

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: *Prayer*

July 5, 2026

CONNECT

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

1. On a scale of 0–10, how easy (10 being very easy) is it for you to ask for help? Explain.
2. What's one prayer you've found yourself praying lately?

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 7:7-12 (ESV)

⁷“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ⁸For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. ⁹Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a

serpent? ¹¹If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

¹²“So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

1. What repeated words or phrases do you notice in this passage?
2. What do you notice happening in you when Jesus says, *Ask*? Do you feel invited, exposed, resistant, hopeful, tired or something else?
3. Which of these feels most like your current spiritual life: asking from a place of need, seeking from a place of longing, or knocking from outside a closed door? Explain.
4. Verse 11 says human parents are flawed and still know how to give good gifts. What tension does that create in the passage? What emotions surface for you personally?
5. Luke 11 contains a similar account of this teaching from Jesus. How does Luke 11:13 describe what our heavenly Father wants to give us, and what are the benefits of receiving that gift?
6. What do you notice about the simplicity of Jesus' invitation? Why might something so simple still feel difficult?
7. What experiences have shaped your attitude toward praying?
8. When you think about asking God for something important, what feels more vulnerable: the asking itself, the waiting or the possibility of being told no? Share an example if you have one.
9. Archbishop William Temple famously said, *When I pray, coincidences happen; when I stop praying, the coincidences stop happening*. Does that match your experience or not? Explain.
10. What does this passage reveal about the relationship between dependence on God and love for neighbor?

11. What tone do you hear in Jesus' words: command, invitation, reassurance, challenge, or something else?
12. How might your relationships change if you treated others according to the mercy, patience, and generosity you hope to receive?
13. Where is God inviting you to become an answer to someone else's prayer?
14. What do you usually do with desire when it goes unmet: pray harder, shut down, distract yourself, get cynical, try to control things or something else? Share an example if you have one.
15. What are you currently seeking from the Father?
16. How would you say your prayer life has changed over the years?
17. What would seeking look like for you this week—not just wanting an answer, but pursuing God Himself?

For Further Reflection: Sometimes we hold back from pouring out our hearts to God because we're concerned some of what we're thinking or feeling might not be right to say. But the writers of the Psalms didn't hold back. They were honest with God about what was really going on inside them. What stands out to you in these Psalms? How do they help you have freedom before God in prayer?

1. Psalm 13
2. Psalm 88
3. Psalm 142

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

Matthew 7:7-11 (MSG)

“Don't bargain with God. Be direct. Ask for what you need. This isn't a cat-and-mouse, hide-and-seek game we're in. If your child asks for bread, do you trick him with sawdust? If he asks for fish, do you scare him with a live snake on his plate? As bad as you are, you wouldn't think of such a thing. You're at least decent to your own children. So don't you think the God who conceived you in love will be even better?”

Philippians 4:6-7 (MSG)

“Don't fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns. Before you know it, a sense of God's wholeness, everything coming together for good, will come and settle you down.”

* 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!

Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.

Colossians 4:2 (NIV)