

SIMPLE FAITH

Let's Keep It Simple

Matthew 5-7



LET'S BEGIN HERE

Of all the sermons that have been preached, none is more famous, more profound, or more convicting than the one Jesus preached on the mountain. It is timeless, ever-relevant, and never dull. With penetrating power, Jesus exploded the brittle veneer of Pharisaic hypocrisy and explained the essence of true righteousness. Weaving threads from the Old Testament through this new garment of truth, Jesus set forth principles that, to this day, refuse to be ignored.

Yet how few truly embrace His words! We analyze and interpret them. We outline and compare them. We admire and quote them. But those activities, while worthwhile, are not the reason Jesus preached this sermon. He preached it so that change might occur—so our lives might be different in this world gone wrong.

God's people are to be *thoroughly* Christian—a divine minority who live in contrast to a secular majority.



LET'S DIG DEEPER

1. Our Times: A Display of Gross Hypocrisy

Politically, morally, and religiously, hypocrisy is very much in vogue.

Throughout its history, the church has also struggled mightily with the practice of hypocrisy. The habit of saying one thing and doing another has plagued every generation of humanity—believers or not. Hypocrisy is insidious. The hideousness of these hypocrisies makes authenticity all the more beautiful.



Quotable

The Sermon on the Mount reminds us we do not always search our motives.

Let's admit it.

— Charles R. Swindoll



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2. His Words: A Plea for True Righteousness (Matthew 5–7)

Jesus recognized the brokenness of the world, and in the Sermon on the Mount the Lord told His hearers not to be like the sinful nations. The Sermon on the Mount makes clear the ways that Jesus' followers are to differentiate themselves from everyone else in the world.

We can point to four broad principles that, when applied, will cause Christians to stand because of our righteousness. Jesus essentially told His followers *out with hypocrisy, down with performance, up with tolerance, and on with commitment.*



GETTING TO THE ROOT

Two-Faced Hypocrites

In Matthew 6:2, 5, and 16, the gospel writer recorded Jesus' use of the Greek term *hupokritai*, from which English derives its word “hypocrites.” Although the term was used in the biblical era and beyond in a strictly negative sense, early Greeks used the term in a more positive way. The term *hupokritai* was first used to describe actors and the craft of acting. In particular, the term was used in regard to the effective means of communication that is essential for actors to play their parts well. Ancient orators like Aristotle and Demosthenes used the term in this context to describe the specialized skill of speaking well before a crowd. Over time, as people began using the term outside its original acting context, *hupokritai* took on a more negative connotation. When everyday people spoke with the skill of professional actors, they were seen to be “playing a part,” presenting a face other than their own. This divide between the outward portrayal of one character and the inward reality of another helps us understand Jesus' use of the term in reference to those who act in ways inconsistent with their fundamentally prideful nature. It's unsurprising, then, that the term has come to indicate those we call “two-faced.”



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LET'S LIVE IT

How should we respond to Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount? We should admit that:

- *We are not free of hypocrisy.* We all have hidden agendas. Admitting our failure in this area is the first step in recognizing our need to change.
- *We do not always search our own motives.* We need to put our motives under a microscope and root out those that do not belong—that are not properly Christian.
- *We have not stopped judging others.* At times, our intolerance of others can be blistering. We need to back off of our brothers and sisters in Christ, as well as those who dwell outside the body of Christ.
- *We dare not continue as we currently are.* When we make this commitment, we are saying that hypocrisy, poor motives, and uncaring judgment have no place in our lives.

In what ways do you see yourself acting hypocritically? Which of your actions should change, and how?



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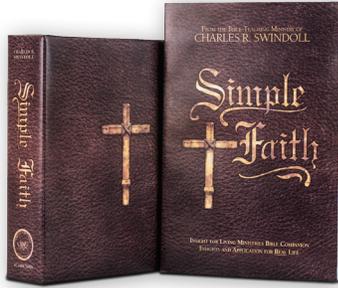
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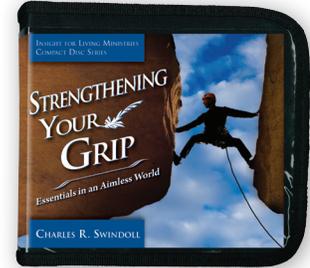
Tools for Digging Deeper



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