*What If Jesus Was Serious?* Discussion Questions

***Week 1***

Chapter 4. In what ways does the church environment create an expectation to be doing “pretty good” all the time (what the author call “happy-clappy people”)? How do you engage your faith with the times when you are lamenting things that are broken? Why do you think Jesus says, “Those who mourn are blessed” (Matt 5:4)?

Ch 5. What differences do you see between Jesus’ promise that “the meek… will inherit the earth [or land]” (Matt 5:5) and contemporary political rhetoric? What ways do you see *yourself* (try not to talk about other people!) drawn toward the political rhetoric? How do you think Jesus’ message can counteract that attitude in yourself?

Ch 9. Why was it so costly for Jesus to make peace between us and God? How does this highlight the difference between being a peacemaker (Matt 5:9) and being a “peace-faker” in relationships with others?

***Week 2***

Ch 11. Why do you think Jesus chose to share his message with “the crowds” (Matt 5:1) instead of scholars, rulers, or wealthy business backers? How does that affect the role you believe Jesus has for you?

Ch 14. In what ways do you find yourself tempted to “flee into safe enclaves of holiness, far removed from the decay of society”? What do you think it would take to be “salt and light” in a ways you can sustain your whole life while keeping your faith strong (Matt 5:13-16)?

***Week 3***

Ch 17. Why is it so hard to “wield anger” with clear vision? What is the right way to respond to anger when you feel it rise in you (cf. Matt 5:22)?

Ch 19. When is it tempting to think of someone else as “*raca*” (Matt 5:22), contemptible, not worthy of care? How do we show people respect even when we disagree (strongly) with them?

***Week 4***

Ch 24. How well do you think you embody the author’s opening statement that the Christian loves not only his tribe or his ideals of what people should be but, “The Christian loves the irritating person right in front of him”? What are some challenges you find if you redefine “love your enemy” (Matt 5:44) to include the everyday annoying people in your life?

Ch 28. Do you have anyone you don’t like on your regular prayer list (cf. Matt 5:44)? If so, how has it changed the way you see them? How do you think our church could pray for each other that builds community more personally?

***Week 5***

Ch 29. The author says, “Real intimacy—whether with another person or God—requires privacy and shuns publicity.” What do you think intimacy with God looks like? Why is privacy important for nurturing it (Matt 6:1, 4, 6)?

Ch 34. How often are you consciously aware of sin in your life you need God to forgive? In what ways do you see this influencing the ways you give and receive forgiveness with others (Matt 6:12, 14-15)?

***Week 6***

Ch 39. What concern is God’s greatest rival for the role of “master” in your heart? How do you see the things you treasure influencing what you think about and what you love (Matt 6:19-21, 24)?

Ch 45. What fears tempt you to barricade yourself from others? How can Jesus’ assurance that God knows what you need free you from those fears to love others (Matt 6:25-34)?

***Week 7***

Ch 46. Why do you think it’s difficult to distinguish between judging in the sense of moral discernment and judging in the sense of condemning from place of superiority (Matt 7:1-2)? What can help us do the first without being guilty of the second?

Ch 51. Has there been a time you were glad God said “no” to your prayer? What are some of the better things God graciously gives us that we don’t often think to ask him for (Matt 7:11)?

***Week 8***

Ch 56. What popular ideas do you sometimes want to justify, even though you know they run against Jesus’ teaching? How will it influence the way you live if you know that following Jesus is a minority (“narrow,” Matt 7:14) way of life?

Ch 60. What are some practices you think would be beneficial if we want to be living trees that grow fruit instead of dead trees decorated with fake fruit (Matt 7:15-20)? What expectations might we need to lay down in order to give up the temptation to focus more on fruit than life?

Ch 66. Why is it important to distinguish between those God might use and those who belong to him (Matt 7:21-23)? What are some important ways to tell the difference?

***Week 9***

Ch 69. The author suggests that the foundation of our spiritual house needs to be built with the difficult hidden work of “prayer, solitude, confession, and discipline.” How do these hidden disciplines relate to more visible and social practices? Which of these do you find easier? How do we keep them in balance?

Ch 71. What do you think it was that so amazed the crowds about how Jesus taught (Matt 7:28-29)? How did this come across? What do you think your soul is attracted to?