

Fall 2025 Grow Groups: Week 2
“Better: Upside Down”
Matthew 5:1-5

GOAL

Embrace the true good life God has for us in his Kingdom and invite others to join us.

CHECKLIST

- Join the VRBC Listening Community at vrbc.net/listen if you haven't yet.
- Follow @vrbclisten on Instagram if you haven't yet.
- Take attendance in Planning Center, including guests and new members (please include their contact information in the meeting notes section).
- If you meet on-campus, there are Connection Cards available for you in your room for guests to fill out and give to you. Please make sure to drop them in one of our offering boxes in the worship center before you leave church any given Sunday.
- We are still looking for several more men and women to serve as mentors in local elementary schools with us through our new Walk With Me ministry. You and your Grow Groups are invited to register to spend 30 minutes each week mentoring a child at vrbc.net/walkwithme

LOOK AHEAD

- The primary Scripture for next week's sermon is: Matthew 5:6-8

PREPARING THROUGH PRAYER

God, thank you for the gift of our Grow Group. Help me to lead by example and create a safe space for our Grow Group members to be open and honest with one another about where we are in our journey, and what we think you are wanting us to hear and obey. I pray we grow closer to you through your word and closer to one another through our testimony.

CONNECT & COORDINATE

This is our second Grow Group gathering for the fall semester. Take time this week to:

- Make sure everyone is on the same page about the Listening to Jesus journey our church is taking together this year.
- Invite everyone to join our VRBC Listening Community at vrbc.net/listen
- Begin to share our own Listening to Jesus testimonies.
- Process our first Sermon on the Mount message (we will be studying the Sermon on the Mount through Thanksgiving).
- Pray for one another as we seek to Listen to Jesus and share him with others.

DISCUSS

PART 1: PROCESS THE SERMON

>> Read Matthew 5:1-5.

- **As we focus on listening to Jesus, what is the primary message of truth you sensed God speaking to you in our worship gathering this week?**

Leader Notes:

- *We want to create space for our Grow Groups to process the word that was preached in the sermon. Before we ask directed questions, we want to leave room for Grow Group members to share what the Holy Spirit has been writing on our hearts and speaking to us in our worship gathering. I have intentionally used the language of “worship gathering” rather than “sermon” here, because God often uses other components of a worship gathering along with the sermon to speak to us. This is a great question to start your sermon discussions each week to ensure whatever spark God ignites in the souls of your Grow Group members is something we seek to fan into flame, rather than move past to whatever our other questions are for our time together. Often, the most important thing someone will hear at church is something someone else shares in a small group setting. We want to create a safe space for people to speak out of the overflow of what God has been speaking to them in our worship gathering. There is also a lot included in a sermon and a worship gathering, so it is helpful to recognize something tangible we can hold onto.*

>> Why do you think our first message from the Sermon on the Mount is titled, “Better: Upside Down?”

Leader Notes:

- *John mentioned this in his sermon, but it is such a big point, it is worth circling back. It is also helpful to hear different people’s perspectives on what this could mean. This is a great way to get Grow Group members to talk back and respond to what they have just received in the sermon. I’ll include John’s notes below for reference if you need assistance, but there really is not an exact answer you are looking for here. Rather, you are inviting your Grow Group to process what this means for themselves.*
 - *John’s notes on “Better: Upside Down”:*
 - *Jesus speaks to us through the Sermon on the Mount and says, “I’ve got something for you that’s so much better than what you’re experiencing right now. I’m inviting you to live a brand-new kind of life in my Kingdom!”*

- *The good life is life in God's Kingdom, and life in God's Kingdom is better.*
- *The pathway to the good life isn't what we expected. It's better, but it's upside-down compared to how the world normally operates – it feels backward. Everything in this Kingdom seems upside-down.*

>> If “the good life” is living in God’s Kingdom, how does that compare to the vision you had of “the good life” growing up?

- **What realities do you experience living in God’s Kingdom that you can share with others who have not yet lived “the good life” in Christ?**

Leader Notes:

- *The world is constantly trying to sell us on “the good life” we all desire, deserve, and we can work hard to achieve (although it seems like no one ever knows when they have arrived). We do not have to think hard to find concrete examples of what counts as “the good life” according to the world. That said, if we only talk in theory about the true good life being life in God’s Kingdom, rather than giving concrete examples, it is particularly challenging for someone to embrace that abstract idea of the true good life in God’s Kingdom. We want to give everyone an opportunity to acknowledge what version of “the good life” we were sold in our own formation stories, but we also want to give everyone the opportunity to acknowledge the true good life we have tasted and seen in God’s Kingdom through Christ Jesus our Lord.*
- *Again, the world is constantly getting fed realities associated with a false version of “the good life.” What our friends and neighbors really need to hear about are the realities of life in Christ. Our friends and neighbors may not be concerned about where they will go when they die, but they could benefit from knowing where they can go when they feel like they have reached their end. The fact that believers have access to fullness of joy and peace beyond understanding at all times in Christ Jesus is a tremendous witness and gift to those living in our world today.*
 - *If Grow Group members can share this in the comfort of your small group context, our hope and prayer is they will be more likely to share this outside the walls of the church with those who maybe have never had someone share the good news of the true good life in God’s Kingdom before.*

>> If God blesses before he commands, and if every command God gives is actually an invitation into a blessing, then obeying God is drenched in blessing from start to finish.

- **How have you experienced this to be true in your own life?**
- **What personally motivates you to obey God?**

Leader Notes:

- *As John shared in his sermon, it can be easy to read the Sermon on the Mount as a list of rules we need to follow to earn our entrance into the Kingdom of God. But we want to make it so clear that the Kingdom of God is not something we achieve, but something we receive. As John said, we don't climb our way in, but we are carried in – by Jesus Christ himself.*
 - *The biggest point here is what John said himself, “our obedience is always a response to God’s gracious blessing, not a way to earn it.”*
- *John shared that no matter the cost, he has never regretted following God’s way instead of his own way, because God’s way always proves better. This is a great time to remember when God has invited us to do the same. Our testimonies of God’s faithfulness not only inspire our faith in the present, but they also inspire others who are walking their own faith journeys. It is worship and worth our time to acknowledge who God has been for us in the past as we press on to believe who God will forever be for us.*
- *Romans 2:4 is helpful here to remember it is God’s kindness that leads us to repentance.*

>> Read 2 Corinthians 8:9.

- **What does this verse mean to you?**
- **What do we learn about grace through this verse?**
- **What do we learn about Jesus through this verse?**
- **What do we learn about ourselves through this verse?**
- **What does this verse have to do with this week’s sermon?**

Leader Notes:

- *2 Corinthians 8:9 is our church’s memory verse for the week. Each week in our daily Listening Guides and in our Sermon Notes page we use in worship gatherings, you will see a memory verse for that week. Obviously, no one is required to memorize Scripture with us, but as we walk this journey of Listening to Jesus, we pray God writes his word on our hearts, so we want to give our faith family the opportunity to memorize Scriptures together that correlate with our message for the week.*

>> Read John 10:10 and John 14:6.

- **When Jesus says he is the life, and he has come to give us life, what kind of life is he talking about?**
- **What does it mean to be surrounded by people who are alive, but not truly living?**
 - **All of us once lived like this. What are some key differences between what marked your life before Jesus brought you to life, and what marks your life now that you are living in Christ?**

- **Jesus says he comes to give us life and life to the full. In the Kingdom of God, what do you think is the difference between life and life to the full?**
 - **What do you think “no one comes to the Father except through me” has to do with life to the full?**

Leader Notes:

- *It is moving to consider just how much God cares about life, and how much God cares about giving us life. It can be easy for us to spend our whole lives feeling like we are stuck on a hamster wheel trying to find success, but Jesus gives us new life in him with new mercies each morning.*
- *Jesus says in John 17:3, “now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.” True, good, full, eternal life is found in knowing God as we walk with Jesus, keeping in step with the Spirit. Life together with God – that is truly living.*

PART 2: LISTENING TO JESUS TESTIMONIES

Leader Notes:

- *As you may have heard me share in our Grow Group Leader Lunch, my hope is for our Grow Groups to spend around half of our discussion time testifying of what we have seen and heard from God in the last week as we grow in obedience and proclamation along this Listening to Jesus journey together. This may be an adjustment for some of our Grow Groups, so please be patient through the growing pains. This is not necessarily a time to review the previous week’s sermon, but this is a time to encourage one another, keep one another accountable, and pray together about what God has invited us to do with him in response to the message our faith family was focused on the past week. We want to continually grow as disciples who make disciples, and creating space for these testimonies will help us to do just that.*
- *Please take the time to personally share the invitation and challenge below before asking follow-up questions regarding this first full week of our Listening to Jesus journey that we have just completed. This time will be better for everyone if we are journeying together in our Listening Community, so please help your groups see the value of joining us along the way, and remember as a Grow Group Leader, you are leading by example.*
- *Friendly reminder: I have included general questions below as we get started (and you are welcome to use them as a template for each week’s Listening to Jesus testimony time if you choose), but you are also empowered and encouraged as a Grow Group Leader to get the ball rolling by pulling out something specific from the past week’s Listening Guide and your own Listen Journal that you would like to share with your Grow Group and invite others to consider and discuss.*

>> We invite and encourage everyone to join us on our journey of Listening to Jesus this year. If you have not yet joined our Listening Community to receive our daily Listening Guides by email or on Instagram, please do so. And please grab your Listen Journal in the lobby that is our gift to you. Plan to bring your Listen Journal with you to our Grow Group each week as we hope it will be a space for you to keep track of all you are seeing and hearing from God along this journey.

>> For those of you who have already joined us on the journey, what is something you heard from God this week that you would like to share with us?

- What is something you saw God do this week that you can share with us?**
- How has God already challenged you on this Listening to Jesus journey?**
- How has God already blessed you on this Listening to Jesus journey?**

>> As we seek to keep in step with the Spirit this week, how can we pray with you?

PRAY

God, thank you for offering us a better way and a life that is truly good in you and your Kingdom. Help us to remember that it is by grace we have been saved, through faith, and this is not of ourselves, so none of us can boast in anything but your goodness and mercy. Teach us to walk in your better way and to make the most of every opportunity to invite others to join us along the way.