

“Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God”

Lesson 9

Matthew 6–7

Purpose To encourage class members to become more dedicated disciples of Jesus Christ.

Preparation

1. Read, ponder, and pray about the following scriptures, which are a continuation of the Sermon on the Mount:
 - a. Matthew 6:1–6, 16–21. Jesus teaches his disciples to do alms, pray, and fast in secret and to lay up treasures in heaven instead of on earth.
 - b. Matthew 6:7–13; 7:7–11. He shows his disciples how to pray and teaches that Heavenly Father will bless those who ask him for what they need.
 - c. Matthew 6:14–15; 7:1–6, 12. Jesus teaches his disciples to forgive others, to judge righteously, and to treat others as they would like to be treated.
 - d. Matthew 6:22–34; 7:13–29. He teaches his disciples that they will be blessed for serving Heavenly Father and doing his will.
2. Additional reading: Luke 6:37–49; 11:1–13, 34–36; 12:22–34; 16:13; 3 Nephi 13–14.
3. If the following materials are available, use them during the lesson:
 - a. The picture Sermon on the Mount (62166; Gospel Art Picture Kit 212).
 - b. A brief portion (no more than six or seven minutes) of “The Sermon on the Plain,” part 4 of the videocassette *The Savior: Early Years* (53163). Select the portion that will best illustrate the principles you are teaching.
4. You may want to prepare to sing “The Wise Man and the Foolish Man” (*Children’s Songbook*, 281) with class members.
5. Suggestion for teaching: Stories can illustrate gospel principles and keep class members’ attention as few other teaching methods can. Jesus often used stories to teach important lessons or clarify abstract ideas. As you prepare your lessons, consider how you could use stories to help class members understand gospel principles. When you tell a story, be sure class members understand whether it is a true account or a fictional story you have created to make a point. (See *Teaching—No Greater Call*, 98–100, 127.)

Suggested Lesson Development

Attention Activity As appropriate, use the following activity or one of your own to begin the lesson.

Tell the following story in your own words:

Elder William R. Bradford of the Seventy once spoke with the bishop of a ward whose youth had worked to earn money for an activity. The bishop asked Elder Bradford if he would help the youth get some recognition for what they had done. To the bishop’s surprise, Elder Bradford said he would not. He said that he was

glad that the young people had worked hard, but that it was not important that they receive public recognition for that work.

When the youth decided to donate their money to the Church's general missionary fund instead of using it for the activity, they wanted to have their picture taken with Elder Bradford as they made the donation, and they wanted to have the picture and an article put into the newspaper. Again Elder Bradford surprised them by saying "no." He told the bishop: "You might consider helping your young people learn a higher law of recognition. Recognition from on high is silent. It is carefully and quietly recorded there. Let them feel the joy and gain the treasure in their heart and soul that come from silent, selfless service" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1987, 90–91; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1987, 75).

- What lessons can we learn from Elder Bradford's response to the youth?

Point out that one lesson we can learn is that we should do good things because we love God and want to please him, not because we want to receive recognition from other people. This is one of the characteristics of a true disciple of Jesus Christ.

Write *True Disciples* on the chalkboard. As you discuss the Sermon on the Mount, list the qualities of true discipleship taught by the Savior in this sermon.

Scripture Discussion and Application

As you teach the following scripture passages, encourage each class member to consider what he or she needs to do to become a more dedicated and sincere disciple of Christ. Encourage class members to share personal experiences that relate to the principles of true discipleship.

1. True disciples do right things for right reasons.

Read and discuss Matthew 6:1–6, 16–21.

- Why did Jesus condemn some people for doing good things such as giving alms (giving to the poor), praying, and fasting? (See Matthew 6:1–2, 5, 16. They were doing these things for the wrong reason.) Jesus referred to these people as hypocrites. What is a hypocrite? (A person who pretends to have certain qualities but does not have them; a person who tries to appear righteous but is not. Footnote 2a indicates that the Greek word for hypocrite can also be translated "pretender." See Matthew 15:8; Luke 11:39.)
- What will be the reward for people who do good things to be seen by others? (See Matthew 6:2, 5, 16.) What things might we do to be seen by others instead of to please God? How can we purify our motives for serving and performing other good works?
- In this sermon, what did Jesus teach about what we should value most? (See Matthew 6:19–21.) What does it mean to "lay up . . . treasures in heaven"? What are some heavenly treasures we can seek? (See D&C 18:14–16 and 130:18–19 for two examples.)
- What does it mean that "where your treasure is, there will your heart be also"? How can we determine what we treasure? (One way is to evaluate the amount of time, money, and thought we devote to something.) What do people today treasure? Ask class members to think about the things they treasure and silently consider what these treasures say about where their heart is.

2. True disciples follow the Savior's example of prayer.

Read and discuss Matthew 6:7–13; 7:7–11. Point out that Matthew 6:9–13 is known as the Lord's Prayer.

- What does the Lord's Prayer teach us about how we should pray? (See Matthew 6:9–13.)
- How does the Lord's Prayer show Jesus' reverence and respect for Heavenly Father? How can we show reverence and respect for Heavenly Father when we pray?

Elder Dallin H. Oaks commented on the kind of language we should use when we pray: "The special language of prayer follows different forms in different languages, but the principle is always the same. We should address prayers to our Heavenly Father in words which speakers of that language associate with love and respect and reverence and closeness. . . . Men and women who wish to show respect will take the time to learn the special language of prayer" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1993, 17, 20; or *Ensign*, May 1993, 16, 18).

- How can we avoid using "vain repetitions" when we pray? (See Matthew 6:7.)
- Since Heavenly Father knows what we need before we pray (Matthew 6:8), why do we need to pray? Why are asking, seeking, and knocking (Matthew 7:7) necessary for our spiritual progress? How can we seek more diligently for Heavenly Father's help?
- How are we to understand the Savior's promise that "every one that asketh receiveth"? (Matthew 7:8). Why do we sometimes not receive what we ask for at the time we ask for it or in the way we would like it? (See 3 Nephi 18:20.) How have you learned that God knows what is best for you?

3. True disciples treat others kindly and fairly.

Read and discuss Matthew 6:14–15; 7:1–6, 12.

- Why do you think the Savior commands us to forgive others? How can we become more forgiving?
- The Joseph Smith Translation amends Matthew 7:1 to read, "Judge not unrighteously, that ye be not judged; but judge righteous judgment" (Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 7:2). What is righteous judgment? What harm can come to us and to those we judge if we judge unrighteously? How can we ensure that we judge righteously? (See Matthew 7:3–5; Moroni 7:14–18.)
- Jesus said a person who unrighteously tries to correct others is a hypocrite (Matthew 7:4–5). How is judging unrighteously a sign of hypocrisy?
- The teaching in Matthew 7:12 is often called the Golden Rule. What experiences have shown you the value of this principle? How does following the Golden Rule make us better disciples of Jesus Christ?

Elder Marvin J. Ashton described a meeting in which a group of Church members considered the question "How can you tell if someone is converted to Jesus Christ?":

"For forty-five minutes those in attendance made numerous suggestions in response to this question, and the leader carefully wrote down each answer

on a large chalkboard. All of the comments were thoughtful and appropriate. But after a time, this great teacher erased everything he had written. Then, acknowledging that all of the comments had been worthwhile and appreciated, he taught a vital principle: “The best and most clear indicator that we are progressing spiritually and coming unto Christ is the way we treat other people.”

Elder Ashton added: “The way we treat the members of our families, our friends, those with whom we work each day is as important as are some of the more noticeable gospel principles we sometimes emphasize” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1992, 25; or *Ensign*, May 1992, 20).

4. True disciples serve God and do his will.

Read and discuss selected verses from Matthew 6:22–34; 7:13–29.

- Why is it impossible to serve both God and mammon, or worldliness? (See Matthew 6:24.) What blessings does God promise to those who serve him? (See Matthew 6:25–33; D&C 11:7.)
- Jesus promised that if we “seek . . . first the kingdom of God,” we will be given all other things that we need (Matthew 6:33). What experiences have helped you gain a testimony of this promise?
- How does worldliness turn our loyalty and service away from God? What are some ways we might be tempted to seek the things of the world before the things of God? (Answers may include waiting to pay tithing until after we buy the things we need or want or deciding not to serve a mission because of a desire for worldly things.)
- As Jesus neared the end of his sermon, what did he teach about entering the kingdom of heaven? (See Matthew 7:13–14, 21–23.) Why is it significant that the way to eternal life is narrow, while the way to destruction is broad?
- At the end of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus told the parable of the wise man and the foolish man (Matthew 7:24–27). How does this parable apply to us? What is the “rock” on which we should build? (See Helaman 5:12.) What do some people build their lives on that might be comparable to sand?

You may want to have class members sing “The Wise Man and the Foolish Man” (*Children’s Songbook*, 281).

Conclusion

Testify of the importance of following Jesus Christ. Encourage class members to consider what they need to do to become better disciples of Christ.

Additional Teaching Ideas

The following material supplements the suggested lesson outline. You may want to use one or more of these ideas as part of the lesson.

1. “By their fruits ye shall know them” (Matthew 7:20)

- Jesus cautioned his followers about false prophets—people who teach false doctrine or try to lead people away from Christ (Matthew 7:15). How can we discern between false and true prophets? (See Matthew 7:16–20; see also Moroni 7:5, 10–11.) How can Matthew 7:20 apply to us as well as to prophets?

2. Video presentation

The second segment of “New Testament Customs,” a selection from *New Testament Video Presentations* (53914), explains the Jews’ use of phylacteries and fringes. If you show this segment, discuss how these items, once used to show obedience to God, became symbols of the Pharisees’ desires to “be seen of men” as they worshiped (Matthew 6:5).

3. Finding the beam in our own eye

Share the following story about how the Prophet Joseph Smith taught one sister to look for the beam in her own eye when dealing with a personal offense:

A woman went to the Prophet Joseph Smith upset about some things another member of the Church had said about her. The Prophet told her that if what the man had said was untrue, she should ignore the matter, because truth would survive but untruths would not. The woman felt the comments were untrue, but she was not satisfied with ignoring the matter. The Prophet then told his way of handling such comments:

“When an enemy had told a scandalous story about him, which had often been done, before he rendered judgment he paused and let his mind run back to the time and place and setting of the story to see if he had not by some unguarded word or act laid the block on which the story was built. If he found that he had done so, he said that in his heart he then forgave his enemy, and felt thankful that he had received warning of a weakness that he had not known he possessed.”

The Prophet told the sister that she should think carefully about whether she had unconsciously given the man any reason to say the things he did. After much thought, she decided she had, and she thanked the Prophet and left. (See Jesse W. Crosby, quoted in Hyrum L. Andrus and Helen Mae Andrus, comps., *They Knew the Prophet* [1974], 144.)

4. Youth activity

Write each of the following phrases from Matthew 6 and 7 on a separate card:

Let not thy left hand know (6:3)	What thy right hand doeth (6:3)
Thy Father which seeth in secret (6:6)	Shall reward thee openly (6:6)
Use not (6:7)	Vain repetitions (6:7)
Forgive men (6:14)	Their trespasses (6:14)
Lay up for yourselves (6:20)	Treasures in heaven (6:20)
Ye cannot serve (6:24)	God and mammon (6:24)
Seek ye first (6:33)	The kingdom of God (6:33)
Cast out the beam (7:5)	Out of thine own eye (7:5)
Ask (7:7)	And it shall be given you (7:7)
Seek (7:7)	And ye shall find (7:7)
Beware of (7:15)	False prophets (7:15)
By their fruits (7:20)	Ye shall know them (7:20)

Lay the cards facedown on the table or floor. Divide class members into two teams, and have the teams take turns choosing two cards. If the cards match, the team removes them from the table or floor and takes another turn. If the cards do not match, the team replaces them in their original positions, and the other team takes a turn. Continue until all the matches have been made.