



2024 SUMMER YOUTH WEEKS



BEDOTELL CAMP PARENT CONNECTION

Growing up in a pastor's home, the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ was apparent in everything we did as a family and everything we were told to do as fellow believers in Jesus Christ. Amazingly, however, even with all the attention my parents paid to the gospel, sin was still in our lives. Of course, we believed in Jesus and His provision for our eternal life. We believed Jesus was the only way to heaven. We believed following Jesus was the best way to live. But sin was still lurking about.

Many of my friends thought perfection came with faith in Jesus. That was so far from the truth of the gospel. Assurance of my salvation came when I placed my faith in who Jesus is and His payment for my sins on the cross. But as I tried to live out my faith, I was still filled with doubts and uncertainty as I began to think more abstractly as a teenager. The concrete thinking of my childhood expanded with more questions.

Questions led me to search the Bible more for answers. Today, however, questions for some lead them away from seeking the biblical answer, instead causing them to believe that what others say makes up reality.

This summer we want to study what Jesus said in His most famous sermon, referred to as the "Sermon on the Mount" found in Matthew 5-7. This sermon is Jesus' own words of what He wanted His followers to be and do. (That's where we get our name – BeDoTell.)

These verses show us what our lives should look like when we allow Jesus Christ to be the ruler of our lives – how we should think, believe and act under God's rule.

His followers are to live differently because we are created in God's image (Matthew 6:8: "Do not be like them"). Even in the Old Testament God told Israel that they "must not do as they do" (Leviticus 18:3). They were to shine their lights in the darkness – how they lived and their devotion to Jesus would reveal their hearts and love for Jesus. There is a difference in how we, as Christians, are to live.

The Sermon on the Mount is Jesus' first sermon, and in it, He teaches us about what it looks like to have spiritually healthy internal and external lives. Our external lives are how we live in relationship with others, and our internal lives are how we love and obey God. Sin begins in the heart of man and is counter to living the teaching of Christ.



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Maybe you have been growing in your faith as a parent and realize there are many things Jesus has said in the Bible that you have read but are not focused on in training your children. You may think they will just get it because you go to church.

Because of where they are developmentally, children and teens live lives full of anxieties and aspirations. Marketers tap into their spiritual brokenness and attract them to products that can't fulfill the promises their advertisement suggests. These ads help sell a worldview that does not align with God's plan for them.

This generation is more media savvy than any other generation. What used to be for 18-year-olds is now for 6-year-olds. Children have been exposed to more and more, and it has left them more jaded than their peers in previous generations. Results are evident because they spend over 4.8 hours per day on social media.

The Center for Parent/Youth Understanding has several suggestions:

- Parents need to make their children a priority. Your time and focus on your family pay dividends in how your child develops and lives.
- Parents need to remember how the media shapes their children. Most teens mindlessly consume everything they see and hear, never once considering what that does to their faith and perspective. Their values and beliefs are molded by what they see and hear.
- Parents need to spend time with their children. Eat with them daily. Research shows that families that eat together stay together.
- Parents: Teach your children right from wrong. Stay close by, having open communication about what is happening in their lives and what questions they have about life.

Matthew 6 encourages us to have a faith-filled and trusting relationship with God. Matthew 7 invites us to rely on God and not on others. Throughout this sermon, Jesus invites us to live holy lives, inside and outside.

In Matthew 7:28-29, we read, "When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority and not as their teachers of the law." Scripture says all who heard Jesus preach were astonished. Jesus knew the scriptures, but the way He preached was with authority. He made multiple statements that started with, "You have heard it said ... but I say to you." Jesus knew the original law, but the way He preached it was new – with authority.

The Sermon on the Mount challenges us to think differently about Jesus. We are called to



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follow Jesus, which means what we think is right and wrong must match up to what He says. No matter how many religious rules we follow, we all fall short of the glory of God. We can't earn God's love. God's gift to us is salvation and His grace.

Each day at camp we will focus on three main parts of the Beatitudes:

Tuesday

Session Title: Heart of Sin

Scripture Focus: Genesis 6:5-6, Deuteronomy 6:4-7, Mark 12:30-31, Psalm 51:10

What is keeping you from a commitment to love and communicate with Jesus? One answer is your heart. Your heart is committed, loving and communicating with something else more than it is with Jesus. Sin stops us from following Jesus wholeheartedly.

Wednesday

Session Title: Heart of Trust

Scripture Focus: Matthew 6:25-34

Your children might struggle with recalling times when God was faithful in their past. This is part of the reason it's so hard for us to trust in God. We fail to acknowledge His sustaining work in our lives. Our children need to see us praising God when times are good and hard. Parents need to be mindful to grow in their faith and their children's faith by learning how to acknowledge the work of the Lord in their lives.

Thursday

Session Title: Heart of Mission

Scripture Focus: Matthew 5:13-16, Numbers 18:19, Joshua 1:9

We think we know what we are doing, where we are going, and what is going to happen, only to trip on something we didn't know was there. As parents, we need to be open and honest about our faith to our teenagers. Curiosity about Jesus is widespread. Teens in the U.S. are far more curious about Jesus than their global peers, with 77 percent being at least somewhat motivated to keep learning about Jesus throughout their lives.

When They Return Home

Be ready to help your teens with the following questions over the next weeks after they return from camp. The book *Sermon on the Mount* by John Stott has been a handy book for me to learn about this sermon from Jesus. Matthew 6-7 is where you can find this sermon from Jesus.



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Even if they roll their eyes when you bring up faith in Jesus, deep down they want to know. Ask your teens to write down questions they want answered about faith in Jesus. This will give you time to research and ask your pastors to help you find the answers. Then have discussions about these. I led my boys in these conversations on car rides because I knew they couldn't leave. To this day they both say this became a favorite part of family rides.

Family Discussions

- What are you doing in your family to promote following Jesus more?
- The word beatitudes means blessed. How would you define the word “blessed?”
- What do you think it means to be blessed or fortunate? Matthew 5:1-12 helps you see what Jesus considered blessed. Take time to brainstorm what Jesus taught about being blessed.
- To be poor in spirit acknowledges our spiritual poverty. Why is this important and why is it so difficult?
- For those who mourn it means you feel sorrow not only for your sin but for the sin we see in others. Is there anything in the news that causes you to mourn?
- Explore what being “meek” means.
- Scripture says it's important to have a humble and gentle attitude toward others. Ask your family to think of ways they can do that in your home.
- Would our culture back up that the meek will inherit the world? Why or why not?
- What has Jesus said that might lead us to hunger and thirst for righteousness?
- Jesus says that those who hunger and thirst for righteousness will be filled. Ask what they understand that to mean.
- How we treat others reflects what we understand about Jesus. How are we affected by how we treat others?
- Being pure in heart helps us see God. How?
- How can we be peacemakers at home, at school and in our country?
- Why would the world hate those who follow Jesus and try to live according to the Beatitudes?
- In what ways have Christians had a positive influence on society? How can you and your family reach out to those in your community and share the love of Jesus?



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As you take time to reflect on the Beatitudes when your teen returns from camp, take time to be ready to share.

Take time to pray daily for God to show your family how to live by sharing truths from the Bible with others.