

Small Groups

SERMON-BASED STUDY GUIDE

Sermon on the Mount – Week 9 – *The Power of Authenticity*

Nov. 5, 2023

DIGGING IN:

1. On the last page of this guide, read the brief summaries of the sermons we have heard so far in this series. Which one has stood out to you the most? What have you learned or been reminded of that has stuck with you?
2. Silently, as you think about what you have heard so far in the Sermon on the Mount, ask God “What untransformed part of me are you revealing?” Write it down.
3. Turning our attention to this week’s message – Read Matthew 5:33-17. We live in a different culture than Jesus’ time, where oath-making was a serious business. What are some ways that we make “oaths” in our own time and culture?

MAKING IT REAL:

1. This text is “fundamentally about how you present yourself to the world around you, particularly in conversation.” Most of us, to some extent, participate in “fronting” – putting on a false façade to impress people. Take a minute to consider what façades you are most tempted to put on and write them down.
2. “Let your yes be yes and your no be no.” (Mt 5:37)
Alex said that “Our struggle with yes and no is tied to our desire to *convince* somebody else to do something they might not want to do, and our desire to *compensate* just a little bit for who we wish we were, to build ourselves up a little bit more.” We have a tendency to push the truth a bit to get what we want or convey what we want. In what ways do you identify with this struggle?
3. The answer to the struggle: Jesus invites us to find our identity in Him. When we understand and live in our true identity, our need to convince or compensate, to “front,” can fall away. What does it mean to “find your identity in Jesus?”
4. Who does Jesus say that you are? Here is a partial list. Choose one word from this list that you would like to focus on in the prayer practice below. Share

with the group what word you have chosen (and why, if you are comfortable doing so).

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Valuable (Mt 6:26)• Free (Gal 5:1)• A Temple of God (1 Cor 6:19)• Chosen (Col 3:12)• Loved (Jn 15:9)• God's Co-worker (1 Cor 3:9)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wonderfully Made (Ps 139:14)• Forgiven (Acts 13:39)• Beloved (Col 3:12)• Free from Condemnation (Rom 8:1)• Seen (1 Peter 3:12)
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5. How would seeing yourself the way Jesus sees you help you to be more honest in relationships and diminish your need to "convince" and "compensate?"

PRAYER IDEAS

Alex offered the idea of "Centering Prayer." Take some time in your group to practice this silent prayer practice together:

- Close your eyes.
- Recognize God's presence as the one who created the Universe, the world, and you, and who holds you together.
- In the silence pick a word that signals your intention to allow God to speak to you and work in you. (For the purposes of this exercise together, choose a word from above that describes how Jesus sees you).
- As you speak (think) that word in the silence, allow it to permeate you. Receive the truth of that word and think about how it looks and what it means in your life.
- Ask Jesus to bring to the surface anything you hold from your past that causes you to look for identity in anything other than Him (especially as related to the truthful word you are thinking about). Ask for and receive His healing over whatever comes up.
- Repeat the word, and thank Him for speaking His truth over you.

WANT TO DIG A LITTLE DEEPER?

(Extra Bible study ideas)

Google "Identity in Christ" and create a list of your own of all the things that are true about you in Jesus.

Read the book in "Additional Resources" below to help you discern not just what God says is true about ALL of us as believers, but how to discover your *own, unique* God-given identity that can be lived out in the way you show up in the world.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Red Couch Theology Podcast

If you or group members have questions around parts of the sermon that are not included in the discussion guide, it's always helpful to listen to *Red Couch Theology*, where Alex and Aaron talk about the sermon and answer questions that come in from people in the congregation. <https://guysdrinkingtea.podbean.com/>

Living Fearless by Jamie Winship

A book about discovering your unique God-given identity and learning how to live it out.

Short summaries of the Sermon on the Mount series so far:

1 - **Intro**: SOM is the "Beginner's Guide to the Kingdom of Heaven." A "Guide to Human Flourishing."

2 – **Beatitudes** – You are invited to the Kingdom even if you feel like a "misfit." Jesus calls those blessed who the rest of the world would not consider blessed.

3 – **Persecution** – How do you handle the emotions that come when you have been persecuted or wronged in some way? We can invite Jesus into every emotion we feel; he meets us there. (See the study guide from Week #3 for a guided prayer).

4 – **Salt & Light** - "When people see you, they'll see what life with God is meant to look like." How is Jesus helping you understand your true identity and how you show up in the world?

5 – **Rules of Christianity** – Are you living "by the rules" or from a transformed heart? "The best gift you can give is your transformed self."

6 – **Anger & Contempt** – What are the emotions underlying your anger? Invite Jesus into those emotions. How might processing those emotions with Jesus transform your relationships?

7 – **Lust** – Find wholeness in Jesus, Choose human interactions (see everyone as a person), Choose to *see* instead of *look* (seeing the *whole* person, not just what's visible on the outside).

8 – **Marriage & Divorce** - "A restored and re-storied marriage is a wonderful witness to a watching world." For what is past, *grace*. For what is present, *grace* and *hope*.

9 – **Oaths** – Living in your true identity in Christ helps you be truly honest in your relationships and avoid convincing and compensating.