

## NOTE TO TEACHERS OF THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT SERIES

Congratulations! You have been asked to lead a class as they read and learn to follow the greatest sermon ever preached. May you find real joy in your preparation and teaching.

The members of the committee charged with developing this group of lessons have enjoyed our work and have been blessed by once again spending time meditating on these words of Jesus. We hope that these lessons are a blessing to you and to the participants in the class you will be leading.

The lessons are not outlines for you to follow. Rather, they give you material to assist in developing your lessons as you see best for the class you are teaching.

Each lesson gives the text for that class meeting and some introductory ideas. Then notes are given for the verses in the lesson text with significant quotations from several authors. What we see as perhaps most important are questions which you might use in class discussion and for later consideration by class members at home.

Some teachers may prepare lectures with opportunities for class questions and comments. Even in the largest of our classes time for questions and contributions from students is worthwhile. Other teachers may prepare for all discussion with much involvement from students. The questions in the teacher's notes should provide for much of what you might need in this case. Or teachers may assign questions ahead of time and rotate through the group for discussion.

We hope that whatever your teaching style might be, these lesson notes will help you.

Many statements in the sermon ring out with a truth that calls for immediate and simple, if not easy, obedience: "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you." Other statements might puzzle us to know how to follow. We might be tempted to dismiss these statements of Jesus with limp explanations: "Turn the other cheek." "Give him your coat also." However, we must tell our son what to do when his little sister has been mistreated at school or hit and abused.

All such challenging statements must be considered together ["pluck out your eye," "cut off your hand," "has already committed adultery," "causes her to commit adultery," "do not resist evil"] when we are working on how to apply them. You will find additional help in the lessons that follow.

All statements of Jesus in the sermon point us which way to head even if certain steps at a given time are uncertain. But the direction in which we are to head is never in doubt nor is the impact which our actions should have on others. Prayer and meditation on his words should be our regular habit, as well as talking with other disciples whose steps are following Jesus.

We want to give credit to those who have contributed much to these lessons. Nancy Shankle Jordan, whom many of us remember, wrote eight lessons for our congregation on the Sermon on the Mount almost a dozen years ago while she still lived in Abilene. Our contribution has largely been to revise her lessons and update them for our times. Nancy gave credit, as you will see in the notes, to several authors especially John Stott. We have also used a book from Randy Harris [*Living Jesus: Doing What Jesus Says in the Sermon on the Mount*] written after Nancy's lessons were produced. Also, Kenneth Pybus has written a series of reflections on the sermon designed to be sent to his students over the course of a term.. This material has been valuable in our work.

In addition to the eight lessons in this series, there is one beginning session. On January 8, all of us will meet together in the auditorium where Randy Harris will give an introduction to our study. His approach in his book—which we like very much—is to begin with the parable of the two builders at the end of the sermon. We assume Randy will include something like this when he talks to us at the beginning of the series.

Blessings in your work for our congregation.

The Committee

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