

## The Sermon on the Mount Part 14: Praying The Lord's Prayer (addendum) Matthew 6:9-15

**Thesis:** We are a people who follow Jesus, who listen to the voice of God, and who get in action around what the Lord is saying through the power of his Holy Spirit.

**Text:** Matthew 5 – 7

The Sermon on the Mount is one of the most famous passages in the Bible. People refer to it and quote from this teaching of Jesus all the time.

These words of Jesus are revolutionary, radical, and relational (righteousness). I wonder if the words of Jesus have lost their cutting edge in our lives because of familiarity.

God is showing me wonderful things from his Word. And, the Lord is using The Sermon on the Mount to transform me.

So, I am asking the Lord to encourage you by his Holy Spirit and to speak to us as we spend time on Matthew 5 – 7 over the next months.

### **What we have considered so far in our time looking at The Sermon on the Mount.**

In a message 11'10'24, we worked on **an overview** of The Sermon on the Mount.

Then, we looked at Matthew 5:3-5: **The Poor in Spirit, The Grieved, and The Unimportant** on 11'17'24.

In a message on 11'24'24, we looked at Matthew 5:6-8: **The Hungry, The Merciful, and The Pure in Heart.**

In a message on 7'13'25, we considered Matthew 5:9-12: **The Peacemakers, The Persecuted, and the Misunderstood.**

In a message on 7'20'25, **we finished looking at our kingdom identity from Matthew 5:9-16: The Peacemakers, The Persecuted, and the Misunderstood.** We also sought to understand three illustrations of the way we show up in this world as a part of our kingdom identity: as salt, light, and a city on a hill.

In a message on 7'27'25, we looked at Matthew 5:17-20. **Jesus came to fulfill the Torah.** Jesus' teaching on righteousness brings the Torah to its completion.

In a message on 11'16'25, we looked at Matthew 5:21-26 which dealt with **murder and angry contempt.** True righteousness means treating every human as an image of God who is to be loved and respected.

In a message on 11'30'25, we looked at Matthew 5:27-30 which dealt with adultery and lust. The Old Testament law about adultery reveals God's wisdom about how we reduce people to objects of desire. **Jesus invites us to view every human being as an image of God who is to be honored in our actions and imaginations.**

In a message on 2'22'26, we looked at Matthew 5:31-32 which dealt with divorce and remarriage. Jesus sides with the interpreters teaching that a man may not divorce his wife for just any reason he chooses. **The Lord calls out the harm that is done to women in this scenario by identifying them as the victims of adultery.**

In a message on 3'15'26, we looked at Matthew 5:33-37, which dealt with oaths and telling the truth. Instead of seeking to embellish our words and to trying to manipulate others by making religious sounding oaths, **Jesus calls us to embrace honesty, telling the truth, and integrity.**

In a message on 3'22'26, we looked at Matthew 5:38-48, which dealt with retaliation (revenge) and enemy love. **Regarding retaliation, Jesus raises the bar when he says to respond to revenge and retaliation with creative nonviolence.** Jesus is not telling us to do nothing. Rather, Jesus raises the bar in his kingdom for creative and nonviolent responses that open the door for real peace. **Regarding enemy love, Jesus commands us to love our enemies.** It may sound crazy, but Jesus is saying that bold generosity can subvert the power games of our world and even turn enemies into friends.

In a message on 4'15'26, we looked at Matthew 6:1-18, which dealt with warnings about religious practices. Jesus focuses on doing right by God as he describes three common religious practices—giving, praying, and fasting. Jesus warns us about engaging in spiritual practices in a hypocritical, performative way to be seen by others. Instead, **Jesus encourages true devotion born out of a desire for intimacy with God and alignment with his will.**

In a message on 4'26'26, we looked at Matthew 6:9-15, in which Jesus gives us The Lord's Prayer. Praying the Lord's Prayer is one way to make Jesus' story our own story. Over time, the prayer forms us into people who trust God daily, love and forgive others, and participate in the good work that unites Heaven and Earth.

**As we make this journey, here is an important perspective to keep in mind:**

As we look at The Sermon on the Mount, I will share with you what I am learning and processing, some of which is new to me. But please understand: The Lord can speak to you through his Word without all this teaching I am doing and without all the research we are processing. **What we are doing together is to help us enter into the context of this Word, and to let the Lord speak to us in our current context.** The Lord can do that through the Holy Spirit whenever you open God's word and read it devotionally or study it thoroughly. **Getting into God's Word and listening for The Voice is one of the most important spiritual practices the Lord has given us for growing in our relationships with God and others. I pray that our time in The Sermon on the Mount will stir in you a greater love for God, for God's word, and for the leadership of Jesus in your life.**

**Consider While Reading:**

The first hearers of these words were mostly low-status, powerless Israelites on the fringes of mainstream society ([The Bible Project](#), Weekly Playlist, January 1-7). They were the impoverished, the infirmed, the unimportant, the oppressed, and the ignored.

**Overview:**

"The introduction (5:3-16) announces the surprising and counterintuitive identity of those who are a part of God's Kingdom. Then comes the main body of teachings (5:17-7:12), where Jesus explains further what he means when he calls his followers to be 'righteous.' Finally, Jesus concludes the sermon (7:13-27) by calling people to make a choice about how they're going to respond" ([The Bible Project](#), Weekly Playlist, January 1-7).

**The Sermon on the Mount is carefully designed and organized.**

1. **There are 3 main parts to The Sermon on the Mount.**
  - a. The middle part is divided into 3 parts.
  - b. Each of the parts of the middle part is divided into 3 parts.
  - c. Right at the center of the center of The Sermon on the Mount is the Lord's Prayer.
2. **The Bible tells us what it means for God's Kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven.**

- a. The kingdom of God coming to earth is the one of the main themes of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation.
3. **From the beginning, humans rebelled and started to build their own kingdom by their own wisdom.**
4. **So, God chose one family, Israel, to join him in his mission.**
  - a. And, God offered them his wisdom.
  - b. That wisdom was called the Torah—the teaching.
  - c. Beginning on with Moses on Mt. Sinai, God entered into a covenant with Isreal.
  - d. The goal was for Israel, one nation, to be transformed by God’s wisdom, so that they could represent God’s Kingdom before all the nations and to lead the nations back to God.
5. **In Jesus’ day, the kingdom of God was nowhere to be seen.**
  - a. Instead, Israel was under the rule of the Roman Empire and Roman oppressors.
6. **So, why wasn’t God’s Kingdom coming?**
  - a. Some religious leaders-- the **Pharisees**-- believed Israel was not being faithful enough to the Torah.
  - b. Other religious leaders—the **Sadducees**—said it would be best if Israel found a way to cooperate with Rome. They were the power brokers in Jesus’ day.
  - c. Some people ran to the hills to become freedom fighters against Rome. They were known as the **Zealots**.
  - d. Others **withdrew to the desert**, waiting for God to use them to start the new Israel.
7. **But walk around the country of Israel, like Jesus did in his day, and here is what you would find.**
  - a. You would find mostly normal people.
  - b. They were trying to figure out how to live their lives as best they can.
  - c. Most people were living in poverty and were carving out a subsistence living.
  - d. There were lots of poor and sick people.
  - e. They were oppressed by high taxes.
  - f. Rome had taken their land away from them.
  - g. Most people were struggling to pay the heavy taxes imposed on them by their Roman occupiers.
  - h. In essence, the people of Jesus’ day were powerless and hopeless.
8. **Jesus went to these people** healing the sick, setting free the demonized, mending broken hearts, and bringing salvation.
  - a. Jesus came with good news.
  - b. And, Jesus told these people that the kingdom of God was arriving.

- c. People came from all over to hear his teaching and to get healing, deliverance, and encouragement.
- 9. **One day, Jesus went up to a tall hill or small mountain and said, “The arrival of kingdom of God is starting here and now with you.”**
  - a. The kingdom of God was starting with the powerless, the weak, and the nobodies.
  - b. Where can you go to see God’s presence and blessing?
    - i. You see God’s presence and blessing among the poor in spirit, the crushed, and the defeated.
    - ii. The kingdom of God was not coming first among the wealthy and the powerful.
    - iii. The kingdom of God was coming to the people standing right before Jesus.

### The structure of The Sermon on the Mount:

There are **3 main sections** to The Sermon on the Mount.

1. **Main Section 1: Matthew 5:3 – 16. This is the introduction. Jesus tells us about the kingdom identity of his followers. Jesus gives 9 sayings about who is experiencing the good life of God’s kingdom.**
  - a. Matthew 5:3 – 12. The Good Life.
    - i. The Poor in Spirit (3).
    - ii. The Grievors (4).
    - iii. The Unimportant (5).
    - iv. The Hungry (6).
    - v. The Merciful (7).
    - vi. The Pure in Heart (8).
    - vii. The Peacemakers (9).
    - viii. The Persecuted (10).
    - ix. The Misunderstood (11-12).
  - b. Matthew 5:13. Salt of the Earth.
    - i. “In the Hebrew Scriptures, salt is a symbol of God’s long-lasting covenant relationship with Israel. So Jesus is claiming that he and his followers are carrying Israel’s covenant relationship to its fulfillment” ([The Bible Project](#), Weekly Playlist, January 1-7).
    - ii. Salt is an important preservative.
    - iii. Salt is a seasoning. We are to bring out the God-flavors in this world (MSG).
    - iv. A little salt goes a long way. Christians are supposed to influence rather than be influenced by the ways of this world.

- c. Matthew 5:14 – 16. The Light of the World and a city on a hill.
  - i. According to Isaiah, one day the inhabitants of Jerusalem will reflect God's light, peace, and blessing out to all the world.
  - ii. Jerusalem is the image of the city on a hill that shines for all the world to see. We are a part of that family, heritage, and kingdom.
  - iii. Light shines in the darkness and overcomes darkness. Christians have influence way beyond themselves.
  - iv. We are to bring out the God-colors in this world (MSG).
  - v. When Jesus calls his followers "the light of the world" and "a city on a hill," he is referencing images from the prophet Isaiah. The shining city on the hill portrays God's wisdom and heavenly presence emanating from Jerusalem and filling the whole Earth. By using these images, Jesus is applying Isaiah's prophecies to himself and his followers ([The Bible Project](#)).
- 2. **Main Section 2: Matthew 5:17 – 7:12. This is the main body of teaching. In this section, Jesus tells us what he means for his followers to be righteous. Righteousness is living in right relationship with God and others. It is a character trait that creates justice and peace in the world.**
  - a. **Section 1 of the Middle Section: Matthew 5:17 – 48. In this section, Jesus tells us how this righteousness relates to the Torah.**
    - i. Matthew 5:17 – 20. Jesus fulfills the Torah.
      - 1. Jesus' teaching on righteousness brings the Torah to its completion.
    - ii. Matthew 5:21 – 47. Jesus gives six case studies on how the righteousness of Jesus fulfills the Torah.
      - 1. Anger, lust, divorce, telling the truth, revenge, and enemy love.
    - iii. Matthew 5:48. Summary: be complete or whole. The purpose of the Torah is teaching people God's wisdom so that they can become mature, whole people who spread God's blessing to the world.
      - 1. Being complete or whole links back to what Jesus says: living by Jesus' teachings will fulfill the Torah and Prophets.
  - b. **Section 2 of the Middle Section: Matthew 6:1 – 18. In this section, Jesus tells us how this righteousness relates to religious practices.**
    - i. Matthew 6:1. Living in right relationship with God and other results in a reward.
      - 1. But be careful: If you are doing your righteousness to get public praise, you will miss out on the real reward God has instore.

- ii. Matthew 6:2 – 18. Three examples of how religious devotion can go astray.
  - 1. Generosity to the poor.
  - 2. Prayer.
  - 3. Fasting.
- iii. Matthew 6:19 – 21. True wealth: the real reward.
  - 1. The real reward links back to Matthew 6:1. The reward is knowing and being love by God.
- c. **Section 3 of the Middle Section.** Matthew 6:19 – 7:12. In this section, Jesus tells us how **this righteousness is expressed in right relationships with God and with neighbor.** Doing righteousness affects our relationship with God and neighbor.
  - i. Matthew 6:19 – 34. God and money.
    - 1. Our stuff tends to claim our allegiance and causes us to worry.
    - 2. Our relationship to our stuff can be one of the biggest obstacles to healthy relationships with God and others.
    - 3. Store up treasure in heaven.
    - 4. **Parable 1: Two eyes.** You can have a healthy, generous eye, or an evil, stingy eye.
    - 5. **Parable 2: Two masters you can serve—God or money.**
    - 6. Teaching on worry. We are invited to trust the generous God of creation who cares about us.
  - ii. Matthew 7:1 – 11. God and neighbor.
    - 1. Teaching on not judging others.
    - 2. Parable 1: Speck and log.
    - 3. Parable 2: Holy pearls—using discernment when we try to help and correct others.
    - 4. Ask God for the wisdom you need: ask, seek, and knock.
  - iii. Matthew 7:12. The Golden Rule.
- 3. **Main Section 3:** Matthew 7:13 – 27. In his conclusion, **Jesus calls people to make a choice as to how they are going to respond.**
  - a. The choice for how we will live our lives.
    - i. Matthew 7:13 – 14. Two paths with two different gates. One leads to life; the other leads to ruin.
    - ii. Matthew 7:15 – 23. Two trees. Discerning between two kinds of leaders who claim to represent God. One tree is good; one is not.
    - iii. Matthew 7:24 – 27. Two types of houses you can build. You can ignore Jesus and build your house by your own wisdom. Or, you can listen to Jesus and build your house on the rock.
- 4. **Finally, every one of these parts has 3 parts.**

- a. There is a lot of design in the structure of The Sermon on the Mount.

**5. Review of The Sermon on the Mount:**

- a. **Kingdom Identity:** the sermon begins with a surprise announcement about how the good life of the kingdom of God has come to the least likely people.
- b. **A Greater Righteousness:** in the main body, Jesus teaches how to do right by God and others.
- c. **The Choice:** the conclusion calls for a decision. In light of what Jesus has said, what choice will you make?

**Here is what Jesus is saying through The Sermon on the Mount.**

1. God's Kingdom comes to Earth through Jesus.
2. In God's Kingdom, love, justice, and peace prevail.
3. This Kingdom is arriving first to ordinary people—the poor, the powerless, and the outsider ([The Bible Project](#), Weekly Playlist, January 1-7).

**Prayer:**

1. Lord, I pray that you speak to us, encounter us, and grant to us your Spirit of wisdom and revelation that we might know you better.
2. Bless our time in your word together corporately.
3. Bless our time in your word individually as a part of our spiritual practices.
4. Help us to hear your voice, God, by the power of your Holy Spirit.
5. Help us to fall more and more in love with you, and help us to join Jesus on his mission together with others in our spheres of influence.
6. May we be a people who follow Jesus, who listen to the voice of God, and who get in action around what the Lord is saying through the power of his Holy Spirit.

**Today, as we continue our look at the second Main Section of the Sermon on Mount, let's look more closely at The Lord's Prayer.**

Remember, righteousness is living in right relationship with God and others. It is a character trait that creates justice and peace in the world.

In Section 2 of the Middle Section, Matthew 6:1 – 18, **Jesus tells us how righteousness relates to religious practices.**

1. Matthew 6:1. **Living in right relationship with God and other results in a reward.**
  - a. But be careful: If you are doing your righteousness to get public praise, you will miss out on the real reward God has instore.
2. Matthew 6:2 – 18. **Three examples of how religious devotion can go astray.**
  - a. Generosity to the poor.
  - b. Prayer.
  - c. Fasting.

In Matthew 6:9-13, Jesus give us the Lord's Prayer or the Model Prayer.

**The Lord's Prayer is at the center of the center of the Sermon on the Mount.** This placement shows the prayer's central place in the lives of the followers of Jesus.

*Matthew 6:9–15 (NIV84) 9 “This, then, is how you should pray: “ ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, 10 your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. 11 Give us today our daily bread. 12 Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. [For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever, Amen.]’ 14 For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.”*

The first half of this prayer focuses on God's purposes in the world; the second half addresses our needs. Through this prayer, we are invited to trust God daily and to love one another as we participate in the union of heaven and earth.

[BibleProject Guide: The Lord's Prayer](#) [and Jeff McGee's personal notes from device playlists on the Lord's Prayer from the BibleProject]

Prayer is partly based on the belief that we can somehow talk with the God of the universe. But it's pretty mysterious. Where do we even start? At the very center of a collection of teachings called the Sermon on the Mount, **Jesus teaches his followers a simple prayer to adopt as their own. The prayer is made up of two short halves, each with three requests.** The first half focuses on God's

purposes in the world, and the second half addresses our concerns in day-to-day life. **It's a short prayer, but it contains a whole new way to look at the world.**

## The Big Idea

**Praying the Lord's Prayer is one way to make Jesus' story our own story. Over time, the prayer forms us into people who trust God daily, love and forgive others, and participate in the good work that unites Heaven and Earth.**

## Our Father

Jesus begins the prayer this way: *Matthew 6:9 (NASB) "Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father, who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name.'*

Why refer to God as being "in the skies?" In the Bible, the skies, or the heavens, are a way of imagining God's universal power and presence that are high above all things. In God's realm, God rules as the king whose will is always done.

**But notice that Jesus refers to God as "our Father." Most expect the God of the universe to be called something stronger, like "king" or "ruler." However, a key claim in the Bible is that God has appointed [humans as his representatives](#) and beloved children to embody God's wisdom and rule in the world.**

*Genesis 1:26-27 (NASB) 26 Then God said, "Let Us make mankind in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the livestock and over all the earth, and over every crawling thing that crawls on the earth." 27 So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them."*

[There are about a dozen different passages throughout the Hebrew Bible where God is either compared to a father or where he is actually called our father. But Jesus primarily uses this title for God, demonstrating his unique identity as the Son. As his followers, we are invited to participate in this identity, too.]

## Your Name

The [story of the Bible](#) is about humanity's disregard for this calling and how we make a mess of things. So the prayer continues this way:

*Matthew 6:9 (NASB) "Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father, who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name.'"*

[Holiness](#) may sound like a fancy, religious word. But in the Bible, "holy" signifies [God's one-of-a-kind status](#). God is the source of all reality and the author of life, without beginning or end. And it's this God who calls the family of Israel out from the nations and [attaches his holy name](#) to them. He sets them apart as his holy representatives to all the other nations.

[Just like all of humanity, Israel messes up this calling. And this leads to their defeat and subjugation to many empires, bringing dishonor upon God's holy name. But Israel's prophets, like Ezekiel, said that one day God would restore the holiness of his name among the nations.](#)

*Ezekiel 36:22-28 NASB 22 "Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'This is what the Lord God says: "It is not for your sake, house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for My holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you went. 23 And I will vindicate the holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned among them. Then the nations will know that I am the Lord," declares the Lord God, "when I show Myself holy among you in their sight. 24 For I will take you from the nations, and gather you from all the lands; and I will bring you into your own land. 25 Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. 26 Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put My Spirit within you and bring it about that you walk in My statutes, and are careful and follow My ordinances. 28 And you will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God.*

[\[Restoring God's name and reputation\]](#): Yahweh chooses Israel to represent his name and reputation to the nations—to show who he is and what he is like. But the people fail, and God's name is dishonored. In this prayer, Jesus prays for the restoration of Yahweh's reputation in the world.]

### **Your Kingdom and Will**

[God will restore the holiness of his name among the nations by raising up a new representative, who will restore God's rule over Israel and the world so that everyone sees the holiness and goodness of God.](#) And when Jesus announces

the arrival of God's Kingdom, he claims to be this representative. This makes sense of the next lines of his prayer:

*Matthew 6:10 (NASB) 10 'Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.'*

Jesus teaches his followers that when we love God and our neighbor, and when we treat others with God's generosity and justice, we are [entering God's Kingdom](#). So this is a prayer for the reunion of Heaven and Earth, and we're invited to participate.

This completes the first half of the prayer, which focuses on loving God and seeking his will.

### **Give Us Our Daily Bread: a radical trust for provision**

The second half of the prayer shifts to the challenges of daily life as we pray for God's Kingdom to come.

*Matthew 6:11 (NASB) 'Give us this day our daily bread.'*

This is as basic as it gets, asking God to provide food. Jesus uses an image from Israel's story, when they journeyed through the wilderness and God provided just enough bread for each day.

*Exodus 16:4-5 \*NASB) 4 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, so that I may test them, whether or not they will walk in My instruction. 5 On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather daily."*

Remember, Jesus' audience is filled with poor people, struggling to get by during the Roman occupation. And here, he invites them to join their ancestors in the wilderness, trusting God for provision each and every day.

[By praying this way for daily bread, we are training our minds to see that every day's existence comes as a gift from God. And, as we pray this prayer regularly, it will start to shape how we view all of our possessions. Jesus wants us to see that our moment-by-moment existence is not something that we created for ourselves. Rather, it is something we receive as a gift from God.]

[The word translated “daily” is really the word meaning “this present moment.” Jesus wants his followers to live in the reality of radical, in-the-moment trust and dependence on the generosity of God.]

[Jesus doesn’t discourage his followers from making plans beyond today’s needs. Rather, **Jesus is encouraging a shift in perspective from self-sufficiency to a radical, moment-by-moment trust and dependence on God’s generosity.**]

## **Forgive Our Debts**

Jesus continues the prayer.

*Matthew 6:12 (NASB) ‘And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.’*

Forgiveness is central to Jesus’ movement. He announces that God is forgiving Israel and all humanity for its long history of violence and greed. And so he calls his followers to do the same—to forgive those who hurt us. **Jesus sees that our desire for revenge only keeps the cycle of pain going. So he teaches that forgiveness begins with naming the wrongdoing but then not seeking vengeance.**

**This doesn’t necessarily mean becoming best friends with the people who wrong us. But it does mean we release our right to get even, and we even learn to pray for their well-being.**

*Matthew 5:43-44 (NASB) 43 “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ 44 But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you....”*

This kind of forgiveness requires radical trust in God. And Jesus invites us to see that forgiveness is like breathing. In order to truly receive and take in God’s forgiveness, you need the habit of giving it out. The two work together as one.

*Matthew 6:14-15 (NASB) 14 “For if you forgive other people for their offenses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive other people, then your Father will not forgive your offenses.”*

*Matthew 18:21-35 (NASB) 21 Then Peter came up and said to Him, “Lord, how many times shall my brother sin against me and I still forgive him? Up to seven times?” 22 Jesus \*said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to*

seventy-seven times. 23 "For this reason the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his slaves. 24 And when he had begun to settle them, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. 25 But since he did not have the means to repay, his master commanded that he be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment be made. 26 So the slave fell to the ground and prostrated himself before him, saying, 'Have patience with me and I will repay you everything.' 27 And the master of that slave felt compassion, and he released him and forgave him the debt. 28 But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and he seized him and began to choke him, saying, 'Pay back what you owe!' 29 So his fellow slave fell to the ground and began to plead with him, saying, 'Have patience with me and I will repay you.' 30 But he was unwilling, and went and threw him in prison until he would pay back what was owed. 31 So when his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved and came and reported to their master all that had happened. 32 Then summoning him, his master \*said to him, 'You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. 33 Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, in the same way that I had mercy on you?' 34 And his master, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he would repay all that was owed him. 35 My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart."

### **Deliver Us from the Evil One**

*Matthew 6:13 (NASB) 'And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil.'*

Does this mean that God might test us? **We actually see tests all throughout the Bible.** In the biblical story, God appoints humans as his representatives to rule the world, and that opportunity presents them with a test. Will they partner with God and rule by his wisdom or break away from God and operate by their own wisdom? While God intends this test to strengthen them, there's another voice that twists God's good test into a trap that tempts humans to trust their own wisdom. So yes, God presents good testing moments for people, but the evil one presents traps. And we get to decide whose voice we will trust.

[A test can be an opportunity or a trap, depending upon the tester. God tests people to see if they will trust his wisdom and be his faithful partners, which leads to life. But the evil one twists God's truth and traps people, which leads to death. Tests can help us mature and grow, but they are still unpleasant. So, Mathew 6:13 contains two requests that work together. We start by asking,

“Will you please lead us, and not lead us into a test?” Then, the second request is implied: “But if you lead us into a test, will you please deliver us from the evil one?”]

Jesus knows that life is full of choices that will force us to choose who or what we will trust, so he teaches us to pray for deliverance from [the evil one](#).

### Jesus Prayed This Prayer

This is not only the prayer Jesus taught to his followers—it’s the prayer that Jesus himself prayed. When he faced his greatest test in the garden, the night before his crucifixion, he prayed these words. Jesus even asks the Father to take this responsibility, or “cup,” from him. As a true human being, he wants to survive. But because he trusts his Father’s will even more than his basic human instinct, he prays:

*Matthew 26:39-42 (NASB) 39 And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will.” 40 And He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and He \*said to Peter, “So, you men could not keep watch with Me for one hour? 41 Keep watching and praying, so that you do not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” 42 He went away again a second time and prayed, saying, “My Father, if this cup cannot pass away unless I drink from it, Your will be done.”*

Jesus hopes for the same thing he previously prayed for: “May your Kingdom come and will be done.” And because this prayer is his habit, he continues following the way of God and trusting in his promises even in the face of unjust [arrest and execution](#).

Jesus is delivered from the evil one when God [raises him from the dead](#). In fact, it is through his act of self-giving love that God’s forgiveness and heavenly Kingdom come to Earth. This is how God’s holy name is restored. And Jesus invites every human being to embrace the same kind of love and trust in God’s will so that we may partner with him in his resurrection way of life that even death can’t corrupt.

[BibleProject: The Lord’s Prayer](#) Device Playlist 34 [Jeff McGee’s personal notes]

Let’s summarize the Lord’s Prayer again.

The Lord's Prayer has 2 main parts.

**The first half of the Lord's Prayer has 3 requests:**

1. That God's name would be recognized as holy—wholly unique.
2. That God's kingdom would come.
3. That God's will would be done on earth as in his presence.

They are all ways of asking God to renew our world.

**The second half of the Lord's Prayer shifts the focus to asking God for help so that we can be part of that renewal.**

1. **Daily provision:** trust God to meet our needs one day at a time.
  - a. Most people live in worry and fear about our survival and of not having enough so we hoard resources.
  - b. Jesus invites us to trust God to meet our needs one day at a time.
  - c. This prayer cultivates a habit of gratitude and daily gratefulness to see every meal and every moment as a gift.
  - d. Why focus on bread? Jesus is recalling the story of Israel wandering in the wilderness when God sent bread from heaven. It was just enough for one day at a time so that Israel had to stay in a posture of gratefulness and trust.
2. **Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.**
  - a. Debt is a metaphor for when you wrong someone and then owe them to make it right.
  - b. It is a relational debt.
  - c. Our ability to receive forgiveness is bound up with our ability to give out forgiveness.
  - d. Jesus is creating a culture where the forgiven are becoming agents of forgiveness to others.
3. **Don't lead us into the test, but deliver us from the evil one.**
  - a. The Greek word is *perasmos* which means a test that is designed to reveal the truth.
  - b. In the bible, God's tests have a positive purpose, to reveal someone's character and to invite them into a relationship of trust.
  - c. Jesus is being really honest here. Tests can be difficult, painful.
  - d. Often, there is a little voice nudging me to take the easy way out, because the right choice is just too costly. Jesus says that voice is the voice of the evil one.
  - e. When we face a test and when we hear that voice, we should ask for deliverance.

**The second half of the prayer has 4 requests that focus on our needs:**

1. Give us bread.
2. Forgive our debts.
3. Don't lead us into the test.
4. Deliver us.

Combine that with the previous 3 requests and you get a total of 7 requests which is the number for completeness in the Bible.

The prayer of Jesus shapes us into people who long for God's heavenly kingdom and desire to come about here on earth. And we can participate as we learn to trust God, forgive others, and remain faithful to God's promise to bring heaven down to earth.

**Conclusion:**

**Our identity:** We are a people who follow Jesus, who listen to the voice of God, and who get in action around what the Lord is saying through the power of his Holy Spirit.

**For reflection:**

1. What is God saying to you?
2. What is getting stirred up in you?
3. Where do you sense resistance?
4. What questions do you have?
5. What are you feeling or thinking?
6. What is at least one takeaway for you today?

**Ministry Time.**

## Addendum: Praying The Lord's Prayer

In this teaching, we will look at one model of prayer. Jesus taught his disciples to pray. The Model Prayer (The Lord's Prayer) is a way to pray according to the will of God. You don't always have to pray through every part of the Lord's Prayer. Sometimes, you will simply pray the model prayer itself. Sometimes, you will use each part of the model prayer as a launching pad for prayer. Sometimes, you will focus on one part or another.

**Promise:** Using the model prayer will inform, inspire, and impact your prayer life. The prayer of Jesus shapes us into people who long for God's heavenly kingdom and desire to come about here on earth. And we can participate as we learn to trust God, forgive others, and remain faithful to God's promise to bring heaven down to earth.

### How to Pray (Matthew 6:9-13 KJV / NIV)

1. **Worship: *Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.***
  - a. *Our Father:* Think about who you are addressing. Our God is near, immanent, present. Our identity is in God.
  - b. *In heaven:* Our God is transcendent, all powerful, and beyond us.
    - i. Perspective: The center of the universe is where our Father rules and from where he does his will.
    - ii. We get to come near to our Father, above every power and force in heaven and on earth.
    - iii. When we come near to God, we come to our Father.
    - iv. In his presence, we worship and respond to his beauty, majesty, and greatness.
    - v. That causes everything else to fall into its proper place (Matthew 6:33).
  - c. *Hallowed be your name:*
    - i. We exalt you as holy and respond humbly to you.
    - ii. We seek to spread the fame of your name in the earth. We declare who God is and what he has done.
      1. *Isaiah 66:19 "I will set a sign among them, and I will send some of those who survive to the nations... and to the distant islands that have not heard of my fame or seen my glory. They will proclaim my glory among the nations."*
    - iii. Holy signifies God's one-of-a-kind status. There is no one like the Lord. We pray that God would be recognized as holy, as who

he is. And, we pray that God would restore the holiness of his name among the nations. (See Ezekiel 36:22-28.)

2. **Welcome / Intercession: *Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.***

- a. *Your kingdom come*: We welcome the Lord to rule and to reign on earth as in heaven. We invite him to rule and reign in every place: our lives, our home, our neighborhood place, workplace, and other places.
- b. *Kingdom*: What it is like when God rules and reigns.
- c. *Will*: God has a will; he has desires. God has redemptive purposes and designs for every business, every school, every city, every nation, etc. Learn to pray into the plans, purposes, and promises of the Lord.
- d. **Intercession** is standing in the gap between the way things are and the way God wants them to be (Ezekiel 22:30).
- e. It involves blessing and cooperating with what God is doing and wants to do.
- f. Jesus teaches his followers that when we love God and our neighbor, and when we treat others with God's generosity and justice, we are [entering God's Kingdom](#). So this is a prayer for the reunion of Heaven and Earth, and we're invited to participate.

3. **Petition: *Give us today our daily bread.***

- a. It is important to ask on a daily basis for what we need.
- b. God has the bread which we need.
- c. God knows how to parent us, how to give his kids good gifts (Matthew 7:9-11)
- d. Jesus is encouraging a shift in perspective from self-sufficiency to a radical, moment-by-moment trust and dependence on God's generosity.
- e. We admit that we have need. Acknowledging our dependence upon God honors the Lord and humbles us.

4. **Confession of sin: *Forgive us our debts.***

- a. We have all sinned and come short of the mark, God's glory.
- b. We can all experience and walk in forgiveness, in freedom from debt and slavery to sin.
- c. Read 1 John 1:9.

5. **Forgiveness of others: *As we forgive our debtors.***

- a. *Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy (Matthew 5:7).*
- b. Hardness of heart toward God or others keeps the love of God out and poisons our soul.
- c. Unless we forgive others, God will not forgive us (Matthew 6:14-15). Learning to forgive ourselves and others is a part of being conformed to the image of Christ.

- d. Forgiveness is central to Jesus' movement. He announces that God is forgiving Israel and all humanity for its long history of violence and greed. And so he calls his followers to do the same—to forgive those who hurt us. Jesus sees that our desire for revenge only keeps the cycle of pain going. So he teaches that forgiveness begins with naming the wrongdoing but then not seeking vengeance ([BibleProject Guide: The Lord's Prayer](#)).
  - e. Forgiveness is a powerful spiritual weapon that disarms the enemy (Colossians 2:13-15).
6. **Guidance: *Lead us not into temptation.***
- a. Lead us! We pray for God's guidance (Psalm 25:12).
  - b. May we learn directly from God and not from exposure to tempting situations.
  - c. Some people say that you have to learn the hard way. Some people say that they only learn when the pressure is on.
    - i. There are other ways to learn rather than running into brick walls and falling into ditches.
    - ii. We can learn by seeking, listening to, and following wise, godly counsel.
  - d. And, when we face the test, may we listen to the voice of the Lord rather than to the voice of [the enemy](#).
7. **Warfare: *But deliver us from the evil one.***
- a. There is a war and there is an adversary.
  - b. God wants to show himself strong on behalf of those whose hearts are inclined toward him.
  - c. Ephesians teaches us to believe right, live right, and fight right.
  - d. **Principles of warfare.**
    - i. Wield the weapons of our warfare like the Word of God, forgiveness, love, righteousness, holy actions. (See Isaiah 58 and Ephesians 6:10-18).
    - ii. Stand in repentance: "we have sinned." (See Daniel 9.)
    - iii. Pray out of your authority in Christ (Luke 10:17-20).
    - iv. Appeal directly to God for his intervention, righteousness, mercy, etc.
    - v. Boldly ask God to execute vengeance and judgment against his enemies (Ephesians 6:10-12).
    - vi. Proclaim the truth about Christ and his kingdom.
    - vii. Declare the reality that all powers and principalities are subject to Christ and will bow before Jesus (Psalm 29:1-2; Psalm 86:8-10; Psalm 97:7; Colossians 1:13-18; Philippians 2:10-11; Hebrews 1:6).

- viii. Use the principle of replacement, praying for the opposite of the work of the enemy and brokenness which you see.
- 8. **Bold declaration: *For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen (KJV).***
  - a. This is a bold prophetic declaration.
  - b. It gives us perspective as we close our prayer and live in this broken world.
  - c. It empowers our souls as we hear it and proclaim it.

## **[Jesus on God's Forgiveness](#) (The Meaning of Matthew 6:14-15)**

### **Do I Have to Forgive Everyone for God to Forgive Me?**

By BibleProject Scholarship Team

July 29, 2024

9 min read

In [Matthew 6:14-15](#), Jesus says, “For if you forgive people their transgressions, your Father in the skies will also forgive you. But if you will not forgive people, then neither will your Father forgive your transgressions”. (1) Forgiving the person who accidentally bumped into us or the rude customer who scolded us may come easily. But what about those who’ve caused devastating wounds—the friend who stabbed us in the back, the spouse who cheated, the parent who abused, the drunk driver who killed, the assailant who attacked?

From Jesus’ words, it may sound like God refuses to forgive us until we forgive those who have most deeply harmed us. But is Jesus saying that? Is he suggesting that God remains unforgiving in some cases? The short answer is no. And a more careful examination of [Jesus’ words in context](#) will help us discover the longer answer—that approaching relationships with an unforgiving posture suggests we have not yet opened ourselves up to receive and experience God's forgiveness.

Offering forgiveness requires honest acknowledgment of our raw feelings. And it’s a process that takes time. God doesn’t expect us to immediately forgive the people who shatter our world. But he knows that forgiveness is a key ingredient for true healing. When we forgive, it frees us from the crippling power of resentment and opens the door for the possibility of repairing the relationship.

### **The Unmerciful Servant**

Jesus aims to create a new way of relating that seeks healing by drawing attention to the way offenses break relationships and threaten community life. To illustrate this, he uses an Old Testament metaphor of sin as a debt that requires repayment.

In [Matthew 18:23-35](#), Jesus explains what the Kingdom of God is like by telling the story of a servant who owes his king something like 60 million days’ wages. (2) Since the servant has no way to pay this impossible sum, the king orders that he and his family be sold into debt slavery. But when the servant pleads for more time, the king shows great compassion. Instead of merely granting the servant’s request to extend the loan, he cancels it completely.

No actual king would forgive such a massive debt or even allow his servant to become so indebted in the first place. Jesus paints this exaggerated picture for rhetorical effect—to spark our imagination about how it would feel to be freed from the crushing weight of such an unpayable debt.

We would expect the king's extravagant compassion to change the servant's heart, so that he would also express compassion for others. He ought to celebrate his good fortune and invite others to share in it. But when the servant immediately encounters someone who owes him only 100 days' wages, (3) he ignores his pleas for mercy and callously throws him in prison. The servant's heart remains untouched and stingy, despite the king's astonishing forgiveness. The king then rebukes the servant for failing to express the same compassion he just received.

### **The Canceling of Debts**

The same is true with us, Jesus explains. Since we all contribute to the corruption of God's creation, we each owe an immeasurable debt for the damage. As one who experienced imprisonment for political dissidence, Russian author [Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn](#) says, "The line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being." (4) Nobody gets to claim pure innocence or accuse others of being pure evil. We're all mixed up in this world, all doing harm and all suffering from harm.

But with great mercy, God fixes his compassionate gaze on us and generously cancels the debts we incur. God does not passively ignore or blindly overlook our offenses, but he does not hold them against us either. Our word "forgive" stems from the Greek verb *aphiemi*, which means "let go." To hold something against another is unforgiving; to let it go is to forgive. Out of his deep love for us, God lets our offenses go. As theologian [Miroslav Volf](#) says, "To forgive is to condemn the fault but to spare the doer." (5)

As Jesus frees us from the impossible sum of our debts, he invites us to allow [God's compassion](#) to soften our hearts toward those who have wronged us, and to free them from the debts they owe us. Only then can we begin to heal the fractures that tear us and our communities apart.

### **The Results of Forgiveness (and Unforgiveness)**

Jesus calls us to forgive not only for the health of our community, but for our own benefit as well. When unforgiveness takes root, it produces resentment. And as the old saying goes, "Resentment is like drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die." We may think resentment works like a weapon to protect us from our enemy, but it ends up destroying us instead. As resentment sprouts, it quickly entangles and ultimately imprisons us in a cage of bitterness. Trapped and haunted, we can no longer experience the love and light of healthy relationships.

Recent research shows that unforgiveness can also negatively impact our physical health. It increases our physiological stress responses, such as a heightened heart rate and blood pressure, which can lead to long-term health problems. And it can also contribute to depression and interfere with our ability to sleep. (6) When someone harms us, the choice to forgive releases the hold they have on us. Forgiveness frees us from our cage of bitterness and calms our minds and bodies. Almost like breathing, in order to take in and benefit from God's forgiveness, we have to also be in the habit of giving it out.

Sometimes we can quickly choose forgiveness and put an offense behind us once and for all. At other times, we may need to wrestle with God until we're ready (or able) to forgive. And freedom may involve a lengthy process of letting go again, and again, as God slowly heals our wounds. We may also find that we can't always forgive on our own. We might need a trusted mentor, a group of friends, or a counselor to help us work through the pain.

But the more we practice forgiving, the more it becomes a way of life, impacting all of our relationships. We become more understanding when people cut us off in traffic, wondering if they've had a difficult day rather than angrily laying on our horn. We display more patience toward our children, addressing their misbehaviors without harshly condemning them. We're less reactive with our friends and coworkers, rarely taking offense and calmly working through conflict. We're able to accept people with all their flaws and failings, recognizing that, in the words of lawyer and activist [Bryan Stevenson](#), "Each of us is more than the worst thing we've ever done." (7) And every person we encounter is a miraculous creature of inestimable worth, created in the [image of God](#) and capable of acting in life-giving ways.

Becoming a forgiving person allows us to navigate a world full of relational hurt with freedom and joy. And it empowers us to follow in the way of Jesus by bringing healing to the world around us.

### **Seeking Genuine Reconciliation**

But forgiveness doesn't automatically lead to reconciliation. For serious offenses, true reconciliation requires that forgiveness be *offered* and that it be *received* by the offender. To receive forgiveness involves acknowledging wrongdoing and working to repair what was broken.

Failing to adequately address the behavior is like trying to heal a gunshot wound with gauze. The bandage may conceal things and even offer some protection, but it cannot deliver true healing and will likely leave the wound vulnerable to infection. Similarly, seeking reconciliation without transformation will only conceal the harm, allowing it to become infected. Relational gangrene ensues, and pretty soon friends, family members, and neighbors are getting cut off. Genuine restoration is impossible when we try to just

“move on” without adequately addressing the offense. This cheap reconciliation denies the truth, declaring, “Peace, peace,’ when there is no peace.” (8)

Jesus addresses this issue in [Matthew 18:15](#), saying, “If your brother or sister sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If you are listened to, you have regained that one.” (9) In other words, he encourages us to lovingly confront people when they cause us significant harm. This is an act of love. If they acknowledge the offense and work to change their behavior, then the relationship is on the way to restoration.

But Jesus goes on to say that if they don’t listen, then we should bring one or two more trusted people into the conversation. If they’re still unmoved, then involve the larger community. And if the offender adamantly refuses to address the behavior, then we should treat them like a “gentile” or a “tax collector.” (10) At first, it might sound like Jesus is encouraging some kind of discipline or exclusion. But Jesus himself consistently loves and cares for gentiles and tax collectors, joining them in table fellowship. He’s not talking about kicking people out; he’s talking about the kind of forgiveness that he offers them. He approaches all people with love and invitation, desiring to form a good relationship and forgiving their offenses.

When people who deeply hurt us refuse to recognize their actions or the impact of their behavior, we may no longer trust that we can be vulnerable with them. But following Jesus’ example, we can still forgive and continue to show them love, hoping that one day true restoration may be possible.

### **God Wants Renewal, Not Destruction**

Our first reaction when someone harms us is often to retaliate or demand justice, not to pursue the hard work of forgiveness. After all, God is just and loves justice. But remember that God’s justice is most fully displayed on the cross. When Jesus forgives, he is not doing something unjust; forgiveness and justice never oppose one another when they’re compelled by love. Volf observes that “Consistent enforcement of justice would wreak havoc in a world shot through with transgression. It may rid the world of evil, but at the cost of the world’s destruction.” (11) And God’s work is to renew the world, not destroy it.

So Jesus calls us to seek restoration through forgiveness. “Forgiveness does not mean condoning what has been done,” South African theologian [Desmond Tutu](#) explains. “It means taking what happened seriously and not minimizing it; drawing out the sting in the memory that threatens to poison our entire existence.” (12)

When we practice forgiveness, we allow God’s Spirit to cleanse us from the toxic power of resentment. We find new strength and healing. And we participate with God in

creating and restoring vibrant, peaceful, intimately connected communities rooted in real love.

---

1. BibleProject Translation.
2. See Craig S. Keener, *IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), 92.
3. See Keener, *IVP Bible Background Commentary*, 92.
4. Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago 1918–1956: An Experiment in Literary Investigation I–II*, trans. Thomas P. Whitney (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), 168.
5. Miroslav Volf, *Free of Charge: Giving and Forgiving in a Culture Stripped of Grace* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 141.
6. See further Loren Toussaint, Everett Worthington, and David R. Williams, eds., *Forgiveness and Health: Scientific Evidence and Theories Relating Forgiveness to Better Health* (New York: Springer, 2015).
7. Bryan Stevenson, *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption* (New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2014), 17–18.
8. [Jeremiah 6:14](#) NRSV.
9. NRSV. Some of the earliest manuscripts don't have "against you," but many interpreters see it as original to the verse.
10. [Matthew 18:16–17](#).
11. Volf, *Free of Charge*, 160.
12. Desmond Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness* (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 271.

Sermon on the Mount Bible Project and other research 8'22'24

[The Bible Project](#)

NIV	ESV	<a href="#">The Bible Project</a>
3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.	3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.	3 How good is life for the poor in spirit, because theirs is the kingdom of the skies.
4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.	4 "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.	4 How good is life for those who grieve, because they will be comforted.
5 Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.	5 "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.	5 How good is life for the unimportant, because they will inherit the land.
6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.	6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.	6 How good is life for those who hunger and thirst for right-relationships, because they will be satisfied.
7 Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.	7 "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.	7 How good is life for those who show mercy, because they will be shown mercy.
8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.	8 "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.	8 How good is life for the pure in heart, because they will see God.
9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.	9 "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.	9 How good is life for the peacemakers, because they will be called children of God.

<p>10 Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.</p> <p>11 "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.</p> <p>12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.</p> <p>13 "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men.</p> <p>14 "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before</p>	<p>10 "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.</p> <p>11 "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.</p> <p>12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.</p> <p>13 "You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.</p> <p>14 "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may</p>	<p>10 How good is life for those who have been persecuted on account of doing what is right, because theirs is the kingdom of the skies.</p> <p>11 How good is life for you when they insult you and persecute and speak any evil lies against you on account of me.</p> <p>12 Celebrate and shout for joy. Because your reward is great in the skies, because this is how they persecuted the prophets before you.</p> <p>13 You are the salt of the land.</p> <p>But if the salt becomes unsalty, with what can it be made salty again?</p> <p>It is useful for nothing, except to be thrown out and stepped on by humans.</p> <p>14 You are the light of the world.</p> <p>A city that is set up on a mountain is not able to be hidden.</p> <p>15 And they don't light a candle and place it under a basket. Rather, upon a</p>
---	---	---

men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.	see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.	candle stand, and it will shine on everyone in the house.  16 In the same way, let your light shine before people so that they can see your good works and they can give honor to your Father who is in the skies.
--	---	--

### [The Bible Project: Matthew 5:14-16](#)

“Jesus is taking this image from the Hebrew prophet Isaiah, who said that one day, God’s heavenly reign will touch down on Earth in Jerusalem, high on a hill. And this city will reflect God’s light out into the nations, who will learn the ways of God and live in peace. It’s a heavenly city, and its light will be like the dawn of new creation.”

#### Highlight

“What Isaiah begins to anticipate is that if God’s purpose for Israel is ever going to happen, that calling, to walk in the light of Yahweh, to be a source of peace among the nations, is going to fall on the shoulders of one Israelite who is just called ‘the servant.’”

#### Salt

“In the Hebrew Scriptures, salt is a symbol of God’s long-lasting covenant relationship with Israel. So Jesus is claiming that he and his followers are carrying Israel’s covenant relationship to its fulfillment” ([The Bible Project](#), Weekly Playlist, January 1-7).

#### The Light and the City

When Jesus calls his followers “the light of the world” and “a city on a hill,” he is referencing images from the prophet Isaiah. The shining city on the hill portrays God’s wisdom and heavenly presence emanating from Jerusalem and filling the whole Earth. By using these images, Jesus is applying Isaiah’s prophecies to himself and his followers.

## [Read - What Is the Sermon on the Mount?](#)

The Sermon on the Mount is Jesus' most well-known teaching and one of history's most famous speeches ever. Jesus delivered this sermon 2,000 years ago, and the implications of these words are still shockingly relevant and meaningful.

Emphasizing humility, forgiveness, and generous care for our neighbors, Jesus encourages people to choose God's way of love, which will eventually renew all of creation. He calls this restored world God's Kingdom. This is a realm in which Heaven and Earth are inseparably combined, a place where life flourishes that's free from injustice, suffering, and death.

We're not sure if Jesus delivered the Sermon on the Mount as one big speech or if Matthew collected Jesus' key teachings over time and organized them into a sermon-style scene (recorded in Matthew 5-7). Either way, this sermon contains some of the most rigorous ethical demands in the Bible. It has wild ideas like "blessed are the peacemakers" and "love your enemies" and "pray for people who persecute you."

These ideas might pass for utopian ideals, but they're nonsense (and weak) in our modern empires, where leadership usually means strength and power more than vulnerability and love.

### Why Teach from a Mountain?

In the Gospel of Matthew's Sermon on the Mount story, Jesus is intentionally portrayed on a large hill (or mountain, Matt. 5:1), speaking to a group of hurting Jewish farmers and day laborers who have been oppressed by Rome (and other powerful nations) for too long. They're sick of being bullied, mocked, and taxed into poverty by those in power. And like their Hebrew ancestors, who had long ago been slaves under brutal Egyptian tyranny, they are in need of a rescuer.

Enter Jesus of Nazareth—the humble teacher everyone whispers about. Family and friends are saying good things, but the power guys are getting irritated about everything he says.

By the time of the Sermon on the Mount scene, many already considered Jesus a great prophet like Moses. Matthew says that crowds gather, and Jesus ascends a "mountain." This mountain teaching with oppressed people sounds familiar—think about Moses giving instructions at Mount Sinai to the Hebrew people recently freed from enslavement. With all these symbols working together, many in the crowd are wondering if Jesus will be some kind of rescuer: "Is this Jesus a new kind of Moses?"

Matthew compares Jesus to Moses but takes care to show he's not the same as Moses, nor is his instruction a simple repeat of Moses' law. In Matthew 5:17, Jesus says he is not abolishing what Moses gave; he's "filling it full." Jesus' teaching deepens and expands that first instruction (Hebrew: torah) from Moses.

To better answer the question "What is the Sermon on the Mount?", we need to dig deeper into the three key distinctives we've briefly mentioned. We need to look at:

- How Matthew portrays Jesus as a new Moses
- How Jesus' teaching "fills full" the Hebrew Bible's law
- What Jesus means when he talks about God's Kingdom

### Jesus as the New Moses

Throughout the biblical story, God instructs people in many ways, but two teachers—Moses and Jesus—become primary human instructors. Moses was the only one who experienced God face-to-face (Exod. 33:11), and Jesus is God himself in the flesh. In Matthew's Sermon on the Mount, through Jesus, God shows up like a new Moses, arriving to rescue not only all of Israel but all of humanity.

As such, Matthew casts Jesus not only as a new Moses but also as a greater Moses. Somehow, in a speech where Jesus never tells people to respect him or to bow down, the crowds still recognize strong authority in Jesus' words. His teaching seems to have the ring of truth, and it fits with the Hebrew Bible's instruction they already know, yet it leaves them utterly astonished (Matt. 7:28).

Jesus is disrupting the common expectations of their world. Moses' teaching also disrupted the common expectations of the Egyptian empire and its Hebrew slaves. Moses taught an enslaved people to become free, not by turning to violence but by turning their attention to God and following his lead—trusting his instruction—which becomes a core theme in the Exodus narrative. That had to sound crazy to enslaved people. Just follow God and trust him to deal with their enemies? But they did, and God set them free as promised.

Like most of us throughout history, the crowds listening to Jesus assume that evil gets eradicated from our world with strong military power and the wealth it takes to build armies. But Jesus goes nowhere near that or an idea that depends on force, coercion, or violence. He promises with his life that the power of God's love, along with those who choose to embrace it, will eventually outlast and overwhelm all evil everywhere.

Don't fight evil with the power of evil, Jesus says. Instead, join God in creating goodness throughout the land. If Jesus' followers listen to his words, they will start seeing their enemies as neighbors and miracles of God who are worthy of love. All evil and every oppressor will ultimately be defeated, Jesus teaches, not with swords but with God's creative, renewing love.

Moses' law had always been pointing in this exact same direction. It always intended to form its followers into loving people who honor God by blessing every family on Earth (see Genesis 12:1-3). Jesus is now making good on that intent by finishing—or filling full—the work that Moses' instruction started.

### How Jesus' Teaching "Fills Full" the Torah

In Matthew 5:17-43, Jesus opens six repeated statements with these words: "You have heard it said, and I say to you ...." The first part, "you have heard it said," refers to the original Torah. Some thought Jesus opposed that first instruction, but Jesus emphatically says the opposite. He doesn't think the old law is flawed or obsolete. It was limited in its scope, and he's providing fuller explanation and illustration.

Though the first law did intend to form the human heart, its instructions could be followed in vain—interpreted and followed in a way that had no meaningful effect on the follower. For instance, Jesus agrees with Moses' prohibition against murder, but his teaching suggests that avoiding murder is only a surface-level goal. One can be considerate or non-violent while still harboring contempt and hate for others. But hateful hearts won't function in the Kingdom of God, even if they are well-behaved. So Jesus refocuses his listeners to consider their actual hearts and to honestly pay attention to whom and what they truly love.

Real human life and goodness, as Jesus describes it, is not about a simple rejection of murder; it's about actively loving every person around you, regardless of their status as friend or enemy. Jesus teaches impartial love for all neighbors (not some neighbors). Jesus' life fulfills the law, and Jesus' teaching fulfills the law—he fills Moses' Torah full.

### What's This "Kingdom" Jesus Talks About?

Think about an average neighborhood or village. Imagine if, one by one, its citizens started making decisions to bless one another with resources rather than hoard and fight over them. Imagine what it would be like if society at large considered vulnerability and kindness to be the highest forms of power and glory. It's a world where mutual love between citizens has made it impossible for evil to continue.

Total peace. Total safety. Total provision. Everyone experiencing the good life.

“The good life belongs to [or ‘blessed are’] those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,” Jesus says in the introduction of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:6). That word “righteousness” comes from the Greek *dikaiosune*, which is about right relating with others. To be a righteous person, according to Jesus and the New Testament, we must learn how to relate rightly with all people. In other words, we learn how to love our neighbors.

Jesus says that the good life belongs to people who hunger and thirst for right relationships “because they will be filled [or ‘satisfied’].” They will, according to God’s promise, eventually live in a world where Heaven and Earth are united, where everyone else wants right relationships too—this is God’s Kingdom. Surely many in Jesus’ crowds wanted to be there now.

Notice how Jesus does not promise to take these oppressed Galileans from their bad situation straight to a better world by simply destroying their Roman oppressors. He’s teaching them that a free world doesn’t come about through harming or exterminating enemies. It comes about freely, through something more powerful.

He’s helping them experience freedom within God’s Kingdom right now by choosing to turn their attention to him and his way of love. This is why Jesus invites the people to “seek first the Kingdom” (Matt. 6:33)—to let his Sermon on the Mount instructions guide them through their wilderness, into the promised Kingdom way—and to want that more than anything.

Loving that way of life, he says, leads to a world where every need is met, every tear is wiped away, and every bit of life’s goodness gets experienced by all people.

Don’t allow worries about securing your basic needs govern the decisions you make, Jesus teaches. Instead, more than anything else, pursue God’s Kingdom way of life and right relating with all others. When we do that, we’ll find that life’s biggest needs are no longer an issue (Matt. 6:31-33). When everyone lives like that, fear and violence don’t make sense anymore because the world is altogether good. That good world is the Kingdom Jesus speaks of in his Sermon on the Mount.

#### How God’s World Will Be Transformed

Moses joined God in this life-renewing work back in Egypt. And Matthew portrays Jesus as a new Moses to signal that Jesus is doing the same thing. He is continuing the rescuing work God started long ago. But he’s introducing an unexpected trajectory through his Sermon on the Mount, opening humanity’s eyes to the deeper meaning of Moses’ Torah.

As it is, Jesus' teaching implies that the world won't be fixed through the elimination of human enemies or through merely escaping our world for a better utopia in the clouds. God's world—on Earth as it is in Heaven—will be transformed by changed human hearts. Jesus' frustrated Galilean crowds were probably as unhappy to hear this as we likely are. They want God's power to destroy their enemies, not God's power to bless and heal and love them. In fact, Matthew says at the end that Jesus' crowds were utterly shocked, astounded, and amazed.

Despite hearing the most intense ethical teaching they had ever heard, far greater than any legal experts or religious elites, the people still somehow knew that Jesus spoke truth. And isn't it true for each of us that, deep down, we prefer kindness and love more than hate or contempt?

"When Jesus finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed by his teaching," Matthew writes to conclude, "because Jesus taught them like one who had authority, not like their experts in the law" (Matt. 7:28, NET).

## [Read - What Does It Mean to Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness?](#)

Of life's most basic needs, food, oxygen, and water rank high. We might add shelter to round out the "essentials" category, but Jesus would add one more—right relating with others. When he tells people to "hunger and thirst for righteousness," we may assume that he's talking about a personal desire for holiness. But righteousness, according to Jesus and the rest of the Bible, is about right relating in the ways of love. And in Matthew 5:6, Jesus suggests that loving others is a basic human need like eating food or drinking water.

In the opening lines of his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says, "How good is life for those who hunger and thirst for right relationships (righteousness), because they will be satisfied" (Matt. 5:6, Bible Project Translation).

Our English term "righteousness" comes from the Hebrew word *tzedakah* and the Greek word *dikaiousune*. Both terms carry weighty ideas like justice, generosity, and honesty, which all describe ways of right relating with others and with God.

Even if we understand what righteousness means, Matthew 5:6 still raises a key question: What does it mean to hunger and thirst for righteousness in the context of Jesus' teachings?

Radical as it sounds, Jesus' teaching is not new. In fact, this upside-down way of relating, which lifts others up rather than oppressing them in the name of personal gain, is woven throughout the whole story of the Bible, from beginning to end.

### Righteousness in the Hebrew Bible

The world God created is shaped around intrinsic right relating (see Genesis 1). Male and female human beings walk with God, and he creates them as partners who bear God's image and care for the rest of creation. It's here that we get the first picture of righteousness—humanity's good relationship with God, each other, and the land they live on.

When Adam and Eve choose to ignore God's instruction and eat from the tree of knowing good and evil, it's a choice to stop relating well with God. Immediately, a seismic shift occurs in the way that they relate to each other and everything around them. Listen to Adam's response after God asks, "Did you eat from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" Adam says, "The woman whom you gave me, she gave me some fruit from the tree and I ate it" (Gen. 3:11-12, NET).

When God turns to Eve, she similarly deflects blame toward the serpent. Suddenly, man and woman become preoccupied with self-preservation in a way that requires the subjugation of one another and the world around them. Previously, the humans walked in right relationship with each other and their Creator; now, they hide from him and respond dishonestly to his questions. Even worse, they begin to die because right relating is essential to ongoing life.

Humanity's inherent desire for right relationships has since been replaced with fear and an appetite for personal protection and gain. We're taught to compete for resources and defend what we have, keeping others and enemies away at any cost.

But God didn't want to leave things this way, so he periodically gives instruction to people, like the law given to Israel through Moses. This law was intended to address humanity's destructive craving—a deadly kind of hungering and thirsting. The daily practice of Moses' law created rhythms of right relating with God and others that undermine self-centered ways of life. When people and whole communities follow these instructions, those routinely harmed or ignored by the power-hungry—the poor and powerless, widows and orphans—can find new life through the care shown to them by their neighbors.

Despite these instructions from God, humanity continues to pursue self-supremacy with the determination of a famished wolf searching for prey. In response, God persistently calls his people back to a way of right relating that will finally satiate their deepest longing.

“Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy, and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy?” (Isa 55:1-2a, NIV)

#### Righteousness, Hunger, and Thirst in the Sermon on the Mount

Given how integral this idea of right relationship is to the Bible's story, it's not surprising that the theme takes center stage in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:20, 6:1, 6:33, 7:12). When Jesus sits down on the mountainside, surrounded by crowds of people, Jesus details a revolutionary way of life that's rooted in ancient wisdom from the Hebrew Bible. With his words, Jesus sets a table and invites those listening to experience a nourishing way of life that satisfies our longing for good relationships with all people. This is the kind of relating that defines Jesus' Kingdom way of life.

“How good is life for the poor in spirit,” Jesus says, “because theirs is the kingdom of the skies.” “How good is life,” he promises, “for the peacemakers” (Matt. 5:3, 9, BPT).

Jesus' tender words have transformative power, inviting us to abandon our hunger for self-sufficiency and power. Like loving parents gently lifting their child's gaze to meet their own, Jesus invites us to be transformed by a desire for right relationship with himself and one another. Be like me, he says. Allow your perspective of the world to be turned upside-down, and yearn for a new way of living and relating.

This kind of righteousness is about more than a personal moral code. According to Jesus, it is possible to become consumed with following rules without craving right relationships (Matt. 5:20). Jesus also confronts a group of Bible scholars who expertly adhere to the law while simultaneously oppressing the vulnerable (Matt. 23:1-36)! They're acting with evil while thinking they're the most righteous people in town.

Jesus says that real righteousness points back to the first garden and describes the ethic of God's Kingdom. This way of life is inspired not by an appetite for personal gain but by a hunger for love that compels a person to be fair and just toward others, to seek peace with all, and to generously give without restraint (see Matt. 5:38-42). Jesus lives like this without fail, and he invites everyone to join him in hungering for righteousness in our own lives and in our world.

This is what Jesus means when he says, "Rather, first of all seek for his kingdom and doing-what-is-right by him, and all these things will be added to you" (Matt. 6:33, BPT).

Before presenting his listeners with this challenging promise, Jesus reassures them that God cares about their physical needs. "So then, don't worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?'" He says, "For the nations, they constantly seek for all these things, and your Father in the skies knows that you need all that" (Matt. 6:31-32, BPT).

The message is at once simple and revolutionary. Jesus invites us to trust God with the substance of our daily existence, while simultaneously becoming consumed with a hunger for the right relationships of his Kingdom.

### You Will Be Satisfied

When we trust that right relating with God and others is no less essential for life than food or water, Jesus teaches, our lives will be turned upside-down. We start living like we're already in God's Kingdom (and start experiencing a taste of its goodness). Throughout his time on Earth, Jesus was lifting the downtrodden and challenging those who sought power at the cost of the helpless. As an ultimate expression of this righteous way, Jesus willingly gives up his life. His death is at once a demonstration of

humanity's cruel hunger for power and God's boundless mercy, justice, and determined pursuit of right relationships.

Jesus calls us to push aside our craving for personal gain and become like him. He promises that our hunger for this way of life will not leave us wanting: "How good is life for those who hunger and thirst for right relationships, because they will be satisfied" (Matt. 5:6, BPT). Did you catch it? He's saying that if we become hungry for right relating with others, we will eventually be satisfied. All of restored humanity will live in a flourishing world where no human being does harm or relates poorly to another.

That's the home everyone was built for. If we hunger for that, we will be satisfied. Through his way of life and teaching, Jesus is slowly but surely changing our hearts, teaching us to love one another like he does and leading us to an incorruptible home where right relating—righteousness—will be our daily fare.

**Other resources:**

*Pure Heart: Restoration of the Heart Through the Beatitudes*, Tom and Donna Cole. From Margaret.

*The Pure Shall See God*, Francis Frangipane. From Louis Posthauer.

Sam Storms. *Biblical Studies: The Sermon on the Mount*. Edmond, OK. 2016.