

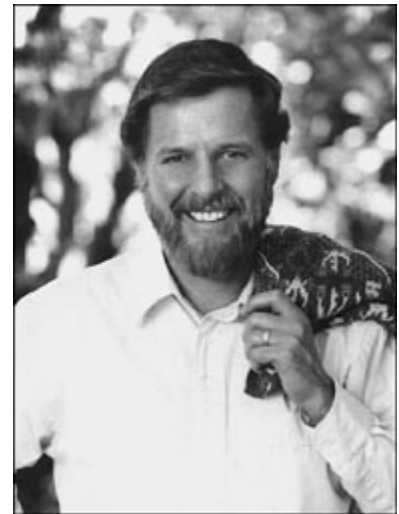
### GROWING EDGES

October 2001

The Sermon on the Mount is the spotlight of this *Perspective*. The reason for this focus is intentional and thought through with great care. Genuine Christian renewal will always carry in its wake a richer and deeper understanding of Scripture. As there arises in our hearts and minds a determined quest for him who is the sole object of it all—for Jesus Christ himself—we are driven irresistibly to seek a fuller understanding of his wonderful words of life. And when we consider the renewal movement of discipleship to Jesus, that is, the spiritual formation of our souls under God, the Sermon on the Mount is simply the most central text in the Bible.

#### The Greatest Teaching Ever Given

This sermon, recorded for us in Matthew 5-7 (along with its parallel in Luke<sup>1</sup>), is absolutely the greatest teaching ever given on how to live fully and freely. It is a continuous discourse in which Jesus lays out the principles sufficient for anyone who wants to live the blessed life. This sermon is THE GOLD MINE that the Church has too often dismissed as interesting in a poetic sort of way but having nothing essential to do with how we might actually live today. Or relegated it to another dispensation because it seems like an impossible way to live in our present world. And, tragically, we have too often embraced these convenient ways for neglecting this greatest of teaching, to our own detriment.



O' dear friend, believe me, the riches in the Sermon on the Mount are worth a lifetime of study, thought, reflection, and practice. The truths in it can bring life and order to the emotions and the will and the spirit and the soul.

#### Somebody Confused Somewhere

But it does need to be understood. When we read the literature on the Sermon on the Mount we have to conclude that somebody is confused somewhere. Many, for example, turn these penetrating words of Jesus into a new set of soul-crushing laws. This, the greatest of all teaching on life, is often used to beat people down and put them into the worst of bondage. It is true, isn't it, that the best of literature is often taken and used to the worst of ends.

But in this great sermon Jesus is not teaching systematically or exhaustively. He is not giving us a system of doctrine or of moral rules. Rather, he is aiming to convey a certain spirit to us, a spirit that will transform our minds. And he uses concrete examples and everyday situations and striking sayings to fix that spirit and outlook in us.

The resources we are providing you on pages 6 and 7 all take the Sermon on the Mount seriously for life today. And while they may not agree on every interpretive detail, they will give you a balanced and practical understanding of this great sermon. I hope you will look them over carefully. Taken together they will provide you with a core library on this most important of Jesus' teachings on life in the Kingdom of God.

Peace and joy

Richard J. Foster

<sup>1</sup> There is no justification whatever for setting Luke's version (often called "the Sermon on the Plain") over against Matthew's. Matthew, for example, is not spiritualizing the beatitudes, and Luke giving them in their original form, nor is Luke giving a political twist to an original form of the sermon that applied only to the individual. The variations of the sermon are akin to studying a diamond from multiple angles.

## GROWING TOGETHER

We are here looking at ways to practice the Sermon on the Mount. What is given below is merely my way of jump-starting your thinking with the hope that you will take it from there, discovering ever new ways to apply the Sermon on the Mount to your daily life. One warning: space allows me to use only isolated sayings, and to truly understand the height and the depth and the breadth of the teaching we must see it in its full context. But then, that is the task of our study for the months and years to come.

❶ In the “beatitudes” Jesus takes up various kinds and classes of people that in his day were thought to be unblessed and unbleisable, and he shows how the Kingdom of God is available to them and how they too can be blessed. No wonder the poor heard him gladly! As the Simon and Garfunkel song goes, “Blessed are the sat upon, spat upon, ratted on.” In *The Divine Conspiracy* Dallas Willard gives contemporary expression to these “unblessed and unbleisable—the physically repulsive . . . the bald, the fat, and the old . . . the flunk-outs and drop-outs and burned outs. The broke and the broken. The drug heads and the divorced. The HIV-positive and herpes-ridden. The brain-damaged, the incurable ill. The barren and the pregnant too-many-times or the wrong time. The overemployed, the underemployed, the unemployed. The unemployable. The swindled, the shoved aside, the replaced. . . .” (pp. 123-124).

Ask yourself: How can I make the kingdom God available to individuals who are humanly hopeless? Then as you go about your days, learn to take time to point out the natural beauty of every human being.

❷ Take an afternoon to travel through your town on public transportation. Observe those who use this service. If you are not normally dependent on public transportation, consider how you would have to rearrange your life if you were always dependent on a bus schedule. As you ride, pray about being open to someone you meet on the bus. “Being open” might mean striking up a friendly conversation, showing concern, offering help of some kind, praying for someone or sharing the “good news” with them. (Adapted from *Dallas Willard’s Study Guide to the Divine Conspiracy*, p. 47.)

❸ Jesus had some very strong words to say about human anger (Matt. 5:21-26). Ask yourself: What

situations in my life set off recurring angry impulses? After you have identified several situations, take the most pressing one and consider how you might respond differently in light of the reality that your well-being, your blessedness, comes from God and your life in the Kingdom of God. Then, for the next few weeks focus on this single situation and seek in the power of the Spirit to react to it in new ways. Watch this develop a new response pattern in you. Do all you can to nurture this new “holy habit”.

❹ In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus says, “Let your yes be yes and your no be no. Anything more than this comes from evil” (Matt. 5:37). This teaching urges us to state what is actually the case without embellishing or distorting things in any way. Jesus knows that all our little embellishments are attempts to manipulate situations or coerce others. In fact, many today get handsome salaries by learning ever more clever and attractive ways to say yeses that are not yeses and noes that are not noes—we call them spin-doctors.

In your place of work, perhaps from now until Christmas, try out Jesus’ counsel to simply state what is without embellishment or distortion. Keep a journal record of the time. See what you learn about yourself, about others, about your workplace, and more. Especially note your growing ease with telling the truth. It is one of those habits of the heart that we take to like a duck takes to water, for, indeed, we are created to tell the truth! To be sure, it is hard at first for we are so accustomed to relying upon deception, but watch and see how much freer and alive you feel telling the truth.

❺ In Matthew 6:9-13 we are given the Lord’s Prayer, the grandest prayer of all. Try what C. S. Lewis called “festooning” as you pray through this Prayer. To understand festooning think of decorating a Christmas tree: the Lord’s Prayer is like the tree itself; the various ornaments and tinsel is your festooning.

So now, pray the Lord’s Prayer allowing each phrase of the Prayer to move you into prayers particular to your personal world. For example, praying, “Your kingdom come” might move you into taking up the needs of neighbors and friends and work associates, praying that God’s kingdom will come in them and in the circumstances of their lives. And the festooning will change from day to day, matching the changing particulars of your world.

Richard J. Foster

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# ***THE HEALING OF HUMAN HURTS***

## **A Child's Wounded Heart**

On the first evening of the conference, Richard Foster asked those who knew that they needed something from the Lord to stand up. I did not know what I needed, only that the Holy Spirit was nudging me to stand. As I stood, I felt tears come. As Mr. Foster prayed, I saw a clear vision, like a short movie. The vision healed a very painful childhood memory.

When I was about nine, my family was vacationing with family and friends at a small lake in Northern Michigan. Walking home from church one Sunday along the cottage road, someone mentioned that a relative had caught a chipmunk in a live (humane) trap in his garden. I enjoyed animals and was very eager to see a live chipmunk up close since in the wild they always ran away. I hurried off to find my relative.

As I walked toward the beach, I was horrified to see a man standing on the dock, holding the submerged trap by a chain, drowning the chipmunk. I was nauseated by the idea of that chipmunk struggling desperately to live and of the heartlessness of that man. Why catch it alive in order to kill it? I was so angry and horrified that I burst into tears. I ran back to the road crying loudly. Some woman hugged me, but I could not stop weeping. I started to feel sick and to cry again before bed that night and my mother rebuked me: "It was just a chipmunk!" The combination of feeling sick and alone stayed with me for a long time. I was stunned that no one cared about the chipmunk. The picture of the man on the dock holding that chain haunted me for years. It was the closest thing to evil I had ever witnessed. The world had changed for me.

I had not thought about that time for many years, but the Lord remembered. As I stood up at the Conference, suddenly I was standing on that road in Northern Michigan. Then I could see under the water off the dock and watched as the chipmunk swam out between the bars of the trap. It swam to shore, ran up the beach, and came right up to me as I knelt on the road. We looked at each other, and then it scampered off into the woods.

I can't describe the joy and relief and closure that vision gave me; it renewed my hope in the resurrection and the triumph of good over evil! I think in some ways I must have identified with that chipmunk as a child, afraid of drowning and not trusting adults to care, especially about small things. The vision reminded me that Abba cares deeply and has compassion on all he has made (Ps. 145:9), even a chipmunk. Whatever despair was bound up in me with that awful memory was released and healed. I thank the Lord for ministering to a child's heart when I was thirty-two.

Durham, North Carolina

## **A New Song**

Whether we are sopranos, tenors, altos, or just plain tone deaf, there are times that we will lift our voices in praise to our Almighty God. We seek to bring to his ears a sweet song that will please and honor him. The author of Psalm 149 tells us to "Praise the Lord. Sing to the Lord a new song." In song, we become united to our Father as we glorify his holy name. However, there are other times that the reverse takes place and the Lord will fill us with a new song. It will often be a song that is filled with healing for those who need it. In Psalm 40 David writes these words, "I waited patiently for the Lord; he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. He put a new song in my mouth."

When I attended the RENOVARE Conference in June 2000 near Seattle, Washington, I had been a Christian for a little over eight months. Although my Christian walk was just beginning, I felt as though I had already accomplished much. In actuality, becoming a Christian was enough of a stretch for me but

I had also gone on a short-term mission trip to Nicaragua, was ushering at our church, started participating in Bible studies, and a few other activities. In every outward appearance, I was coming along rather nicely. But I knew and God knew that there were many important internal issues that had not been dealt with. Perhaps most importantly was the fact that I had not fully and completely accepted the grace, love and forgiveness that had been offered me by our Lord and Savior. My mind accepted the idea but my heart remained closed. Having come from a life filled with sin, tragedy, and failure, I could not possibly understand and accept the great gifts that were being offered to me.

Then, the Lord took me to the RENOVARÉ Conference with a plan to do exactly what David had written about. He decided to lift me out of the slimy pit and put a new song in my mouth. That song was *I Will Change Your Name*.

I will change your name.

You shall no longer be called wounded, outcast, lonely or afraid.

I will change your name.

Your new name shall be confidence, joyfulness, overcoming one, faithfulness, friend of God, one who seeks my face.

The powerful words and melody of the song entered my soul with a clear message that God does not view me as I see myself. He knew that I had been wounded, outcast, lonely, and afraid, but he reached down to me anyway to offer me his love and forgiveness. He truly wanted to change my name. We sang that song twice during the weekend, and both times I was brought to tears. Yes, some were tears of sorrow over the wasted past, but there were also many tears of joy that the Lord was going to bring about in me a new creation, a new person that would be so unlike the original that she would even get a new name. I must admit that there are still many days when I do not feel like a new creation, but I now have one thing that I did not have before. Hope. Hope that started from the singing of a short but powerful song.

Mary M. Mees  
Auburn, Washington

## God's Ultimate Adoration

Since the conference, I have known God's ultimate adoration. God delights in me for no other reason than the fact that God desires it so. I read daily the card of commitment from the conference; it is always important to start every day with focusing on my center—Jesus Christ.

Roxana D. Labrador  
Oakland, California

## Victory Over Allergies

During my childhood and into early adulthood, I had terrible problems with seasonal allergies. When I was a child my parents and I changed my pillows from feather-stuffed to foam, and that at least helped in the morning. (I needed all the help I could get . . . I've never been a "morning person"!)

In my mid-twenties I got a job at the local university library. It was awful. My supervisor was very irritable and a perfectionist. At that time in my life I wasn't assertive enough to respectfully but firmly stand up to her. Thankfully, nine months later a friend from my church was leaving his position in another campus library and encouraged me to apply for his job. I did and was accepted.

My supervisor and the atmosphere were as different from my old position as night and day. There was absolutely no outward stress. However, even after two months I had not yet recovered from the emotional trauma of the other job. At the same time, I began to notice that I was developing allergies to two of my favorite foods — milk and whole wheat bread.

To have the problem checked, I went to the family practice clinic at the university hospital however, my usual doctor was not on duty. The doctor that saw me did not do any of the usual physical checks, but asked me some questions about my lifestyle and recent history. I told him about the other job and my lingering feelings about it. He told me that my emotional upset probably caused the allergies.

This diagnosis made sense to me. However, when he began to recommend some things to do about it, I began to feel uncomfortable. I don't remember what all of them were, but one that sticks out in my memory was "empty your mind." I instantly prayed to the Lord for discernment. Just as instantly, he answered. Then the doctor mentioned some classes he was teaching at a place called the Community Wholistic Health Center which had recently opened. I'd seen one of its catalogs of class offerings, and it had an underlying belief system of Eastern mysticism and the occult.

Thanking the doctor, I paid my bill and went home. I communed with the Lord about what the doctor had said. I said to him, "I think his diagnosis was correct, but obviously his prescription is dead wrong. You're the Great Physician; what is your prescription?" The Lord directed me look up verses in my concordance about how unnecessary anxiety is because we belong to him. I wrote these verses on index cards and began meditating and praying over them. Because my job did not require a great deal of mental concentration, I was able to meditate on the verses a great deal at work as well as at home. Within two weeks I realized that the food allergies were gone. Praise God!

But that isn't the end of my story. The following spring, all of my coworkers began complaining about hayfever caused by pollen. It suddenly dawned on me that for the first time in my life I wasn't experiencing any symptoms nor have I since that time. This is especially miraculous, because where I live is supposed to be one of the worst areas in the country for seasonal allergy sufferers. Another praise!

Tina Vaughn  
Chapel Hill, North Carolina

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*Remember to send us your account of a healing of a human hurt. As a reminder: keep the account brief; write about physical, emotional, or spiritual healing (heart, mind, body, soul); reserve the word "cured" to situations where there is medical confirmation; and include your name and a way for us to contact you even though you want the story printed anonymously. Address your story to "The Healing of Human Hurts" and fax, mail, or e-mail it to us. The telephone number and addresses are on the front of this newsletter.*

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## **ADDITIONAL LOCAL CONFERENCE DATES**

**We have reserved five dates in 2002 for RENOVARÉ Local Conferences:\***

- ◆ January 19
- ◆ February 9
- ◆ March 16
- ◆ April 13
- ◆ May 18

### **Speakers Available:**

Glandion Carney	Emilie Griffin
Marti Ensign	James Bryan Smith
Roger Fredrikson	Donn Thomas

Local Conferences are sponsored by one to two churches that invite the community to participate. They are held on one day (Saturday from 8:30 a.m.-4:00 p.m. or Sunday from 1:30 p.m.-9:00 p.m.) for typically around 150 people. Costs include speaker's fees and travel expenses, registration materials, and RENOVARÉ overhead.

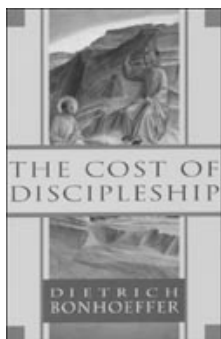
**To explore holding a RENOVARÉ Local Conference in your area, contact Joan Skulley**  
(in office Thursdays and Fridays).

**Phone: 303-792-0152 ◆ Fax: 303-792-0146 ◆ E-mail: [renovare@compuserve.com](mailto:renovare@compuserve.com)**

\*Dates are negotiable based upon availability of speaker.

## GOING DEEPER

The resources in this issue are chosen to give you a clear and balanced understanding of the Sermon on the Mount. If you will secure and seriously study them, we feel they will give you a competence in this great sermon that few have today. Even more, they will open to you a way of life in the Kingdom of God that is “LIFE, and that more abundantly.”



### ***The Cost of Discipleship*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer**

What can the call to discipleship, the adherence to the word of Jesus, mean today to the CEO, the soldier, the laborer, or the homemaker? What did Jesus mean to say to us today? Drawing on the Sermon on the Mount, Dietrich Bonhoeffer answers these timeless questions by providing a seminal reading of the dichotomy between “cheap grace” and “costly grace.” “Cheap grace,” Bonhoeffer writes, “is the grace we bestow on ourselves . . . grace without discipleship . . . Costly grace is the gospel which must be sought again and again, the gift which must be asked for, the door at which a man must know . . . It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life.”

### ***The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God*, Dallas Willard**

A masterpiece that explores what it means to live in God’s kingdom here and now as a disciple of Jesus Christ rather than waiting solely for the hereafter. As he describes apprenticeship to Jesus, Willard brings a fresh perspective to the Sermon on the Mount in chapters 4-8. He writes, “What we have come to call the Sermon on the Mount is a concise statement of Jesus’ teachings on how to actually live in the reality of God’s present kingdom available to us from the very space surrounding our bodies. It concludes with a statement that all who hear and do what he there says will have a life that can stand up to everything—that is, a life for eternity because it is already in the eternal (Matt. 7:24-25).

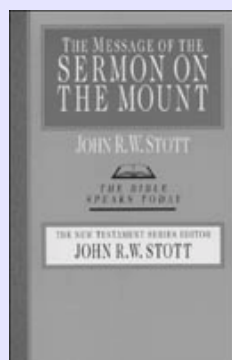


“As outstanding thinkers before and after him have done, Jesus deals in the two major questions humanity always faces. First there is the question of which life is the good life. . . . The second question Jesus deals with in the sermon concerns who is truly a good person” (pp. 97-98).

### ***Dallas Willard’s Study Guide to The Divine Conspiracy*, Jan Johnson, Keith J. Matthews, Dallas Willard**

This study guide expands the discussion begun in *The Divine Conspiracy*, focusing on and clarifying key issues and encouraging a fuller understanding of Christian discipleship. In it you will find:

- Overviews and summaries of each chapter of *The Divine Conspiracy*
- Scripture meditations to enhance your understanding of the text
- Study questions to facilitate stimulating discussion and reflection.



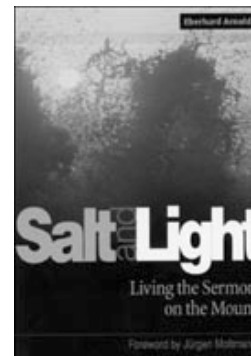
### ***The Message of the Sermon on the Mount*, John R. W. Stott**

“The followers of Jesus are to be different,” writes John Stott, “different from both the nominal church and the secular world, different from both the religious and the irreligious. The Sermon on the Mount is the most complete delineation anywhere in the New Testament of the Christian counter-culture. Here is a Christian value-system, ethical standard, religious devotion, attitude toward money, ambition, lifestyle and network of relationships—all of which are totally at variance with those in the non-Christian world. And this Christian counter-culture is the life of the kingdom of God, a fully human life indeed but lived out under the divine rule.”

In this careful exposition of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, John R. W. Stott accurately expounds the biblical text and relates it to life today. Above all, Stott says, he wants to let Christ speak this sermon again, this time to the modern world.

### **Salt and Light: Living the Sermon on the Mount, Eberhard Arnold**

Written by the founder of the Bruderhof community movement, this interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount threatens and challenges the present order of society. It opens with the question, "How do we respond to the Sermon on the Mount?" For two thousand years each generation has had to find its own answer to the call of Jesus: Wadensians and Hussites, the Baptizers and the Hutterites, the Mennonites and the Quakers. In the twentieth century Eberhard Arnold of the Bruderhof faced the powerful challenge of the Sermon on the Mount without reservation, ready for unconditional discipleship. "Arnold shows us that the Sermon on the Mount is not a new moral law but a proclamation, a witness to the power of the coming kingdom and true life" and that "discipleship and community life belong together: they cannot be separated. It is from community life that we draw the strength for discipleship and courage to face the inevitable opposition. In discipleship we find our brothers and sisters of the communal life" (pp. viii-x).



### **The Sermon on the Mount Four-tape Audio Set, Richard J. Foster**

Delivered during Spring Harvest at Skegness, England, in the spring of 2001, these talks bring the best of Foster's experience and teaching to the Sermon on the Mount. There are four presentations:

- "The Talk on the Hill"
- "Hill Walking for Beginners"
- "True Religion"
- "The Lord's Prayer"



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	<i>Study Guide to The Divine Conspiracy</i> by Johnson, Matthews, and Willard	\$ 12.00			
	<i>The Mission of the Sermon on the Mount</i> by John R. W. Stott	\$ 14.00			
	<i>Salt and Light</i> by Eberhard Arnold	\$ 12.00			
	<i>The Sermon on the Mount Four-tape Audio Set</i> by Richard J. Foster	\$ 20.00			
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6 Oct. 2001	<b>Wooster, OH</b> Local Conference	Central Christian Church 407 North Market Street Wooster, Ohio	Glandion Carney	David Stout 330-262-4652
12-13 Oct. 2001	<b>Northern Minnesota</b> Regional Conference	Greenway High School 308 Roosevelt Street Coleraine, Minnesota	Richard Foster Emilie Griffin George Skramstad	Linda Pierson 218-245-2218 lpierson@uslink.net
20 Oct. 2001	<b>Seattle, WA</b> Local Conference	First Free Methodist Church 3200 3rd Avenue West Seattle, Washington	Marti Ensign James Bryan Smith	David Hicks 206-281-2240
9-10 Nov. 2001	<b>San Antonio, TX</b> Regional Conference	Alamo Heights United Meth. Church 825 E. Basse Road San Antonio, Texas	Glandion Carney Richard Foster George Skramstad	Vic McCracken for Kathy Orr 210-698-4630 victorm@oakhillscocf.org
1-2 Feb. 2002	<b>San Francisco, CA</b> Regional Conference	First Baptist Church Market & Octavia San Francisco, California	George Skramstad James Bryan Smith Dallas Willard	Tiffany Flaming 415-863-3382, Ex. 223 tiffyd72@aol.com
22-23 Feb. 2002	<b>Phoenix, AZ</b> Regional Conference	North Phoenix Baptist Church 5757 North Central Avenue Phoenix, Arizona	George Skramstad James Bryan Smith Dallas Willard	Clark Youngblood 602-589-2543 cyoung@grand-canyon.edu
8-9 March 2002	<b>Wheaton, MD</b> Regional Conference	First Baptist Church 10914 Georgia Avenue Wheaton, Maryland	George Skramstad James Bryan Smith Dallas Willard	Lori and Tom Austin 301-603-8124 trailway@msn.com
19-20 April 2002	<b>Folsom, CA</b> Discipleship Evangelism Conference	Oak Hills Church 1100 Blue Ravine Road Folsom, California	George Skramstad James Bryan Smith Dallas Willard	David DeRoos 916-355-1385, Ex. 101 dderoos@citygateassociates.com
3-4 May 2002	<b>San Jose, CA</b> Regional Conference	First Baptist Church 800 Ironwood Drive San Jose, California	George Skramstad James Bryan Smith Dallas Willard	Betsy Anderson 408-291-0464 betsy5th@yahoo.com

*For more information or to help organize a conference, call or e-mail the contact person.*

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