

What does it mean for you personally to reach a verdict that you will live under the authority of God's Word, and are there areas of your life where you struggle to submit to that authority?

How does understanding that all Scripture is God-breathed, inerrant, and infallible change the way you approach difficult or uncomfortable passages in the Bible?

In what ways have you made your own life the center of your universe rather than recognizing Jesus as the center of all things, similar to the pre-Copernican worldview?

How does Jesus' teaching on divorce challenge modern cultural attitudes about marriage, and what does it mean to have a high view of marriage even in a no-fault divorce society?

Why do you think Jesus emphasized simple truth-telling over oath-making, and in what situations are you tempted to embellish or manipulate the truth rather than let your yes be yes and your no be no?

What rights or privileges might God be calling you to surrender in the areas of retaliation, resentment, resistance, or resources as Jesus taught in the eye for an eye passage?

Who in your life do you find most difficult to love, and what would it look like practically to pray for and love that person as Jesus commanded?

How does loving your enemies demonstrate that you are a mature son or daughter of your heavenly Father, and what prevents you from reflecting God's image in this way?

Are you running on empty spiritually, or are you actively being filled with the Holy Spirit to empower you to obey Jesus' teachings that seem impossible in your own strength?

Like the sheep that gets freed only to become stuck again, what patterns of disobedience keep trapping you, and what would it mean to build your life on the rock of Jesus' words rather than the sand of your own wisdom?

Small Group Guide: Living Under God's Authority

Based on "Summer on the Mount" - Matthew 5

OPENING PRAYER & ICEBREAKER (10 minutes)

Icebreaker Question: Share about a time when someone's authority (parent, teacher, coach, boss) challenged you to grow beyond what you thought possible. How did you respond?

SERMON RECAP (5 minutes)

The sermon explored Jesus' authoritative teaching in Matthew 5, using Simon Sinek's "Golden Circle" framework:

- **WHY:** We must reach a verdict to live under God's authoritative Word
 - **HOW:** Jesus addressed four practical life areas with "You have heard...but I tell you"
 - **WHAT:** The Holy Spirit empowers us to obey Jesus' teaching
-

KEY SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

- Matthew 5:31-48 (Four areas Jesus addressed)
 - Matthew 7:24-27 (Building on rock vs. sand)
 - 2 Timothy 3:16 (All Scripture is God-breathed)
 - Acts 2:38 (Receiving the Holy Spirit)
-

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Part 1: The Verdict on God's Authority (15 minutes)

1. **The speaker asked: "Have you reached the verdict that the Word of God is sovereign and we live under its authority?"** How would you honestly answer this question about your own life?

2. The Copernicus illustration showed how people wanted Earth (themselves) at the center of the universe. **In what areas of life do you struggle most with making Jesus the center instead of yourself?**
 3. **What's the difference between believing the Bible is true and actually living under its authority?** Share an example from your own experience.
-

Part 2: Four Practical Applications (25 minutes)

Topic 1: Marriage & Commitment (Matthew 5:31-32)

4. Jesus elevated the value of marriage above the cultural norm. **How does our culture's view of marriage (no-fault divorce, living together, etc.) differ from Jesus' teaching?**
5. The sermon mentioned that "to be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable." **Why is this so difficult? What would it take to restore a broken relationship in your life?**

Topic 2: Truth-Telling (Matthew 5:33-37)

6. Jesus said our "yes" should be yes and our "no" should be no. **Why do we complicate simple truth-telling with exaggerations, white lies, or half-truths?**
7. The sermon stated: "Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks." **What does your speech pattern reveal about what's really in your heart?**

Topic 3: Surrendering Rights (Matthew 5:38-42)

8. Jesus taught about surrendering:
 - Retaliation (turn the other cheek)
 - Resentment (give your cloak also)
 - Resistance (go the extra mile)
 - Resources (give to those who ask)

Which of these four "surrenders" is hardest for you? Why?

9. **Share a time when someone went "the extra mile" for you. How did it impact you?**
How can you do this for someone else this week?

Topic 4: Loving Enemies (Matthew 5:43-48)

10. Jesus commanded us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. **Who in your life fits this category—someone difficult to love?** (You don't have to name them aloud)
11. The sermon said when we love our enemies, we "look like a chip off the old block"—we look like our Heavenly Father. **How does God's love for His enemies (us!) motivate you to love difficult people?**

Part 3: The Power to Obey (15 minutes)

12. The sermon asked: **"Are you running on empty or filled with the Holy Spirit?"** What does it look like practically to be "filled" with the Spirit daily?
13. The sheep video showed getting stuck repeatedly. **What sin or struggle do you find yourself "stuck" in over and over?** What might it mean to truly build your life on the rock of Jesus' teaching in that area?
14. **What's the difference between being a "hearer" of the Word and a "doer" of the Word?** Give a practical example.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ **God's Word is inspired, inerrant, and infallible—we must live under its authority**
- ✓ **Jesus raised the bar on marriage, truth-telling, surrendering rights, and loving enemies**
- ✓ **We cannot obey Jesus' teaching in our own strength—only through the Holy Spirit**
- ✓ **Building our life on Jesus' words means putting them into practice, not just hearing them**
- ✓ **When we love like Jesus, we reflect our Heavenly Father to the world**

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Individual Commitments (10 minutes)

Choose ONE of the following action steps for this week:

- ☐ **Marriage/Relationships:** Have an honest conversation with your spouse or a close friend about strengthening your commitment to one another
- ☐ **Truth-Telling:** Identify one area where you've been using "white lies" or exaggerations and commit to simple, honest speech
- ☐ **Surrendering Rights:** Look for one opportunity to "go the extra mile" for someone—at work, home, or church

□ **Loving Enemies:** Begin praying daily for one difficult person in your life; look for one practical way to show them love

□ **Holy Spirit Filling:** Start each morning this week asking the Holy Spirit to fill you and empower you to obey Jesus

Share your commitment with at least one other person in the group for accountability.

GROUP CHALLENGE

As a group, identify one person or family in your church or community who is going through difficulty. **How can you collectively "go the extra mile" for them this week?** Make a specific plan before you leave.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL QUIET TIME

- In which of the four areas (marriage/commitment, truth-telling, surrendering rights, loving enemies) is Jesus most challenging me right now?
 - What verdict have I reached about God's Word? Do my daily choices reflect that verdict?
 - Am I building my life on rock (obeying Jesus) or sand (just hearing without doing)?
 - How can I cooperate more fully with the Holy Spirit's work of sanctification in my life?
-

CLOSING PRAYER (5 minutes)

Prayer Focus:

- Thank God for His authoritative Word that guides us
- Ask the Holy Spirit to empower you to obey Jesus' teaching
- Pray for strength to love difficult people
- Commit to building your life on the rock of Jesus' words

Pray for one another's specific commitments and challenges shared during the discussion.

BEFORE NEXT WEEK

- Read Matthew 5-7 (the entire Sermon on the Mount)
- Journal about one way you put Jesus' teaching into practice
- Follow through on your individual commitment
- Check in with your accountability partner mid-week

"Anyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock." - Matthew 7:24

5-Day Devotional: Living Under the Authority of Christ

Day 1: The Foundation of Truth

Reading: Matthew 7:24-27; 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Devotional: Nicholas Copernicus proved the sun, not earth, sits at the center of our solar system. Many resisted this truth because they wanted to remain central. Similarly, we must reach a verdict: Does Jesus Christ stand at the center of our lives, or do we? All Scripture is God-breathed, inerrant, and infallible. When we build our lives on the solid rock of God's Word, the storms of life cannot destroy us. But when we hear Christ's teaching and dismiss it, we build on sand. Today, ask yourself: Have I truly surrendered to the authority of Scripture? The Holy Spirit empowers us to obey, but we must first choose to submit. What verdict will you reach?

Day 2: Marriage and Faithfulness

Reading: Matthew 5:31-32; Malachi 2:13-16

Devotional: God hates divorce—not divorced people, but what divorce does to people. Like two pieces of wood glued together, when a marriage separates, both are scarred and damaged. Jesus elevated marriage above the low cultural standards of His day, calling us to faithfulness even when it's difficult. God has forgiven the inexcusable in us; therefore, to be Christian means to forgive the inexcusable in others. Whether you're married, single, or divorced, God calls you to value covenant faithfulness. If your marriage is struggling, remember: restoration is possible through the Holy Spirit's power. Today, pray for marriages in your life—that they would reflect God's unbreakable covenant love and that wounded hearts would find healing.

Day 3: The Power of Truth-Telling

Reading: Matthew 5:33-37; John 8:42-47

Devotional: Jesus declared Satan the "father of lies"—the source of everything false. Just as a father is the source of life, Satan is the source of deception. Jesus commanded His followers to simply let their "yes be yes and no be no." We don't need elaborate oaths to appear truthful; we need hearts filled with truth. Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. A half-truth is a whole lie, and no amount of manipulation will transform a lie into truth. The Holy Spirit convicts us to walk in integrity. Today, examine your words. Are you known for truthfulness, or do you shade the truth for convenience? Ask God to fill your heart with truth so that it naturally flows from your lips.

Day 4: Surrendering Our Rights

Reading: Matthew 5:38-42; Romans 12:17-21

Devotional: Jesus raised the bar from "eye for eye" to "turn the other cheek." This isn't about national pacifism or refusing to protect our families—it's about surrendering our personal right to retaliation, resentment, and resistance. When struck, we can choose not to strike back. When sued, we can give more than required. When forced to go one mile, we can go two. When asked to share, we can surrender our resources. This radical surrender is only possible through the Holy Spirit's power. God says, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." When we release our grip on revenge and rights, we demonstrate trust in God's justice. Today, identify one area where you're clinging to your rights. Surrender it to God.

Day 5: Loving Like Our Father

Reading: Matthew 5:43-48; John 3:16; 1 John 4:7-12

Devotional: God loved the world—people who opposed and hated Him—so much that He gave His Son. When we love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us, we look like our Father. We become chips off the old block, reflecting His image. This isn't natural; it's supernatural. We cannot love difficult people in our own strength. We need the Holy Spirit filling us daily, empowering us to obey Christ's teaching. Are you running on empty or filled with the Spirit? When you surrendered to Christ in baptism, you received two gifts: forgiveness and the Holy Spirit. He enables lifelong sanctification, making you increasingly like Jesus. Today, pray for someone who has hurt you. Ask God to fill you with His love for them.

Reflection Question for the Week: Have you reached the verdict to live under the authority of Christ's teaching, empowered by the Holy Spirit dwelling within you?