

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: *False Prophets*

July 19, 2026

CONNECT

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

1. When have you had to discern whether someone was trustworthy?
2. What's a verse, phrase, song or truth that has stuck with you recently?

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 7:15-20 (ESV)

¹⁵ “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶ You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?

¹⁷ So, every healthy tree bears good fruit,

but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.”

1. What words or images stand out to you in this passage?
2. What contrast does Jesus make between outward appearance and inward reality?
3. Why do you think Jesus uses the image of *ravenous wolves in sheep's clothing*?
4. What does the repeated phrase about recognizing people by their fruits emphasize?
5. What kinds of fruit does Jesus mention indirectly through the tree imagery?
6. What tone do you hear in Jesus' warning—harsh, protective, urgent, pastoral or something else?
7. What does this passage say about the connection between a person's nature and what their life produces?
8. What feels simple in this passage, and what feels difficult?
9. How can we practice discernment without becoming harsh or self-righteous?
10. Do you tend to be more trusting, more skeptical or somewhere in between? How has your story shaped that?
11. Who or what is currently shaping your view of God, yourself and others?
12. What specific influences cause good fruit to grow in you? Bad fruit?
13. From the stories you can remember in the gospels, what's one way you see fruit being produced by Jesus' life?

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

2 Peter 2:1-2 (MSG)

But there were also *lying* prophets among the people then, just as there will be lying religious teachers among you. They'll smuggle in destructive divisions, pitting you against each other—biting the hand of the One who gave them a chance to have their lives back! They've put themselves on a fast downhill slide to destruction, but not before they recruit a crowd of mixed-up followers who can't tell right from wrong.

1 John 4:1 (MSG)

My dear friends, don't believe everything you hear. Carefully weigh and examine what people tell you. Not everyone who talks about God comes from God. There are a lot of lying preachers loose in the world.

* 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!

*"Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing,
but inwardly they are ferocious wolves."*

Matthew 7:15 (NIV)