

Jesus Teaches About Discipleship

Summary and Goal

In this session, we will examine Jesus' teaching about the call to and nature of discipleship. We will read about His command to be both exemplary and set apart and yet simultaneously humble. In doing so, we will set a standard both of how to disciple and how to be disciples of Jesus Christ, the principal disciple-maker. The core of our Christian life is in being transformed disciples of Jesus by faith and in purposefully making disciples of others.

Session Outline

1. Jesus' disciples are to be salt and light (Matt. 5:13-16).
2. Jesus' disciples are to obey for God's glory, not their own (Matt. 6:1-4).
3. Jesus' disciples are to live purposefully (Matt. 7:19-24).

Background Passage: Matthew 5–7

Session in a Sentence

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught what it means to live as one of His disciples.

Christ Connection

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught His followers what it means to be His disciple—someone who has been transformed by faith in Jesus and who lives for Him. Just as Jesus came into the world to be light, we too are to live in the world as salt and light for Him.

Missional Application

Because we have been saved by Christ and have committed to follow Him, we live purposefully so that others see His glory, investing in eternal treasures rather than earthly ones.

Group Time

GROUP MEMBER CONTENT

Group content found in the Daily Discipleship Guide is included in this shaded area throughout the session.

Introduction

EXPLAIN: Use the paragraphs in the DDG (p. 48) to help group members feel at ease about answering the question below. Emphasize the hope of teachers on the first day of school.

Maybe you were the straight-A student who thrived in an academic setting, the first hand to spring up when a question was asked. A student who could hardly sleep the night before the first day of class, bursting with excitement about fresh lined notebooks, new pencils, and the uncharted territory of a brand new textbook.

Or perhaps you struggled more with school and had a hard time sitting still and paying attention in class. The words in those fresh textbooks represented a jumble of obscure facts that refused to stick in your brain. You also might have had trouble sleeping the night before, only anxious about the taxing day ahead.

Regardless of what kind of student you were (or still are), you understood the importance of the first day of school. Teachers recognize how important that first day is as well, so they use it to set the tone and expectations for all that is to come in the school year.

INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.



What kind of student were you in school? How has that school personality carried into your adult life? (be prepared to give an answer of your own to jump-start the conversation)

SAY: In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is doing what all teachers hope to do on the first day of school: **setting the tone and expectations for all that is to come.** He is signaling to His listeners that following Him isn't just something at which passive participants can excel—everyone is called to the highest of standards, but only a certain kind of obedience will matter.

SUMMARIZE: In this session, we will examine Jesus' teaching about the call to and nature of discipleship. We will read about His command to be both exemplary and set apart and yet simultaneously humble. In doing so, we will set a standard both of how to disciple and how to be disciples of Jesus Christ, the principal disciple-maker. The core of our Christian life is in being transformed disciples of Jesus by faith and in purposefully making disciples of others.

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Point 1: Jesus' disciples are to be salt and light (Matt. 5:13-16).

READ Matthew 5:13-16 (DDG p. 49).

¹³ “You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt should lose its taste, how can it be made salty? It’s no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled under people’s feet.

¹⁴ “You are the light of the world. A city situated on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ No one lights a lamp and puts it under a basket, but rather on a lampstand, and it gives light for all who are in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

EXPLAIN: Use the first paragraph in the DDG (p. 49) to articulate the purpose of the salt Jesus referred to in the Sermon on the Mount: it was used for **preservation**. Further explain how this applies to Jesus’ disciples.

The salt that Jesus referred to in this passage is more useful than the salt that saturates the average American diet. In Jesus’ day, salt was much more than a seasoning. In a time when there was no refrigeration, salt was an important ingredient in the **preservation** of food. Without it, Jesus’ listeners would have had to deal with rotting meat or fish. Similarly, believers find themselves in the business of **preservation** against decay.

- Our worldly culture is rotting: Deep partisan rifts result in fruitless shouting matches. People feel alone in the world even though they are more connected than ever. Parents fear for the future of their nation and their children.
- While some clamor that this brave new world is an improvement upon times past, Christians in this generation, and in every generation, know that something is not right. The Bible tells us that the creation is *groaning* for the coming of Jesus, the last Adam, to set things right, and believers groan for it too (Rom. 8:22-23). Christians can smell the rot of a culture that has turned from the precepts of the Lord.
- So Christians are called to be the salt of the earth, **preserving** the world from social and moral decay by proclaiming and living the truth of God’s Word for a people who need it. We are called to be a remnant of faithful disciples who maintain their saltiness and their preserving power, all for the glory of God.

INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.



What are some ways Jesus’ followers can serve as salt in the world? (share the gospel; stand up for the truth in love; help people see the wisdom and benefit of a biblical worldview; graciously address sin in others; love and build up the church; affirm what is good in the culture and condemn what is evil)

PACK ITEM 7: THE WORLD'S LIGHT: Call attention to the **John Stott quote** on this poster. Then use the second paragraph in the DDG (p. 49) to expound on what it means for Jesus' followers to be the light of the world.

According to Jesus, His followers are the light of the world. We were made to shine light into the darkest corners of creation for the glory of God. We do not produce this light. God's Word makes it clear that in and of ourselves, all we are capable of producing is darkness (Matt. 6:22-23; John 3:19-20). It is God who lights our lamp (Ps. 18:28), and He lights it through the sacrifice of His one and only Son, Jesus, the true light of the world (John 8:12).

- Jesus goes before us as the perfect example of what it means to be the light of the world. Jesus is the light who shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome Him (John 1:1-5). In Matthew 5:14-16, we have both a *command* and a *hope*.
 - The *command* is to shine our set-apart life in front of a dark and dying world so that by our light the true light—Jesus—might be illuminated for those lost in the darkness.
 - The *hope* is that no matter how dark this world might be, it will not overcome the true light of God.
 - While it might be very easy for a little girl in Sunday School to shout her bold “no” about hiding her light under a bushel, she will eventually grow up to realize that light can illuminate some frightening things. That “little light” might also put a target on her back. Rather than teach His followers to fear the darkness, Jesus—whose confrontation with the darkness would lead to His own crucifixion—calls His disciples to boldness in the face of ridicule, isolation, and persecution. Jesus' identity as the true light of the world reminds us that no matter the results of our shining for His glory, He will be victorious.
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FILL IN THE BLANKS: Provide group members with the answers for the call-out in their DDG (p. 49).

Mission of the Church: The mission of the church is to go into the world in the power of the Spirit and make **disciples** by proclaiming this gospel, calling people to respond in ongoing repentance and faith, and demonstrating the truth and power of the gospel by living under the **lordship** of Christ for the **glory** of God and the **good** of the world.

Essential Doctrine “Mission of the Church”: The church is a sign and instrument of the kingdom of God, a people united by faith in the gospel announcement of the crucified and risen King Jesus. The mission of the church is to go into the world in the power of the Spirit and make **disciples** by proclaiming this gospel, calling people to respond in ongoing repentance and faith, and demonstrating the truth and power of the gospel by living under the **lordship** of Christ for the **glory** of God and the **good** of the world.

Point 2: Jesus' disciples are to obey for God's glory, not their own (Matt. 6:1-4).

READ: Ask a volunteer to read Matthew 6:1-4 (DDG p. 50).

¹ “Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. Otherwise, you have no reward with your Father in heaven. ² So whenever you give to the poor, don't sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be applauded by people. Truly I tell you, they have their reward. ³ But when you give to the poor, don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

EXPLAIN: Use the first paragraph in the DDG (p. 50) to point out that Jesus is not merely concerned with outward conformity but with His followers maintaining the right internal priorities.

Jesus calls disciples to exemplary behavior as salt and light in the world, but then He cautions against misplaced motives in the midst of that exemplary behavior. He is not merely concerned with outward conformity to His precepts but with the right ordering of inward priorities. While our good works may be seen in the world, they are not to be practiced for show.

- We cannot confuse the *show* of “righteousness” with *actual* righteousness. Saying or doing all of the right things before human beings to bring ourselves glory is not true obedience to God.

Application: Social media might make the task of glorifying God seem easy. Just upload a poignant Scripture passage or inspired thought from the comfort of your own couch and *voilà*—Christian duty fulfilled. But two thousand years before Facebook®, Voxel®, or the iPhone® existed, Jesus warned that our righteousness is not to be practiced for show. In the age of the Internet, it is easy to practice our “righteousness” before human beings, just as it is easy to confuse empty practices for righteousness. The draw to get likes, retweets, and followers is real. It can be easy to invest so much energy into becoming influencers in our particular sphere that the focus shifts to our own renown. Though our obsession may appear righteous outwardly, sprinkled with all of the right words, causes, and images, it can be completely self-centered.

INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.



What are some ways we may be tempted to practice our righteousness for personal glory? (we may serve in various ways in the church in order to be noticed and praised; we may use social media to call attention to ourselves while appearing spiritual in our posts; we might commit to pray for people because that is what we are supposed to do as Christians, even though we don't care to follow through)

SAY: Whether we're gathering signatures for an important cause, trying to raise awareness by using a hashtag, or posting a quote or picture for our upcoming Bible study, it is easier than ever to be *disobedient* to Jesus' words. Applause is so readily available to us from those in our immediate communities and from notifications on social media that we don't need literal trumpets to call attention to our good deeds.

EXPLAIN: Use the second paragraph in the DDG (p. 50) to emphasize that according to Jesus, our obedience is ultimately not about us but about God's glory.

While we are to shine our light before men, this light of good deeds is to be shone not for our own praise or glory but that others might glorify our Father in heaven (Matt. 5:16). In this way we will be rewarded by God. Jesus teaches that our reward should not be in the applause or approval of human beings but in Him instead. His reward far outweighs the temporary reward that the trumpeters would receive from anyone who would listen.

- As an example of practicing righteousness with the right priorities, Jesus paints a picture of giving so secret that it could even be secret from one's own body, that one hand wouldn't know what good deed the other has done. Using hyperbole, He's saying that if our other hand knows the good we've done, we might be tempted to puff ourselves up and look for the praise of human beings instead of for the praise and reward of God.
 - Our Savior modeled the blinders that He requests of us. Before His sermon on the mountaintop, He lived it for forty days in the wilderness (see Matt. 4:1-11). At His weakest physical point from fasting, Satan tempted Him to turn stones into bread. Satan was asking Jesus to perform miracles not for His Father's glory but for self-gratification. Jesus saw right through the enemy's ploy. In fact, His final words to Satan reveal the heart of what Jesus is asking us to do in Matthew 6: "Go away, Satan! For it is written: Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only" (Matt. 4:10).
 - In reminding us of where we should garner our satisfaction, Christ takes our eyes that strain toward the temporal and directs them toward the eternal. Human praise is a drop in a bucket with a hole in the bottom; God's reward, however, will fill us to the uttermost.
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INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.



How can we combat the temptation to seek the reward of human applause instead of God's glory and His eternal reward? (be appropriately secretive in our good works; acknowledge our temptations for human applause and pray for God's help to seek His glory alone; meditate on the future reward that God has promised to His faithful children; always remember that God is working in us so we can work out His good purpose)

Point 3: Jesus' disciples are to live purposefully (Matt. 7:19-24).

READ Matthew 7:19-24 (DDG p. 51).

¹⁹ Every tree that doesn't produce good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

²⁰ So you'll recognize them by their fruit.

²¹ "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. ²² On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, didn't we prophesy in your name, drive out demons in your name, and do many miracles in your name?' ²³ Then I will announce to them, 'I never knew you. Depart from me, you lawbreakers!'

²⁴ "Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

EXPLAIN: Use the first paragraph in the DDG (p. 51) to explain Jesus' warning about **outward compliance**. *Illustrate* this warning with the deception and betrayal perpetrated by Jesus' disciple Judas, and *apply* this warning to your group members.

After giving His listeners a blueprint for Christian living, Jesus issued an important warning: **Outward compliance to Jesus' commands is not enough to place someone in the kingdom of God.** You can look really good by the things you say and do. Prophesying, casting out demons, and performing miracles would seem like the pinnacle of good works to perform for the glory of Jesus' name. But just as it is possible to do good works as a show before human beings, it is possible to do good works as a show before God Himself—and He rejects all such shows.

Illustration: Jesus' own disciple Judas would become a chilling illustration of the truth that **outward compliance** is meaningless. He followed Jesus for the three years of His earthly ministry. He heard the sermons, saw the miracles, and was handpicked by the Messiah. If anyone knew all the right things to say and do to persuade people that he was a Christ-follower in *every* sense of the word, it was Judas. And yet, with a simple kiss, he revealed his lack of faith in the Lord Jesus (Matt. 26:47-50). Judas sat at Jesus' Passover table and proclaimed his innocence on the very night Jesus was arrested, but by the time Judas told Jesus that he would never betray the "Rabbi" (notice, not "Lord"), he had already done it (see Matt. 26:14-16,20-25). For thirty pieces of silver, Judas showed that his **outward compliance** during Jesus' earthly ministry was all for show.

Application: While one's semblance of fruit might fool casual onlookers temporarily, God is not deceived. People may not get caught in their webs of deceit until the day of judgment, but it *will* catch up with them. Jesus sees through **outward compliance**. So we would do well to do the will of the Father, to pray to Him for a growing faith in Jesus, and to test ourselves to see if we are in the faith (2 Cor. 13:5).

INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.

 What is the difference between outward compliance to Christ's commands and inward conformity to Christ's lordship? (a matter of faith in Jesus; obedience that flows from faith in God's acceptance through Jesus' sacrifice for us instead of a desire to prove oneself before God and others; a humble submission to Jesus' commands for the glory of His name alone)

EXPLAIN: Use the second paragraph in the DDG (p. 51) to explain why Jesus can use the term “lawbreakers” to refer to those who practice mere outward conformity to God’s standards.

In His warning about outward obedience, Jesus called those who practice seemingly biblical living without inward change “lawbreakers.” In doing so, He emphasized yet again that the keeping of the law goes beyond just obeying a list of rules. If this law-keeping doesn’t flow from a heart submitted to the God who sees the heart, then it is just as bad as lawlessness. Only if we obey through faith in Jesus can we be considered law-keepers, since Jesus is the fulfillment of the law (Matt. 5:17).

Voices from the Church

“The true disciple expresses the sincerity of his confession of Jesus’ identity as the Lord through obedient living. Jesus was not pitting obedience against faith but was insisting that obedience is the necessary expression of true faith.”¹

—Charles Quarles

Illustration: While we might think of the Pharisees as the villains in the Gospel stories, in their time, they were presumed to be the heroes. Known for their religious knowledge and piety, they appeared to keep the law of God near perfectly. They were so intent on keeping the law of God that they erected secondary laws *around* God’s laws in order to make perfectly sure that they stayed on the right path. In the midst of the Greco-Roman immorality of their day, they maintained a strict code of righteousness that was seen as exemplary. Yet for all their “righteousness,” they still could not enter the kingdom of heaven because it was a righteousness of show instead of a righteousness from faith (Matt. 5:20).

Application: Even though it’s unlikely that we could ever appear as righteous as a Pharisee in Jesus’ day, we could fool everyone around us pretty easily. In fact, we could even fool ourselves. We could actually believe that our righteous acts are our saving grace instead of the blood of Jesus. But just like the Pharisees, we would be sorely mistaken. Our spiritual houses would not be built on the firm foundation of Jesus’ righteousness but on the shaky and meaningless foundation of outward compliance. So we must hear Jesus’ words in faith and act on them in faith.

My Mission

EXPLAIN: In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus isn't simply telling His listeners to "do better" or "try harder"—He's actually reminding them that the only way to do the things that He is asking them to do is to be radically transformed from the inside out by faith. Jesus is not interested in watching us put on a show; He wants to see us walking in an obedience that is more than skin-deep. He wants our light to shine before a dying world not because we're gritting our teeth and trying to turn on the bulb by our own power but because we are walking in such obedience to Him that others cannot help but see. He wants us to take every step by faith in His grace, not in our own power or in our own perceived righteousness.

READ the following missional application statement in the DDG (p. 52), and encourage group members to choose at least one of the options below as a way to respond to the truth of God's Word.

Because we have been saved by Christ and have committed to follow Him, we live purposefully so that others see His glory, investing in eternal treasures rather than earthly ones.

- **What step of faith will you take to live purposefully for Jesus' glory and not your own?**
- **How might your group need to act or change so your ministry to one another and others brings glory to Jesus and not to your group?**
- **Who do you know needs to hear Jesus' warning that outward compliance is meaningless apart from faith in Jesus?**



Voices from Church History

"The Christian is not only to be different, he is to glory in this difference. He is to be as different from other people as the Lord Jesus Christ was clearly different from the world in which He lived."²

—Martyn Lloyd-Jones
(1899-1981)

CLOSE IN PRAYER: Our Father in heaven, through Your Son, Jesus, You have rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of light so that we might reflect Your light to the world. As those indwelt by the Holy Spirit, help us to obey and bear fruit fitting for Your kingdom as we invite fellow sinners to become disciples of Jesus by faith. Amen.

INSTRUCT: As your group departs, encourage group members to read and respond to the **Daily Study** devotions in their DDG (pp. 53-55), which build and expand upon the group study. Also advocate for small groups or families to use **Encourage One Another** (p. 56) for mutual accountability and fellowship grounded upon the foundation of God's Word.

Daily Discipleship

Throughout the week following the session, use the ideas below to remind and encourage your group members to live as disciples of Jesus Christ. The **Daily Study** devotions in the DDG (pp. 53-55) will help group members get into God's Word and study it for themselves. **Encourage One Another** (p. 56) will help group members and families fellowship with one another with purpose.

Daily Study

Brief daily devotions in the DDG (pp. 53-55) will help group members take initiative in their own discipleship.

- Make sure all group members have access to a Bible to read. Have some Bibles available to give to guests who may need one, or offer to get one and arrange a time to meet to give it and show how to navigate it for the devotions.
- Share the following idea from the devotion for **Day 4** as a part of point 2 in the session: **He shows His listeners that the problem isn't in the righteous acts of the Pharisees but in the deadened, affirmation-seeking hearts behind those actions.**



Consider leading by example and reading the daily devotions yourself with your own DDG. Based on your study, use brief messages throughout the week (group text, email, social media) to encourage your group to keep up with their daily time in God's Word and to live it out. Here are a couple of examples you can use:

- **Day 2: "God chose for His plan of salvation on this earth to include us; He is glorified before others because our works point them to Him."**
- **Day 5: "Jesus clarifies that our judgment of others' actions needs to start with a deep personal look at our own sinfulness."**



Visit www.GospelProject.com/Blog for additional content and resources you can use to help group members gain more insight into their daily studies. Send group members a link or a portion of a blog post or other content that you believe will be helpful and encouraging for their time in God's Word.

Encourage One Another

This brief plan for fellowship and accountability in the group member's DDG (p. 56) will help groups of 2-4 people to meet sometime during the week to reflect on the session and to share how God is working and they are responding. It could also be used for family discipleship with students and children who are using *The Gospel Project* in their groups.

- **Encourage group members to point out how they see one another living as salt and light in their respective contexts and ways they can do even more.**
- See yourself as a member of the group who also needs encouragement in the faith, and participate in such a group this week.

Additional Commentary

Point 1: Jesus' disciples are to be salt and light (Matt. 5:13-16).

“The Sermon was meticulously structured to communicate Jesus’ demand for a greater righteousness (5:17-20). The teachings are essentially grouped into units of three. The Beatitudes and the ‘salt and light’ passages formed the introduction (5:3-16). Six illustrations of the greater righteousness followed, contrasting the Old Testament Law with Christ’s ethic (5:21-48), then three examples of true piety (6:1-18), followed by three teachings about money and anxiety (6:19-34) and then by three sections on how to treat others (7:1-12). Jesus concluded His sermon with three examples, focusing on the only two responses possible for those who heard Him—acceptance or rejection (7:13-27).”³

“You are the light of the world—not of a single nation nor of twenty cities but of the entire inhabited earth. You are like a light for the mind, far better than any particular sunbeam. Similarly, you are spiritual salt. First you are salt. Then you are light. The metaphors of salt and light drive home the great benefit of these stinging words and the profit of this rigorous discipline, how it binds and does not permit us to become dissolute in our behavior.”⁴

“What did Jesus mean when He said salt could ‘lose its taste’ so that it becomes worthless and must ‘be thrown out and trampled on by men’ (Matt. 5:13, HCSB)? Possibly He referred to impurities mixed with the salt that diluted its effect. If so, He intended this as a warning to His disciples to remain faithful to fulfill their responsibility to salt the earth. Or possibly Jesus stated an obvious impossibility. Pure salt stays pure. He considered it foolish to think that genuine believers would allow impurities to render them ineffective in their task.”⁵

Point 2: Jesus' disciples are to obey for God's glory, not their own (Matt. 6:1-4).

“**before other people.** Public acts of obedience are valuable and honorable, but if they are done merely for the sake of public recognition, there will be no reward from God (cf. vv. 2,5,16). **Hypocrites** originally referred to the Greek actors who wore different masks to play various roles. Jesus criticizes the religious leaders, most notably the Pharisees, for a particular form of hypocrisy: doing right things for the wrong reasons. To **give to the needy** was one of the pillars of piety, but the religious leaders gave to the needy in order to be **praised** by others. The tragic irony was that they had **received their reward** of public and professional acclaim, but that was all the reward they would ever receive, and such fleeting human adulation precludes satisfaction of the deep longing of people’s hearts to stand approved by their **Father who sees in secret.**”⁶

“Gifts for the poor were taken up in synagogue services, and often the donors gave substantially in order to be seen to be giving. They paraded their wealth in a boastful manner to draw attention to themselves. It was equivalent to announcing their giving *with trumpets* (6:2a). Such people are *hypocrites*, or actors (6:2b). The feeble accolades and admiration they receive from people is their payment in full. It is better to give secretly so that the beneficiary is not embarrassed and only God, *who sees what is done in secret*, knows (6:3-4). The donor’s reward is far greater and more significant, for it has eternal consequences. God himself rewards such giving.”⁷

Point 3: Jesus’ disciples are to live purposefully (Matt. 7:19-24).

“The imagery is clear: Our way of life—our words and deeds—proves the truth or falsity of our message. For a time we may be able to keep up the pretense of living by the standards and values of the kingdom, but what we really are will eventually be revealed by our actions. No matter what image we present to people, our way of life will ultimately reveal who we really are and determine our fate (7:19-20) ... The ultimate reward of discipleship is entrance into *the kingdom of heaven* and the only way to receive that reward is obedience to *the will of the Father* (7:21) ... What the false disciples are claiming to have done is not wrong, but is insufficient. The fact that Jesus will say: *‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’* undoubtedly signifies a final rejection and serves as a warning to us (7:23). The basis for their rejection is that they are, in effect, evildoers because disobedience to the Father’s will amounts to sin.”⁸

“Being aware of false prophets is the consistent message throughout 7:15-23 (cf. 7:6). In one sense we can connect this theme with the broad and narrow ways of 7:13-14, as the false prophets are ones who, among other things, would mislead people to practice piety along the lines of the broad way (external only) rather than the narrow way (wholehearted). However, there is also an integrity and larger point to 7:15-23 that are not just flowing from that preceding image. The reality of false teachers and prophets and the warnings against them are not uncommon in the Old Testament (Deut. 18:20-22; Jer. 6:13-14; 14:14-18; 23:11; Lam. 2:14; Ezek. 13:1-23) ... In the context of the Sermon, false prophets and teachers are defined not so much as ones not speaking the truth (though that is implied) but as those who appear pious but do not do the true whole-person righteousness. Thus, the scribes and Pharisees are the first examples that come to mind (Matt. 5:20; cf. the pointed warnings and woes in 23:1-39).”⁹

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Cornerstones: 200 Questions and Answers to Learn Truth

Jesus was born to die—a jarring statement indeed, but one that is quite true. Christmas and Easter are fused together, linked hand-in-hand in such a way that each is dependent on the other for its meaning. The theology of such a statement is solid but incomplete, for Jesus was not born to die immediately but rather some thirty years later. Jesus' life, then, was not utilitarian—existing just so it could be taken away and picked up again—it had greater meaning and purpose. What Jesus did during those thirty years of walking the earth mattered; He lived a life of perfect obedience to the Father. He satisfied the demands of righteousness that we could not so He might take away our sin when we trust in Him and so His righteousness might be credited to us, making us fully pleasing to the Father (2 Cor. 5:21).

In this volume we delve deeper into the marvelous truth of the incarnation to see still further glimpses of Christ's glory on earth. His righteousness did not occur in a vacuum but rather among people, ordinary people like you and me. In each unit of this volume, we will look at Jesus' interactions with people as through a prism, making slight turns to see different yet equally brilliant perspectives of Jesus' works. In Unit 22, we will see Jesus' power to heal coupled with His deep compassion for people, even those who were marginalized in society. In Unit 23, we will see Jesus' riveting teachings empowered by His divine authority. And finally, in Unit 24, we will see Jesus' miraculous power over nature, revealing His identity as Creator God.

Each ray of light we will see points to the same truth: that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God given for our salvation. Jesus was indeed born to die, but He lived so that we too might live.

EDITOR