

# The Sermon on the Mount

## Level Up!

### Matthew 5-7

- Chelsea Oh, my brethren.
- Tyler Yes. Wow. This is it. National Youth Conference brethren. If you are excited to be here, can I get a what? What?
- Chelsea They're sitting in the seats if you guys are excited to get here. Can I get a. Oh, hey.
- Tyler Okay. Just sitting directly on the floor. If you are excited to be here, can I get a shoe? Wow. It is so good to be here with you at NYC.
- Chelsea Like you have probably guessed.
- Tyler I'm Chelsea and I'm Tyler and we're siblings and tonight we're having a lovely little chatty chat about how to follow Christ. And if you want the plain and simple of how to follow Jesus, look to the Sermon on the Mount.
- Chelsea The Sermon on the Mount is found early on in the Book of Matthew, and it has so much good stuff in it. It starts off with the Beatitudes, which Naomi unpacked for us this morning, and from there for three whole chapters. Jesus keeps preaching and teaching up a storm. He's thrown out parable after parable, saying some of the most iconic lines from the Bible.
- Chelsea And Jesus is painting this in-depth picture of how we are to follow him and says, It's our job to take everything from the Sermon on the Mount and slim it down into something we can remember. We have summarized the Sermon on the Mount and digested two words Level up. Jesus is calling us to level up.
- Tyler Leveling up is like in those video games or movies where the main character starts out fairly mediocre, but then they become super powerful and amazing. Mario taps into star power. Peter Parker becomes Spider-Man, Ray becomes the hero of the Star Wars universe. Your mediocre bowl of Cheerios becomes magically delicious. Lucky Charms you all those marshmallows make all the difference.
- Tyler The point is, the character starts out here fairly inexperienced, not so confident, not so sure of who they truly are. But then, over time, with a lot of practice and leaning on the teachings of others and discovering more of who they truly can be, they level up and become something even greater than what anyone ever thought possible. Many of us have yet to tap into our full potential, but wherever we're starting from, Jesus calls us toward greater Jesus is calling us to level up.

Chelsea From studying the Sermon on the Mount. We have determined three ways we can work on how we level up and following Christ.

Tyler We can level up by focusing on one our relationship with others.

Chelsea To our relationship with God.

Tyler And three, our relationship with ourselves.

Chelsea So let's start with the first one, our relationship with others. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is totally flipping around how we ought to relate with others. He's kind of saying, Okay, in the past you have heard that this is how you're supposed to treat someone. But I'm asking you to rise to be better. He's saying that society may be saying that you should treat someone like this way, but he's saying, I'm calling you to be up here.

Chelsea He's saying am. He's inviting us not to just be over here, but to level up and be up here.

Tyler For example, Jesus says, you have heard that it was said by those of ancient times, you shall not murder. Paul It's like duh when relating well to others. Not murdering is like the most basic of basic.

Chelsea So Jesus is like, yeah, not murdering is some of what it takes to care for others. But that is definitely not all of it. You got to take a step back and dig a little deeper. You got to work on what leads to murder in the first place. You got to level up and work on your anger.

Tyler Everyone gets angry now and again, but Jesus is calling us to pay attention to that anger, to try to work things out with the other before they escalate. Listen to them. Try to understand their point of view. Apologize and forgive society. Set the bar pretty low with do not murder. But Jesus is saying that if we want to live into the full and abundant life that Christ that God wants for us, then we've got to start doing things better.

Tyler We've got to level up.

Chelsea Jesus goes from talking about anger to then giving us passages about marriage and adultery and divorce.

Tyler And you're probably thinking, Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa. Marriage, divorce. This is a youth conference. Marriage, if I'm even going to get married, is somewhere down the road. And yes, this is a youth conference. But the sentiment of what Jesus is saying here is still important. Jesus is saying that our relationships with others are important, and we're not just talking about significant others here.

Tyler Your friendships, your family, how you show care to the stranger. That stuff matters. Others matter. We've got to level up and take our relationships with others seriously.

Chelsea From there, Beatitudes are talking about anger and marriage. Jesus is emphasizing our relationship with others.

Tyler But then Jesus throws the biggest curveball of them all when he says.

Chelsea You have heard that it is said you should love your neighbors and hate your enemies.

Tyler But that's the old way of doing things. We've got to level up because if we want to live our best life, then we have to.

Chelsea Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.

Tyler Yet Jesus calls us to love our enemies. And when you think of enemies, perhaps you think of the scary world power kind of enemies like Hitler or Kim Jong un or Vladimir Putin. And I'm convinced that Christ command to love thy enemy still applies and daring and creative ways even to the scary world powers of today. But the enemies that we want to focus on tonight are a little bit more every day and personal.

Tyler The person you don't quite see eye to eye with, the classmate who thinks they're all that and is always putting others down. The rival sports team and their star player, he does have to be. I mean, the rival sports team is no scary world power enemy. But if Christ is calling us to love our enemies, then surely those words apply to our smaller everyday enemies.

Chelsea Take this story of Ivan and naive, for instance. And Niya was an amazing runner and he had put in the work to prove it. He had entered into a major cross-country race in Spain, where athletes from all over the world were coming to compete. And not just any athletes, either. Olympic level athletes. This was a nice chance to show the world who he was.

Chelsea Runners on your mark get set. This starting gun fires. Runners take off over hills, fields, miles, twists and turns. After miles of running, the finish line came into sight and India was in second place. Up ahead in first place was this guy, Abel Mutai, an Olympic level, an Olympic medal winner. And now you just had to pass Mutai and he would get such a boost for his running career.

Chelsea He started picking up his pace in hopes of catching him. But despite his best efforts, Mutai was still pulling away and it became clear that he wasn't going to win. But then Mutai stopped. He sat ten meters away from the finish line. He

hadn't crossed. He he hadn't won. So it comes to find out that Mutai he thought he had won.

Chelsea He thought he had crossed the finish line, but the markings weren't clear and he didn't know Spanish. And so he was just a little confused and hadn't actually won. Anyways, this was a nice chance. He started picking up the pace. He was only steps away. Now the crowd was cheering. The tension was palpable. And then something unexpected happened.

Chelsea And Nayar also stepped ten meters from the finish line, and instead of passing Mutai, he strove for something greater. He put his hand on Moutai's back any point. It had his hand forward and he showed the rightful winner. He led the rightful winner crossed first.

Tyler When Jesus calls us to level up and relating to others, he's calling us to be more like a NAIA. All the rules of the world would say to take any opportunity to get ahead. The world would say that success is about who is first, but Jesus is calling us to show the world another way of living.

Chelsea So when working on a relation ships with others, Jesus caused us to. Yeah. Okay. Let me hear it again when working on our relationships with others. Jesus caused us to. Okay. Thank you. The second way Jesus is calling us to level up is how we relate to God, how we are, relate to God in different ways. Some feel really connected through prayer, others through service, some from being and church, others from being out in nature.

Chelsea And how we personally connect with God is important. But what we want to focus on today is something a little different. When we focus up on how we relate to God, we want to do it by staying focused, focus on God and focused on God's kingdom.

Tyler I want you to imagine what heaven is like. Actually, let's do this right. I invite you to close your eyes. Go ahead and close your eyes and let's take a deep breath together. Breathe in and out for you. Then. And out and with your eyes still closed, I invite you to imagine what heaven is like. And let's not focus so much on what it looks like, but rather what it feels like.

Tyler What emotions come to mind when you think of heaven. Perhaps it is the sense of joy, of of peace, of safety. It's a sacred space where there isn't hatred or violence, greed or jealousy. It's this place where there is this overwhelming and abundant sense of love and acceptance, where everyone has enough, where you are enough. Now I invite you to open your eyes and maybe look around a little bit and imagine that sacred space right here, right now on Earth, heaven on Earth.

Tyler That's what Jesus is inviting us to experience.

- Chelsea That's what Jesus is talking about in the Lord's Prayer, which is also found in the Sermon on the Mount. He says, Thy kingdom come, thy will be done. On earth as it is in heaven. We want all the goodness from heaven to be right here, right now on Earth, and as our God and following Christ to help welcome the Kingdom of God right here, right now, and hatred and violence right now.
- Chelsea Create welcoming spaces where we can all belong right now. But our greed and jealousy aside right now and by working on bringing God's Kingdom on Earth right now, we can deepen our relationship with God and God's people.
- Tyler Jesus has all these sayings throughout the Sermon on the Mount about what it means to focus on God and God's kingdom first. For example, he says, So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do, in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.
- Chelsea Jesus is saying giving money to offerings and those in need is a great thing. But don't make a big deal about it. Don't make give offerings because it will make you look good. But because you are focused on God and God's kingdom.
- Tyler Or here's another one Jesus says, Whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites. For they love. Just stand on and pray in the synagogues, not the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to God who is in secret.
- Chelsea Jesus is saying, Don't make this about you. Don't draw everyone's attention on how holy you are being, how you're doing the right thing. If you've leveled up and are doing the work of God, you don't have to flaunt it. Just do it for God. You want to stay focused on God and God's kingdom.
- Tyler It's like the story of Florence Chadwick. Florence Chadwick was known for her long distance open water swims. At the age of ten, she became the youngest person to swim the mouth of the San Diego Bay. Then, at the age of 32, she became the first woman to swim the English Channel. Both directions. She swam from England to France.
- Tyler One year and then from France to England the next. So at the age of 34, she wanted to set a new record. She wanted to be the first woman to swim the Catalina Channel. The Catalina Channel runs from the Catalina Island to the coast of California. That's 21 miles worth of swimming. To put that into perspective, that's the equivalent of 1352 lengths of a normal 25 meter pool on the morning that.
- Tyler CHADWICK It's a set out on the swim. A dense fog blankets the ocean with the Catalina Island at her back, Chadwick wades into the icy Pacific waters and kicks off towards the California coast. Hours go by, exhaustion sets in, the water is so icy

cold, she even has close encounters with sharks. So after nearly 16 hours of nonstop swimming, Chadwick can't take it any longer.

Tyler She calls the support boat, and they haul her in only to soon discover that she was just half a mile from the California coast, 20 and a half miles worth of swimming. And she had to call it quits with just half a mile to go. Later that day, she told a reporter, Look, I'm not one to make excuses, but I know that if I could have seen the California coast, I would have finished that swim.

Tyler So it wasn't the fatigue or even the icy waters that defeated her. It was the fog. It had prevented Chadwick from being able to see her goal. Two months go by and Chadwick attempts to swim again. And just like before, a dense fog blankets the ocean. But this time, Chadwick keeps a mental image of the California coast and her mind as she swims through the fog.

Tyler This time, Chadwick becomes the first woman to swim the Catalina Channel. Not only that, but she beat the men's record by 2 hours.

Chelsea Yet he brethren, there is plenty of fog in life dressed this way by this consume that hang out with these people, avoid those people don't hang out with the homeless, the immigrant, the Democrat, the Republican. Focus on your own gains, your own interests, your own, your own, your own. But like Florence Chadwick, we had to keep our goal in mind.

Chelsea If we keep God and God's kingdom as our focus, then we can endure any fog this world throws our way. So when it comes, this is your part. Get ready. When it comes to our relationship with God, we've got to know when it comes to our relationship with others. We have got to think.

Tyler And now, brethren, it's time to get real for a second. Is it? Am I allowed to sit here? Can I sit.

Chelsea Right about to have a heart to heart. Hear it?

Tyler Yeah, we are. Larry, can you do a little camera zoom for dramatic effect? Brethren, we know how to show care to the other right. Love thy enemy, do unto others peacefully simply together we get caring for others. We're also really good at focusing on God and God's kingdom. I mean, we are a church, after all. That's kind of what this is all about.

Tyler But brethren, if we truly want to level up, then we've also got to focus on ourselves.

Chelsea Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa. And I know what some of you are thinking to wait Chelsea trailer. Like, didn't you just literally say not to focus on yourself?

Tyler Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. So, like, don't be selfish or self-centered, but we've got to be in tune with our own faults. We have to understand our triggers, understand what makes our blood start to boil with anger. We have to be willing to ask ourselves the hard questions. Is that person actually annoying or am I just tired? Is that person actually wrong or am I just not willing to hear their point of view?

Tyler Oh, here's a good one. Is that who the person actually is, or am I just projecting stereotypes?

Chelsea It's really easy to sit back and see how others need to improve or how others are in the wrong. But Jesus is saying, Whoa, whoa, whoa. Before you go judging other people, what about yourself and the Scripture? Jesus says it like this. Why do you see the speck in your neighbor's eye but you not notice the log in your own eye, you hypocrite?

Chelsea First take the log out of your own eye and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor's eye. Jesus is saying that we've got to work on ourselves and check ourselves before we go judging other people.

Tyler Oftentimes we don't know someone's full story. We're quick to make these judgments when in reality we don't know what their life holds. And sometimes these quick judgments can be because of our own personal biases. And by working on our own biases, we can work on the log in our own eye.

Chelsea Everyone has biases. They're ingrained in us from her upbringing, from who we hang out with, who we see at school, what we see on TV or TV shows or the news social media and biases sometimes are so ingrained in us that we can act on our biases without even realizing it. And sometimes, if we're not careful, these biases can be harmful.

Tyler Am I saying that because she's a woman?

Chelsea Am I thinking that because he's black.

Tyler Because she's vegan.

Chelsea Because he wears a Kamau hat.

Tyler Because they use a different pronoun than I expected.

Chelsea Because she's on the spectrum of autism.

Tyler What hidden biases might you have? What are the logs in your own eye that you need to work on? Because, brethren, I don't want to just help build up the Kingdom of God, but I want to be able to see the beauty that is God's kingdom.

- Chelsea So maybe working on yourself means working on your biases and how you perceive others. But another part of working on ourselves is how we perceive ourselves. For example, say you have a teammate and they miss a pass and you encourage them and you say, Hey, it felt good, you got the next one. But if we miss the pass sometimes we can be hard on ourselves and have kind of like a negative voice in our head.
- Chelsea Why did you miss that pass? You've been practicing. You shouldn't have let that happen. Maybe you're not good at this anyways. Sometimes as Christians, it's really easy for us to extend grace towards other people, and sometimes we forget to extend that same grace to ourselves.
- Tyler So we want to work on our biases. Yes, but also when we mess up, we have to be willing to extend that same grace and kindness that we show toward others. And by doing so, we can better live and to the Kingdom of God.
- Chelsea So we've leveled up in our relationship with others. We've leveled up and focused on God. We've leveled up and we focus on ourselves. Jesus ends the Sermon on the Mount with a parable that summarizes this whole level up thing, and it's the scripture we heard earlier about the why the builder, the wise builder who built their house on rock and the foolish builder who built their house on sand.
- Chelsea And when the storm comes, a house built on sand gets demolished and a house built on rock stays strong.
- Tyler Jesus is comparing us to the builders saying, Those of you who hear these words of mine and act on them will be like the wise builder, a.k.a. those of you who hear the words of the Sermon on the Mount and act on it and level up will be like the wise builder.
- Chelsea And what is so powerful about this passage is its honesty. Jesus is saying that, you know, unexpected troubles can happen to any of us, regardless of if we are a wise builder or a foolish one. Death of someone we love, feelings of loneliness and depression, an argument with a close friend. These kind of storms can happen to any of us.
- Chelsea But Jesus is saying that if we are able to build a firm foundation on him and his teaching, then we are setting our life upon a solid rock and through Christ we can weather any storm.
- Tyler But brethren, this parable has more to teach us this. And then just enduring the storms of life. Oftentimes when I think of this parable, I think of this image. There are these two houses divided by a swift flowing river, one of the houses as it built upon the solid foundation of rock, while the other house is built upon the soft and susceptible sand.

Tyler And I'm like, Well, obviously I want to be the builder who builds my house on the rock, because as soon as the river rises, the one on the sand is being swept away. But brethren, I'm starting to realize that maybe I've been thinking about this image all wrong. What if it looks a little more like this again? There are these two houses, but this time it looks like they're both built upon sand, at least on the surface level.

Tyler If you want to get to any solid rock, you have to dig deep. You have to put in the hard work in order to find the bedrock. Because I'm convinced that maybe the story isn't just about where we place our house, but it's about doing the hard work to set our house upon the firm foundation.

Chelsea For us to set our foundation on Christ, our solid rock. That means we've got to level up, we've got to put in the hard work and dig past, dig deep past, simply the surface level, like the owner on the left. We have to put in the hard work and get to the core. But in the hard work, when relationships get messy, put in the hard work when we can't see past the plank in our own eye, but in the hard work of putting our pride and selfishness aside and getting to the core of seeking first the Kingdom of God.

Chelsea So how do we follow Christ's? We worry less about the surface level, what others define as success, what society defines as success. And as I said, we put in the hard work and get to the core of what Christ once from us we rise to the occasion and not only hear these words from the sermon on the Mount, but we act on them because when we act on them, when we level up, then we can more fully enter into the abundant life that Christ has in store for us.

Tyler So, brethren, let's get to it. Let's put in the hard work and level up into the full and abundant life that Christ, our Lord calls for us. Let's level up. Let's try that again. Let's level up and care for all of our relationships, even loving thy enemy.

Chelsea Let the Lord and we're on the plank and our own eye and our biases.

Tyler Lads level up and seek first the kingdom of God Let whoever and feed the hungry lads level up and clothe the naked.

Chelsea Let's fight and fight for justice.

Tyler Let's let them proclaim a new the old, old story.

Chelsea Let's go and reach those who are running from God and comfort those who have been hurt from the church.

Tyler Last one. Here we go. Let's level up and associate with those who don't act like us, look like us, think like us, and even those who don't like us.

Chelsea

And do it all in the name of the one who taught us from atop a mount a millennia ago. Jesus.