



*Sermon on the Mount*

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BLESSINGS *of* THE  
KINGDOM

LEADER GUIDE



# FROM THE EDITOR

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The January Bible Study 2024 Leader Guide is intended to help those who will teach JBS. Included in this guide are:

**TEACHING PLANS**—The teaching plans, beginning on page 4, are designed for seven sessions using the 2024 January Bible Study Personal Study Guide, *Sermon on the Mount: Blessings of the Kingdom*. The table of contents shows how the chapters in the Personal Study Guide are addressed in this Leader Guide.

The Personal Study Guide (PSG) has been designed as a teaching resource. Each adult will need his or her own PSG. Each teaching plan suggests ways a teacher can use the PSG during the session.

A variety of questions and learning activities in the PSG will help readers understand and apply the Scriptures to their lives. An alternate plan for teaching this study could consist of short lectures combined with small or large group discussion of the questions and learning activities.

**EXPOSITORY NOTES**—The expository notes, beginning on page 24, provide in-depth commentary for a teacher's use.

**PREACHING GUIDE**—The preaching guide, beginning on page 76, provides sermon outlines and ideas for the pastor who wishes to emphasize the theme of JBS 2024 from the pulpit.

**SUPPORT DOWNLOAD**—The support download includes everything in this Leader Guide as well as additional teaching helps such as teaching items, PowerPoint® backgrounds, clip art, and planning and promotion ideas. See the inside back cover for information about securing these files.

Do you ever wonder what to do with all this material when January Bible Study is over? Here are some suggestions: Conduct a weekly Bible study for business people or stay-at-home mothers. Conduct a weeknight study for apartment dwellers, mobile home residents, or language or ethnic groups. Or conduct a weekend retreat for singles, students, or an Adult Sunday School class. Whatever you do in JBS, we pray that these materials will enhance this study and that lives will be changed as a result.

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# LIFE BY DESIGN

We live in a broken world. This brokenness is seen in suffering, violence, poverty, pain, and death around us. Brokenness leads us to search for a way to make life work.

The Bible tells us that God originally planned a world that worked perfectly—where everything and everyone fit together in harmony. God made each of us with a purpose—to worship Him and walk with Him (Gen. 1:31 and Ps. 19:1).

Life doesn't work when we ignore God and His original design for our lives. We selfishly insist on doing things our own way. The Bible calls this sin. Sin leads to a place of brokenness. The consequence of our sin is separation from God—in this life and for all of eternity (Rom. 3:23 and Rom. 6:23).

We need a remedy—some good news. Because of His love, God did not leave us in our brokenness. Jesus, God in human flesh, came to us and lived perfectly according to God's design. Jesus came to rescue us—to do for us what we could not do for ourselves. He took our sin and shame to the cross, paying the penalty of our sin by His death. Jesus was then raised from the

dead—to provide the only way for us to be rescued and restored to a relationship with God (John 3:16; Col. 2:14; and 1 Cor. 15:3-4).

We cannot escape this brokenness on our own. We need to be rescued. We must ask God to forgive us—turning from sin to trust in Jesus. This is what it means to repent and believe. Believing, we receive new life through Jesus. God turns our lives in a new direction (Mark 1:15; Eph. 2:8-9; and Rom. 10:9).

When God restores our relationship to Him, we begin to discover meaning and purpose in a broken world. Now we can pursue God's design in all areas of our lives. God's Spirit empowers us to recover His design and assures us of His presence in this life and for all of eternity (Phil. 2:13 and Eph. 2:10).

Now that you have heard this good news, God wants you to respond to Him. You can talk to Him using words like these: My life is broken—I recognize it's because of my sin. I believe Christ came to live, die, and was raised from the dead—to rescue me from my sin. Forgive me. I turn from my selfish ways and put my trust in You. I know that Jesus is Lord of all, and I will follow Him.

## MEET THE WRITERS

**KIMA JUDE** wrote the teaching plans for this resource. She is a member of The Oaks Baptist Church in Grand Prairie, Texas, where she leads the women's ministry and her husband Barry serves as pastor. Kima has a bachelor's degree in journalism from Marshall University and had an early career as a newspaper reporter followed by a freelance writing career. She has written for several Christian publications, including Lifeway's *January Bible Study* and several *Explore the Bible* group plans.

She is employed full-time at a local university in the Dallas-Fort Worth region directing foundation relations and writing proposals. She and her husband are the parents of four young adult children and three young grandchildren. She looks forward to helping them discover the wonders of the Bible.

**ARGILE SMITH** wrote the expository notes for this resource. Argile serves as pastor of Parkway Baptist Church, Biloxi, Mississippi. He's a graduate of William Carey College (BA) and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (MDiv, PhD).



A black and white photograph of a mountainous landscape. In the foreground, a dirt path leads from the bottom center towards the middle ground, flanked by grassy and shrubby terrain. The path appears to be a mix of dirt and small stones. In the background, there are large, rugged mountains with steep slopes and some snow patches visible in the distance. The sky is overcast and hazy. The overall tone is somber and atmospheric.

# TEACHING PLANS



## YOUR NOTES

# JESUS'S (SHOCKING) VISION FOR THE TRULY BLESSED LIFE

## Before the Session:

a. Review Matthew 5:1-16 from the Bible, highlighting repeated words, ideas that stand out to you, and Jesus's directives that seem especially countercultural.

b. Read the Sermon on the Mount Introduction and chapter 1 in the Personal Study Guide as well as the related Expository Notes in this Leader Guide.

c. Pray for the group who will be engaged in the January Bible Study.

d. Gather Personal Study Guides, extra Bibles, and pens for the group.

e. Be prepared to display **Teaching Item 1: Happiness word**; **Teaching Item 2: Flourish word**; **Teaching Item 3: Thrive word**, and **Teaching Item 4: Blessed word** by downloading and printing or projecting.

f. Be prepared to display **Teaching Item 5: Sermon on the Mount Illustration**.

g. Practice reading the sermon aloud as you imagine Jesus would have delivered it.

## Leading the Session:

1. Introduce the session by drawing attention to **Teaching Item 1: Happiness word** and invite the group to share definitions of the word. Add **Teaching Item 2: Flourish word** and invite the group to share their definition of this word. Draw attention to **Teaching Item 3: Thrive word** and invite the group to share a definition. Encourage the group to decide whether any of these words have been goals in their lives.

Introduce the study of the Sermon of the Mount by noting that the words recorded in Matthew were spoken directly by Jesus to an audience of disciples and seekers. Set the stage for studying this famous sermon by helping your group of listeners imagine the scene: Jesus, on a mountain, delivering a message while sitting down, surrounded by a throng of people hanging on every word. Display **Teaching Item 5: Sermon on the Mount Location**.

Call on a volunteer to read the opening to the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5:1-2. Invite the group to review the Introduction to determine the significance of 1) being on a mountaintop and 2) sitting down. Briefly discuss how they may picture this scenario, such as in an amphitheater-type setting. Direct the group to complete **Friends in High Places** activity in page 16 of the PSG for more insight on the mountain setting.

Direct the group's attention to the entire passage to be studied during the session and tell them that you are going to attempt to share it the way you thought Jesus may



have delivered His message. Note that you could have the wrong artistic interpretation—perhaps He was more fiery or more restrained and undoubtedly more compelling. Move your chair to a place where most of the group can see you—even if it's in the middle of the room—and read Matthew 5:1-16 aloud. Draw attention back to the words that the group has defined: *happiness, flourish, thrive*. Note that none of these words are found in the passage translation—instead another word, which may be considered a synonym or related, is: *blessed*. Display **Teaching Item 4: Blessed word** and encourage the group to consider how they would define it. Draw attention to the PSG, page 12 where the writer points out that there are actually two definitions for the word *blessed*, one an act of distributing divine favor and the other a state of being. Emphasize that while we tend to think of sermons as a set of instructions, often negative, that the writer makes the point that Jesus is not issuing commands in His message but describing a state of mind that these actions produce in a Christian. Invite the group to think of other words that may characterize this and be prepared to suggest a few more: *peace, serenity, satisfaction, contentment, bliss*, and so forth. Draw attention back to the word strips to ask: **Would you say that you live in a state of happiness? Are you flourishing? Are you thriving? Are you blessed?** Note that in some ways this part of the Sermon on the Mount is a good test of understanding how close we are to kingdom life.

Guide the group to search the PSG, page 17 to learn why. Point out that while *beatus* is a Greek word, it makes perfect sense in English to also think of the Beatitudes as Be Attitudes, or ways to live a whole and flourishing life. Note that there

are eight Beatitudes outlined in the passage, all of which work together to provide a comprehensive picture of a flourishing follower of Jesus Christ.

Invite a volunteer to take your seat and read Matthew 5:3-6, challenging that person to share it in a way they imagine Jesus may have. Guide the group to underline all the words that indicate who is blessed: the poor, mourning, humble, hungry, and thirsty. Ask: **Are these attributes that you would normally assign to “blessed” people?**

Encourage the group to break down each phrase for meaning and application. Challenge the group to discuss diverse ways we can be impoverished, beyond the scarcity of earthly goods. Define grief as mourning that may go beyond personal loss. Talk about what humility looks like in our contemporary culture. Point to ways that we hunger and thirst for righteousness that extends to others. Direct the group to the PSG, page 19, to complete the **Be Attitudes** exercise.

Ask the group to share their definition of the word *paradox* and inquire whether Jesus outlined a series of paradoxes in this passage. Point out that poverty, humility, hunger, and thirst all have significant spiritual context yet none are left in a state of want. Highlight that the counter point to each Beatitude seems to nullify any negativity that may be associated with poverty, grief, humility, hunger, and thirst. Invite the group to share testimonies of their own experiences with such paradoxes.

2. Call on a second volunteer to read the next set of Beatitudes from Matthew 5:7-9. Guide the group to highlight the words that describe happy disciples in this passage. Note the shift from the first set of Beatitudes, which were focused on God, to a focus on others and draw a parallel to the

first and second commandments. Inquire: **What's your emotional reaction to this set of words? If you find them inherently more appealing, why? Do you admire these attributes when you see them in others?** Take a few minutes to define each term: *mercy* as compassion, *purity* as a life of integrity, and *peacemaking* as pursuing reconciliation.

Discuss the circular nature of this set of Beatitudes, noting that the Bible consistently teaches that the attitudes that we exhibit come back to us through others. Discuss the Golden Rule and its promise, noting that you will delve into that deeper in a later session. Also discuss the admonition not to judge to avoid being judged. Talk about whether mercy, purity, or peacemaking, while always desirable, may be challenging. Remind the group that the crowd listening to Jesus as He delivered His Sermon on the Mount were no doubt hearing truths that shocked, confused, challenged, and compelled them.

3. Invite a third volunteer to take a seat and read Matthew 5:10-11 aloud. Guide the group to highlight the descriptive words in the passage. Inquire whether words like *persecuted*, *insulted*, *lied about*, and *evil* evoke happy feelings or other. Again point to Jesus's extraordinary insistence on turning what, on its face, seems so negative into a positive. Question: **How easy or difficult is it for you to rejoice under this kind of pressure? What can you do to withstand it with the right attitude?** Dig deeper into the topic of persecution of Christians. Talk about the promise of rewards in heaven.

Point out that as followers of Jesus, at some point in our Christian walk, we will suffer as Jesus did. Note that while very few of us will be called upon to give up our physical lives and no one suffers all the time, one

of the marks of following Jesus is becoming a target of people who oppose your message and who may damage your reputation, threaten your self-esteem, destroy your livelihood, defriend or isolate you, and more. Encourage the group to think about such episodes as a special time of communion with Christ. Point out that those who suffer for Christ's sake are amassing rewards in heaven, which should bring comfort. Ask a volunteer to read Psalm 34:18, which reveals that God draws close to the brokenhearted and saves those crushed in spirit. Invite the group to reflect on how in their times of suffering, they've felt closer to God.

4. Call on a fourth volunteer to take a seat and read Matthew 5:13-16. Guide the group to highlight the two primary words in the passage: *salt* and *light*. Note that these are two metaphors that are intended to illustrate how blessed Christians live in the world. Invite the group to compare their emotional responses to these two terms: **Does salt evoke as much of a positive as light?** Break down the two concepts and their application for living.

Draw attention to PSG, page 24 where the writer suggests that these two terms should not be considered separately but as a whole. Discuss the idea that we must actively serve as both salt and light. Talk about what happens if a Christian presents only as salt or only as light. Also take some time for the group to identify ways that Jesus showed Himself as salt and light—at the same time. Point to His conversation with Martha when He affirmed Mary and gently showed Martha the better way (Luke 10:38-42), or how He carefully confronted the woman at the well (John 4), acting as salt to help her identify sin while shining the light of God's love.