

SERMON OFF THE MOUNT

(developed by Michel Larribeau MTh)

AUTONOMOUS STUDIES

Aim: 'to learn how to build on good life foundations'

COURSE PLAN

(Jesus' commands in the 4 gospels,
based on the chronological order of Luke's Gospel)

Title: OFF THE MOUNT COURSE (23 instructions in Luke 8 to 16)

Aim: to learn to build life on solid foundations

sample below for preview

SESSION 1 - built on God's Word
(Mt 13:18-23 with Lk 8:11-18)

for the rest of the course contact us

SESSION 2 - built away from sin
(Mk 7:1-23 with Mt 15:1-20)

SESSION 3 - built on humility
(Mt 18:1-14 and Mk 9:33-37)

SESSION 4 - built on reconciliation (Mt 18:15-35)

SESSION 5 - built away from hypocrisy (Lk 12:1-12)

SESSION 6 - built away from conceit (Lk 14:1-24)

SESSION 7 - built on stewardship (Lk 16:1-13)

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SESSION 1 - built on God's word

① Read Matthew 13:18 to 23 with Lk 8:11-18 & Mk 4:13-25

② **to start**

- **what is the instruction of Jesus in this portion of his ministry in Mt.13:9?**
- this is the conclusion given to his disciples following the first of His many different parables in the Gospels (around 30)
- **what is a parable?**
- astonishing reasons for teaching in parables given in Mt 13:11-17 = a God given privilege (grace) just for disciples !!?
- **what is the parable about?**
- very often this parable used in an evangelistic context (encouraging unbelievers to accept the good news of Jesus the right way)
- Jesus' main purpose for this parable is to warn his disciples (Lk 8:18)
- lasting fruitfulness even of the Word of God is not guaranteed but care and attention must be given to how it is heard, listened to
- let us consider how to make sure that the seed of the Word of God falls in the right kind of soil and is as effective as possible

③ **THE WORD OF GOD**

- from Jesus' words in all 3 Gospels (Mt. 13:23, Mk. 4:20, Lk. 8:15),
what are the 4 principles to be aware of and keep paying attention to?
- 1. from Mt.13:23?**
- **does God speak today?**

④ (the Word of God continued)

- if God speaks even today, **so whom does God speak to?** Helpful questions
 - is it normal
 - . for a child to hear his father? see Jn 1:11-13
 - . for a sheep to hear the shepherd? see John 10
 - . for a disciple to hear his teacher? see John 13:12-17
- God wants to speak to **every** Christian, it is NORMAL for a Christian to hear God, to hear the Word of God: read **John 8:47**
- so **let us expect** God to speak to **us** as soon as becoming a child of God
- 2. still from Mt.13:23?**
 - from these examples, Num.12:1-9, Num.22:21-36, 1 Sam.3:1-10, Dan.7, Act.8:26-35, Act.10:9-23, Act.16:6-10, 1 Thes.2:13, **does God always speak in a personal direct approach and a simple clear way?**
 - let us not limit God and rely on Him for giving understanding if necessary
- 3. from Mk.4:20?**
 - how to know then what we hear from God? See Lk.8:18 & Col.2:16-19
 - what is the other extreme that is also to be avoided? See 1 Thes.5:19-21
 - **what is the solution (avoiding the 2 extremes) proposed in v.21?**
 - **why is Acts 17:10-12 a great example of that ?**
 - **what about when no clear indication one way or the other in Scriptures?**
 - after God has spoken to us and it has been established, He wants us to believe him without reservation, to have faith in what He says
 - examples: Gen.15:6, Jonah 3:5, Luke 1:45, Acts 27:25: Rom. 4:21
 - the definition of faith in **Heb. 11:1** is very good but not quite complete, telling us 'what' (to be sure, certain) but not 'how'
 - the way (how) to be sure and certain is to hear and to believe God's Word, God speaking to us, either about Himself (trust) or our situation (faith)

⑤ (the Word of God continued)

4. from Lk.8:15?

- is it always so simple? see Lk.8:13b

- what kinds of pressure?

- * see Mt.13:21
- * see Mt.13:22 and Lk.8:14
- * others mentioned others elsewhere;
 - . see Luke 9 :23,24 (1 Cor.9 :26-27)
 - . Luke 16:26 with Matt.10:37
 - . Matt.15:2-6 (Rom.12:2)

- is obedience another test?

- * see James 2:20
- * also 1 Pet.1:13
- * see Lk 6:46-49, John 14:23, Rom.1:5 ('the obedience of faith'), James 1:2
 - . *the best proof that we believe what God has told us is to do what he says*

- whatever excuses are put forward that diminish or nullify the notion of obedience for Christians, they are not from God (Lk 8:15, 'by persevering')

- carefully note and communicate that obedience is ultimately to Jesus and His commandments and not to a human institution, organisation, local church or leadership; Paul could say 'follow me as I follow Jesus' (1 Cor.11:1)

- a normal reaction would be 'Who is equal to the task?'

- * see John 14:16 and 16:7 with Eph.1:13, Col.1:9-11

- is repentance always available after failure? [Lk 15:10-32, 1 John 1:9-2:2]

- in the parable Jesus speaks of 'producing & yielding a crop',
what 'crop' can be expected? or in other words what benefits?

- . see Lk 11:28 (with Mt 10:29-30, 40-42, 11:28-29)
- . Mt 7:24-27
- . John 8:31-32
- . Col.1:9-11
- . last but not least Luke 6:40 [to be *like Him*]

⑥ to sum up: counting on the help of the Holy Spirit to ...

- accept that God wants and does speak to all His children in various ways
- realise our need of being careful, avoiding being gullible and cynical but ready to test everything when it comes to hearing God
- make sure to accept that the Bible is our final authority and to know and refer to it as much as possible
- hold on and persevere in believing what is true and doing what God tells us to do

SESSION 2 - built away from sin

① Read Mark 7 verses 1 to 23 with Mt 15:1-20

② to start

- what does this passage start with?
- what is the side issue Jesus takes the opportunity to teach about?
See Mk 7: 6-13
- what is the other issue Jesus also takes the opportunity to teach his disciples about?
- from Jesus' explanation (v.18-23) it is clear that he wants his disciples (us) to understand about sin and where it comes from
- it is a right understanding of sinfulness (real defilement, uncleanness) that gives the right understanding of the opposite, **real holiness**

③ SINFULNESS

- in his parable in Mk 7:15 what is the first of 2 astonishing principles Jesus wants to convey?
- from Jesus' explanation in v.18 & 19 (food in stomach, then out of body) Mark gives (v.19b) the astonishing conclusion and shattering (for jews) principle, **all food is clean**
- why was and is a massive problem?
- what are the main and definite reasons for the prohibitions found in Lev.20:22-26?

④ (sinfulness continued)

- Jesus' declaration that all food is clean is both a clarification about what is not sin defilement and a introductory preparation for the all nation (Jews and Gentiles) mission [see Eph.2:11-22, Mat.28:19-20]
- in spite of Jesus' declaration did the early church struggle to accept both notions?
See Act.10:27-29, Act.11:1-3, Rom.14:13-23, 1 Cor.10:23-33
- what about us? Do we struggle with certain food, drinks? Do we struggle with certain nations, ethnic groups or other groups?
- then let's turn to the second part of Jesus' parabolic saying (Mk 7:15) 'Rather, it is what comes out of a person [Mt 15:11 'out of their mouth'] that defiles them'
- from Jesus' explanation in Mk.7:20 & 23 (what comes out of the heart through the mouth is what defiles) what is the next astonishing principle?
- Jesus names the 'heart', something within human beings as the source of evil and defilement, does he refer to the physical organ?
- from Jesus' list of evil things in Mk 7 [12] + 'false witness' in Mt 15 (and other references in the New Testament [NT]) what do we understand about this mind set?
- does Jesus here offer a solution to this flawed heart?

⑤ to sum up: counting on the help of the Holy Spirit to ...

- make sure the Word of God always takes priority over all traditions if necessary
- understand and accept that all food is meant for the stomach and not a source of defilement of the heart
- realise that the solution to sanctification is a question of renewal of the heart / mind
- having our desires, emotions, and understandings fall in line with the Will of God

SESSION 3 - built on humility

① **Read** Matthew 18 verses 1 to 14 and Mark 9:33-37

② **to start**

- which one is the only direct command?
- which ones are indirect commands?
- very enlightening and challenging for all Christians on our attitude toward children! see also Mk.10:13-16 [v.14 = Jesus' indignation]
- what has been your attitude until now? any need to repent and change?
- the indirect instruction of v.4 is the main focus for this session
- what seemed to be the disciples' preoccupation at that time?
- what might they have used in their arguments?
- Jesus not against achievements and experiences!! he achieved and experienced a lot himself - see also John 14:12
- what is the thing above all things that God considers greatness?
- what conclusion regarding humility can we draw from Jesus' words and actions here?
- if humility is very important to God **HUMILITY** must be or become very important & vital to us and something to pursue at all cost

③ **HUMILITY**

- to start with we need to look at the definition:
 - . for some it is just the quality of having a low view of ourselves
 - . but a full biblical definition is, see Romans 12:3
'not think of ourselves more highly than we ought, but rather think of ourselves with sober judgment'
- what is a common attitude Paul refers to when it comes to thinking of ourselves?
- do you know of any warnings the Bible gives against such an attitude?
- what other attitude Paul could have warned that is the opposite one and which is even more common?
- do you know any biblical examples?
- the main problem with low esteem is that it makes anybody, like Moses & Gideon, reluctant/unwilling to do what God says
- what is the right attitude advocated by Paul and acceptable to God?
- where does Paul also tell us 'sound judgement' comes from?
- in Rom.12:3-8, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, does Paul also help us to believe the right things which will promote humility?
- these different things need to be the object of our attention to help our pursuit of humility

④ **to sum up:** counting on the help of the Holy Spirit to ...

- to have a positive attitude towards children following Jesus' example and words
- to never despise any children for any reason
- to welcome and pray for children whenever possible
- to know and remember how humility is important & vital to God
- to make sure whatever it takes for humility to be one of the ingredients in our life

SESSION 4 - built on reconciliation

① Read Matthew 18 verses 15 to 35

② to start

- v.15, 'if your brother sins' = astonishing / reassuring words?
- what possibility does Jesus indicate?
- no good for us to believe or pretend it doesn't / won't happen
- not only we need to accept it is possible for a Christian to sin in general, but more amazingly it is possible to be 'against you', potentially a more direct and acute offence
- although 'against you' it is not in all ancient manuscripts [so some versions include it & others don't] Peter knows it is a possibility; see same chapter, v.21
- with or without it, Jesus calls for a clear and definite resolution however tempted we might be to respond, react in either situations
- however because it is included in most versions and Peter's indication, for the purpose of this session we will leave it in
- if we talk about a 'brother sinning against another', it means a breakdown in relation, some kind of a conflict
- so what 'conflict resolution' does Jesus teach, applying to my 'brother sinning against me' and 'me sinning against my brother'?

③ CONFLICT RESOLUTION or RECONCILIATION

- Jesus' wise instruction in Mat.18:15-17
- whom does Jesus address himself to?
- what does 'sin against you' mean?
- what is the first thing we do when offended?
- what is the first thing Jesus says?
- what is Jesus expected result?
- if not, what are the next moves?
- what further things does Jesus say to the offended party?
- what about the offender? any part to play or just wait for offended?

④ to sum up: counting on the help of the Holy Spirit to ...

- always remember that Jesus did not rule out the possibility for Christians to sin, even against each other
- know, that whether we are the injured party or the offending one, God wants us to play a part in the reconciliation process and not be a spectator
- keep in mind that God is insistent on it and so be always willing to forgive whatever the outcome of the attempt to seek reconciliation

SESSION 5 - built away from hypocrisy

① Read Luke 12 verses 1 to 12

② to start

- Jesus' instruction (v.1b) is 'be on your guard against hypocrisy'
- in the previous chapter Jesus has accepted the invitation of a Pharisee (11:37)
- similarly to the incident of Mk 7 (session 2) after the astonishment of the Pharisee about his guest not washing before the meal Jesus uses this as an opportunity to openly and sternly rebuke ['Woe to you'] the religious leaders for their various practices (11:39-52)
- not surprisingly the religious leaders felt insulted (11:45) and from that time began to fiercely oppose Jesus (11:53-54)
- then our text, Lk 12:1-12, starts by indicating that meanwhile, during the meal it seems, a crowd had come together outside [v.1].
- 'many thousands' is one word in the original meaning 'ten thousands' so really a big crowd, more than 10 000 people
- Luke specifies 'they were trampling on one another'.
- Was that excitement? panic? or opposition?**
- in any case Jesus takes, in the face of brewing opposition, the opportunity to warn and teach his disciples about what he calls 'the yeast of the Pharisees'
- Jesus leaves them in no doubt as to what this figure of speech means; it is not a cooking lesson but the very important matter of 'hypocrisy'

③ HYPOCRISY

- with 'be on your guard' to his disciples what does Jesus indicate?
- trying to forewarn and forearm them and us against such hypocritical people what 4 warnings with relevant advice does Jesus give [verses 2 to 12]?

1. in verse 2?

2. in verses 3 to 7?

3. in verses 8 to 10?

4. in verses 11 and 12?

⑤ to sum up: counting on the help of the Holy Spirit to ...

- always be aware and alert that some very 'respectable' people might be very hostile to Jesus and his followers
- remember that hypocrisy (pretence) might be their overriding motivation and not be fooled by appearance
- not to fall prey to hypocrisy and its various tactics and attacks
- remain faithful to Jesus and keep trusting God in spite of adversity

SESSION 6 - built away from conceit

① **Read** Luke 14 verses 1 and verses 7 to 11

② **to start**

- what motivated Jesus to give this parable?
- why 'a parable' ?
- what is 'to honour' synonymous with?
- is Jesus opposed to honouring?
- why would someone 'exalt himself'?
- so important to keep away from conceit at all cost

③ **CONCEIT**

- the difficulty for the ones conceited is 'blindness to their predicament'
- what 'fertile' contexts and their various instructions are given in the New Testament to expose and discourage conceit?

1. Luke 14:7-11?

③ (conceit continued)

2. Luke 14:12-14?

3. what about approachability?

4. in Rom.12:3?

5. other contexts?

see Phil.2:3-11 with Eph.4:2-3

see Jn.13:1-17 with Acts 6:1-4

④ **to sum up:** counting on the help of the Holy Spirit ...

- treat 'conceit' (a feeling of high self importance) seriously and avoid it at all cost
- be on guard to spot it in the contexts mentioned and others not mentioned (and repent if necessary)
- always consider and treat others as if more important than ourselves by being eager to honour them

SESSION 7 - built on stewardship

① Read Luke 16 verses 1 to 15

② to start

- **v.1 to 8a** = although not indicated, most likely a parable
 - = a commonly known story/event/situation with a spiritual dimension
 - = a rich man, a manager ('steward' in some versions) being dismissed because of mismanagement and his 'interesting' settling of accounts
- **why does the master commend his dishonest manager in v.8a?**
- **v.8b to 15** = Jesus' applications and expansion;
- **v.9; does Jesus really instruct his disciples (us) to act dishonestly too?**
- whatever else Jesus wants to emphasize, an important & universal aspect he draws attention to which 'accountability' (giving an account) is part of, regarding the use of money/wealth, is **stewardship**

③ STEWARDSHIP

- as said some versions use the word 'steward' for manager; a steward is someone who manages/looks after the property of somebody else
- **using this definition of 'stewardship' what are its 3 inevitable aspects in Lk.16:8b-15 Jesus refers to?**
- 1. Lk.16:12 = 'someone else's property' = ?**
 - does Jesus equating 'worldly wealth' with 'someone else's property'? (v.12); [compare v.12 with v.11]
 - see 1 Tim.6:17-19, Phil.4:19, 2 Cor.9:8, Heb.13:5
 - is poverty / prosperity a sign or not of God's approval?
 - see Lk.16:19-31, Phil.4:11-13, 1 Tim.6:17-19 and Lk.8:1-3
- 2. Lk.16:11 = 'handling' = ?**
 - what does Jesus require?

③ (stewardship continued)

- what strong warning does Jesus give about 'the love of money'?
 - see v.13
 - see also Lk.12:13-15, 1 Tim.6:9-11, Heb.13:5
- do you know any other dangers re money/wealth?
 - *see Mt.6:19-34;
 - *see also see Lk.12:16-21; Lk.16:19-31; 2 Cor.8:13-15, 9:6-8; Gal.6:7-10, Eph.4:28
- 1 Pet.4:10 = a good general principle for any gifts, including money
- 3. Lk.16:11 = 'if you have not been trustworthy' = ?**
 - what does the word 'if' imply?
 - this applies to all areas of our lives where we have been made 'stewards' (1 Cor.4:2-5), including 'worldly wealth' (Lk.16:11)
 - what other areas have we been made 'stewards', given something to manage?
 - is 'accountability' unavoidable & with long term consequences?
 - see Mt.18:23; Mt.25:14-19; Lk.19:11-23; Rom.14:12
 - let us make sure that we serve God and not 'mammon', nor any other masters

④ to sum up: counting on the help of the Holy Spirit to ...

- realise that God in his grace directly or indirectly (through one another) supply all of our needs
- accept that God, as part of his provision, gives us a certain wealth to manage whether it is little or much
- want to be a faithful and trustworthy steward following the principles God has established
- always keep in mind that God will require each of us to give an account for what He has given us during this life time, not forgetting its long term consequences