

## THE QUESTION OF APPLICATION IN PREACHING: THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT AS A TEST CASE

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*Some pastors preach the Word as if their sole responsibility is to explain the original meaning of the text. However, if you examine the greatest sermon Jesus ever preached, the Sermon on the Mount, you will see that He considered application to be a critical component. If you outline the sermon, you can observe how He valued it so highly that He included application not only in every one of His points, but also in each sub-point. To follow His example, we should not only explain the text well, but also help our listeners understand the present-day implications of that truth.*

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Some pastors teach as if their only duty is to explain the original meaning of the text they are preaching. They focus their energies solely on explaining the passage and fail to give exhortations to implement the information they have taught. John Stott admitted to this when he related the following: “In my early days I used to think that my business was to expound and exegete the text; I am afraid I left the application to the Holy Spirit.”<sup>1</sup> Yet is that what Jesus modeled in His preaching? Did He only explain His text and leave the application to the hearers, or did He also give exhortations to life-change as a significant part of His teaching process?

Obviously, an exhaustive study of *all* of Jesus’ discourses would be most profitable to ascertain if and how often He included application in His preaching. However, such a large undertaking is beyond the scope of this article. My aim is a much more modest attempt to singularly examine Jesus’ most significant sermon recorded in Scripture—the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7). Since this

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<sup>1</sup> John R. W. Stott, “Creating the Bridge: An Interview with John R. W. Stott,” interview by R. Albert Mohler Jr., *Preaching* 4, No. 5 (March–April 1989): 4–5.

discourse is considered Jesus' magnum opus<sup>2</sup> and the greatest sermon He ever preached,<sup>3</sup> it will be used as a test case to see whether or not Jesus communicated specific, concrete applications in His teaching, and what implications that holds for preachers today.

### Definition of "Application"

Before our examination of the Sermon on the Mount, we need to define this foundational term. In its simplest form application is "the present, personal consequence of scriptural truth."<sup>4</sup> It is "when listeners are enabled to see how their world, like the biblical world, is addressed by the Word of God."<sup>5</sup> Application "exhorts and encourages Christian duty"<sup>6</sup> and is the present-day response called for by a given text(s). "The word *response* is used intentionally because too often *application* suggests [only] action."<sup>7</sup> However, a response is more than performing an outward deed. It can also include an inward attitude change. The Scriptures are clear that out of the heart "flow the springs of life" (Prov 4:23), and "the good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil" (Luke 6:45). Therefore, an accurate definition of application must include not only what the hearer must do, but also the inward heart attitudes necessary to produce such actions.

### Presuppositions

Another preliminary matter is to say a few words about the presuppositions permeating this article. First, it is assumed that most Bible teachers desire to preach somewhat like Jesus, and that His teaching should be considered an example for contemporary preachers who strive to follow and be like Him.<sup>8</sup> Second, the Sermon

<sup>2</sup> Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 159.

<sup>3</sup> The following anthologies of great preachers list Jesus' Sermon on the Mount as the first or one of the great sermons in their collections: (1) Clyde E. Fant, Jr. and William M. Pinson, Jr. *A Treasury of Great Preaching: An Encyclopedia of Preaching* (Dallas, TX: Word Publishers, 1995), 3–8; (2) Clarence E. McCartney, *Great Sermons of the World* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 19; and (3) David L. Larsen, *The Company of the Preachers: A History of Biblical Preaching from the Old Testament to the Modern Era* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1998), 41.

<sup>4</sup> Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*, Second Edition (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 210.

<sup>5</sup> William D. Thompson cited by John Ortberg, "Biblical Preaching is About Life Change, Not Sermon Form," in *The Art and Craft of Biblical Preaching*, eds. Haddon W. Robinson and Craig Brian Larson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 2005), 452.

<sup>6</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe and David Wiersbe, *The Elements of Preaching: The Art of Biblical Preaching Clearly and Simply Presented* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1986), 58.

<sup>7</sup> Greg R. Scharf "God's Letter of Intent," in *The Art and Craft of Biblical Preaching*, 231 (italics in original).

<sup>8</sup> Homiletics books like Ralph Lewis' and Gregg Lewis', *Learning to Preach Like Jesus* (Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1989) assume Jesus' preaching is exemplary for contemporary teachers. While giving some warnings concerning excesses, York and Decker underscore several areas, including

on the Mount is assumed to be a single sermon given by Jesus on one occasion.<sup>9</sup> The inspired text presents itself this way: Jesus “opened His mouth and began to teach them saying...” (Matt 5:2). The entire discourse appears to follow without interruption, ending with “when Jesus had finished these words” (Matt 7:28). There is no indication that it is a compilation of sayings; it is presented as a single sermon given at one time.

### Outline

To examine Jesus’ use of application in the Sermon on the Mount, we will use the following outline from Matthew’s Gospel:<sup>10</sup>

- I. Introduction: The Identification and Influence of True Believers (5:3–16)
  - The Privileges and Character of Believers—the Beatitudes (5:3–12)
  - The Believer’s Influence—like Salt and Light (5:13–16)
- II. Main Body of the Sermon: The Greater Righteousness of True Believers (5:17–7:12)
  - The Continuing Relevance of the OT Demands a Greater Righteousness (5:17–20)
    - The Continuing Relevance of the Old Testament (5:17–19)
    - The Theme of the Sermon (5:20)

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application that contemporary preachers should follow Jesus’ example. “Certainly we should emulate many elements of Jesus’ preaching: his passion, his high view of Scripture, his confrontation and application, and his tendency to force a decision of acceptance or rejection,” Hershael W. York and Bert Decker, *Preaching With Bold Assurance: A Solid and Enduring Approach to Engaging Exposition* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2003), 15.

<sup>9</sup> This is the view of Carson, Blomberg, and Morris in their Matthew commentaries. Hagner, Betz, and France believe the Sermon on the Mount is a compilation by Matthew of several of Jesus’ sayings.

<sup>10</sup> This outline is the author’s, but it follows closely similar plans given by Blomberg, Carson, Guelich, Dockery and Garland, Hagner, Osborne, Tuner, Stott, Webber and Quarles (Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, in *The New American Commentary* [Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992], 95–96; D. A. Carson, *The Sermon on the Mount: An Evangelical Exposition of Matthew 5–7* [Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1978], 7–8; Robert Guelich, *The Sermon on the Mount: A Foundation for Understanding* [Waco, TX: Word Books, 1982], 39; David S. Dockery and David E. Garland, *Seeking the Kingdom: The Sermon on the Mount Made Practical for Today* [Wheaton, IL: Harold Shaw Publishers, 1992], 133–37; Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1–13* in the *Word Biblical Commentary* [Dallas, TX: Word Publishers, 1998], 84; Osborne, *Matthew*, 161; David L. Turner, *Matthew* in the *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008], 143; John R. Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7): Christian Counter-Culture* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985], 24–26; Stuart K. Weber, *Matthew* in the *Holman New Testament Commentary* [Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000], 73; Charles Quarles, *The Sermon on the Mount: Restoring Christ’s Message to the Modern Church* [Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2011], 17–18.

- Six Contrasts Between Jesus' Interpretation of the Law and the Common Misinterpretations of them— the Demands for a Greater Righteousness (5:21–48)
- The Genuine Righteousness of the Believers Seen in Their Non-hypocritical Alms, Prayers, and Fasts (6:1–18)
- The Greater Righteousness of the Believer Properly Relates to Riches and Anxiety (6:19–34)
- The Greater Righteousness of the Believer Judges and Prays Properly (7:1–12)

### III. The Conclusion of the Sermon: The Call to Decision and Application (7:13–27)

- The Call to Enter the Kingdom (7:13–14)
- The Call to Beware of Hindrances to Entering the Kingdom (7:15–23)
- The Call to Respond and Continually Apply Jesus' Teaching (7:24–27)

#### Introduction (Matt 5:3–16)

Now we will employ the outline above to consider each point and sub-point, determining how often Jesus specifically applied His sermon to His listeners.

Jesus' introduction includes two sub-sections. The first is the beatitudes, which describe the privilege and character of those who will inherit the kingdom (Matt 5:3–12). As we can see, the final two beatitudes speak of the blessing of being persecuted (Matt 5:10–11), after which Jesus concluded with the exhortation to "Rejoice and be glad for your reward in heaven is great" (Matt 5:12). That is present-tense action describing how to apply the truth.

The second sub-section of the introduction regards the disciples' influence on the world as salt and light (Matt 5:13–16). Jesus concludes this part of the sermon with directions to His listeners to "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matt 5:16)—a direct application. Thus, both of Jesus' sub-points include specific advice on how His listeners should respond.

#### Sermon Theme and Six Contrasts (Matt 5:17–48)

Next is the body of the sermon, where Jesus explained three things: the continuing relevance of the Old Testament (Matt 5:17–19), the theme of the sermon (Matt 5:20),<sup>11</sup> and six contrasts between Jesus' interpretation of the law, and the common misinterpretations at the time (5:21–48). Each one of those three sub-points include application. Let us briefly see how, below:

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<sup>11</sup> Luz says Matt 5:20 is the theme of the Sermon on the Mount as do many others (Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1–7: A Commentary on Matthew 1–7*, rev. ed. Hermeneia (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007), 177.

First (regarding the relevance of the Old Testament), after explaining that He is not abolishing but fulfilling the law, Jesus applied this concept to His hearers saying, “Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (5:19). Second His theme—that our righteousness should surpass that of the scribes and Pharisees or we will not enter the kingdom of heaven—is exhortative (and therefore applicational) in nature.<sup>12</sup> Third, regarding the six contrasts, Jesus compares His knowledge of the law with the prevailing misinterpretations of the time. Each one is followed by application.

In the first contrast, Jesus taught that not only is the outward act of murder wrong, but also the inner anger that motivates it. Instead of letting anger fester, Jesus urges His listeners to “make friends quickly with your opponent,” even to the point of leaving one’s offering if need be so as to be immediately reconciled (5:23–25).

The second contrast is between the outward act of adultery and the inward act of lust. Jesus condemns both and urges His disciples to do whatever it takes to not lust—even to the point of plucking out one’s eye or cutting off one’s hand (5:29–30). Within these first two contrasts (5:21–30) Jesus spent more time on application (6 verses) than exposition (4 verses).

Third is the contrast between the Jewish requirements for divorce and Jesus’ sole exception in the case of adultery.<sup>13</sup> Doing the paperwork and giving a certificate of dismissal was not enough (5:31)—only sexual immorality (*pornea*) was a just cause (5:32). Anyone who divorced other than for the reason of unchastity was committing adultery (5:32).

The fourth contrast is between lying and honesty. The Jews of the time had a complicated system of oath-taking whereby some were considered more binding than others. Some had twisted things to look like they were telling the truth when in fact they were lying. Jesus taught what people *should* do, which is “make no oath at all” (5:34) and be so honest that our simple word is enough (“let your statement be ‘Yes, yes’ or ‘No, no’; and anything beyond these is of evil”—Matt 5:37).

In the fifth one, revenge is contrasted with forgiveness (5:38–42). The OT teaching regarding “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth” had been taken out of its judicial setting and twisted into permission for personal revenge. Jesus applied a

<sup>12</sup> Jesus is modeling what Adams has called the “preaching stance” in which the preacher talks to the congregation about the “here and now” aspects of the Bible and about “what He is doing and they ought to be doing” (Jay Adams, *Preaching with Purpose* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982], 43). According to Adams, every part of the sermon should take the “preaching stance” in which the preacher speaks from the Bible about the congregation to produce change based on the facts rather than just inform or lecture (Ibid., 43–45). John MacArthur put it this way, “the ultimate goal of our teaching ministry is not merely to fill people’s heads with information; it is to press on their hearts the duty of obedience” (cited in Michael Fabarez, *Preaching That Changes Lives* [Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2002], vii).

<sup>13</sup> Here Jesus is contrasting His view with both the Hillel school, which allowed for divorce for almost any reason (Matt 19:3), and the Shammai school which required divorce when immorality had occurred (Blomberg, *Matthew*, 110; Andreas Köstenberger, *God, Marriage, and Family* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010], 228). Neither interpretation was correct. Jesus did not allow divorce for any reason, nor did He require it when adultery occurred.

more accurate understanding, teaching that instead of repaying a slap for a slap, “turn the other cheek.” Instead of vengefully paying back the Romans for forcing you to carry their pack for the required mile,<sup>14</sup> Jesus says to voluntarily go with them another.

The sixth contrast concerns the accepted sinful attitude of loving your neighbor and hating your enemy. Jesus commanded otherwise, telling people to “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (5:44). All of those contrasts contain specific examples on how His sermon should work itself out in the lives of His listeners.

#### Piety Section (Matt 6:1–18)

In the next part of His sermon Jesus talks about the hypocrisy of practicing our righteousness to be noticed by others, rather than to be pleasing to the Lord. This group of verses concerns three religious practices: giving to the needy, prayer, and fasting.

First, we are not to give our offering while “sounding a trumpet<sup>15</sup> before you” (6:2). Jesus directed His hearers to give their gifts secretly—so secretly it would seem that one hand would not know what the other had done (6:3–4). Similarly, we should not make a big show of our praying, such as waxing eloquent on a busy street corner (6:5), but rather pray in private, and without meaningless repetition (6:6–7). Fasting too involves the same principle. Jesus directs those who are fasting not to put on a sad, suffering, “deprived-looking” face, but rather to look “business-as-usual” so no one will notice (6:17–18).

#### Riches and Anxiety Section (Matt 6:19–34)

Jesus addresses these two subjects to help His followers have an eternal perspective on money and other earthly concerns. Regarding money, He instructs, “do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth” “but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal” (6:19–20).

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<sup>14</sup> The occupying Romans could demand immediate service or transportation from anyone to carry their supplies and equipment up to one Roman mile (John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, in the New International Greek Testament Commentary [Grand Rapids: MI; Eerdmans, 2005], 259, n242; John MacArthur, *Matthew*, in the MacArthur New Testament Commentary [Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1985], 334). This would of course infuriate any Jew being forced to assist their hated occupiers and would naturally cause them to want to take revenge.

<sup>15</sup> To “sound a trumpet before you” is “a figure of speech pointing to the entire gamut of religious ostentation and pomposity” that should be avoided when giving or doing deeds of service (Hans D. Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount: A Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, Including the Sermon on the Plain (Matthew 5:3–7:27 and Luke 6:20–49)* Hermeneia [Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1995], 356). Davies and Allison concur saying, “to blow a trumpet is probably just a picturesque way of indicating the making of an announcement or the calling of attention to oneself” (W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, in the International Critical Commentary [London: T&T Clark International, 2004], 1:579).

Regarding anxiety, Jesus taught that we need to look to the One who even provides for the birds and the flowers. He explained that our worrying about our lives will not help (can you add a cubit to your life?), and “each day has enough trouble of its own” (6:34). He described how to stop worrying—“seek first His kingdom and His righteousness and all these things will be added unto you” (6:33).

#### Judging and Prayer Section (Matt 7:1–12)

Turning to the way we interact with each other, Jesus urges us to be neither hypocritical nor hypocritical in assessing others (7:1–5). He says, “Do not judge so that you will not be judged,” and “you hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye.” He wants us to evaluate our *own* hearts first. Where do we get the wisdom and discernment required to properly judge ourselves and others? We must “ask,” “seek,” and “knock” (7:7). To sum up, Jesus helps us know how to apply what He just said—by treating others however we would want them to treat us (7:12).

#### Conclusion (Matt 7:13–27)

Jesus finishes His famous sermon with three couplets. He describes two different paths we can take in our lives (the broad or the narrow way), two kinds of fruit we can bear (good and bad), and two different professions of faith (empty or true). Jesus warns that the broad path of the world leads to destruction, and teaches His listeners to enter by the narrow gate because it is the way to eternal life (7:14).

Regarding the two kinds of fruit, Jesus warns that false prophets in “sheep’s clothing” will come who will attempt to deceive (7:15–16). How can we know the difference between true and false teachers? Jesus tells us to consider their fruit. Good trees produce good fruit and bad trees produce bad.

The last couplet is a warning against professing faith in word only, versus true faith that is accompanied by obedience to the Lord. It isn’t the one who *says* “Lord, Lord, that will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven” (7:21).

Jesus concludes the entire Sermon on the Mount with a call to be like the wise man who built his house on the rock, instead of the foolish person who built his house on the sand. When the time of final judgment comes, that person will be destroyed as surely as one whose home is built in a flood plain when a flash flood comes and destroys everything in its path.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> That Matt 7:25–17 is referring to the winter flash floods that occur in Israel when wadis are filled and destroy anything in their paths is supported by Bauer, Danker, Arndt and Gingrich, who say that the word “floods” (ποταμός) in Matt 7:25, 27 are “the mountain torrents or winter torrents which arise in ravines after a heavy rain and carry everything before them” (William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. [Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000], 856). Hagner says the floods referred to in these verses are “torrential rains that produce sudden rivers where formerly there were dry wadis” (Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 191).

The following table summarizes the above information in a more visual format demonstrating how Jesus included application in every paragraph or subsection of the Sermon on the Mount.

**Summary Table of Jesus' Use of Application in the Sermon on the Mount**

<b>Sermon on the Mount Text</b>	<b>Theme of Each Passage</b>	<b>Do These Verses Include Application?</b>	<b>Application</b>
Matt 5:3–12	Beatitudes	Yes	“Rejoice and be glad for your reward in heaven is great” (Matt 5:12)
Matt 5:13–16	The influence of Jesus’ disciples	Yes	“Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven” (Matt 5:16)
Matt 5:17–20	Jesus’ view of the law	Yes	“Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (Matt 5:19)
Matt 5:21–26	Mental murder	Yes	<sup>23</sup> “So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, <sup>24</sup> leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. <sup>25</sup> Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison. <sup>26</sup> Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny” (Matt 5:23–26)
Matt 5:27–30	Heart adultery	Yes	<sup>29</sup> “If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. <sup>30</sup> And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell” (Matt 5:29–30)
Matt 5:31–32	Divorce	Yes	“I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her

			commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery” (Matt 5:32)
Matt 5:33–37	Importance of speaking the truth	Yes	<sup>34</sup> “But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, <sup>35</sup> or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. <sup>36</sup> And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. <sup>37</sup> Let what you say be simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything more than this comes from evil” (Matt 5:34–37)
Matt 5:38–42	Non-retaliation	Yes	<sup>39</sup> “Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. <sup>40</sup> And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. <sup>41</sup> And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. <sup>42</sup> Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you” (Matt 5:39–40)
Matt 5:43–48	Love your enemies	Yes	<sup>44</sup> “But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.... <sup>46</sup> For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? <sup>47</sup> And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? <sup>48</sup> You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matt 5:44, 46–48)
Matt 6:1–4	Giving to the needy	Yes	<sup>1</sup> “Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. <sup>2</sup> Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. <sup>3</sup> But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, <sup>4</sup> so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you” (Matt 6:1–4)

<p>Matt 6:5–15</p>	<p>Prayer</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p><sup>5</sup>“And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites....<sup>6</sup>But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.  <sup>7</sup>“And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. <sup>8</sup>Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. <sup>9</sup>Pray then like this. . . .” (Matt 6:5–9)</p>
<p>Matt 6:16–18</p>	<p>Fasting</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p><sup>16</sup>“And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.  <sup>17</sup>But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, <sup>18</sup>that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you” (Matt 6:16–18)</p>
<p>Matt 6:19–24</p>	<p>Store up treasures in heaven</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p><sup>19</sup>“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, <sup>20</sup>but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup>For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. . . .<sup>24</sup>“No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money” (Matt 6:19–21; 24)</p>
<p>Matt 6:25–34</p>	<p>Worry</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p><sup>33</sup>“But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.  <sup>34</sup>Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble” (Matt 6:33–34)</p>

<p>Matt 7:1–6</p>	<p>Judging others</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p><sup>3</sup>“Why do you see the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? <sup>4</sup>Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when there is the log in your own eye? <sup>5</sup>You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye. <sup>6</sup>“Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you” (Matt 7:3–6)</p>
<p>Matt 7:7–12</p>	<p>Prayer</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p><sup>12</sup>“So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets” (Matt 7:12)</p>
<p>Matt 7:13–20</p>	<p>The call to enter the kingdom and warning against false prophets</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p><sup>13</sup>“Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. <sup>14</sup>For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few. ...<sup>16</sup>You will recognize them [false prophets] by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? <sup>17</sup>So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. <sup>18</sup>A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. <sup>19</sup>Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. <sup>20</sup>Thus you will recognize them by their fruits. <sup>21</sup>“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven” (Matt 7:13–14; 16–21).</p>
<p>Matt 7:24–27</p>	<p>The call to put the Sermon into practice</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p><sup>24</sup>“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ...<sup>26</sup>And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand” (Matt 7:24, 26).</p>

### **Results and Conclusions from Examining the Sermon on the Mount**

Several important conclusions can be drawn from this survey. First, Jesus highly valued application and employed it liberally in what is considered His greatest sermon recorded in Scripture. Second, He included application *throughout* this sermon, even within the introduction. Every one of His main points and even every sub-point included it—18 out of 18 pericopes.<sup>17</sup> Third, consider how large a portion of the sermon Jesus dedicated to application—57 out of 107 verses, which is 53 percent. Fourth, application was not only the goal but also the main point of His conclusion. Jesus said only the one who “acts upon” His words can be considered like the wise man who built his house on a rock. Anyone who does not continually act upon His words is a fool, building their house on sand, and awaits eschatological destruction (Matt 7:26). Fifth, Jesus directed His application not only to outward actions but also to inward attitudes. Nine out of eighteen of His applications (50 percent) were directed toward internal attitudes, while the other nine (50 percent) concerned outward actions. Jesus valued both and neglected neither.

Since Jesus’ example is worthy of emulation, we should consider the major emphasis He placed on application and follow in His footsteps. So, is application necessary in preaching? For those who want to be like the Master, the answer is a resounding, Yes!

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<sup>17</sup> While the divisions are the author’s, they largely follow the paragraph breaks provided in the NASB and ESV Bibles, and the Greek New Testament (Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Carlo M. Martini et al., *The Greek New Testament, Fourth Revised Edition*, [Stuttgart, Germany: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006]). The pericopes used for these statistics are: Matt 5:3–12; 5:13–16; 5:17–20; 5:21–26; 5:27–30; 5:31–32; 5:33–37; 5:38–42; 5:43–48; 6:1–4; 6:5–15; 6:16–18; 6:19–24; 6:25–34; 7:1–6; 7:7–12; 7:13–20; 7:24–27.