JESUS AT THE CENTER OF THE KINGDOM

GROUP GUIDE

This guide is designed to help you study the Scriptures and deepen your relationship with God. Use this guide by yourself or with others.
To find a group, visit brookwoodchurch.org/groups.

Message Title: *Storm-Tested Faith*
August 2, 2026

CONNECT

If new people have joined your group, take time to introduce yourselves to each other.

1. When have you seen something look strong on the outside but prove unstable under pressure?
2. What's something that helped you feel close to God this week?

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

This is the third part in a message series titled *Jesus at the Center of the Kingdom*, which covers the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5-7. In the summer of 2024, we looked at Matthew 5. In the summer of 2025, we studied Matthew 6. We're concluding the series this summer, studying Matthew 7.

Matthew 5-7 is most commonly referred to as *The Sermon on the Mount* because Jesus gave this powerful teaching from a mountainside (*Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain…* Matthew 5:1a ESV). The name simply points to where it happened, but the message is much more than a location. It's an invitation to another way of life. It's a call to a life of humility that restores and strengthens relationships, to a life of prayer that draws us closer to God, and into a relationship with God that realigns us with His purpose for our lives. It provides us a way to know what is true and who we can really trust. It's a call to build our lives on the foundation of Jesus so we can stand firm when the storms of life come crashing in. Ultimately, *The Sermon on the Mount* is Jesus' announcement of what His kingdom is like and what kind of people His grace is forming us to become. *May we be these kind of people*.

PRAY

Take a few minutes to quiet your heart and release the cares of the day. Take a couple of deep breaths and allow any tightness you feel in your neck and shoulders to relax. Then pray together, asking God to meet each of you right where you are. Ask Him to show you more of His beauty, His truth and His direction. Invite others to voice their prayers as they feel led.

GROUP TIPS

- If your group has eight or more people, it might be helpful to break into circles of four or five for greater participation and deeper discussion. When you come back together, invite each group to share a few takeaways from their conversation.
- Don't worry if you don't get to all the questions. Spend time reading and really thinking about what the Bible is saying and what God is revealing to you personally.

STUDY AND DISCUSSION

Matthew 7:24-29 (ESV)

24 "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. 26 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. 27 And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it."

28 And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, 29 for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.

1. What contrast does Jesus make between the wise person and the foolish person?
2. What do both builders have in common?
3. What's different about the way each person responds to Jesus' words?
4. How does the outcome reveal the true condition of each house?
5. What words or images feel especially strong or vivid in this passage? Share why.
6. What does this passage suggest about the difference between hearing Jesus and following Jesus?
7. What might *sand* represent in a person's (or in your) life?
8. What does this passage reveal about Jesus' authority?
9. Where does this passage feel comforting, challenging, or exposing?

10. Where might God be inviting you to slow down and notice the foundation beneath your habits, choices or relationships?

11. Who helps you build your life on Jesus' words rather than on cultural pressure, fear, comfort or control?

12. What's a practical way we, as a group, can encourage each other to practice Jesus' words, not just discuss them?

13. What does it look like to encourage someone whose life has been shaken because of the decisions they've made?

14. Try to summarize this passage in a sentence or two. (You might allow a couple of minutes of silence for people to write down their summary before sharing.)

Take time this week to reflect on these passages from The Message* version of the Bible:

Psalm 18:1-2 (MSG)
"I love you, GOD—
you make me strong.
GOD is bedrock under my feet,
the castle in which I live, my rescuing knight.
My God—the high crag where I run for dear life,
hiding behind the boulders,
safe in the granite hideout."

Matthew 7:26-27 (MSG)
"But if you just use my words in Bible studies and don't work them into your life, you are like a stupid carpenter who built his house on the sandy beach. When a storm rolled in and the waves came up, it collapsed like a house of cards."

* The Message is commonly understood as a paraphrase rather than a formal translation. NavPress explains, *Eugene Peterson renders the meaning, tone, and force of the biblical text in fresh, idiomatic English rather than closely following the original wording*. It can help familiar passages sound fresh again, especially for devotional reading. But for study, doctrine and memorization, a more formal or balanced translation such as NIV, ESV, NASB, CSB or NLT is safer.

LIVE IT OUT

Based on this week's lesson, God is calling me to move from _____ to _____ .

Ask God what He wants to say to you, then spend a few minutes quietly listening for Him to speak. This could be a word or phrase from the passage that stands out to you, or a simple thought He brings to mind.

PRAY

Share what you sensed God saying to you and pray for each other.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY

Here's a great verse to memorize based on this week's teaching. Read it every day until you can repeat it without thinking. Trust God to bring it back to mind at just the right time!

"The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock."

Matthew 7:25 (NIV)