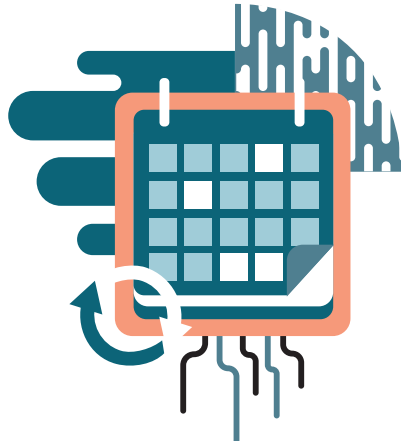


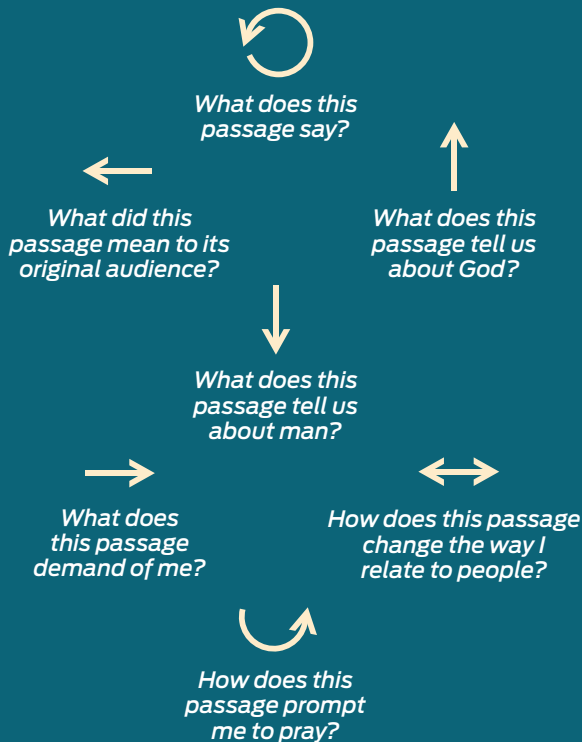
# Daily Devotions



Day 1

## Matthew 5:1-12

### The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



So often those who encountered Jesus missed the fact that He was the Messiah because He did not come to earth the way that they had envisioned He would. Where they had expected Him to ride in on a blaze of glory, He was born to a teenage mother in the town of Bethlehem. While they expected Him to perform His signs and wonders to the sound of thunderous applause, He often told those whom He healed to keep their healing quiet. While they expected Him to throw off the yoke of their Greco-Roman society, He was crucified under its reign. In the Beatitudes, Jesus beautifully captures the heart that He displayed here on earth—one of humility, mercy, purity, and peace, one that was willing to mourn, submitting to persecution, and was poor in spirit. And He reminded His listeners that even though these qualities were not often honored among His listeners, through those qualities, they were marked as blessed.

By turning the Jews' expectations of the Messiah on their head, Jesus drew the focus away from the earthly trappings of earthly royalty and toward the marks of royalty that are honored in heaven. He exemplified the type of spirit He required, pointing away from an earthly reward to a heavenly one, promising eternal blessing for those who heed His words.

**What are some of the ways you can practically exemplify the Beatitudes in your life?**

## Day 2

# Matthew 5:13-15

We often hear about how bad salt is for us. It is often linked to hypertension, causing great strain to your heart, brain, arteries, and kidneys. Many people are bent on eliminating as much salt from their diet as possible. But in our fear of excess, we know that completely eliminating all sodium from our diets would be equally detrimental; we need sodium for our muscles, nerves, and blood pressure to function properly.

We need light, too. Without it, our bodies grow weak from Vitamin-D deficiency, our vegetation ceases to grow, and our vision dissipates.

Salt and light are a daily earthly necessity, and similarly, the salt and light that come as a result of the good news that Jesus' kingdom is incredibly necessary for a lost and dying world. God chose for His plan of salvation on this earth to include us, and through us, He is glorified before others because our works point them to Him.

**How can you be a light in your everyday environment?**

## Day 3

# Matthew 5:17-48

We are used to seeing the Pharisees as the “bad guys” in the Gospel accounts, but in this passage, Jesus tells His listeners that unless their righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and the Pharisees they would never get into the kingdom of heaven (v. 20).

Given the fact that the Pharisees and scribes prided themselves in obeying every iota of the law, it might seem impossible for our righteousness to surpass theirs, but that is the standard that Jesus has given us. He tells us that murder and adultery begin in the heart (vv. 22,28). Further, He charges us to keep our word (v. 37), turn the other cheek (v. 39), and love our enemies (v. 44).

The Pharisees made a habit of building more laws around Scripture's laws, but that is not what Jesus is doing here. Instead of adding to the law, He is piercing through to the heart of the law, exposing outward compliance for what it is: a failure to submit to the Lord in our hearts.

**How can we tell the difference between outward compliance to the law and inward compliance?**

## Day 4

# Matthew 6:1-34

After He told His listeners that their righteousness must exceed that of the Pharisees, Jesus continues to present the practical implications of that righteousness. 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. He doesn't ask His listeners to stop praying, giving, or fasting, but, instead models how to do these things in a way that honors God.

Jesus reminds us that our treasure is not here on earth, in the physical gifts we might receive, but instead in heaven. He stills our anxious thoughts, reminding us that our prayers, fasting, and giving are not the things that produce His will, but acts of obedience in the face of a God who cares for us. There are many times when Jesus speaks in parables that mask His meaning for those whose eyes the Spirit has not yet opened, but this passage offers some of His plainest instruction.

**In what ways does this part of Jesus' sermon challenge you concretely to exceed the "righteousness of the Pharisees"?**

## Day 5

# Matthew 7:1-29

Even the most biblically illiterate person you know can probably tell you that the Bible says not to judge. You may have had the words tossed at you when you're trying to point out sinful behavior, and perhaps you've been driven into silence upon hearing this misapplication of the verse so many times. Matthew 7, however, is far from a lesson on tolerance.

In this same passage, Jesus preaches that some of the very people who believe they are above judgment are judgment-bound. In addition to including the saying "Do not judge, so that you won't be judged," the passage also holds gems like "Depart from me, you lawbreakers!" (v. 23). Following the verse that is often taken out of context as a condemnation against any kind judging whatsoever, Jesus clarifies that our judgment needs to start with a deep personal look at our own sinfulness. Then He tells us that once we have seen ourselves clearly, we are to turn our eyes to our brothers to judge (with righteous judgment; see John 7:24) their actions—and He tells us exactly the fruit we are to be looking for in both our lives and theirs.

**How can we judge ourselves and others with righteous judgment (rather than self-righteous judgment)?**