

Come Follow Me -- February 25 – March 3

Matthew 6 – 7

He Taught Them as One Having Authority

Matthew 6 and 7 continue the Sermon on the Mount. Studying to find context for Jesus' teachings can really enlighten us.

Matthew 6:

Almsgiving (vs 1 – 4):

In Judaism almsgiving includes any kind of charity, and the belief is that generous giving of alms brings abundance to the giver temporally and spiritually. Jesus, however, makes a direct reference to adding donations to the temple treasury where people are in the public eye.



The story of the “widow’s mite” is found in Mark 12: 41 – 44 and Luke 21: 1 – 4. Jesus comments to His apostles that the offering made by the widow is greater than the offering made by the rich, because she gave all she had, even though the amount was so small. Her offering of two mites equaled the smallest Roman coin, worth just a few minutes of work for the laborer. But Jesus also knew the heart of the widow and knew that her offering was not just a huge sacrifice, but that it was sincere, and not to be seen of men. In fact, her tiny offering may have been embarrassing for her to make.

Note that in the Matthew verses, Jesus says, “Therefore when thou doest *thine* alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee...” This is a play on words, because the location for giving alms to the temple treasury consisted of [thirteen trumpet-like receptacles of brass](http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/1295-alms) (<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/1295-alms>). They were shaped like this so the person making the offering couldn’t take the coins back out, simply pretending to make an offering. These trumpet-shaped receptacles were used also by Christians until about 400 years after Christ’s birth, when alms-boxes completely replaced them and were located in churches.

Note that offerings into the temple treasury were for temple use. Jews were expected to make other offerings to support the poor.

You might want to reflect with your family on the methods we use in the Church today to pay our tithes and offerings. These offerings are completely private. There are no plaques in Latter-

day Saint churches like this one. In some churches there is a plaque on each pew honoring those who donated the money to pay for it.



You might also want to discuss tithing settlement, where our honest statement of having paid a full tithe is acceptable to the bishop and the Church.

Jesus teaches the people how to pray (vs 5 – 15):

It's really worthwhile to understand how the people of the times understood prayer and then it's easier to see what Christ was trying to teach them. The earliest recorded prayers in the Bible are those of prophets like Abraham conversing directly with God. Thus, the personal prayer has always been part of Judaism.

When the Jews were taken into Babylon, they adopted the language of Assyria and Babylon, Aramaic. Since the Greek Empire had swallowed up all of the Middle East 300 years before Christ, the universal language and language of the marketplace at the time of Christ was Greek. An educated person would have learned Latin to be able to communicate with the Romans, and there were certainly dialects.

When the Jews returned from Babylon, their prophet, Ezra, was very concerned about their loss of Hebrew, which was the holy language of the scriptures. Ezra was worried about the purity of their petitions to God, so he formulated 18 written prayers to be said for certain situations. The Jews recited these prayers morning, noon, and night, as sacrifices were offered in the temple (morning, afternoon) or finally consumed in the evening. These prayers (now 19) are offered currently four times on Sabbaths and holidays, and five times on [Yom Kippur](#) (Day of Atonement).

At the time of Christ, with all that the Jews had been through and were going through, prayer became a petition for all of Israel as a nation and not just for the private needs of the individual. Many prayers were reserved for gatherings of Jews into congregations or in synagogues.

Also, women were not required to do any religious observance under the Law of Moses that had a time or seasonal requirement to it, because they were engaged in doing good within their

families. Jewish law says doing good in one way need not be interrupted by the requirement to do good in another way. Because they were normally less educated than men, they also did not learn rote prayers or read them. A prayer from the heart at any time of day or night suited them, and now this scribe who spoke with authority from God was ratifying the kind of prayer they had full access to.

Knowing these things may change the way you see The Lord's Prayer, Christ's instruction on how to pray:

5 And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites *are*: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

6 But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

7 But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen *do*: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

8 Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

9 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

10 Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as *it is* in heaven.

11 Give us this day our daily bread.

12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

The Jews needed to be reminded how to truly engage in personal prayer, and that they could do it any time in private.

There are some lessons for us in the Church that you may not have noticed. Verse 7 is a lesson that few understand. Knowing that verse, we worry about praying about the same things every day, but if that is so, we misunderstand the verse. The word "vain" has two meanings. One is self-aggrandizement (think about the Zoramites and the Rameumptum), in other words, praying to show off. The other definition of "vain" is "useless." Note that Christ is referring to prayers to heathen gods! Such prayers are useless because they are to idols or Greco-Roman gods that are fanciful and not real.

Joseph Smith offers us a corrected translation of verse 13. He translated it as, "And suffer us not to be led into temptation." God is not the one who leads us into temptation.

Matthew 7

Judge not (vs 1 – 4):

Joseph Smith retranslated the first verse as the following—"Now these are the words which Jesus taught his disciples that they should say unto the people. Judge not unrighteously, that ye be not judged; but judge righteous judgment." We live at a time when the only sin is judging others, but in many other scriptures Jesus talks about righteous judgment. Jesus was very harsh

on hypocrisy, however, and when the “mote” in our brother’s eye is a splinter, and the “beam” in our own eye is a building support, we may not be seeing very clearly.

You never knew me (vs 21 – 23):

Joseph Smith retranslated “I never knew you” in verse 23 to “You never knew me.” What is the difference?

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NEW TESTAMENT 2019

JUDGING OTHERS OBJECT LESSON

Matthew 6-7

The first verse of Matthew 7 tells us to not judge others. And the Joseph Smith Translation of this verse further clarifies that we shouldn't *unrighteously* judge. We learn that how we judge others is how we ourselves will be judged, so we need to be careful. Here is a fun object lesson to help your kids understand why we shouldn't unrighteously judge others:

Materials: different sized shoes

1. Talk about how easy it can be to judge someone else.
2. Have everyone slip on shoes that are either too small or too large for their feet.
3. Then have everyone try to walk around the room or down the street in the shoes.
4. Come back together and talk about what it was like trying to walk in shoes that didn't fit. Was it hard? How long did it take you to get somewhere? Which shoes do you prefer?
5. Liken this to judging others. You could read Matthew 7:1 together. We don't know what everyone is going through (or what their "shoes" are like), so judging others is often misguided. Christ is the only one who knows what we're all going through, which is why he will be the one to give our final judgment.

Resources for discussion:

- ["Judging Others" section of True to the Faith](#) (explains when it is okay to judge others righteously)
- ["The Merciful Obtain Mercy"](#) by Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf
- ["Judging Others"](#) Gospel Topic page
- ["Bullying - Stop It"](#) video
- ["Developing Good Judgment and Not Judging Others"](#) by Gregory A. Schwitzer

Come Follow Me

NEW TESTAMENT 2019

PRAYER HANDS CRAFT

Matthew 6-7

In Matthew 6, Christ teaches us how we should pray. It should be earnest and not contain “vain repetitions” (verse 7). He also gives us the Lord’s Prayer (verses 9-13), which President Russell M. Nelson taught serves as a pattern to follow when praying, not something to memorize. Help your young kids understand how to pray as Jesus taught by completing this simple craft:

Materials: paper (colored construction paper is a fun option), scissors, pens/pencils, colored pencils, crayons, markers

1. Read Matthew 6 as a family. Briefly discuss what Christ teaches about prayer.
2. Help your kids trace their hand on a piece of paper and cut it out.
3. On each finger, write one thing you could pray about. Here’s an example:
 - a. Say thank you
 - b. Praise God
 - c. Ask for forgiveness
 - d. Ask for help
 - e. Talk about your day and how you’re feeling
4. Instead (or in addition), you could list five things that make a good prayer. Here’s another example:
 - a. Pray in Secret
 - b. Don’t use vain repetitions
 - c. Be respectful and reverent
 - d. Be sincere
 - e. Have a constant prayer in your heart
5. Allow your kids to decorate the prayer hand(s).
6. When you have family prayers or help your kids with individual prayers, you can pull out the prayer hands and remember what Jesus taught about prayer.

Resources for discussion:

- [“How to Pray” Friend](#) page (an adaptation of Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf’s [“The Hope of God’s Light”](#) talk in which he mentions six elements of prayer)
- [“Using the Supernal Gift of Prayer”](#) by Elder Richard G. Scott
- [“Daily Bread: Experience”](#) video (for older children)
- LDS Media Library [“Prayer” section](#)

[“Sermon on the Mount: The Lord’s Prayer”](#) video

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NEW TESTAMENT 2019

WISE MAN AND FOOLISH MAN OBJECT LESSON

Matthew 6-7

At the end of Matthew 7, we are taught the wise man and foolish man parable by the Savior. Those who build their foundation upon a rock will survive the rains and floods. But those who build their foundation upon sand will wash away when the rains and floods come. Here's a fun activity for kids to help them understand this parable:

Materials: cookie sheet, rock, sand (dirt or flour also work), small figures (Little Tikes, quarters, etc), water

1. Read the story of the wise man and the foolish man in Matthew 7:24-29 as a family.
2. Place the rock and a little mound of sand in the cookie sheet. Then place one small figure (or quarter) on the rock and put another on the mound of sand.
3. Explain that you're going to do an experiment to see exactly what happens when the rain comes down on these two foundations.
4. Have one of the kids slowly pour water on the rock. Discuss what happened.
5. Have another kid slowly pour water on the sand. Discuss what happened this time.
6. Talk about what we can do to make sure our foundations are like rocks.

Resources for discussion:

- Helaman 5:12
- ["The Wise Man and the Foolish Man"](#) *Friend* resources
- ["The Wise Man and the Foolish Man"](#) song
- ["The Wise Man and the Foolish Man"](#) video
- [Friend activities and coloring page](#)
- ["A Sure Foundation"](#) by Sheldon F. Child

*You can also do the Building Your Testimony Activities from the week of January 21-27 on Third Hour's Come Follow Me resource page