

JESUS^{AT THE} CENTER OF THE KINGDOM

GROUP GUIDE

This guide is designed to help you study the Scriptures and deepen your relationship with God. Use this guide by yourself or with others.

To find a group, visit brookwoodchurch.org/groups.

Message Title: *Counterfeit Faith*

July 26, 2026

CONNECT

If new people have joined your group, take time to introduce yourselves to each other.

1. When have you seen someone mistake busyness for genuine health or growth?
2. What's one thing you're bringing into group today—joy, stress, gratitude, tiredness, hope, something else?

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

This is the third part in a message series titled *Jesus at the Center of the Kingdom*, which covers the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5-7. In the summer of 2024, we looked at Matthew 5. In the summer of 2025, we studied Matthew 6. We're concluding the series this summer, studying Matthew 7.

Matthew 5-7 is most commonly referred to as *The Sermon on the Mount* because Jesus gave this powerful teaching from a mountainside (*Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain...* Matthew 5:1a ESV). The name simply points to where it happened, but the message is much more than a location. It's an invitation to another way of life. It's a call to a life of humility that restores and strengthens relationships, to a life of prayer that draws us closer to God, and into a relationship with God that realigns us with His purpose for our lives. It provides us a way to know what is true and who we can really trust. It's a call to build our lives on the foundation of Jesus so we can stand firm when the storms of life come crashing in. Ultimately, *The Sermon on the Mount* is Jesus' announcement of what His kingdom is like and what kind of people His grace is forming us to become. *May we be these kind of people.*

PRAY

Take a few minutes to quiet your heart and release the cares of the day. Take a couple of deep breaths and allow any tightness you feel in your neck and shoulders to relax. Then pray together, asking God to meet each of you right where you are. Ask Him to show you more of His beauty, His truth and His direction. Invite others to voice their prayers as they feel led.

GROUP TIPS

- If your group has eight or more people, it might be helpful to break into circles of four or five for greater participation and deeper discussion. When you come back together, invite each group to share a few takeaways from their conversation.
- Don't worry if you don't get to all the questions. Spend time reading and really thinking about what the Bible is saying and what God is revealing to you personally.

STUDY AND DISCUSSION

Matthew 7:21-23 (ESV)

²¹“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²²On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and

cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ ²³And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’”

1. What repeated phrase does Jesus say will not be enough by itself?
2. What contrast does Jesus make between saying *Lord, Lord* and entering the kingdom of heaven?
3. What words in this passage feel especially sobering or weighty?
4. What helps you tell the difference between going through motions and living from real trust?
5. What do the people in the passage seem to misunderstand about their relationship with Jesus?
6. When you hear the phrase *I never knew you* what emotions or questions come up?
7. What does it mean to be a *worker of lawlessness*?
8. When have you found yourself confusing spiritual activity with spiritual life?
9. How does this passage deepen your understanding of grace, obedience, faith and discipleship?
10. Where do you need to receive grace instead of trying to prove yourself?

DEEPER STUDY AND REFLECTION

11. Read Romans 5:18-19 and Ephesians 2:8-9.
 - a. How are people saved?
 - b. What role do our works have in salvation?
 - c. How do these passages help you understand that the Gospel is something received, not achieved?
 - d. What encourages you or challenges you from these passages?

Take time this week to reflect on these passages from The Message* version of the Bible:

Matthew 7:21-23 (MSG)

“Knowing the correct password—saying ‘Master, Master,’ for instance— isn’t going to get you anywhere with me. What is required is serious obedience—*doing* what my Father wills. I can see it now—at the Final Judgment thousands strutting up to me and saying, ‘Master, we preached the Message, we bashed the demons, our super-spiritual projects had everyone talking.’ And do you know what I am going to say? ‘You missed the boat. All you did was use me to make yourselves important. You don’t impress me one bit. You’re out of here.’”

Hosea 8:1-3 (MSG)

“Blow the trumpet! Sound the alarm!
Vultures are circling over God’s people
Who have broken my covenant
and defied my revelation.
Predictably, Israel cries out, ‘My God! We know you!’
But they don’t act like it.
Israel will have nothing to do with what’s good,
and now the enemy is after them.”

* The Message is commonly understood as a paraphrase rather than a formal translation. NavPress explains, *Eugene Peterson renders the meaning, tone, and force of the biblical text in fresh, idiomatic English rather than closely following the original wording.* It can help familiar passages sound fresh again, especially for devotional reading. But for study, doctrine and memorization, a more formal or balanced translation such as NIV, ESV, NASB, CSB or NLT is safer.

LIVE IT OUT

Based on this week’s lesson, God is calling me to move from _____ to _____ .

Ask God what He wants to say to you, then spend a few minutes quietly listening for Him to speak. This could be a word or phrase from the passage that stands out to you, or a simple thought He brings to mind.

PRAY

Share what you sensed God saying to you and pray for each other.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY

Here's a great verse to memorize based on this week's teaching. Read it every day until you can repeat it without thinking. Trust God to bring it back to mind at just the right time!

*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves,
it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast.*

Ephesians 2:8-9 (NIV)