

Radical Living

Introduction

I'm really pleased that Jonathan, our youth leader, has written the Growth Group notes for us this term. I think he's done a great job and look forward to using them. Do let us know how you get on...

This half term we are looking at the Sermon on the Mount. We are hoping this will challenge and inspire you to continue in your walk for Jesus.

The Sermon on the Mount contains some of Jesus' most famous words, stories and teaching including The Lord's Prayer and the Wise and Foolish builders.

The Book of Matthew

The book of Matthew is one of four gospels about Jesus' life. It is the first book in the New Testament and has a focus on Jesus being King.

Lots of the stories found in Matthew can be found in Mark and Luke as well.

Further Reading

Matthew for Everyone by Tom Wright

The Divine Conspiracy by Dallas Willard

The Secret Message of Jesus by Brian McLaren

Growth Group Notes

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1: Being Different

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing & sharing together. You could try this...

Christmas & New Year: Was there anything different about Christmas and New Year this time around? What was it and why?

WORSHIP

Use music, silence, prayer, meditation, reflection, songs, hymns, etc. or be creative with drawing, writing, symbols, poetry etc to help people to draw near to God. You could try this...

Have a piece of paper and a pen for each person. Everyone draws a stick person on each side of the paper. Around the first stick man write the qualities and characteristics you already have. Around the second stick man write the qualities and characteristics that you would like God to develop in you.

WORD

This series is about radical living. The word 'radical' comes from the Latin word for root. As a group you could discuss what this means for radical living.

Read Matthew 6:1-8, 16-18 (We're looking at the Sermon on the Mount)

Discuss your initial reactions to the passage:

- Does anything in the passage jump out at you? Why?
- Does anything connect with something you've been doing, reading or thinking about?
- Is there anything you haven't noticed before?

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Now use **some** of the questions below (*and set a time limit to leave yourselves time to pray!*)

- Jesus talks about giving, praying and fasting. Which of these do you think is more important?
 - * Is this reflected in your own life? How?
- Which of these three is easiest?
- Jesus says it is important to do these things secretly (v.3, 6, 18). Why do you think he says this?
- Jesus talks about giving financially. What do you think is a reasonable amount to give?
- What other ways are there to give?
- Jesus talks about praying. How difficult do you find it to pray?
- What does it mean by 'babbling like pagans' (v. 7)?
- Jesus suggests an important reason for keeping prayers simple. Why else should we keep prayers simple?
- Jesus talks about fasting. Have you ever tried fasting? What was it like?
- Why do you think fasting is a spiritual discipline?

WHAT NEXT?

- Think about which of these three (giving, praying, fasting) you could improve on. Choose one to try in the next two weeks.
- Look through the Church notices (can be found online) and pray for any upcoming events and people you would like to invite
- Pray for each other and record what you pray for (confidentially)

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2: Saving and Serving

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing & sharing together. You could try this...
Share how you got on trying giving, fasting or praying.

WORSHIP

Use music, silence, prayer, meditation, reflection, songs, hymns, etc. or be creative with drawing, writing, symbols, poetry etc to help people to draw near to God. You could try this...

Print out the lyrics to a song we sing in Church. Discuss what they mean to people in the group. Then sing it through (to a CD).

WORD

Read Matthew 6:19-24

Discuss your initial reactions to the passage:

- Does anything in the passage jump out at you? Why?
- Does anything connect with something you've been doing, reading or thinking about?
- Is there anything you haven't noticed before?

Now use **some** of the questions below (*and set a time limit to leave yourselves time to pray!*)

- What is your most prized possession? Why?
 - * Would you give this away if you felt God wanted you to?
- Jesus talks about storing up treasures on earth for ourselves. Can you relate to this?
- Jesus suggests it is better to store up treasures in heaven than on earth. How do you do this?

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- Read vv. 22-23. What do you think they mean? (commentaries suggest they are talking about generosity)
- Do you think of yourself as a generous person?
- As a group, are you generous?
- Do you think that Jesus is correct when he says it is impossible to serve two masters? Why?
- Jesus seems to equate storing up wealth with serving money. Why is this?
- What does it mean to serve God?

WHAT NEXT?

- Look at last week's prayer record. Have any prayers been answered? Take some time to thank God in your prayer time if so.
- Think about generosity. If you have felt challenged to be more generous, as individuals, or as a group, how are you going to do that in the next two weeks?
- Pray for each other and record what you pray for

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3: No worries?

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing & sharing together. You could try this...
Share how you got on if you set yourself a generosity task.

Share any favourite jokes in the group

WORSHIP

Use music, silence, prayer, meditation, reflection, songs, hymns, etc. or be creative with drawing, writing, symbols, poetry etc to help people to draw near to God. You could try this...

Light a candle in the middle of the room. Turn out the other lights (bar one to read by).

Read Matthew 5:14-16, then Isaiah 58:6-8

Spend two minutes reflecting on what you've heard.

WORD

Read Matthew 6:25-34

Discuss your initial reactions to the passage:

- Does anything in the passage jump out at you? Why?
- Does anything connect with something you've been doing, reading or thinking about?
- Is there anything you haven't noticed before?

Now use **some** of the questions below (*and set a time limit to leave yourselves time to pray!*)

- What gives you the most worry in your life? (eg. money, family, job)
- Why does Jesus tell us not to worry? What is wrong with worrying?

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- Do Jesus' words about birds and lilies give you confidence? Why or why not?
- Jesus says to seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness. What does this mean?
- What is the Kingdom of God like?
- Later on (ch 7:7) Jesus says we find if we seek. Does anyone in your group feel like they have ever sought and found the Kingdom of God? What was it like?
- How often do you worry about tomorrow?
- Do you ever miss out on the joy of today because you are worrying about tomorrow?

WHAT NEXT?

- Look at last time's prayer record, and the time before. Have any prayers been answered, Spend some time thanking God for answered prayers when you pray.
- Share with each other issues which have been worrying you.
- Pray for one another and record what you pray for.

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4: Gifts and Grace

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing & sharing together. You could try this...

Ask each member of the group: What is the best gift you have ever been given?

WORSHIP

Use music, silence, prayer, meditation, reflection, songs, hymns, etc. or be creative with drawing, writing, symbols, poetry etc to help people to draw near to God. You could try this...

Listen to a song. Martyn Joseph's 'He never said' is thought provoking. It can be found on youtube. You could spend some time discussing the song's meaning in the group.

WORD

Read Matthew 7:7-12

Discuss your initial reactions to the passage:

- Does anything in the passage jump out at you? Why?
- Does anything connect with something you've been doing, reading or thinking about?
- Is there anything you haven't noticed before?

Now use **some** of the questions below (*and set a time limit to leave yourselves time to pray!*)

- If any members of the group have children you could share with one another what Christmas and Birthdays are like. How much do you try to give your children what they would like? How does this compare to friends?
- What do you think Jesus means by 'Ask and it will be given to you'?
 - * Is this your experience?

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- Why do you think it seems like prayers are not always answered?
- Jesus talks about knocking at a door. What door is Jesus talking about?
- Does anyone feel this is the kind of experience they had when getting to know God (knocking on a door)?
- When do you stop knocking at the door?
- Jesus says that our Father in heaven will give good gifts to those who ask him. What kinds of gifts does he mean?
- Why does God give us gifts?
- What is grace?
- Why does God give us grace?
- What is our response to God's grace?
- Jesus mentions a response we could have to God's grace. He says we should do to others what we would have them do to ourselves. What does this mean?
- What would this 'golden rule' mean if everyone in your growth group followed it?
What about if the whole of:
 - * Christ Church followed it?
 - * The world wide Church?
 - * All people everywhere?

WHAT NEXT?

- Decide to treat others how you'd like to be treated this week. Be prepared to come back with three examples of how you did this next time.
- Read through the prayer record. Remember to thank God for answered prayers.
- Go round the group asking what people would like prayer for. Remember this session has been about God giving us gifts if we ask – so don't be afraid to ask. Record what you've prayed for.

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5: Actions Speak Louder than Words

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing & sharing together. You could try this...

As a group try to sing the children's song 'The Wise Man built his house upon the rock...' with actions. You could try to see if it works in a round.

WORSHIP

Use music, silence, prayer, meditation, reflection, songs, hymns, etc. or be creative with drawing, writing, symbols, poetry etc to help people to draw near to God. You could try this...

Each member of the group writes down as many names for God as they can. eg. Saviour, healer, creator. After a minute or two share as a group.

WORD

Read Matthew 7:24-29

Discuss your initial reactions to the passage:

- Does anything in the passage jump out at you? Why?
- Does anything connect with something you've been doing, reading or thinking about?
- Is there anything you haven't noticed before?

Now use **some** of the questions below (*and set a time limit to leave yourselves time to pray!*)

- If you have a builder or engineer in your group you could ask them to explain how important foundations are to buildings.
- What are the most important things in your life?
 - * Could these be described as foundations?

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- How easy is it to put Jesus' words into practice? You could share examples of when you did this successfully, or what has stopped you from being successful at times in the past.
- Jesus talks about rain, floods and winds. In our lives what might the rains, floods and winds be?
- The foolish man in Jesus' simile builds a house which collapses. If Jesus is using a house to describe our lives, what might lives which have been built without using Jesus' words end up like?
- As Christians, how can we help those who do not base their actions on Jesus' words?
- As Christians, how can we help each other to base our actions on Jesus' words?
- Jesus amazed the crowds with his teaching. What is your reaction to it?
- The Law was the authority for the Jewish people, yet teachers of the Law did not have authority. Why do you think this was?
- What gave Jesus authority?
- Considering the series as a whole, which part have you found most challenging?

WHAT NEXT?

- Look at the Growing Stronger leaflet produced by Christ Church. Do you think this might help some of you to follow Jesus' words more closely? Consider forming small groups or partnerships to meet and share using the leaflet.
- Look at the prayer record. Thank God for any answered prayers in your prayer time.
- Each share what issues you would prayer for and one thing in the wider world which you would like to pray for.
- Record your prayers to look at next time.

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Extra Stuff!

If you'd like to spend more time on the Sermon on the Mount as a group or as individuals, you could try this...

- Read through a book on the Sermon on the Mount together.
- Use tearfund's discipleship guide at rhythms.org as a group.
- Learn two or three verses from the Sermon on the Mount each day for the next couple of months so that eventually you can recite it by heart.
- Take one thing which has challenged you in the past few weeks and tell someone about it, and tell that person what you're going to do about it. Ask the person to check you have done it to make sure you then do it!