

Contents

How to Use <i>Life Design</i>	5
Preface	7
Resources for This Course	8
LESSON 1 Sermon Preparation	9
LESSON 2 True Happiness	16
LESSON 3 Salt and Light	23
LESSON 4 Phony Righteousness Exposed	30
LESSON 5 Matters of the Heart	38
LESSON 6 Respecting Women and Cherishing a Wife	45
LESSON 7 The Truth, the Whole Truth, and Nothing but the Truth	53
LESSON 8 True Love	60
LESSON 9 Secret Prayer and Other Matters	67
LESSON 10 First Things First	75
LESSON 11 Judges with Eye Trouble	82
LESSON 12 Fruit Inspectors	90
LESSON 13 House Building	96
Answers to Bible Study Questions	103

How to Use *Life Design*



LIFE DESIGN: Bible Study Designed for the Life You Live. These Bible study materials are designed to engage adult learners in inductive Bible study and then to apply the truths of that study to their daily lives.

As you prepare to teach these lessons, keep these two factors in mind:

- The **FOCUS** of productive adult Bible learning is the learner. The intent of teaching is not teaching, but learning—the learner’s learning.
- The **GOAL** of productive adult Bible learning is an appropriate life-response to Biblical truth. You do not teach simply to impart information; you teach so that the Holy Spirit of God can use the truths of the Word of God to change the child of God into the image of the Son of God.

The Lesson Plan

Each *Life Design* lesson has three distinct parts. **GETTING STARTED** is the attention-getter. The questions and activities “set the table,” as it were, for the Bible study. **SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES** is the heart of the lesson. A series of inductive Bible study questions leads the teacher and learners through the Biblical text. **MAKING IT PERSONAL** applies the truth to life.

As is true of any teaching experience, you can adapt the parts of the lesson to fit your particular class. You may choose to alter the beginning activities or change the focus of the application. You will find more mate-

rial in the Bible study than you can cover in one class session. Ask God to help you as you tailor the lesson for your learners.

The Study Book

This leader’s guide is designed to accompany the Bible study book. As the teacher, you will want a copy of the Bible study. Commit to working through the questions before you plan your lesson. We encourage you to distribute Bible study books to your learners. Urge them to complete the study before class. The more your learners have studied on their own, the better the class discussions will be. When a question in the leader’s guide is picked up from the Bible study book, you will notice the question number in parentheses. The answers to the questions are usually in the lesson commentary. They are also grouped together in the back of this book, starting on page 103.

Other Resources

If you want to use transparencies as you teach, a packet of sixteen full-color transparencies is available. If you prefer to use PowerPoint, the resource CD-ROM includes a PowerPoint presentation of the outline points, as well as the transparency art.

Some teachers stay very close to the outline as they teach. If this is true of you, and if you want your learners to capture that outline, reproducible in-class worksheets are included on the CD-ROM. The same worksheets may be downloaded from the Web and photocopied for class members. Visit www.regularbaptistpress.org/downloads.

Thank you for choosing *Life Design* teaching materials. May God richly bless you and your learners as you study and apply His Word.

Preface

A sermon should resonate with divine authority, honor the Scriptures, exalt God, comfort the afflicted, and afflict the comfortable. Jesus' Sermon on the Mount did all this and more. In every way it was a perfect sermon. Jesus spoke with authority, echoed Old Testament truth, exalted His Father in Heaven, encouraged His listeners by pronouncing a series of blessings, and rebuked the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees. No wonder those who heard Jesus' sermon were "astonished at his doctrine" (Matt. 7:28).

Jesus addressed the Sermon on the Mount primarily to the Jews, although at times He addressed His disciples. He had come to the nation of Israel to offer the Jews the long-awaited messianic Kingdom, and His sermon described the kind of righteousness God requires for entrance into the Kingdom. Unlike the self-righteousness exhibited by the nation's religious leaders, the righteousness Jesus described requires repentance and faith in Him, the Messiah. The truly righteous will enjoy the blessings He outlined in the well-known Beatitudes.

We know that the Jews rejected Jesus and the Kingdom, but someday redeemed and restored Israel will inherit the Kingdom. In the meantime, Jesus directs the church as her risen and glorified Lord.

So how does the Sermon on the Mount apply to believers in the Church Age? Because all Scripture is "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16), we may study the principles Jesus taught and apply them to our lives. We can learn from the Sermon on the Mount how to better relate to God and others. The Sermon challenges our worship and our walk. It lays bare our motives and tests our attitudes. If we are tempted to flaunt our self-righteousness, the Sermon deflates our pride and reminds us that we are nothing apart from God's grace.

This study will draw you and your learners closer to the Lord and to one another. When you feel weary in a world worn with stress and fragmented by hatred and violence, you will find this course lifting your spirits and pointing you to a better world ruled by Jesus, the Righteous One.

Now get ready for the best sermon you will ever hear!

LESSON 1

Sermon Preparation

Scripture Focus

Genesis 12:1–3; 15; Psalm 89; Jeremiah 31:31–34; Matthew 4

Key Verse

“But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd” (Matt. 9:36).

Overview

Lesson 1 points out Israel’s failure to obey God’s law and her need to repent and believe on the Messiah, Jesus Christ. By faith, believing Jews would enjoy the blessings that accompany genuine obedience.

Theme

The nation Israel had an opportunity to receive Jesus as the Messiah and thereby to enjoy the blessings of the promised Kingdom.

Aims

As a result of this lesson, learners will

1. know that obedience to God springs from a changed heart;
2. understand the background to Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount;
3. embrace God’s commandments with a positive attitude.

Outline

- I. The Promise of the Kingdom
- II. The Place of the Law
- III. The Position of the People

Getting Started

Use the following activities to help each learner think about the setting in which Jesus taught the Sermon on the Mount.

The Political Setting

Have a volunteer read aloud Luke 2:1. Ask: What powerful empire was in charge of Palestine when Jesus lived there? (*The Roman Empire.*) How do you think the Jews felt about the political situation? (*They felt oppressed by the Romans.*) What would be the Jews’ greatest political hope? (*To have the Messiah deliver them from the Romans and restore the kingdom to Israel.*)

The Religious Setting

Have a volunteer read aloud Matthew 5:20. Explain that the scribes and

Materials

- RBP transparency 1
- Paper and pencils
- Whiteboard and markers
- Lesson 1 case study from CD-ROM (optional)

Question 1: They were His chosen people. They had His promises of protection and provision. They had His spoken and written Word. *Question 2:* (b) Slight appreciation.

This sketch is included in the PowerPoint presentation for lesson 1 on the resource CD-ROM.

Pharisees were Israel's religious rulers when Jesus ministered in Palestine. Ask: On a scale of 0 to 10, how would you rate the religious leaders' quality of spiritual leadership? (0)

Discussion

Have volunteers share their responses to questions 1–3 in the Bible study book.

Searching the Scriptures

I. The Promise of the Kingdom

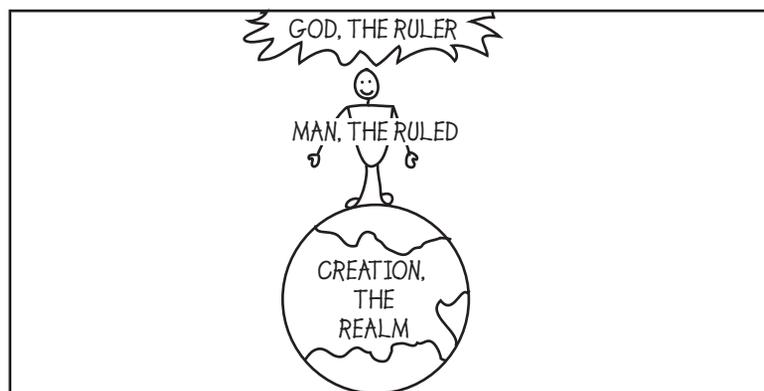
Our understanding of the Kingdom that Jesus spoke about must begin with the domain God established at the beginning of human history and the role He assigned to man and woman at that time.

A. In the Old Testament (Gen. 12:1–3)

Although Exodus 19:6 contains the first mention of “kingdom” in the Bible, it is not the first time the concept of a kingdom appears. When God placed man in dominion over creation, He actually established a kingdom form. God was the ultimate king, and man was His appointed vice regent to rule over creation on His behalf. But when Adam sinned, man's perfect dominion over creation ended. One day, however, it will be restored (Heb. 2:5–8).

The concepts of a kingdom and of a great nation share the common characteristics of the ruler, the ruled, and the realm in which the rule is exercised. Genesis 12:1–3 records God's promise to make a great kingdom of the descendants of Abram.

SKETCH: Use the accompanying sketch to illustrate this concept of “kingdom.” First illustrate the relationship between “God,” “man,” and “creation.” Then add “the Ruler,” “the ruled,” and “the realm.”



ASK: What privilege and authority did God give Adam and Eve, the first people? How did Adam and Eve lose this privilege and authority? According to 2 Corinthians 4:4, who has ruled over mankind since Adam and Eve sinned? (Questions 5–7)

Sometime after the Lord first appeared to Abram and promised to make a great kingdom of his descendants (Gen. 12:1–3), He repeated this promise and entered into an unconditional, unilateral blood covenant with Abram. He covenanted to give Abram a land in which his descendants would become a great nation. Normally, when a covenant of this nature was enacted, both parties entered into the binding agreement. In this case, God alone bound Himself to His promises by walking through the midst of the sacrificial animals.

This covenant was later passed to Isaac (Gen. 26:2–4) and to Jacob (Gen. 28:10–15). God subsequently revealed that the Ruler of this promised nation would come from the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:10) and specifically from the family of David (2 Sam. 7:12–29; cf. 1 Chron. 17:11–14; Ps. 89).

God set no conditions for Abram to fulfill in order to receive the heir or the land. The same is true of His promise that the Ruler would come from the tribe of Judah or from the family of David. Although Solomon's rule was conditioned on his obedience, the promise to establish David's throne was not (2 Sam. 7:16).

Human history records mankind's relentless efforts to derail God's plan to establish His kingdom on earth and install a kingdom devoid of divine influence. Genesis 11 records one of those efforts. At Babel, men attempted to build a kingdom that would glorify themselves and honor pagan deities. However, God thwarted the effort, confused the builders' language, confounded the men, and dispersed them.

DISCUSS: What humanistic kingdom-building efforts do you see today? Agree or disagree: mankind cannot build a kingdom of peace and goodness on earth. Explain your response. Compare Genesis 12:1–3 with Galatians 3:13 and 14. How did Jesus make possible the blessing God had promised to the nations of the earth through Abraham? (Questions 8–10)

B. In Matthew's Gospel (Matt. 4)

At the outset of His ministry, Jesus proclaimed, "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4:17). This had been the message John the Baptist preached (Matt. 3:2). Such a message would have caused the Israelites to recall the promises given to Abram and his descendants concerning the promised kingdom.

READ: Matthew 3:2 and 4:17.

Any different meaning of “kingdom” would have placed John and Jesus in the position of misleading the people, because they did not redefine the term so their audience would understand that a new meaning was being attached to it. Surely, had they meant something different from the Scriptural definition, they would have explained the new meaning.

Some commentators suggest that the term “kingdom” took on a new meaning in Jesus’ ministry that it did not have in the Old Testament. This conclusion is usually based on the later teaching of Jesus, after the nation had rejected Him and He was about to turn to the Gentiles (Matt. 12:14–45; 21:43). But it is a mistake to interpret words in a way that differs from what the hearers would have normally understood.

When Jesus began His public ministry, He was offering the nation Israel the messianic Kingdom and Himself as their king.

II. The Place of the Law

God first gave the law to the Israelites at Mount Sinai. At that time God told them that if they obeyed Him and kept His commandments, He would make them “a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation” (Exod. 19:6). The commandments that God gave marked His people as unique. Those commandments became the constitution of the nation. At Sinai the Israelites agreed to submit themselves to the Lord and obey His commands (Exod. 24:3–8). For their obedience, the Lord promised to make them a great nation.

A. Its purpose (Exod. 19)

The law was never designed to restrict the Children of Israel from enjoying the true blessings of life. Instead of a repressive response from a vindictive God, the commandments were a gracious provision of a loving God Who had redeemed the people. Through obedience to God’s commandments, the people could enter into the fullest blessings God had for them.

READ: Exodus 15:26 and 19:12. Point out the benefits promised in return for obedience. ASK: Can you think of other examples?

God’s commandments came out of His loving heart to His people, who had spent four hundred years in Egypt and had become accustomed to the evil ways and false religions of that pagan land. In Deuteronomy God declared the purpose of His commandments.

READ: Deuteronomy 30:15 and 16.

The Israelites could not keep the commandments in their own human strength. They needed supernatural enabling, a resource available only as they depended upon God. Just as they had to enter into salvation by faith, so also they were to continue to walk by faith if they were to enter into the blessings God had for them. The people could keep the commandments of God (Deut. 30:11–14), but only by faith (Rom. 10:5–8).

This principle applies to us today. We can keep the New Testament’s commandments only by faith. Even as redeemed children of God, we do not have the power to do what we ought to do (Rom. 7:15–24). Only by faith in the power of God do we find the supernatural enabling to do what God wants us to do (Rom. 8:8–14).

ASK: Read Exodus 20:1–17 and Matthew 5:21, 22, 27, and 28. What goes through your mind as you read the Ten Commandments? Do you feel a sense of pride in how well you have done in keeping the commandments? Or do you feel a sense of guilt and helplessness in living up to such a high standard? What purpose did the law serve? How has the law fulfilled its purpose in your life? (Questions 11, 12)

BUZZ GROUPS: Divide your class into groups of four. Appoint a leader for each group, and give him or her a sheet of paper and a pencil. Instruct each group to suggest situations in which Christians are likely to act in their own strength and wisdom instead of in reliance on God. After three minutes, ask for the groups' reports.

God gave the law to provide the Children of Israel with the guidance they needed to lead lives pleasing to Him. He had redeemed and chosen them to be His witnesses to the Gentiles. At the same time, the requirements of God's law demonstrated the necessity of walking by faith in God, not in mankind. This was a lesson Israel quickly forgot.

B. Its perversion (Exod. 32; Num. 14)

No sooner did God give His law to the Children of Israel than they began to turn against Him. The sin of making the golden calf, coming so soon after God's great deliverance of His people, shows how quickly the Israelites would turn away from the things they knew they should do in order to do those things they knew were wrong. Numbers 14 records the tragedy at Kadesh-Barnea. The Israelites refused to enter the Promised Land because they lacked faith in God's ability to do that which He had promised (Num. 14:1–10).

Israel's subsequent history records many more failures. At times the people exercised faith, but the Old Testament is full of accounts of their failure to obey God's commands. Their disobedience brought divine punishment. Foreign nations ravaged both Israel and Judah, took possession of the Promised Land, and uprooted the Jews from their homeland.

ASK: How would you answer someone who claims that God is too loving to punish anyone? (Question 13)

By the time of the New Testament, the Israelites had so reinterpreted the commandments of God that they had minimized their need to obey them. By lowering the standards of God's commands, the people thought they could meet the requirements of God and please Him.

When Jesus began His ministry, He faced a people who, for the most part,

We are unable to obey God's commands in our own strength, but Christ makes the impossible possible (John 15:5; Phil. 4:13).

Isaiah 9:6 and 7, often read at Christmas programs, promises Israel a king and a kingdom. Jesus was born to be Israel's king and to offer the nation His Kingdom.

had rejected God and turned their backs on His gracious commands. It was to these sin-blinded people, people willfully ignorant of the grace-faith principle, that Jesus spoke. He came as their king to provide for them the promised blessings of the Kingdom.

III. The Position of the People (Matt. 4:12–25)

A. They heard Jesus' preaching (4:12–23)

At first the teaching ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ was well received. Undoubtedly the miracles He was performing drew large crowds to hear Him (4:23). In fact, His fame went beyond the borders of Palestine (4:24). Unlike the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus taught with authority (7:28, 29).

B. They saw Jesus' miracles (4:23–25)

The people were attracted by the miracles Jesus performed, but apparently they were confused by the message He preached. The confusion arose from the fact that His teachings of the Old Testament were so different from the tenets of Judaism generally accepted at that time. The distortions and misinterpretations that the religious leaders had foisted upon the people to justify their own behavior were a far cry from God's righteousness, which Jesus proclaimed. How could someone perform such miracles and at the same time present teachings contrary to those of the religious leaders?

DISCUSS: Do you think some churches have lowered Biblical standards of righteousness to make people feel good about themselves? Defend your answer. (Question 15)

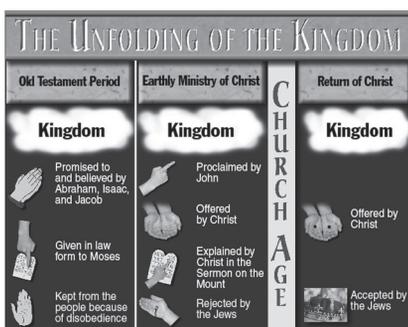
The Sermon on the Mount, the first of the five great discourse passages in Matthew's Gospel (Matt. 5:1–7:29; 10:1–42; 13:1–58; 18:1–35; 24:1–25:46), spells out exactly what Jesus taught about the Old Testament commandments and the messianic Kingdom. He made it clear that the popular teachings about the law of God were contrary to the divine meaning inherent in the law and that participation in the Kingdom depended upon faith and a transformed heart.

God never intended the law to be simply a list of outward rules for His people to heartlessly conform to. In giving the law, God was concerned about the heart above all else (Deut. 6:1–6).

DISCUSS: Highlight the references to the heart in Deuteronomy 30 (vv. 2, 6, 10, 14, 17). What does the heart have to do with obedience? (Question 14)

Obedience to God has never been about heartless action and deeds. God looks beyond actions and judges the heart with perfect perception.

TRANSPARENCY: Use the timeline on transparency 1 to review the truths concerning the messianic Kingdom. It is important for learners to understand these concepts in order to understand the Sermon on the Mount.



By explaining the great differences between His teachings and popular religious views, Jesus was forcing the people who knew about His miracles and heard His message to decide which teaching they would accept as from God. If they persisted in their old beliefs, they would continue to be blinded by sin. Only when they accepted the teaching of Jesus because of Who He is would they enter into a personal relationship with the true and living God and know His will for their lives.

Making It Personal

Use the following activities and questions to help your learners embrace God's commands eagerly.

Bible Study

Instruct the learners to silently read the following Scripture verses in order. After reading each one, they may volunteer their answers.

Acts 16:31—What is the command? What is the benefit of obeying this command?

Philippians 4:6, 7—What is the command? What is the benefit of obeying this command?

Ephesians 6:11—What is the command? What is the benefit of obeying this command?

Personal Responses

Review questions 16–19 in the study book. Allow volunteers an opportunity to share their answers.

NEXT LESSON

Encourage your learners to complete the Bible study for lesson 2 before the next class.

Challenge believers to evaluate what they really believe about God's commands. What do their deeds, conversations, and desires demonstrate about those convictions?

Use the lesson 1 case study as desired.