A Devotional Study *on* Growing in Character *from the* Beatitudes

LORD, ONLY YOU CAN CHANGE ME



KAY ARTHUR

LORD,
ONLY YOU CAN CHANGE ME

Precept™
SOUTH AFRICA

— BOOKS BY KAY ARTHUR —

Lord, Give Me a Heart for You
Lord, Heal My Hurts
Lord, I Need Answers
Lord, I Need Grace to Make It Today
Lord, I Want to Know You
Lord, I'm Torn Between Two Masters
Lord, is it Warfare? Teach Me to Stand
Lord, Only You Can Change Me
Lord, Teach Me to Pray in 28 Days
Lord, Teach Me to Study the Bible in 28 Days
Lord, Where Are You When Bad Things Happen?
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LORD, ONLY YOU CAN CHANGE ME

A DEVOTIONAL STUDY
on GROWING IN CHARACTER
from the BEATITUDES

KAY ARTHUR



Originally published as: Lord, Only You Can Change Me

New Inductive Study Series
LORD, ONLY YOU CAN CHANGE ME
(Portions of this study were previously included in the book *Lord, How Can I Ever Be Righteous?)*

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Published by WaterBrook & Multnomah
10807 New Allegiance Drive Suite 500
Colorado Springs, CO 80921

WaterBrook & Multnomah reserve the right to continue selling and distributing its own edition in the region.

This is a special Precept Edition Published by
PRECEPT SOUTH AFRICA
Tel. +27 (0)21 531-1836
support@precept.org.za
www.precept.org.za

ISBN 978-1-62119-234-3

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2000—Second Edition

Printed in South Africa
Bevan Print
October 2026





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INTRODUCTION

You stand and gaze in the mirror, evaluating what you see—the way you will appear before others on the outside. But what about the inside—the character that counts, that enhances what others see and never belies the appearance you give when you are "on display"? What are you like, Beloved, in the inner man? Is it any different from what you once were? Is there a growing, a changing into His image? Is your character being transformed more and more into His likeness? Are you distinguished from those you work with in the world, as well as from those who call Him, "Lord, Lord" but really don't do the things He tells them to do?

This is a devotional study on character—the character that belongs to those who genuinely belong to God. It will reveal what godly character looks like for you in the home and in the marketplace…in fact, wherever you are. Among many other things, it's about humility (meekness) and mercy and purity—qualities that we're so often deficient in and that we want to grow in until finally we "are perfect even as our Father in heaven is perfect." Built into the definition of this word *perfect* is the idea of maturity, attainment—and that is what we are after in this study, Beloved: growth on the inside that far outshines and outweighs our physical appearance and accomplishments.

You are about to immerse yourself in a study of the Beatitudes to help you mine and explore many spiritual gems that will enrich your life, helping you to prosper spiritually in a way that will delight you and be noticed by others. The water of His Word will bring a growth that will be well worth the discipline of daily study.

This is a study you can do alone—it's used by Christian counselors as part of their counseling. But it is also a study that can be done in groups and even become a ministry for you, Beloved of God, as you desire to reach the hurting of this world and see them healed. If there is that possibility of your using this as a group study in which you would be a facilitator, then read "Guidelines for Group Use" in the "Study Resources" section at the back of this book, where you'll find other valuable tools to enhance this study.

We provide training if you would like to develop your skills in handling the Word of God more accurately or in leading others in group studies designed to minister to people of all ages at any level of commitment while respecting the restraints on their time. We're known as "The Inductive Study People: everybody, everywhere, any time, any place, any language, any age. One message: the Bible. One method: inductive." Please don't hesitate to call us.

Finally, let me share my vision—it's the possibility of a new avenue of ministry for you, Beloved of God…

A new beginning—
An avenue of ministry—
A sense of doing something that has eternal value

These are three things I think are so important for you and for me. There's so much to learn, to know, to experience, to do—and we never want to lose sight of that. To do so would be to miss what God has for us. To fall short of the tremendous potential of our lives—a potential that is ours because we are His, because we are children of the Creator of the Universe, indwelt by His divine Spirit and given the mind of Christ. You and I, Beloved, are God's workmanship gifted by the Spirit of God and created in Christ Jesus unto good works that would absolutely stagger our minds if we were to see them before they ever happened.

And what has God put into your hands? What are you holding and reading right now? Is it an accident? A coincidence? No! You are holding a devotional study that first and foremost will be the

beginning of a new depth of understanding about growing in godly character.

God is going to speak to you because through this book you are going to come face to face with the living Word of God—the Word that not only discerns the thoughts and intentions of your heart, but becomes the means of throwing His light on the direction your life is taking so you can know with absolute confidence where you are headed. If you listen to what He says—and by that I mean ordering your life accordingly—then there is, in a sense, a new beginning…of understanding, of purpose. A new level of Christlikeness is attained. You will be, as Paul would say, pressing on and attaining that for which Jesus Christ laid hold of you.

Which brings me to my next point—an avenue of ministry. What you have learned, God intends for you to share. I have a vision, and you, Beloved, are part of that vision. Our Lord's commission in Matthew 28 was that we make disciples of all men—that we teach them to observe all that He has commanded us. Acts 1 tells us that when we are saved and receive the Holy Spirit we become His witnesses—yet the question is often, "How?"

Here is the how. This "Lord" book contains truths every human being needs to know and to apply to his or her life. These are precepts for life; through them we will gain understanding and, as the psalmist says, "hate every false way" (Psalm 119:104). We hate it because it is false rather than true, and it is truth that sets us apart, sets us free.

So what is my vision for you, my friend? It is that you go to the Lord in prayer and ask Him to direct you to at least one other person—but preferably at least ten—and that you, along with them, study this book together. You may not be a teacher, but you can be the group's facilitator. You can take the questions you'll find at the end of each chapter and use them to stimulate a discussion among those whom the Lord has brought together in answer to your prayer. These are those who will be part of your crown of rejoicing in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ. As you watch them learn and grow in the knowledge of God and of His Word, you will experience the humbling

joy of knowing that you have been used of God. That what you have done has eternal value. That your life and God-given gifts have not been wasted. That your work will live on—that the grace of God poured out on you was not poured out in vain, for you have labored in the strength of His grace.

So as you facilitate a group using this book, you need to watch for and encourage others in your group to do as you have done—to take what they have learned and impart it to another as you did with them. Think of the multiplication that will happen! Do you realize, Beloved, that this is the way we can reach our neighborhoods, our communities, our nation, and beyond? Think of the transformation that will take place among all those people today who are so interested in "the spiritual" but won't step inside a church. Think—just think!—what is going to happen!

The time is now. The hour is short. Stop and pray right now and ask God what He would have you to do. He will show you, because He is God and because such prayers are in accordance with His will. As you step out and begin, just know that if you will step out in faith, God will give you an avenue of ministry, person by person or group by group, that will not only stagger your mind but absolutely delight your soul.

I cannot wait to hear what God does in and through you, my friend.



chapter 1

GETTING BEYOND OUR MASKS

— DAY ONE —

Maybe you've tried and tried and failed and failed. You find yourself thinking, *There is no way I can change! There's no way I can be the man…the woman…the husband…the wife…the parent…the single person…God wants me to be. The task is too great! The odds are insurmountable!*

Or possibly you look around…maybe among your family and friends, maybe among the members of your church, maybe in the body of Christ in general…and shudder because of all the hypocrisy you see. Or maybe you look within and shudder at your own hypocrisy!

You want heaven, but you're getting hell on earth instead. You find yourself clinging to life—sometimes by your fingernails—in the hope that somehow, someday, somewhere life will change and heaven will come to earth. Or perhaps you've already let go in despair. You've resigned yourself to a living hell.

I understand. Truly, I do. I've been there. And you might be surprised to know how many others have been there too.

It really wasn't all that much different in the days when Jesus walked this earth as a human being. He looked around Him and saw men and women and young people trapped in these same situations. They tried and tried—and they failed and failed. Their religion—the storied, richly tapestried faith of their fathers—just wasn't working. Many of those who seemed "in the know" about God and His Word were rank hypocrites.

But rather than condemning these unhappy, harried people, Jesus had deep compassion on them. To His eyes, they looked "distressed and downcast like sheep without a shepherd" (Matthew 9:36). So He went up to a high and beautiful hill beside the Sea of Galilee to set forth the truth from His Father. Overlooking that sea—a sea sometimes peaceful and serene, at other times turbulent and threatening—He sat down with His disciples and told them about the kingdom of heaven. About what belonging to that kingdom would mean in their daily lives. About the changes it would bring. And about the price they would have to pay.

Let's climb that hill too, my friend. It's a breathtaking climb…with a breathtaking view. Let's sit at His feet, high above the restless, changing sea. Let's drink in His words and ponder His perspective. For we too have been "distressed and downcast," and we too need the wisdom and guiding hand of our good Shepherd.

That's your assignment today, Beloved. To sit at His feet and read again His timeless words in Matthew 5–7. Don't mark or underline a single word today. Simply open your heart and read. But before you do…begin with prayer. Tell the Father you want to hear and understand the words of His Son. Tell Him that you long to have the life they can bring. Then, when you've finished your reading, talk to Him again. Talk to Him about what His Son has said. Be honest. Tell Him what you think, what you feel, what you don't understand, what you *want* to understand. Tell Him what you feel is impossible—and why.

Before you get up from your knees, you might tell Him your desire to commit yourself to this nine-week study. Lift up your voice, and cry out to Him, *Lord, only You can change me. Please do. In Jesus' name.*

If you have read through the Word of God, you know how God delights to hear and honor the cry of those who call out to Him with sincere hearts. And He not only hears "saints;" he hears the cry of "sinners" as well. He's heard my cry, and He will hear yours.

I'm going to give you some space to write out your prayer…or perhaps to list those longings of your heart that you'd like to bring before Him. You don't have to use the space, but you might find it helpful. At

the end of this study, you may want to come back and reflect on all He has accomplished in you through these life-transforming weeks.

Now climb that hill! Hear His words. And watch your life begin to change.

— DAY TWO —

Real Christian life—the genuine article—is never hypocritical.

Authentic Christian life is something higher, brighter, and infinitely more powerful than pale, phony substitutes.

It will take you from the valley of sin to the mount of blessedness.

It will take you from the depths of destitution to the heights of God's approval.

It will lift you from the instability of building on sand to the security of a foundation on rock.

It is a lifestyle that can endure all the torrential storms of life and remain unshaken.

Where can it be found?

It's all in seed form in Matthew 5, 6, and 7—Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. Today I want us to think about the main theme of this magnificent message. What is its heartbeat? What point is Jesus making?

Two key words that will help us grasp the theme of the Sermon are *righteousness* and *heaven*. Read through the Sermon on the Mount printed at the back of this book and mark every reference you find to

heaven and *righteousness*, or their synonyms.* You might want to use a blue pen and draw a little cloud shape like this——around each reference to heaven. Whatever design you choose, mark the words in a distinctive way so you can spot them easily. Then choose another color and/or special marking to highlight the words *righteous* and *righteousness* in the text. *Heaven* or *heavenly* is used twenty-one times; *righteous* or *righteousness* appears six times.

When you have finished marking each reference, fill in the appropriate spaces that follow. Note the chapter and verse of each mention of these words, and record what you learn in each passage.

HEAVEN

CHAPTER AND VERSE	WHAT I LEARNED
1. Matthew 5:3	It belongs to the poor in spirit.
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	

*See page 259 for section on marking your Bible.

9.

10.

11.

12.

13.

14.

15.

16.

17.

18.

19.

20.

21.

RIGHTEOUSNESS

CHAPTER AND VERSE	WHAT I LEARNED
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	

What is the theme of the Sermon on the Mount? It is *the righteous lifestyle of those who belong to the kingdom of heaven*. We will look more closely at this theme tomorrow. But before we close…would you allow me one question? What did you learn today that you didn't know before? Write it out.

— DAY THREE —

From looking at the words *heaven* and *righteousness* you may have noticed that those who will enter the kingdom of heaven fulfill four basic requirements. Let's summarize them.

Those who enter the kingdom of heaven

1. are poor in spirit (5:3);
2. are persecuted for righteousness' sake (5:10);
3. have a righteousness that even surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees (5:20);
4. obey God's will (7:21).

The bottom line of Jesus' message? Righteousness is an absolute necessity for those who are going to enter the kingdom of heaven! For this reason, I believe the *key verse* for the Sermon on the Mount is Matthew 5:20: "For I say to you, that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven."

Was it any wonder the multitudes were amazed at Jesus' teaching! A righteousness that *exceeded* the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees? How could it ever be? These were the great religious leaders of the day. None were more respected than they! How then could such a righteousness be attained by ordinary people—fishermen and carpenters and housewives and passionate young people and children? What could He have meant by those bewildering words?

Understanding the scribes and Pharisees will help you answer these questions and give you deeper insight into Jesus' message in the Sermon on the Mount.

The Old Testament documents the existence of scribes long before the Pharisees entered the stage of history. But they really did not come into prominence until Judah was restored to its land following the Babylonian captivity. The office of scribe came out of the priesthood. Scribes were experts in the Law of Moses whose responsibilities fell into two general categories: preserving the Law and teaching the Law.

The scribes may have been the originators of the synagogues, which came into being as a result of the Babylonian exile. Cut off from the ruined temple of Jerusalem, the Jews created the synagogue as a place where God's people could gather to worship and be instructed in the Law.

By the time of Jesus' birth, the synagogue was one of Judaism's most important institutions. It was in these synagogues that the scribes and Pharisees exercised their considerable authority. They taught the Law, yes. But they taught their own *traditions* and *interpretations* of the Law as well. The man or woman on the street did not own a copy of the Law but depended solely upon the teachings of these religious leaders.

The Pharisees were a religious party which came into being during the four-hundred-year period between the Old and New Testaments. By Jesus' time, they had supreme influence among the people. They believed in the resurrection, angels, spirits, and the coming of the Messiah, but their forte was the Law of God! As a matter of fact, they had reduced God's Law to a code of 365 negative commandments and 250 positive commandments—which included many of their own interpretations of God's Word. They claimed that these expansions came from direct inspiration and were God-given interpretations of the Law. As a result, when the people heard the Word, they heard a distorted version of it. This is why Jesus took the scribes and Pharisees to task so sternly. Their traditions and so-called interpretations often directly contradicted God's intentions. Listen to Jesus' comments.

> And He said to them, "Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written,
>
> 'This people honors Me with their lips,
> But their heart is far away from Me.
> But in vain do they worship Me,
> Teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.'
>
> "Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men." He was also saying to them, "You nicely set aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition…thus invalidating the word of God by your tradition which you have handed down; and you do many things such as that."
> (Mark 7:6-9,13)

As a result of the scribes' and Pharisees' interpretation of the Law, sin had become only an external act, rather than a matter of the heart. Something was declared right or wrong because an external condition was absent or present. For instance, if a Jew gave alms to the poor on the Sabbath, he could do so only if the beggar put his hand through the door to receive the alms. If the Jew extended his hand out the door to give alms to the beggar, he was considered to have broken the Sabbath.

Knowing this, you may better understand what Jesus means in Matthew 5 when He says, "You have heard…*but I say to you*" (verses 21-22). They had heard a distortion of the Law from the scribes and Pharisees' teaching in the synagogues, but they didn't know any better because they didn't know God's Word! (No wonder they were so distressed and downcast!)

And isn't that the way it is today? Sometimes I find myself shuddering as I watch "Christian" television. I shudder because I know that thousands upon thousands of untaught Christians are lapping up teachings which are simply not biblical. Yet they don't know better because they don't know God's Word! And they will *never* know it in its purity and authority and true transforming power until they study it for themselves. This is why I have such an intense longing to teach men, women, boys, and girls throughout the world how to study God's Word for themselves—inductively!

Take a moment now, as this day's study ends, and read Mark 7:1-16. Are there any traditions you're holding to which are not truly biblical? What might they be? List them below.

Now ask the Lord to root your life ever deeper by the sure-flowing stream of His eternal Word.

— DAY FOUR —

"We live in a time when many who claim to know Christ undermine the Gospel by short-circuiting the radical implications of a life of discipleship as set forth by Jesus the Christ." When I read this statement in Robert Guelich's commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, I thought, *How true that is, and how typical!*

We want heaven, life, eternity! Who doesn't? We hear the good news about eternal life through Jesus Christ. It's free, so we take it, tuck it under our arm, and walk away. We're relieved. No hell now; heaven's our home. Then, since we "have that problem settled," we imagine we can get back to living our lives as we please.

But can we?

Does true Christianity allow us to go back to living *our own lives*?

I would like to switch on a worldwide intercom at this point and shout one loud, resounding NO! You cannot belong to God and live any way you please! True Christianity is discipleship. It's the willingness to turn around, to leave everything, and to let Jesus Christ be all in all. It's the willingness to follow Him wherever He leads and to do whatever He says. True Christianity is a total commitment of oneself to the lordship of Jesus Christ.

Some of you may disagree. That's fine. Just don't stop studying until you see what the Sermon on the Mount has to say—lest you short-circuit the radical implications of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Read Matthew 7:13-29. Then, from what you have read, answer the questions that follow.

▶ MATTHEW 7:13–29

"Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it. For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it.

"Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes, nor figs from thistles, are they? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit; but the bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. So then, you will know them by their fruits. Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine, and acts upon them, may be compared to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and *yet* it did not fall, for it had been founded upon the rock. And everyone who hears these words of Mine, and does not act upon them, will be like a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and it fell, and great was its fall."

The result was that when Jesus had finished these words, the multitudes were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.

1. Describe the way that leads to life.

2. Whose words are you reading in this passage? If you have trouble answering this, look at Matthew 5:1-2 and 7:28-29.

3. According to Jesus, how many are there who find the way to life?

4. Who is going to enter the kingdom of heaven?

5. How do those who are going to heaven respond to Jesus' words?

6. Why do you think the people were amazed at Jesus' teaching in Matthew 5–7?

7. According to what you have just read, do you think a person can live any way he pleases and still go to heaven? Explain your answer.

8. Now, let's get personal. How do *you* live?

— DAY FIVE —

Hypocrisy is an age-old problem. And it was as common in Jesus' day as it is today. Jesus used the word frequently, particularly in reference to two groups of people. Take a few minutes and read Matthew 23. As you do, it would be good to color or mark each occurrence of the word *hypocrites* in a distinctive way. Then write in the following space whom Jesus called "hypocrites" and why He called them that.

Hypocrite was the word used for a stage actor. In Greek and Roman theater, actors customarily wore large masks to indicate a particular mood or emotion. No matter how the actor himself might feel, the mask was what everyone saw. A hypocrite, then, is an actor, or one who habitually wears a mask.

From your reading of Matthew 23, why do you think Jesus used the term *hypocrites* to describe the scribes and Pharisees? What were they doing that prompted Him to say what He did? Write out your answer below.

Now, stop and think. Are you a hypocrite in any way? Do you ever find yourself "acting"? Do you ever find yourself slipping on a mask to hide the way you truly feel? Do you speak words that your life does not back up? For instance, when you sing in church "I surrender all…," have you really surrendered all?

When you pray the Lord's Prayer and say, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil…," do you really desire to stay away from temptation? When you pray, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us…," are you really willing to forgive others—from the heart—as God has forgiven you? Do you pray at prayer meetings to be seen by others, but not at home when you are alone with God?

What about masks? Do you behave one way at church and another way at home or in your business? Does your attitude toward your mate or your children change when you get out of the car in the church parking lot? Do you slip a smiling-face mask over an angry scowl? Do you pull on an I-really-care-about-you mask when you talk to people, while underneath you really don't care at all?

Do you see what I am saying? It was the *religious* ones whom Jesus called hypocrites. They were the ones who claimed to know God—not the prostitutes, drunks, thieves, liars, and adulterers.

Perhaps at this point you are asking: "Is it possible *not* to be a hypocrite? Doesn't everyone wear a mask now and then? Is it realistic to think my heart can match what I portray on the outside? Can I truly be righteous—inside and out?"

Yes! Yes you can!

You can…or Jesus would have never required it of us. Just remember, what He demands, He supplies. How? By coming to live inside you. By giving you His Holy Spirit who will lead you into all righteousness. Be patient, Beloved. It will all become more clear as this study unfolds in the weeks that follow.

Philip Keller in his autobiography, *Wonder O' the Wind*, wrote:

> It was not that we neglected the church, the Word of God, or our daily devotions. We did not. Quite the contrary. Like other millions of modern-day Christians, we went through the regular routine of religious rituals, but they were dry as the dust in my sheep corrals, and just about as barren.
>
> Almost by default I concluded subconsciously that my joy in life could come from the earth and need not come from Christ.
>
> Yet the strange irony of my inner spiritual stagnation was that deep down within my spirit there was an intense hunger to really know God. There persisted an insatiable thirst to commune with Christ. But how?

How? We will see how in the Sermon on the Mount.

The Sermon on the Mount is not a new law or an impossible standard to be reached for but never obtained until the Lord's return. Rather, it is a teaching given by Jesus Himself on the new relationship with Him that is ours through the New Covenant.

The first seven beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-9) show the *character* of those who enter into this relationship. The next two beatitudes (verses 10-12) show the *conflict* that such character brings in a world that does not recognize Jesus' lordship. The remainder of the Sermon (5:13–7:27) shows the *conduct* of those who belong to Jesus. This conduct shows forth the shining presence of God's sovereign rulership in the life of His son or daughter.

So, what is our outline of the Sermon on the Mount?

THE RIGHTEOUS LIFESTYLE OF THOSE WHO BELONG TO THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

Matthew 5:1-2:	Prologue
Matthew 5:3-9:	Their Character
Matthew 5:10-12:	Their Conflict
Matthew 5:13-7:27:	Their Conduct
Matthew 7:28-29:	Epilogue

The Sermon on the Mount is only an impossible lifestyle for those who have not bowed their knees to the King nor yielded up the throne of their hearts to His right to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords!

But if you will but bow—
if you will yield—
the kingdom of heaven,
in all its fullness and joy
will be yours.

It will be yours because God Himself will change you and fit you for the kingdom of heaven. It's the very reason He came among us.

MEMORY VERSE

For I say to you, that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.

MATTHEW 5:20

SMALL-GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. As you read the Sermon on the Mount, what made the most significant impression on your mind?
2. What did you learn about righteousness?
3. What did you learn about the kingdom of heaven?
4. According to the Sermon on the Mount, who is going to heaven? What are the four basic requirements of those who will enter the kingdom of heaven?
5. What is the meaning of the word *hypocrite*? How does hypocrisy manifest itself?
6. Is hypocrisy in any form demonstrated in your life? What would others see if they really knew you? Try to be honest, vulnerable, and willing to grow.

7. Is your Christianity working? If not, in which areas are you failing?
8. What, if anything, needs to change in order for your life to become a true mirror image of what is inside?
9. Review the outline of the Sermon on the Mount with its chapter and verse divisions, as given on page 15.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

CHAPTER 5

[1] And when He saw the multitudes, He went up on the mountain; and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him.

[2] And opening His mouth He began to teach them, saying,

[3] "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

[4] "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

[5] "Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.

[6] "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

[7] "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

[8] "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

[9] "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

[10] "Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

[11] "Blessed are you when men cast insults at you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me.

[12] "Rejoice, and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

[13] "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how will it be made salty again? It is good for nothing anymore, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men.

[14] "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.

[15] "Nor do men light a lamp, and put it under the peck-measure, but on the lampstand; and it gives light to all who are in the house.

[16] "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

[17] "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill.

[18] "For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished.

19 "Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments,
and so teaches others, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven;
but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the
kingdom of heaven.

20 "For I say to you, that unless your righteousness surpasses that
of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.

21 "You have heard that the ancients were told, 'YOU SHALL NOT
COMMIT MURDER' and 'Whoever commits murder shall be liable to
the court.'

22 "But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother
shall be guilty before the court; and whoever shall say to his brother,
'Raca,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever shall say,
'You fool,' shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell.

23 "If therefore you are presenting your offering at the altar, and
there remember that your brother has something against you,

24 leave your offering there before the altar, and go your way; first be
reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering.

25 "Make friends quickly with your opponent at law while you are
with him on the way, in order that your opponent may not deliver you
to the judge, and the judge to the officer, and you be thrown into prison.

26 "Truly I say to you, you shall not come out of there, until you
have paid up the last cent.

27 "You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT
ADULTERY';

28 but I say to you, that everyone who looks on a woman to lust
for her has committed adultery with her already in his heart.

29 "And if your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out, and
throw it from you; for it is better for you that one of the parts of your
body perish, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

30 "And if your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off, and throw it from you; for it is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish, than for your whole body to go into hell.

31 "And it was said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of dismissal';

32 but I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for the cause of unchastity, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

33 "Again, you have heard that the ancients were told, 'You shall not make false vows, but shall fulfill your vows to the Lord.'

34 "But I say to you, make no oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God,

35 or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King.

36 "Nor shall you make an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black.

37 "But let your statement be, 'Yes, yes' or 'No, no'; and anything beyond these is of evil.

38 "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.'

39 "But I say to you, do not resist him who is evil; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also.

40 "And if anyone wants to sue you, and take your shirt, let him have your coat also.

41 "And whoever shall force you to go one mile, go with him two.

42 "Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you.

43 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy.'

STUDY RESOURCES

HOW TO MARK YOUR BIBLE

One of the things we at Precept Ministries International teach you to do in inductive Bible study is to find the key words in the passage you're studying and to mark them in a distinctive way. This is a very helpful and important element of the essential Bible study step known as observation—discovering exactly what the text says. So many times a Scripture passage is misinterpreted simply because the initial work of accurate observation has not been done. Remembering to mark key words will help you not to overlook this critical step.

WHAT ARE KEY WORDS?

Key words or phrases are those that are essential to the text. If they were to be removed, you would find it difficult or impossible to grasp the essence of what the passage is about. Like keys, these words "unlock" the meaning of the text. Recognizing them will help you uncover the author's intended purpose and emphasis in his message.

Key words can be nouns, descriptive words, or action words. Very often an author will repeat these words or phrases in order to emphasize his message. They may be repeated throughout an entire book—like the key words *love* and *abide,* which we see throughout the book of 1 John. Or they may be repeated throughout a shorter section of text, as with the key word *fellowship,* which is used four times in the first chapter of 1 John but not elsewhere in the book.

In the "Lord" series of Bible studies, you will often be asked to find and mark certain key words or phrases in the passage you're studying. This is a method that you will want to make a lifelong habit in your personal Bible study.

HOW TO MARK KEY WORDS

Marking key words can be done in several ways.

1. You can use different colors or a combination of colors to highlight different words. When I mark a passage, I like to choose a color that to me best reflects the word I'm marking. I color references to God in yellow because God is light and in Him there is no darkness. I color sin brown. Any Old Testament reference to the temple is colored blue.
2. You can use a variety of symbols—simply drawing a circle around a word, underlining it, or marking it with a symbol of your own creation, such as these:



When I use symbols, I try to devise one that best pictures the word. For example, the key words *repent* and *repentance* in Matthew 3 might be marked with the symbol  since in Scripture this word's root meaning represents a change of mind, which often leads to a change in direction.

3. You can combine colors with symbols. For example:
   - In 1 John 3, the key word *love* could be marked with a red heart like this: . If you want to distinguish God's love from man's, you could color God's heart yellow and man's red.
   - Every reference to the devil or evil spirits could be marked with a red pitchfork. 
   - Every occurrence of covenant could be colored red and boxed in with yellow.

The *New Inductive Study Bible* (NISB) has a whole page of suggested markings for key words used throughout the Bible.

A WORD OF CAUTION

When looking for key words, sometimes the tendency is to mark too many words. For example, I rarely mark references to God and to

Jesus Christ unless it is significant to understanding the message. For instance, the phrases "in Christ" and "in Him" are significant to understanding the message of Ephesians 1–3. If you marked every reference to Jesus in some of the gospel accounts, your Bible would be too marked up. So you need to use discretion. (I always mark every reference to the Holy Spirit because He is not referred to often, and there is much confusion about the person and ministry of the Holy Spirit.)

Remember to look for those words that relate to the foundational theme of the text. Sometimes a key word may not be repeated frequently, but you know it is key because without it you would not know the essence of what the author is talking about in that passage.

BE SURE TO MARK KEY-WORD SYNONYMS AND PRONOUNS

Synonyms for a key word would be marked the same way you mark the key word. For example, you would mark identically the word *devil* and the phrase "evil one" in Ephesians 6:10-18.

And be sure to mark pronouns (I, you, he, she, it, we, our, and so on) the same way you would mark the words to which they refer. In 1 Timothy 3:1-7, for example, you would mark the pronouns *he* and *his* in the same way you did the key word *overseer* in that passage.

For consistency, you may want to list on an index card the key symbols and colors you like using for certain words and keep that card in your Bible.

IMMEDIATE IDENTIFICATION

With a passage's key words marked in this way, you can look at the text and immediately spot the word's usage and importance. In the future you'll quickly be able to track key subjects and identify significant truths in any passage you've studied and marked.

CREATE LISTS FROM KEY WORDS

After you mark key words, you will find it helpful to list what you learn from the text by the use of the key word. For instance, once you mark the word *sin* in 1 John 3, you would make a list of what the text tells you about sin. As you look at each marked key word, list anything that would answer the questions *who, what, when, where, why,* or *how* about sin. You will be not only surprised but also delighted at the truths you can learn from this simple process of observation.

For more on how to mark your Bible and on the inductive Bible study approach, you may want to use the *New Inductive Study Bible* (from Harvest House Publishers), or you can reach us at Precept South Africa by referring to the contact information in the back of this book.

GUIDELINES FOR GROUP USE

This study book, as well as all those in the "Lord" series, can be used for home Bible-study groups, Sunday-school classes, family devotions, and a great variety of other group situations. Here are some things to keep in mind as you use this study in a group setting to minister to others.

- Prayerfully commit the entire study to the Lord, seeking His direction for every step.
- As your group forms, encourage each member to purchase an individual copy of this book.
- For your first meeting you can show your students how to get started in their first lesson; work through a part of the lesson together so that they know what to do. Each student should then be able to complete on their own the study preparation for chapter 1 before the next class. (Encourage each student to do this faithfully week by week.)
- From the second meeting on, the weekly pattern should be to discuss first what you each have learned from your own study during the preceding week. Then, if you so desire, you could have a teacher present an in-depth message on the material you just studied.
- The group discussion questions following each chapter in this book are to aid you in leading a discussion of that week's material. However, merely having these questions will not be enough for a really lively and successful discussion. The better you know your material, the greater freedom you will have in leading. Therefore, Beloved, be faithful in your own study and remain dependent upon the ministry of the Holy Spirit, who is there to lead you and guide you into all truth and who will enable you to fulfill the good work God has foreordained for you. (As the group's leader, it would be ideal if you could either

read the entire book first or do several weeks' study in advance, so you know where you're going and can grasp the scope of the material covered in this study.)

- Each week as you prepare to lead the group's discussion, pray and ask the Father what your particular group needs to learn and how you can best cover the material. Pray with pen in hand. Make a list of what the Lord shows you. Then create your own questions or select from the questions at the end of each chapter, which will help stimulate and guide the group members in the Lord's direction within the time you have.
- Remember that your group members will find the greatest sense of accomplishment in discussing what they've learned in their own study, so try to stick to the subject at hand in your discussion. This will keep the class from becoming frustrated. Make sure the answers and insights come from the Word of God and are always in accordance with the whole counsel of God.
- Strive in your group to create an atmosphere of love, safety, and caring. Be concerned about one another. Bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ—the law of love (Galatians 6:2). We desperately need one another.

Please know that I thank our Father for you and your willingness to assume this critical role of establishing God's people in God's Word. I know that this process produces glory and reverence for Him. So press on, valiant one. He is coming, bringing in the kingdom in all its glory, and His reward is with Him to give to each one of us according to our deeds.

THE "LORD" SERIES: AN OVERVIEW

My burden—and calling—is to help Christians (or interested or desperate inquirers) see for themselves what the Word of God has to teach on significant and relevant life-related subjects. So many people are weak and unstable in their Christianity because they don't know truth for themselves; they only know what others have taught them. These books, therefore, are designed to involve you in the incomparably enriching experience of daily study in God's Word.

Each book has been thoroughly tested and has already had an impact on a multitude of lives. Let me introduce the full series to you.

Lord, I Want to Know You is a foundational study for the "Lord" books. In this seventeen-week study you'll discover how God's character is revealed through His names, such as Creator, Healer, Protector, Provider, and many more. Within the names of God you'll encounter strength for your worst trials, comfort for your heart's deepest pain, and provision for your soul's greatest need. As you come to know Him more fully—the power of His glorious name and the depth of His infinite love—your walk with God will be transformed and your faith will be increased.

Lord, Heal My Hurts is, understandably, one of the most popular studies in this series. If you're in touch with the world, you know that people around you are in great pain. We run to many sources for relief when we are in pain. Some of us turn to other people; many escape into drugs, work, further education, and even hobbies. But in God you can find salvation from any situation, from any hurt. In this thirteen-week study you'll see that, no matter what you've done or what's been done to you, God wants to become your refuge…He loves you and desires your wholeness…and He offers healing for your deepest wounds.

Lord, I Need Grace to Make It Today will reveal to you in fresh power the amazing truth that God's grace is available for *every* situation, no matter how difficult, no matter how terrible. You'll gain the confidence that God will use you for His glory, as His grace enables you to persevere regardless of your need, regardless of your circumstances, and despite the backward pull of your flesh. You will see and know that the Lord and His all-sufficient grace will always be with you. A highlight of this nine-week course is your study of the book of Galatians and its liberating message about our freedom in Christ.

Lord, I'm Torn Between Two Masters opens your understanding to the kind of life that is truly pleasing to God. If you've known discouragement because you felt you could never measure up to God's standards or if you've ever felt unbearably stretched by the clash of life's priorities, this nine-week study of the Sermon on the Mount will lead you into a new freedom that will truly clear your vision and fortify your heart. You'll be encouraged to entwine your thoughts, hopes, dreams, and desires around heavenly things, and you'll find your life transformed by choosing to seek first God's kingdom and His righteousness.

Lord, Where Are You When Bad Things Happen is a critically important study in preparing you for times of trial. In this ten-week course you'll be grounded in the knowledge and confidence of God's sovereignty as you study especially the book of Habakkuk and see how God works in and through difficult and demanding situations. More than that, you'll learn what it means to live by faith…and to rest the details of your life in His hands.

Lord, Give Me a Heart for You examines the anatomy of a heart for God—what it looks like, what it feels like, and how you can become a person whose sole passion is to please God. By walking you through the words of the apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians and Acts, as well as other portions of Scripture, this revolutionary eight-week study equips

you to fight the good fight and keep the faith in the daily and difficult circumstances of life. Paul's vulnerability will touch your heart as you realize how much this great man of God is just like you in the battles and fears, conflicts and pressures of serving God in a world of opposition. Through this compelling study, you will learn how to tap God's power in your weakness, to look beyond the temporal to the eternal, and to be prepared for whatever life holds.

Lord, Is It Warfare? Teach Me to Stand is a study that trains you for spiritual battle. God's Word tells us that our adversary, the devil, goes about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8). Many times we either don't recognize this enemy, or we're scared by his roar. We would like him to go away, but it's not that simple. In this eleven-week study you'll learn how to recognize Satan's tactics and how to be set free from bondage. As you focus your study especially on the book of Ephesians, you'll discover how to build an unshakable faith that makes victory yours for the taking. (This is the most challenging of the "Lord" books and requires an average of two to two and a half hours of weekly preparation to complete the assignments.)

Beloved, I have written these books so that you can have insight from God's Word on the pertinent issues of life—not only for yourself, but also for your ministry to others.

Know that you are on my heart because you are precious to God and I long to see you live as more than a conqueror, fulfilling God's purpose for your life.

ONLINE RESOURCES

As you plant the seeds of God's Word in your heart in this study, I want you to know that you can now find immediate encouragement and help in a variety of ways just by connecting to our special "Lord" studies website at the address listed below.

Here's a sample listing of what you'll find at this site:

- Helpful information for guiding your individual study in this and other "Lord" books
- More detailed information on the exact study focus in all the "Lord" books
- Guidelines for group leaders and facilitators, both to get your group started and to keep it functioning in the best way
- Group study questions for you to download and reformat in a way that is most helpful for you and your group
- Additional insights on the topics in the "Lord" studies from the Precept Ministries International team
- Opportunities for you to join others in sharing your discoveries from God's Word

This information is continually updated to ensure that we're offering you the best support possible. Please e-mail and let us know what you find most helpful from this "Lord" studies website!

For more information on this and other "Lord" studies:
www.lordstudies.com

For other resources and information from
Precept South Africa:
support@precept.org.za | www.precept.org.za

NOTES

CHAPTER TWO

1. Marvin R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 35.
2. D. A. Carson, *The Sermon on the Mount: An Evangelical Exposition of Matthew Five through Seven* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978), 118-119.
3. Carson, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 69, 118-119.

CHAPTER FOUR

1. W. E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, vol. 3 (Old Tappan: Revell, 1966), 56.
2. Lindley Baldwin, *Samuel Morris, The March of Faith* (Minneapolis: Dimension Books), 8.
3. Baldwin, *Samuel Morris*, 10-13.
4. Baldwin, *Samuel Morris*, 15-17.
5. Another excellent study that will take you much deeper in this area is *Lord, Where Are You When Bad Things Happen?*—a powerful study on the book of Habakkuk.

CHAPTER FIVE

1. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary,* 56.

CHAPTER SIX

1. Mrs. Howard Taylor, *Pastor Hsi* (London: OMF Books, 1949), 25.
2. Taylor, *Pastor Hsi*, 26.
3. Taylor, *Pastor Hsi*, 46-47, 50-52.
4. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), 73-74.

CHAPTER SEVEN

1. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary*, 62.
2. Vine, *An Expository Dictionaryy*, 60.
3. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary*, 207.

CHAPTER EIGHT

1. Don Richardson, *Peace Child* (Ventura: Gospel Light, 1976), 199-200.
2. Richardson, *Peace Child*, 201.
3. Haralan Popov, *Tortured for His Faith* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970), 126.

ABOUT PRECEPT

PRECEPT was raised up by God for the sole purpose of establishing people in God's Word to produce reverence for Him. It serves as an arm of the church without respect to denomination. God has enabled Precept to reach across denominational lines without compromising the truths of His inerrant Word. We believe every word of the Bible was inspired and given to man as all that is necessary for him to become mature and thoroughly equipped for every good work of life. This ministry does not seek to impose its doctrines on others, but rather to direct people to the Master Himself, who leads and guides by His Spirit into all truth through a systematic study of His Word. The ministry produces a variety of Bible studies and holds conferences and intensive Training Workshops designed to establish attendees in the Word through Inductive Bible Study.

Jack Arthur and his wife, Kay, founded Precept in 1970. Kay and the ministry staff of writers produce *Precept Upon Precept* studies, *In & Out* studies, *Lord* series studies, the *New Inductive Study Series* studies, *40-Minute* studies, and *Discover 4 Yourself Inductive Bible Studies for Kids*. From years of diligent study and teaching experience, Kay and the staff have developed these unique, inductive courses that are now used in nearly 185 countries and 70 languages.

Contact Precept South Africa for more information about inductive Bible studies in your area.

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