

## In Jesus' Own Words

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What a week we had last week! Does it just amaze you how much Jesus can teach about himself and the Kingdom of God with so few words? Not a single word is wasted or irrelevant; each is measured and exact in its implication and meaning. I will never cease to be amazed by each Word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord! It is wonderful manna from heaven! This week will certainly be no different. We will continue on sitting at the foot of our Lord as he teaches us in his own words about loving our enemies and judging others. In the last passage of scripture we will look at this week we will take a good look at what Jesus has to say about worrying. I can't wait to get into God's Word. Let us once again find ourselves at the feet of Jesus and listen to what he has to teach us.

Let us each silently say a prayer of gratitude for the fact that we can turn to his Word at anytime and learn *his* way of navigating through life. I know I will include a word or two of thanksgiving for all of you for encouraging me on in my studies and preparation for the privilege of leading you all. God bless each one of you this week because of the gift you have given me!

### Loving your Enemies

*Luke 6:27-36*

Today we will be spending some more time in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. We will be looking at a very familiar passage, yet it is one so difficult to truly implement in our lives. Take a few minutes to spend in prayer with the Lord asking Him to increase your faith and understanding through studying His word. Ask Him to gently prod you into responding with love to circumstances this week according to what He teaches you today. A tough challenge, but I'm sure with his love and grace in your heart, it will be an experience leaving you with joy!



Turn in your Bible to Luke 6:27-36. Read the scriptures and answer the following questions.

What are the four commands Jesus gives in verses 27 and 28?

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What are the four actions in those commands?

The first command is to "love your enemies", followed by three actions – do good, bless and pray. The three actions reveal that the "love" in the first command is an act of will, not a command to feel the emotion of love towards your enemy. That would be quite humanly unnatural and emotions cannot be dictated. But Jesus commands us to behave or act with *the will* to love. Often just the will to act in love will lead to the emotion of love. It is a conscious effort of the will to love your enemies in the way Jesus commands. The command is not how to feel about one's enemy, but how to act in the best interest of one's enemy. Once that is recognized we are much freer to do good, to bless and to pray because it does not require an emotional response, but one of the will.

Luke follows the four commands with four examples of how love should be implemented in dealings with enemies (Luke 6:29-31). Give a few modern scenarios.

Verses 32-34 give examples of the "golden rule" not being a high enough standard. "Sinners", or "the world", expect reciprocity. Jesus expects us to rise to a higher standard: to love, to do good, to bless, and to pray *without expectation* of our actions being reciprocated. It does not mean that our actions will go unnoticed and unrewarded. God himself will reward us for demonstrating love to our enemies through our actions.

When we love our enemies whose children do we reveal ourselves to be?

The next half of verse 35 says, "*because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.*"

- Who is "he"?
- Who are the ungrateful and wicked?
- Write Romans 5:8-10. Sinners can also be understood as "wicked" and "ungrateful".

✂ Apply the Romans 5:8 passage to what we have been studying about loving our enemies. What light does this shed on your understanding of the love that Jesus commands us to share? Who are "enemies"?

Opportunities abound in our society to show love when love is least deserved, expected, or even felt. Look for such opportunities this week to show the love of God to someone who might be considered an "enemy".

*"Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful."*

## Judging Others

*Luke 6:37-42*

Jesus has some very clear teaching on a habit that is so difficult to refrain from doing! We judge others. It happens every day, all the time, whether we mean to or not, it happens. We see a young woman wearing too short a skirt, too tight a top, and too much makeup and we jump to conclusions. We see cookie crumbs where a cookie was sitting on a counter top and a child disappearing seemingly surreptitiously from the kitchen. Immediately we think they have swiped the cookie. In this case it was actually my husband who took the cookie – my child was innocent. We judge people based on our own biases, convictions, values, and experiences without knowing all the facts, or sometimes any of them. Worse, we jump to judgments and reveal a "good measure" of hypocrisy in ourselves. We are quick to condemn those with the same faults we despise in ourselves.

Today's passage is not about discernment, it is about condemnation. Discernment is when we review the facts we have and make the best possible *decision* we can make. Condemnation is taking the facts we have and coming to a *conclusion* that we have no right to make. It is only God who is allowed to make judgments, in his timing, with not just some of the facts, but all of the facts. Nothing is hidden from God, and he is patient in coming to his judgment because he loves each one of us so desperately. So desperately in fact, that he wants each one of his creation to have enough time to turn to him and away from sin.

If you haven't already done so, let's take a few minutes to ask the Lord to reveal his truth to us in studying this passage about judgment. Ask him to give you the discernment and wisdom to lead us away from condemning others and to recognize our own sins. Before we jump into today's scripture passage, let's take a look at a few verses and see what God has to say about judging others.

What do the following verses tell us about judging others?

*"Who do you say I am?"*

Lesson 5 Homework

- Romans 2:2-4:
- Ecclesiastes 12:14:
- 1 Cor 4:5



Read Luke 6: 37-42 and answer the following questions.

What do the following phrases mean?

- A good measure
- Pressed down
- Shaken together
- Running over

How does Jesus describe the way we will be judged, or measured, in verse 38?

How will God bless believers?

What is the universal truth Jesus is teaching in this short passage? (Hint: it has to do with a disproportionate relationship between humans and God.)



What do you think is the intention behind verses 39-40 and 41-42? While these verses upon first examination may appear disjointed, there is a strong connection between the two passages. The first two verses seem to be proverbs, although not recorded previously in scripture. The last

two verses are a parable illustrating the teaching point of the preceding two verses. What point was Jesus trying to illustrate?

Luke is referring to the danger of being blind to one's own faults while judging others for their faults. If a disciple has not learned enough to recognize his own faults but dares to judge or instruct others, how is it possible for that disciple to correct or teach others? Both the disciple and the one he presumes to teach or correct are blind and are headed for that pit Jesus mentions.<sup>1</sup> Each of us as disciples of Christ is called to lead and teach others the way to a meaningful relationship with the Lord. Part of that responsibility involves our own understanding of God's Law and our position in relation to it. Yes, as disciples and believers we know our sins will be forgiven, but we must be responsible to recognize them, repent of them, and learn from them. Only by learning from them can we possibly teach others to avoid the pitfalls of sin. Often the best teaching comes from personal experience, as painful as that may be. But hopefully God will take our mistakes and transform them into an opportunity to bless others by letting them learn from our mistakes.

How often in raising our children do we face situations where our beloved child is facing a set of circumstances requiring a difficult choice that parallels our own past experience? Perhaps in our own attempt to make our way through those circumstances we made the wrong choice leading to disastrous consequences. Don't we deeply desire that our child would listen and learn from our experience and make the right choice? God wants to redeem our mistakes, our sins, our disastrous consequences to bless others. The only way he can do that is if we are fully aware of our faults and have learned from them. Then we can use those experiences to hopefully lead others away from the disastrous pit.

Jesus says in verse 40, *"A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher."* We are trained by His Word, and by our own experiences. When we view our experiences and the consequences of our sins through the lens of his Word, we gain understanding and wisdom. We don't ever attain a position above him, but we will be like him when we are fully trained. That "fully trained" is a life time education wrapped up in our lifelong pursuit of holy living, pleasing to God. Not one of us has an excuse for not helping along our fellow Christians, but we must do it with humility, gentleness, and self-examination lest we end up labeling ourselves as the hypocrite in the parable.

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<sup>1</sup> New American Commentary

## Do Not Worry About Tomorrow

*Matthew 6: 25-34*

Well, today we have a refresher course in how to live without worrying! Before we begin I want to spend a few minutes with the Lord, and I hope you will join me, praying that we will learn something new from the verses, that our souls will be refreshed and we will be confident in placing every worry we have into his capable hands. I will pray the same for you, if you'll pray it for me!

Are you a worrier? I try so hard not to worry. I find myself worrying over something, hand it over to God, and next thing I know I've taken it right back out of his capable hands into my own incapable ones! I know I am not alone in this. I hear it from my girl friends that they do the very same thing. Jesus' teaching about worrying, or rather not worrying, must be one of my favorite passages. I say this because if you were to look in my Bible you'd see this passage is heavily marked with pencil, with underlining in colored pencil, colored tabs and notations.<sup>2</sup> Sometimes my Bible even just opens to this passage because I must have trained it to do so. I've spent many worrisome hours going back to this passage for consolation and encouragement in my days. So, it *must* be one of my favorites, right? Joking aside, this passage does have one of my most favorite verses in it. When I go back to it, pray it, trust in it, and be obedient to it, it puts some perspective on my worrying. I hope that this passage will become a source of blessing and encouragement for you, too.



Read Matthew 6: 25-34 and answer the following questions.

In this discourse Jesus focuses on two priorities that we tend to spend a lot of time worrying over. What are the two priorities?

Of those two priorities we spend an inordinate amount of time worry over what?

Jesus' discourse begins with the example that our life and our body are two areas of our existence that require nourishment and protection. Needs to sustain both are necessary to our continued existence. It is these basic needs that Jesus is addressing. When we look at these verses from the perspective of our 21<sup>st</sup> century, comparatively wealthy society, we find ourselves obsessing over not so much *how* we will nourish and protect ourselves as much as *what* we will nourish and protect ourselves with. And if we get right down to it, food and clothing are not so much the basic *need* of nourishment and protection, as it is meeting the immediate *desire* of "where are we going for dinner tonight and what am I going to wear." This is not what Jesus had in mind when he tells us not to worry over what we wear and eat. This is our modern perspective

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<sup>2</sup> Please do not be offended that I write in my Bible. I believe it is a way of worshiping when I spend time in my Bible pouring over God's word and marking passages when God touches my heart. I make notes of what he tells me in his word so that I can go back and remember what he reveals to me.

when easy life in Capitola or Aptos with a fridge full of food and closet of clothing is taken for granted. For all of this excess beyond necessity we really ought to get down on our knees and thank God for those blessings and maybe even go through our "excess" and give it to those in our community who truly "need" it. I do not mean to be "preachy" or condemning anyone here (our lesson on judging others being yet fresh in my mind). My point is that this passage does not have to do with worrying and stressing over what really is minutia in comparison with what Jesus is drawing as his example in this lesson, which was (and is for some even today) "where am I going to get my next meal because I have no food" and "With what am I going to cover myself because I have no cloak to keep me warm." This is the perspective with which we must come to Jesus' teaching. These may not be our exact needs (praise the Lord!) but they are the example used in the framework of Jesus' teaching.

Jesus uses examples of the birds and the flowers of the fields to illustrate in parallel how God meets our needs. What do you think Jesus means in verses 26 -30?

Complete the following verses:

Matthew 6:32 "...your heavenly Father \_\_\_\_\_ that you need them".

Matt 7:11 *"If you, then, though you are evil<sup>3</sup>, know how to give good gifts to your children, **how much more** will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!"*

I do want to point out that while the birds *"do not sow or reap"*, they do work industriously each day for their sustenance. God doesn't just put out a pile of birdseed by each nest every night. The birds go and search out what God has provided for their sustenance in nature. God meets our needs with what he has provided in what he has created in nature around us. We use the same grain in the field that birds eat to make our bread and the flowers of the field to burn in the fire (so to speak) to cook our bread. God's provision is there, but we must make the effort to collect and prepare it. We must prepare and plan for our needs, but we shouldn't worry about them being met. We children of God are of more value to him than the birds and the flowers.

✧ Why is it that we are more important to God than the birds and the flowers? Look up the following verses and make a note of what each verse tells us of our significance to God.

Genesis 1:26

Exodus 19:5-6

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<sup>3</sup> "evil" should be understood in the light of "sinful" or "fallen" mankind in contrast with a perfect and omniscient God who knows our needs.

*"Who do you say I am?"*

## Lesson 5 Homework

Isaiah 42:6

Acts 13:46-48

Matt 28:19-20

When we look at the progression of God's plan and our position in his plan regarding his Kingdom, why do you think that Jesus is telling us not to worry (plan, yes; worry no) about our basic needs?

As Christians we have inherited many of the promises God made to Israel. We are not his "first born", but we are his children by adoption, and by which we are part of his family, and the means by which his Kingdom is spread. The privilege of being part of his family comes with the responsibility of furthering his Kingdom. God has a plan for each of us to contribute to the flourishing of his plan and his Kingdom. If we are immobilized by worry we are not effective in our work for the Kingdom.

How does worry and stress negatively affect our lives, work, and relationships?

Worry will take its toll on all aspects of our life. We know and have experienced that worry and stress damages our health. It weakens our immune system and we become susceptible to every virus around us. Prolonged stress can cause digestive, muscular issues, headaches and worse. Aside from physical ailments, whatever we are worrying over consumes all of our thoughts making it near impossible to focus on anything else. Everything that we must do suffers for lack of concentration and focus. We become irritable, frustrated and angry. We have a short fuse that tends to be set off by the ones we love most and likely did very little to deserve the explosion they receive. It is detrimental to our relationships with family and friends, and worst of all it is detrimental to our relationship with God. Worrying decreases our trust and faith in his love and provision. It limits our ability to pray and rest in his presence, and to hear his counsel. Worry is nothing less than a lack of faith in God's ability to help us, provide for us, and love us. When we go down the path of worrying we are putting obstacles and walls up that prevent us from seeking God and his kingdom and instead focusing on our own abilities or inabilities to deal with stressful circumstances.



Jesus tells us exactly how to confront worry and stress in our lives. Write out Matthew 6:33 here and commit it to memory. This is one of my favorite verses. Hold on to it for dear life because it will remind you to focus your worry on God and not on your own abilities.

If we align our priorities with his kingdom and with his righteousness, then our perspective on our worries will change. We will be able to trust and believe that our needs will be met by God. What does it mean to seek first his kingdom and his righteousness? It means to focus on God to be our help, our strength and our guide in times of worry. It means we fill our minds with him. We read his word, pray, and abide by his timing. We continue to serve him faithfully and obediently in all things with an attitude of love.

## **The Chosen Servant**

*Matthew 12:15-21*

Dear Ladies, I know it has been a week of long and intense study. I am so thankful for your participation. Assembling this study has brought me so much joy and I am grateful that you are interested in what I have gathered together for your spiritual nourishment. It is a feast, and none of you will go away hungry.

Our scripture passage this week is a short one but an important one. Today's scripture will reveal some of the character traits of Messiah as spoken by the Prophet Isaiah, reminding us that God wants a relationship with us based on love and compassion, not fear and condemnation. We serve a Lord who loves us so desperately and deeply! Because of love he willingly allowed himself to be the ultimate sacrifice so that we can have a personal relationship with him. Let's ask the Lord to bless our study today that we may gain insight into the gentle nature of our Lord.



Turn to Matthew Chapter 12. Our focus today will be on verse 15-21. In verse 15 it says *"Aware of this, Jesus withdrew from that place"*. What is the "this" he is aware of? (See verse 14)

Next we will turn to the prophesy from Isaiah recorded in Matthew. The first lines should spark a memory. Glance back to Matthew 3:17. What was the context of our first hearing these words?

What message did the prophecy say Christ would preach? (v. 18)

Read through Isaiah's prophecy and write down words describing what Messiah will do and in what manner.

According to Isaiah, how would the people respond to the Chosen Servant?

What kind of ministry does Isaiah describe Messiah would have?

How will the nations ultimately respond to Christ?

Jesus, aware of the dangerous intentions of the Pharisees retires to a safer place. He knows it is not yet time for his arrest and death. Isaiah's prophecy is one of a few passages that speak of the "Chosen Servant", the Messiah. This passage, quoted from the Old Testament in Isaiah 42: 1- 4, tells us that the Lord has anointed him, consecrated him, and set him aside for his purpose. He has come to proclaim the way of justice, to reveal truth. He will not be one who stands in the street berating and quarrelling with those who denounce him. The reference to "*no one will hear him in the streets*" refers to the fact that very few will adequately respond to his teaching, that most will dismiss him and walk away when the teaching is difficult. They will not apply it in a life changing way to their own lives. His voice and hands are gentle. It is not a time for vengeance anger and condemnation. He has come to gently lift up those bruised and broken, to restore life and God's justice to the world so that even the nations will put their faith in him.

The word translated "*nations*" is the Greek word *ethnos*, which means "*race, i.e. a tribe; specially a foreign (non-Jewish) one (usually by implication pagan):- Gentile, heathen, nation, people.*"<sup>4</sup> Jesus, the chosen servant, has come to restore and heal all the nations. As we have seen, the idea of Jesus coming to restore all people, not just the Jewish nation, is a constant theme throughout the New Testament, and one that flies against all the exclusivity of the Pharisees claiming with great pride (and often great prejudice) their exalted place as "God's chosen people", the Nation of Israel. Matthew Chapter 12 marks a turning point between Jesus and the Pharisees and will require further discussion and explanation to understand its significance to the rest of Jesus ministry.

Dear Ladies, this week's homework marks the half-way point in our study together. I can hardly believe we are half-way done. These last few weeks have had quite a lot of homework and I am so proud of you for persevering through it all. You all have been working so hard, and hopefully learning so much about Jesus. Keep at it and reap the blessings of time spent in the Word of God. No time can be better spent than at the feet of our Lord learning about who he is, what he desires for us to be and to do, and how much he loves us. God bless you this week, and may your studies this week allow you to pour out blessings on those around you.

Before you close up your homework this week for a much deserved rest, write down your thoughts on what you have learned this week. Has God shined a spotlight on something you have studied, read, or experienced this week that relates back to our study? Write your words in a prayer of thanksgiving to God. If you are so inclined, I would be thrilled to have you share your thoughts with the group at our discussion time. You can use the space on the back of this page, or write on a separate piece of paper, or in a journal.

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<sup>4</sup> Strong's Talking Greek & Hebrew Dictionary