Jesus objected to having earthly wealth if it was acquired the righteous way, and it is distributed remembering the teachings about providing for the poor and the disadvantaged, sick, and abandoned by society.

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10 Other version found at Luke 6:13.

## V. Embrace ‘Sermon on the Mount’ Character Traits.

For example, the extreme concentration of wealth, separated from the righteousness of God, produces very few winners (rich) and tens of thousands of losers (poor). While the Bible speaks forcefully against this system, human greed is a powerful force.

As followers, especially in America, we must think deeply about the motivation for greed, examine ourselves to see if we are greedy (without being aware) and, if so, repent.

### “So do not worry about tomorrow...”

Jesus shares a variety of illustrations of the concept of worrying over lesser things that we cannot control but builds anxiety one small worry at-a-time until we are overcome with feelings of worry.

6 <sup>25</sup> “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? <sup>26</sup> Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? <sup>27</sup> And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? <sup>28</sup> And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, <sup>29</sup> yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. <sup>30</sup> But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith?

Matthew 6:25-30 <sup>11</sup>

What Jesus suggests for His followers may sound glibly like “Don’t Worry. Be Happy.” But He backs this teaching up in many other places in the Gospel of Jesus.

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<sup>11</sup> Other version found at Luke 12:22-28.

## Foundational Truth.

6<sup>31</sup>“Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ <sup>32</sup>For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. <sup>33</sup>But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. <sup>34</sup>So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today’s trouble is enough for today.”

Matthew 6:31-34 <sup>12</sup>

The best example is when Jesus first appeared to His disciples after His resurrection. Those gathered were confused and afraid.

Into that setting Jesus stepped and John 20:19 records His first words to them.

20<sup>19</sup>When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” John 20:19 <sup>13</sup>

*“Peace be with you.”* This was far more than a typical greeting; it was precisely on-point for the situation. Jesus likely spoke in Hebrew שלום לכם, Shalom aleichem (*shah'-low-ah-lay'-kim*), then translated into Koine Greek as Εἰρήνη ὑμῖν (*eye'-ray-ney heh'-meen*), then in Latin as PAX VOBISCUM (*packs'-woe-bis'-come*). All with the same meaning passed to us as *‘Peace be with you.’*

In John 14:27, Jesus summed up the same thought.

14<sup>27</sup>“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.” John 14:27 <sup>14</sup>

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12 Other version found at 12:29-32.

13 Additional scriptural background found at John 20:19-23.

14 Additional scriptural background found at John 20:24-29.



## V. Embrace ‘Sermon on the Mount’ Character Traits.

There are at least three types of ‘peace’ that Jesus leaves with us.  
*One is the peace of eternity with Him through the Gospel of the Christ.*

*Another is the peace of knowing you have, in your life, done all you can to follow Jesus in building the Kingdom of God on Earth.* Proverbs 3:27-28 describes the nature of those striving for ‘treasures on earth.’

3<sup>27</sup> Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it. 28 Do not say to your neighbor, “Go, and come again, tomorrow I will give it” — when you have it with you.  
Proverbs 3:27-28

This is a peace that is fulfilling, of knowing your mind is at peace, and that you have brought peace to others faced with fear, confusion, and longing. The words of Paul, from 2 Timothy 4:7, echo this peace, *“I have fought the good fight; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith.”*

*And a third type of peace is contentment.* The world’s peace is based on circumstances. Jesus’s peace is based on a trusting, close relationship with Him. In Philippians 4:6-7, Paul writes of this.

4 6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.  
Philippians 4:6-7



My personal experience is that achieving these kinds of peace is easier said than done. But if we can believe that Jesus, the Christ, died and rose from the dead to secure our eternal salvation...it seems to me that believing Jesus offers His followers peace of mind as we live for Him in His Kingdom of God on Earth makes all the sense in the world.

## Foundational Truth.

“In everything do to others as you would have them do to you...”

7<sup>12</sup> “In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets. Matthew 7:12 <sup>15</sup>

This single verse is so simple and familiar we too often let it go by without giving it the import it deserves coming from the mouth of Jesus.

In this, Jesus echoed what God said about ‘the law’ in Leviticus 19:18b which begins with *‘The LORD said to Moses...’* and is followed by a series of commands for the people. The second part of the verse says, *‘you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.’* So, from the beginning of ‘the law,’ how we treat others is important to God, and to Jesus.

Note that this is a ‘positive’ command — ‘do this because it is right and righteous’ which means we don’t get to stand by and do nothing.

It’s like seeing a car wreck...Jesus says doing nothing is not an option. Or someone drops dead in public at your feet...Jesus says doing nothing is not an option. Or seeing a child hungry or sick or at risk...Jesus says doing nothing is not an option.

In any situation where we can bring the help that, I hope, would be given to me in their situation... Jesus says doing nothing is not an option.

“Beware of false prophets...”

7<sup>15</sup> “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. <sup>16</sup> You will know them by their fruits. Matthew 7:15-16 <sup>16</sup>

False prophets are not new. A ‘false prophet’ uses words that attract people who search for relief from real or perceived oppression.

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15 Other version found at Luke 6:31.

16 Other versions found at Matthew 12:33-35 & Luke 6:43-45.

## V. Embrace ‘Sermon on the Mount’ Character Traits.

Even Jesus was accused of being a ‘false prophet,’ and to many of the religious leaders of the day, He was because in their minds, Jesus was talking and teaching against the accepted religious order.

Here Jesus gives a brief and compelling way to determine if a ‘false prophet’ is indeed false. Don’t listen to what they say, watch and see what they do.

The followers of Jesus can talk about the Gospel of Jesus all the time, to many people...but if they don’t ‘bear good fruit’ with their lives then their talk is just that, talk.

If ‘false prophets’ are false, the fruit they produce will be false. We see this time and again with claims that are ‘too good to be true’ whether it’s a preacher or a president. Jesus isn’t a ‘false prophet’ not just because He is the Son of God, but because what He said, and did has been proven to be good fruit from the best possible tree.

This is why Jesus is so concerned in the Sermon on the Mount that His followers be true to what He says for us to do. If we reflect Jesus in our lives...be like Jesus...our fruit, too, will be good.

**“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock.”**

7 <sup>24</sup> “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock.

7 <sup>26</sup> And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand.

Matthew 7:24, 26 <sup>17</sup>

Jesus closes the Sermon on the Mount with these verses, repeating a common theme throughout His teaching, “If you have ears, listen.” Then adding “act on them.” ‘Hear and act.’

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17 Additional scriptural background found at Matthew 7:24-27.  
Other version found at Luke 6:47-49.

## Foundational Truth.

Those who 'hear and act' are 'wise,' but what are *'these words of mine'* that the 'wise' should hear and act upon?

Jesus tells us plainly in the Sermon on the Mount what *'these words of mine'* are, but will we take them to heart and do what they say?

It is one thing to enjoy a poem or a pre-game speech, but without applying action to what is said, it's just noise. With action, words can change how we act, think, or feel. And for Jesus, acting on *'these words of mine'* brings the Kingdom of God on Earth one step closer to fulfillment.

Also, this type of action has the added benefit of providing a solid foundation for spiritual growth. As Jesus said, *'it will be like a wise man who built his house on rock.'*

Jesus contrasts the solid, wise foundation of 'rock' with the soft, foolish foundation of 'sand.' Those who hear but do not act do not have a firm foundation and will crumble when troubles come their way. They will not grow spiritually.

Go to the beach with a three-year-old, and build a sandcastle that, when the waves come, washes away. But a castle of rocks will stand the waves, like a cairn, a Scottish Gaelic word for a memorial or direction marker that stands the test of time, showing the meaning or direction to follow.

### There is power in rocks that sand cannot equal.

In these verses, 'rock' is not just a rock. In the Koine Greek it is πέτραν (petran), meaning a cliff, like the Rock of Gibraltar, not just a large rock you might sit on. And what is the cliff Jesus is referring to? The actions taken by His followers who hear and obey His words.

So, when Jesus says 'rock' in Matthew 7:18...

"And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it,"

...what does it mean?

## V. Embrace ‘Sermon on the Mount’ Character Traits.

The word ‘rock’ used in this verse has the same meaning as mentioned earlier (cliff, like the Rock of Gibraltar). And ‘Peter’ means small rock, one that can be thrown.

So, whereas many have interpreted this verse to mean ‘I will build My church upon Peter’ – what it actually means is, *‘I will build My church upon those who build their houses (lives) on the rock... who hear and do what I have commanded... who take action.’*

In saying this Jesus has given us the way to be powerful in His name...if we will hear and act upon His word.

### Be Like Jesus.

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In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says His followers are to be like Jesus and let their lives and actions reflect it. This sermon is long, complex, and open to many interpretations, especially of the various elements contained in it. Yet, what Jesus really said is simple, short, and a complete shift from the materialistic, greed-oriented, power-based religion found in many 21st century churches.

When Jesus’s followers inhabit the attributes covered in the Sermon on the Mount, they will find they become interconnected and interdependent. In short, they come together to enable each of the attributes which is, I think, the purpose of the Sermon on the Mount...to become more like Jesus.

By looking through the individual elements of the Sermon on the Mount we find His essential teaching...to yield our ego to His mission, and to be the hope, compassion, comforter, and staunch advocate for “the least of these.”

# Foundational Truth.

## CONCLUSION.

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While the Sermon on the Mount can be a philosophical discussion about right living, it is more...far more...than that. Jesus spoke with authority as the Son of God, presenting not just good ideas to be considered, but commands for how to live.

Jesus wants His Followers to love God and love others with wild, reckless abandon. It's what the world needs and we're the only ones who can make it so.

This "love that is tough" demands our very best, and the good news – what it looks like and sounds like – is written in the Gospel of Jesus.

## Where do you stand?

Which of the seven Beatitudes do you find most difficult to embrace? Why? (see pages 102-109)

Of the other eight attributes from the Sermon on the Mount, which resonate most with you? Why? (see pages 109-124)