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THE COHESIVE RHETORIC OF JESUS:
THE ROLE OF MATTHEW 6:19–7:11
IN THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

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THE COHESIVE RHETORIC OF JESUS:
THE ROLE OF MATTHEW 6:19–7:11
IN THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

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To the love of my life, Katrina:
your patience, support, and faithful love have sustained me and made this work possible.

Thank you.

“She is far more precious than jewels.”

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

1 En.	1 Enoch (Ethiopic Apocalypse)
AB	Anchor Bible
<i>BDAG</i>	Bauer, Walter, Frederick W. Danker, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich. <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
BHGNT	Baylor Handbook on the Greek New Testament
<i>BT</i>	<i>The Bible Translator</i>
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
<i>EBC</i>	<i>Expositor's Bible Commentary</i>
EGGNT	Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament
<i>ExpTim</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
Gos. Thom.	Gospel of Thomas
ICC	International Critical Commentary
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
Jos. Asen.	Joseph and Aseneth
<i>JSNTSup</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series</i>
LXX	Septuagint
NAC	New American Commentary
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary

<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
<i>NovTSup</i>	<i>Supplements to Novum Testamentum</i>
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
<i>NTTS</i>	<i>New Testament Tools and Studies</i>
PNTC	Pillar New Testament Commentary
<i>TDNT</i>	<i>The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i>
UBS5	The Greek New Testament, United Bible Societies, 5th ed.
<i>VTSup</i>	<i>Supplements to Vetus Testamentum</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
<i>WTJ</i>	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
ZECNT	Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament

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PREFACE

This dissertation is the completion of a journey that has spanned fifteen years and three states. I am indebted to my wife, Katrina, who has kept my eyes on the horizon every step of the way, through every late night, every disappointment, and every celebration. This dissertation is as much the fruit of her work as mine.

I'm also indebted to countless family and friends, ministry partners, pastors, and mentors who, in many and various ways, have shaped, counseled, and encouraged me. I am incredibly thankful for the patience and support of Briggs Road Baptist Church, whom I have been blessed to serve as pastor these past five years.

I want to thank my doctoral supervisor, Dr. Hershael York, for his investment, mentoring, and especially for directing me to this research topic. I truly could not have chosen a more enjoyable topic for doctoral research than this one. I also want to thank Dr. Jonathan Pennington and Dr. Robert Plummer for serving on my committee and providing invaluable encouragement and guidance. I am grateful for the trust invested in me by The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and the support I have received from its administration and faculty.

Ray Arlin Umphrey

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Sermon on the Mount is perhaps one of the most well-known and beloved texts of Christian Scripture. Over the centuries, it has taken on a life of its own. Entire commentaries, sermon series, and seminary courses have been devoted to this singular discourse from Matthew’s Gospel. The Sermon has enjoyed special attention as a discrete body of text by the church since Augustine first coined the title in his exposition, *De sermone Domini in monte* (393-396), in which he identifies it as “the perfect pattern of the Christian life.”¹ Even beyond the scope of Christendom, the Sermon on the Mount has been highly regarded as a rhetorical and ethical masterpiece. Many of the Sermon’s aphorisms have been appropriated and repeated to the point of becoming cultural clichés. In his classic self-help book, *How to Stop Worrying and Start Living*, Dale Carnegie recognized the universal relevance of the Sermon on the Mount and stated that its teaching provides enough information for its hearers to “lead perfect lives.”²

Interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount has been a centuries-long hermeneutical conversation. A central concern among the Sermon’s interpreters is the question of structure. Jonathan Pennington says, “To read the Sermon well requires close attention to how the parts and the whole fit together.”³ While general agreement exists concerning the overall macrostructure of the Sermon, many differing proposals exist for

¹ Augustine, *The Lord’s Sermon on the Mount*, ed. Johannes Quasten and Joseph C. Plumpe, trans. John J. Jepsen, *Ancient Christian Writers*, vol. 5 (New York: Paulist Press, 1948), 11.

² Dale Carnegie, *How to Stop Worrying and Start Living* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1948), xv.

³ Jonathan T. Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing: A Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), 107.

the understanding the relationships and boundaries of certain pericopes. Particularly divisive is the third major section of the body in Matthew 6:19–7:11.⁴ Interpreters have largely despaired of identifying a cohesive internal structure comparable to that displayed in the rest of the Sermon. In addition to structural difficulties, there exists no consensus regarding thematic cohesion in this section. Multiple contradictory proposals abound, many of which only provide a vague description of the section and its pericopes.

Thesis

This dissertation seeks to answer the question: “Can discourse analysis provide a structurally and thematically cohesive understanding in the third major section of the body of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 6:19–7:11)?”⁵ I argue that Matthew 6:19–7:11 is a cohesive unit of text consisting of four definable pericopes, with a peak construction in which Matthew 6:31–33 functions as the climax of the Sermon and 7:6–11 as a corresponding denouement.⁶ This section functions within the Sermon to reveal the inner value system necessary for obedience to Jesus’s commands and is best summarized as “Desiring the Kingdom.”⁷

The goal of my research is twofold. First, I offer a structurally and thematically satisfying option for understanding the unity of Matthew 6:19–7:11, which displays continuity with the Sermon as a whole. I aim to convince the reader that my proposal

⁴ A survey of the major commentaries yields little consensus as to the arrangement of this section.

⁵ Some commentators consider verse 12 to be part of this passage, but it likely should not be taken as directly related to 7:7-11. Commonly called “The Golden Rule,” 7:12 functions as an inclusio with 5:17 to bracket off the main body of the sermon. The Law and Prophets are only mentioned here and in 5:17. The inclusio sets this body of Jesus’ teaching apart as his summation of the demands of the Law and the Prophets. The inferential conjunction, οὖν marks this saying not as an inference from the preceding verses, but the entire body of teaching of 5:17-7:12.

⁶ Grouping Matt 7:6 with 7:7-11 is a minority position as most commentators either group the verse with 7:1-5 or treat it as an independent saying. I will argue for the unity of 7:6-11 in chapter 5.

⁷ I am indebted to my doctoral supervisor, Dr. Hershael W. York for the idea that Matthew 7:7-11 constitutes a discourse peak in the Sermon on the Mount. Hershael W. York, unpublished doctoral lecture from “Paul: Model and Source for Preaching,” course no. 86870 (The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Spring Semester, 2019).

answers more questions and creates fewer problems concerning Matthew 6:19–7:11 than others. Second, I intend to show the usefulness of discourse analysis for interpreting and preaching biblical texts. Applying discourse analysis to the Sermon on the Mount illuminates Jesus’s rhetorical strategy and demonstrates the value of discourse analysis for defining pericope boundaries and discerning discourse-level meaning. In turn, this influences the sermon’s shape and content. By identifying the peak of a discourse, the homiletician can isolate the climactic portion of a large section of Scripture and better understand the relationship of the surrounding pericopes to one another. Discourse analysis applied to the Sermon on the Mount enables the expositor to preach the individual pericopes of the Sermon in greater continuity with the Sermon as a whole.

Significance

The notable absence of a treatment of the Sermon on the Mount from a discourse analysis perspective is a lacuna in the field of New Testament research. Others have applied discourse analysis fruitfully to other portions of biblical literature, yet no substantive treatment of the Sermon on the Mount has been produced.⁸ Considering the vast amount of literature produced on the Sermon on the Mount, plus the growing interest in discourse analysis, this gap in research is even more striking. This dissertation seeks to fill this research gap through application of a reliable and proven methodology to one of the church’s most beloved biblical texts.

While many interpreters agree that there is some degree of unity and structure in Matthew 6:19–7:11, the summary of research provided below reveals that no consensus exists among scholars. While it would be arrogant to presume to solve a millennia-old hermeneutical problem in the scope of a single dissertation, the results of a

⁸ The sermon does receive brief treatment in an essay on discourse analysis in Matthew. Todd A. Scacewater and David J. Clark, “Matthew,” in *Discourse Analysis of the New Testament Writings*, ed. Todd A. Scacewater (Dallas: Fontes Press, 2020), 37–40.

discourse analysis of the Sermon on the Mount should yield new insights related to this section. My research will build on some of the most vital insights of established scholarship in order to forward the scholarly conversation surrounding the Sermon on the Mount, with particular attention to Matthew 6:19–7:11.

The authors of *Going Deeper with New Testament Greek* recognize that discourse analysis has largely been relegated to scholarly circles but express gladness that the field is beginning to bear fruit that will benefit the church:

From our observations, discourse analysis has mainly appealed to linguistically inclined scholars who write technical articles for their peers. Thankfully, helpful insights from discourse analysis are beginning to trickle down to the average NT scholar, with promise for future students and pastors. . . we do look forward to helpful insights from discourse analysis finding their way into the preaching of the church.⁹

I hope this dissertation can help bridge the gap between the academy and the church and show the value of discourse analysis not only for academic study but for exegesis and homiletics. I cannot think of a more relevant text to showcase the benefits of discourse analysis than the Sermon on the Mount.

Summary of Research

A survey of the scholarly literature shows little agreement over the structure and unity of Matthew 6:19–7:11. Even the division of the pericopes within the section varies from one commentary to the next. Some have altogether given up the task of discovering cohesion within this section. Krister Stendahl wrote that it “offers material which has been brought into the Sermon on the Mount by Matthew in such a manner that we find no clue as to his arrangement.”¹⁰ Likewise, Donald Hagner writes, “To a

⁹ Andreas J. Köstenberger, Benjamin L. Merkle, and Robert L. Plummer, *Going Deeper with New Testament Greek: An Intermediate Study of the Grammar and Syntax of the New Testament* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2016), 461.

¹⁰ Krister Stendahl, “Matthew,” in *Peake’s Commentary on the Bible*, ed. Matthew Black and H. H. Rowley (London: Thomas Nelson, 1962), 779.

considerable extent, the sermon consists of an arbitrary gathering of ethical materials available to the evangelist.”¹¹ Some commentators either do not acknowledge 6:19–7:11 as a definite unit or do not attempt to treat the section as a whole.¹² Others acknowledge the macrostructural boundaries of the Sermon and thus recognize 6:19–7:11 as a unit but do not attempt to identify a cohesive theme.¹³ Among those who offer a cohesive theme and structure for the section, disagreement reigns. The following survey includes some of the most dominant or significant treatments of the unity of Matthew 6:19–7:11.

Some commentators have understood the pericopes in Matthew 6:19–7:11 as directly related to the six petitions of the Lord’s Prayer. Scholars and commentators generally agree that the Lord’s Prayer lies at the structural center of the Sermon on the Mount.¹⁴ Walter Grundmann and Eduard Schweizer both argue that it also governs the structure of the entire Sermon, with each section of the Sermon relating to one of the petitions of the Lord’s Prayer.¹⁵ Günther Bornkamm, however, argues for the Lord’s Prayer as a structural framework specifically for the following material in 6:19–7:11.¹⁶ Guelich adopts Bornkamm’s proposal in his commentary on the Sermon on the Mount

¹¹ Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, WBC, vol. 33A (Dallas: Word Books, 1993), 84.

¹² Commentaries which are otherwise helpful, but offer no cohesive treatment of 6:19-7:11 as a unit include: R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2007); D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, In *EBC*, vol. 9, *Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. by Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984); Ben Witherington, *Matthew*, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2006); David L. Turner, “The Gospel of Matthew,” in *The Gospel of Matthew. The Gospel of Mark*, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2005); Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, NAC, vol. 22 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992); Charles L. Quarles, *Sermon on the Mount: Restoring Christ’s Message to the Modern Church*, NAC Studies in Bible & Theology (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2011).

¹³ Keener interacts with the proposals of others, but refrains from suggesting one himself. Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2009).

¹⁴ Kennedy notes that the Lord’s Prayer is central to the structure of the Sermon, “occurring just past its midpoint.” George A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, Studies in Religion (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 58.

¹⁵ Walter Grundmann, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, 5th ed. (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1972), 204–6. Eduard Schweizer, *The Good News According to Matthew*, trans. David E. Green (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975), 202.

¹⁶ Günther Bornkamm, “Der Aufbau Der Bergpredigt,” *NTS* 24, no. 4 (July 1978): 419–32.

and titles this section of the Sermon “The Life of Prayer.”¹⁷ His proposal presents 6:19–7:11 as an exposition or continuation of the teaching of the Lord’s Prayer. While attractive in many respects, a rigid relationship to the petitions of the Lord’s Prayer is structurally and thematically unsatisfactory.¹⁸

Ulrich Luz rejects Bornkamm’s use of the Lord’s Prayer as an organizational framework but retains the centrality of the Lord’s Prayer to the structure of the Sermon.¹⁹ Luz proposes a model which sees a “ring composition of the Sermon on the Mount,” of which the Lord’s Prayer is the center.²⁰ Luz’s model is similar to a chiasmic arrangement, though he does not use this term.²¹ Luz’s model is attractive because it demonstrates genuine parallelisms in the “ringed” pericopes. Significantly, his ring construction places the antitheses in 5:21–48 in a parallel relationship with 6:19–7:11. Both passages are similar in length, with 56 lines each in the NA text. This strengthens Luz’s argument and provides grounds for further structural comparison in the Sermon. Despite identifying 6:19–7:11 as an intentional unit, Luz does not offer an especially cohesive reading for the section, identifying 6:19–34 simply as “questions about possessions” and seeing “no thematic unity” in 7:1–11, he says that it “is difficult to say how the section fits in with the Sermon on the Mount as a whole.”²²

Dale Allison proposes a model which divides 6:19–7:11 into two parallel

¹⁷ Robert A. Guelich, *Sermon on the Mount: A Foundation for Understanding* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1982), 321–25.

¹⁸ In contrast with Bornkamm et al., Michael Goulder suggests an organizational framework based on the eight beatitudes. Michael D. Goulder, *Midrash and Lection in Matthew* (London: SPCK, 1974).

¹⁹ Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, trans. James E. Crouch, ed. Helmut Koester. Rev ed. Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 328.

²⁰ Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 174.

²¹ Similar to Luz’s “ring composition” structure is Patte’s chiasmic structure. However, Patte’s proposal is much more rigid and makes problematic textual divisions. Daniel Patte, *The Gospel According to Matthew: A Structural Commentary on Matthew’s Faith* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987).

²² Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 328.

triadic subunits which share common structural and form features.²³ This proposal fits with his overall vision of the Sermon, which is triadic in macrostructure and its microstructures. Allison separates 6:19–34 and 7:1–12 and identifies the themes of the subunits as “What should I do with and about wealth?” and “How should I treat my neighbor?”²⁴ Allison argues that both sections have an identical structure: an exhortation (6:19–21; 7:1–2), followed by a parable about the eye (6:22–23; 7:3–5), a second parable (6:24; 7:6), and a closing saying about the Father’s care for his children which depends on an argument *a minori ad maius* (6:25–33; 7:7–11).²⁵ Allison sums up the theme of the entire section with the generic heading “social issues.”²⁶ Allison follows Davies’ argument that the threefold division of the Sermon on the Mount corresponds to the three pillars of Simeon the Just; Torah, temple service, and deeds of loving-kindness.²⁷

In his commentary, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing*, Jonathan Pennington recognizes the unity of 6:19–7:11 and categorizes the section under the heading: “Greater Righteousness in Relation to the World.”²⁸ Like Allison, Pennington sees two sets of triads in this section of the Sermon (6:19–23; 7:1–12), which reflect the two triads of antitheses in 5:17–48.²⁹ One unique contribution of Pennington’s proposal is that he includes 6:19–21 at the end of the previous section (6:1–21) and the

²³ This threefold arrangement of teaching material has wide precedent in ancient rhetoric. Marcus Cicero, *The Orations of Marcus Tullius Cicero*, vol. 2. Ed. and trans. by C. D. Yonge (London: Bell and Sons, 1917), 335.

²⁴ Dale C. Allison Jr., “The Structure of the Sermon on the Mount,” *JBL* 106, no. 3 (September 1987): 436. See also W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., *Matthew 1-7*, vol. 1 of *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, ICC (London: T & T Clark, 1988), 627.

²⁵ Allison Jr., “The Structure of the Sermon on the Mount,” 435.

²⁶ Allison Jr., “The Structure of the Sermon on the Mount,” 436.

²⁷ Allison Jr., “The Structure of the Sermon on the Mount,” 442–45; W. D. Davies, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount* (Cambridge: University Press, 1964), 307.

²⁸ Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing*, 125.

²⁹ Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing*, 132.

beginning of the third section (6:19–7:11) as a transitional pericope.³⁰ Pennington refers to this as a “double-meaning sectional overlap,” a phenomenon he finds elsewhere in Matthew’s Gospel.³¹

Nathan Ridlehoover’s recently published work, *The Lord’s Prayer and the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew’s Gospel*, deals with structure in the Sermon and identifies the Lord’s Prayer as its “centerpiece.”³² Ridlehoover has since published a paper dealing specifically with the structure of 6:19–7:11. In this paper, Ridlehoover draws some of the most vital points from other proposals and presents a new perspective for the section. He draws from Luz’s juxtaposition of 5:21–48 with 6:19–7:11 and shows that the passages have more in common than simply word count. Ridlehoover summarizes the theme of 6:19–7:11 as “Heavenly Priorities in the Kingdom of Earth,”³³ and characterizes the section as presenting various contrasts utilizing the “duality of heaven and earth.”³⁴

In *Parables and Rhetoric in the Sermon on the Mount*, Ernst Baasland argues for the unity of 6:19–7:11 but stipulates that it contains two sections, the first of which is concerned with love of God (6:19–34) and the other with love of neighbor (7:1–12).³⁵ Baasland also argues that 6:19–7:11 is bound together by four negative imperatives (6:19,

³⁰ Nolland likewise acknowledges the linkage between 6:19–21 and 6:1–18, but does not link them as one section. John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2005), 297. See also France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 257.

³¹ Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing*, 122–23.

³² Charles Nathan Ridlehoover, *The Lord’s Prayer and the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew’s Gospel* (London: T & T Clark, 2020), 2.

³³ Charles Nathan Ridlehoover, “The Logic of Matthew 6.19–7.12: Heavenly Priorities in the Kingdom of Earth,” *NTS* 66, no. 4 (October 2020): 597–99.

³⁴ Ridlehoover, “The Logic of Matthew 6.19–7.12,” 596.

³⁵ Ernst Baasland, *Parables and Rhetoric in the Sermon on the Mount: New Approaches to a Classical Text*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen Zum Neuen Testament 351 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 317.

6:25; 7:1; 7:6), which “are consciously formed and . . . have a *structural* function.”³⁶

Baasland’s argument for unity is also based on literary features of the section, such as metaphor and parable, as well as similarities with other Jewish wisdom literature and “ethical texts in Hellenistic literature.”³⁷

I have included the dominant perspectives in the discussion of Matthew 6:19–7:11 or those that currently demonstrate the greatest relevance and promise for future research. Many other perspectives exist but treating them at length would not further the argument or meaningfully expand the scope of research surveyed here.³⁸

Argument

The argument of this dissertation depends on the use of the principles of discourse analysis to demonstrate the unity of Matthew 6:19–7:11. This dissertation will primarily employ the discourse categories of structure, cohesion, and prominence following the methodologies of other analysts.³⁹ Building on the category of prominence,

³⁶ Baasland, *Parables and Rhetoric in the Sermon on the Mount*, 319.

³⁷ Baasland, *Parables and Rhetoric in the Sermon on the Mount*, 315–16. Walter Wilson makes a similar argument in Walter T. Wilson, “A Third Form of Righteousness: The Theme and Contribution of Matthew 6.19–7.12 in the Sermon on the Mount,” *NTS* 53, no. 3 (July 2007): 303–24.

³⁸ Other notable perspectives include the following. Robert Gundry sees only two main sections in the body of the Sermon on the Mount: “The Righteousness that Surpasses that of the Scribes and Pharisees” in 5:21–48, and “The Teaching of Jesus the Sage” in 6:1–7:27. Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church under Persecution*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1994), 82, 100. Glen H. Stassen argues for a triadic structure in every pericope in 5:21–7:12. He identifies 6:19–7:11 as a unit and titles it “Righteousness Toward Possessions and Enemies.” Glen H. Stassen, “The Fourteen Triads of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:21–7:12),” *JBL* 122, no. 2 (2003): 267. Grant Osborne summarizes 6:19–7:11 as “social responsibilities toward possessions and others.” Osborne sees 7:1–12 exclusively in the context of interpersonal relationships and characterizes the prayer in 7:7–11 as related to discernment in applying 7:1–6. Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 239, 264. Nolland is unique in that he views Matthew 7:1–11 as an appendix to chapter six. Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 47. Betz identifies the theme of 6:19–7:11 as “The Conduct of Daily Life” and sees its pericopes as experiences on the road which leads to life (7:13–14). Hans Dieter Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount: A Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, Including the Sermon on the Plain: Matthew 5:3–7:27 and Luke 6:20–49* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 427.

³⁹ For examples of similar approaches, see Jeffrey T. Reed, *A Discourse Analysis of Philippians: Method and Rhetoric in the Debate over Literary Integrity*, JSNTSup 136 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997); Cynthia Long Westfall, *A Discourse Analysis of the Letter to the Hebrews: The Relationship between Form and Meaning*, Library of New Testament Studies 297 (London: T & T Clark, 2005); William C. Varner, *The Book of James a New Perspective: A Linguistic Commentary Applying Discourse Analysis* (Woodlands, TX: Kress Biblical Resources, 2010).

Robert E. Longacre’s concept of “peak” is central to the argument of this dissertation. Longacre defines peak, saying, “I use the term *peak* to refer to any episode-like unit set apart by special surface structure features and corresponding to the climax or denouement in the notional structure.”⁴⁰ The macrostructure of the Sermon on the Mount as a whole will be analyzed for its discourse boundaries and surface features before giving particular attention to 6:19–7:11.⁴¹ Using Longacre’s concept of peak, Matthew 6:31–33 and 7:6–11 will be analyzed for their markedness as the discourse peaks of the Sermon.⁴² In addition to upper-level discourse analysis, lexical, grammatical, syntactical, and literary analysis will be conducted locally for the relevant passages.⁴³

In chapter 2, I provide a detailed methodology for my research. I begin with a brief overview of New Testament discourse analysis and discuss the benefits and challenges inherent to the discipline. I then present my approach and define the terms and

⁴⁰ Robert E. Longacre, *The Grammar of Discourse*, 2nd ed., Topics in Language and Linguistics (New York: Plenum Press, 1996), 37. He further clarifies, “climax is indicated in some way in the surface structure features of the language. It is to this climax that I am giving the name peak. The peak of a procedural discourse is its target procedure, i.e., the procedure whereby one finally accomplishes what one set out to do. The peak of a hortatory discourse is its final and most effective attempt to influence someone else’s conduct. The peak of an expository discourse is a piece of culminating exposition.” Robert E. Longacre, “Discourse Peak as Zone of Turbulence,” in *Beyond the Sentence: Discourse and Sentential Form*, ed. Jessica R. Wirth (Ann Arbor: Karoma, 1985), 84.

⁴¹ For an example of applying Longacre’s method specifically to texts with various disputed structural models, see Hershael W. York, “An Analysis and Synthesis of the Exegetical Methods of Rhetorical Criticism and Discourse Analysis as Applied to the Structure of First John,” (PhD diss., Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, 1993). York summarizes the benefit of Longacre’s method, “Longacre’s work advocates a more holistic way of understanding the text, seeing it as a unified discourse with constituent parts serving a single rhetorical purpose.” Hershael W. York, “Preaching Zones of Turbulence,” *Preaching.Com*, July 5, 2021, <https://www.preaching.com/articles/preaching-zones-of-turbulence/>.

⁴² Longacre locates two dual peaks consisting of “ethical” and “doctrinal” peaks in his discourse analysis of 1 John. Robert E. Longacre, “Towards an Exegesis of 1 John Based on the Discourse Analysis of the Greek Text,” in *Linguistics and New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Discourse Analysis*, ed. David Alan Black, Katharine G. L. Barnwell, and Stephen H. Levinsohn (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 279. William Varner locates a “thematic” and a “hortatory” peak in the epistle of James. Varner, *The Book of James a New Perspective*, 35.

⁴³ For analyzing discourse at the grammatical and syntactical level, resources that highlight the specific discourse features of New Testament Greek will be utilized, such as Steven E. Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament: A Practical Introduction for Teaching and Exegesis* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010), and Stephen Levinsohn, *Discourse Features of New Testament Greek: A Coursebook on the Information Structure of New Testament Greek*, 2nd ed. (Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 2000).

criteria central to my argument.

Chapters 3 and 4 provide a discourse analysis of the Sermon on the Mount. In chapter 3, I examine the macrostructure of the Sermon on the Mount as a whole and identify the discourse features that contribute to the Sermon's structure. In chapter 4, I provide a detailed analysis of the microstructures of the Sermon and identify features that create prominence and cohesion within the Sermon. Since this dissertation gives particular focus to the third section of the body, the analysis of this section provided in chapters 3 and 4 is not comprehensive.

Chapter 5 builds a case for the pericopal unity of Matthew 7:6–11, in which I argue that the contentious “casting pearls before swine” saying in 7:6 belongs with the following admonition to ask, seek, and knock in 7:7–11. This grouping of verses is an essential component of my overall argument and requires special attention. My argument is based on internal parallelism, parallelism with the preceding pericopes, cohesion within the greater context of the entire discourse, and the symmetry of the text. Not only is this grouping the most structurally satisfying option, but it also alleviates the interpretive difficulty of 6:19–7:11.⁴⁴

In chapter 6, I analyze the microstructures of 6:19–7:11 and demonstrate cohesion between them. Within the main section of 6:19–7:11, I identify four easily demarcated pericopes because they each begin with a negative imperative form. These negative imperatives “are consciously formed and . . . have a *structural* function.”⁴⁵ I demonstrate that 6:31–33 and 7:6–11 serve as discourse peaks of the Sermon, the former as the climax and the latter as the denouement. By applying Longacre's criteria for

⁴⁴ Jonathan Pennington summarizes the frustration of many interpreters when he writes, “the most difficult verse in the Sermon—7:6 with its reference to pearls before swine—feels a bit like a random appendage.” Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing*, 125–26.

⁴⁵ Baasland, *Parables and Rhetoric in the Sermon on the Mount*, 319.

identifying peak in discourse,⁴⁶ I highlight several points of similarity between the two pericopes to demonstrate how they function in relation to one another. Considering the structural and thematic cohesion demonstrated in this section, I summarize the theme of Matthew 6:19–7:11 as “Desiring the Kingdom.” I then support the assertions made about the structure and theme of 6:19–7:11 by showing how similar features and structures occur elsewhere in Matthew’s Gospel.

Chapter 7 explores the homiletic implications of my analysis of the Sermon on the Mount and presents the benefits of including discourse analysis as part of the preacher’s toolkit. Finally, in the conclusion, I will revisit my thesis and summarize the major findings of my research. I then address both the problems solved and the questions raised by my research and suggest potential areas of development for future research.

Presuppositions

This dissertation is motivated by a critical presupposition: that cohesion should be expected of discourse unless evidence suggests otherwise. The presupposition of cohesion is especially valid in a discourse such as the Sermon on the Mount, which, for the most part, demonstrates meticulous intention and craft in its arrangement. In addition to cohesion, a discourse such as the Sermon on the Mount should demonstrate coherence within the text, that is, that the sayings make sense in context.⁴⁷ This presupposition of cohesion and coherence provides the motive for reexamining Matthew 6:19–7:11 and guides the methodology employed.

This dissertation presupposes that Matthew has used sources to present the

⁴⁶ Longacre, *The Grammar of Discourse*, 38–48; Longacre, “Discourse Peak as Zone of Turbulence,” 96–97.

⁴⁷ As Scacewater explains, “While not all discourse is coherent, receivers generally are conditioned through their social interactions with others to expect coherent discourse.” Todd A. Scacewater, Introduction to *Discourse Analysis of the New Testament Writings* (Dallas: Fontes Press, 2020), 17.

Sermon on the Mount as a cohesive discourse spoken by Jesus.⁴⁸ This work will refer to the author simply as “Matthew,” and the Sermon will be assumed to have its origin in Jesus’s teaching. Any reference to composition or use of prior sources will refer to Matthew as composer and author, yet Jesus is presupposed to be the original rhetor.

This dissertation further presupposes that Matthew presents the Sermon on the Mount as a whole. This work, therefore, engages in a “whole discourse” approach to the Sermon and will not substantively engage with the disciplines of form, source, or redaction criticism. Nevertheless, some of the issues related to Matthew’s use of sources will be briefly treated as necessary. While my intention is not to defend the existence of a written source such as Q in this dissertation, this work will use the traditional terminology to speak of Matthew’s sources when such references are necessary. For this study, the fifth edition of the United Bible Society’s Greek New Testament will be used as the base text. A few significant textual variants will be addressed, but the UBS text will be accepted as trustworthy and faithful to the original text.

Limitations

Discourse analysis encompasses a wide swath of approaches and methods. This work will be limited in its scope to specifically address the research question proposed and yield a manageable piece of research. My hope is that this results in a study that is inviting and comprehensible for the reader as well.

This study will confine itself to the realm of semantics and investigate the

⁴⁸ In his *Commentary of a Harmony of the Evangelists*, John Calvin treats Matthew’s Sermon on the Mount and Luke’s Sermon on the Plain as one event. Calvin’s harmonization contributes to his reading of the Sermon as a composition of material rather than a singular unit of discourse. Calvin states the evangelists intended to “collect into one place the leading points of the doctrine of Christ which related to a devout and holy life. . . Pious and modest readers ought to be satisfied with having a brief summary of the doctrine of Christ placed before their eyes, collected out of his many and various discourses.” John Calvin, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke*, trans. William Pringle. vol. 1 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 258-59. Spencer provides a helpful treatment of Calvin as an early “redaction critic” in Stephen R. Spencer, “John Calvin,” in *The Sermon on the Mount through the Centuries*, ed. Jeffrey P. Greenman, Timothy Larsen, and Stephen R. Spencer (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2007), 133-37.

text's surface features. The categories of macrostructure, cohesion, prominence, and peak will comprise the methodology, while other areas related to pragmatics and deeper structures of the text will not be addressed or will only be dealt with briefly.

Matters of interpretation will only be dealt with broadly and in brief. This dissertation is primarily concerned with matters of discourse structure and cohesion. Available interpretive options will be surveyed in areas where discourse analysis considerations affect interpretation. I hope this study's findings will provide a foundation for further work and greater clarity concerning the text for interpreters.

CHAPTER 2

A METHODOLOGY FOR DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Defining Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis, also known as text linguistics,¹ is concerned with the interpretation of texts above the level of the sentence.² Rather than focusing only on lexical or semantic relationships, discourse analysis is concerned with the relationships between sentences and larger units such as paragraphs. George Guthrie has defined discourse analysis as “a process of investigation by which one examines the form and function of all the parts and levels of a written discourse, with the aim of better understanding both the parts and the whole of that discourse.”³ Daniel Doriani describes it simply as “the study of the way authors put sentences and paragraphs together to make their points.”⁴ Underlying the task of discourse analysis is the presupposition that choice

¹ Thompson and Widder clarify, “‘Discourse analysis’ is a rather vague and overused label. In Europe, the term ‘text linguistics’ is used for a discourse approach focused on written texts, and ‘conversation analysis’ is used to designate a focus on spoken discourse. ‘Discourse linguistics’ is something of a hybrid label, apparently indicating text-based analysis similar to ‘text linguistics’ but retaining the association with ‘discourse.’” Jeremy Thompson and Wendy L. Widder, “Major Approaches to Linguistics,” in *Linguistics & Biblical Exegesis*, ed. Douglas Mangum and Josh Westbury, Lexham Methods Series 2 (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), 121n10.

² Kenneth L. Pike stated this in 1964, “A bias of mine—not shared by many linguists—is the conviction that *beyond the sentence* lie grammatical structures available to linguistic analysis, describable by technical procedures, and usable by the author for the generation of the literary works through which he reports to us his observations.” Kenneth L. Pike, “Beyond the Sentence,” *College Composition and Communication* 15, no. 3 (1964): 129.

³ George Guthrie, “Discourse Analysis,” in *Interpreting the New Testament: Essays on Methods and Issues*, ed. David Alan Black and David S. Dockery (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 255.

⁴ Daniel M. Doriani, *Putting the Truth to Work: The Theory and Practice of Biblical Application* (Phillipsburg, N. J.: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2001), 78.

implies meaning.⁵ Levinsohn summarizes the task of discourse analysis:

[D]iscourse analysis looks not only at the sentence and its components but also at the larger units which group sentences together in an organized structure from the smallest units up to the level of the entire discourse. Discourse analysis examines how the boundaries between the various units are signaled. It is similarly concerned with the ways in which the units relate to each other, how they are ordered, and how they hold together to create a unified discourse.⁶

Discourse analysis as a formal discipline is a relatively recent development, and the intersection of discourse analysis and biblical studies is even more recent. Zellig Harris was the first to use the term “discourse analysis” in 1952. The discipline began to take shape in the 1960s and 1970s.⁷ However, lest the reader become too suspicious of what may appear a novel innovation, one should note that several of the tenets of discourse analysis can be traced to ancient Greco-Roman rhetorical practices.⁸ In fact, discourse analysis shares some commonalities with rhetorical criticism, particularly the element of “style.” George Guthrie writes,

⁵ Stephen Levinsohn, *Discourse Features of New Testament Greek: A Coursebook on the Information Structure of New Testament Greek*, 2nd ed. (Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 2000), viii.

⁶ Jenny Read-Heimerdinger, “Acts,” in *Discourse Analysis of the New Testament Writings*, ed. Todd A. Scacewater (Dallas: Fontes Press, 2020), 163.

⁷ Zellig Harris, “Discourse Analysis,” *Language* 28 (1952): 1–30. For the history of the growth and development of discourse analysis, see Scacewater, Introduction to *Discourse Analysis of the New Testament Writings*, (Dallas: Fontes Press, 2020), 1–30; Constantine R. Campbell and D. A. Carson, *Advances in the Study of Greek: New Insights for Reading the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 148–91; Reed, *A Discourse Analysis of Philippians*, 16–33; Thompson and Widder, “Major Approaches to Linguistics,” 121–26; Stanley E. Porter, “Discourse Analysis and New Testament Studies: An Introductory Survey,” in *Discourse Analysis and Other Topics in Biblical Greek, JSNTSup* 113 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 14–35.

⁸ Reed remarks, “Several major tenets of discourse analysis, however, were discussed and developed by the Greeks and Romans, from Aristotle’s *Poetics* to Cicero’s *Institutio Oratoria*.” J. T. Reed, “Discourse Analysis as New Testament Hermeneutic: A Retrospective and Prospective Appraisal,” *JETS* 39, no. 2 (1996): 225. Terry finds the DA concept of peak in the writings of Longinus. Ralph Bruce Terry, *A Discourse Analysis of First Corinthians*, Summer Institute of Linguistics and the University of Texas at Arlington Publications in Linguistics 120 (Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1995), 119. See also Teun A. van Dijk, “The Future of the Field: Discourse Analysis in the 1990s,” *Text* 10 (1990): 135; Johannes P. Louw, “Discourse Analysis and the Greek New Testament,” *BT* 24, no. 1 (January 1, 1973): 103. Porter, “Discourse Analysis and New Testament Studies: An Introductory Survey,” 19; Robert de Beaugrande and J. Wolfgang Dressler, *Introduction to Text Linguistics* (London: Longman, 1981), 14–15. Mark Edward Taylor acknowledges these connections but concludes that discourse analysis is a “a distinctly twentieth-century movement.” Mark Edward Taylor, *A Text-Linguistic Investigation into the Discourse Structure of James*, ed. Mark Goodacre (New York: T & T Clark, 2006), 36.

Analysis of patterns of argumentation, found in rhetorical criticism, may be subsumed under “constituent analysis” in text linguistics. Analysis of elements of style is also a concern of both rhetorical criticism and text linguistics.⁹

Ray Van Neste agrees,

What is of more interest here is the area of rhetoric referred to as “Style,” which incorporates rhetorical devices such as repetition, chiasm, parallelism etc. . . . These devices are easily subsumed under discourse analysis (as many works on discourse analysis show).¹⁰

Constantine Campbell summarizes the way discourse analysis complements rhetorical analysis:

The most distinctive contribution that discourse analysis brings alongside literary and rhetorical analysis is its robustly linguistic nature. It generally moves from the grammar and syntax of a text out to these larger textual concerns, rather than starting with the big picture.¹¹

Discourse analysis not only shares concepts and methods with rhetorical criticism but also with traditional biblical exegesis. In fact, the central aspects of discourse analysis are often applied intuitively to aspects of exegesis mentioned in hermeneutics textbooks. Birger Olsson concludes, “To handle texts is as basic for our discipline as to handle words and sentences. Therefore, text-linguistic analyses belong to the fundamental part of Biblical scholarship.”¹² Guthrie contends that traditional exegesis necessarily involves principles of discourse analysis:

Now we must say from the start that any scholar addressing the biblical text in an attempt to understand the meaning of that text performs aspects of discourse analysis, whether the designation is claimed or not. Any time a scholar seeks to discern the syntax of a word in the Greek text (i.e., the relation of a word to other words in a sentence) or to outline a book of the New Testament, concerns of discourse analysis have been engaged. Yet discourse analysts suggest that an expansion of the analyses normally performed in New Testament studies is in

⁹ George H. Guthrie, *The Structure of Hebrews: A Text-Linguistic Analysis*, *NovTSup* 73 (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1994), 45.

¹⁰ Ray Van Neste, *Cohesion and Structure in the Pastoral Epistles*, *JSNTSup* 280 (London: T & T Clark International, 2004), 7.

¹¹ Campbell and Carson, *Advances in the Study of Greek*, 149.

¹² Birger Olsson, “A Decade of Text-Linguistic Analyses of Biblical Texts at Uppsala,” *ST* 39, no. 2 (1985): 125.

order.¹³

Matters of structure, context, emphasis, stylistic variation, propositions, grounding statements, etc., are common features of traditional hermeneutics. These all relate to the discourse analysis categories of macrostructure and microstructure, cohesion, prominence, and peak.

Discourse analysis should not be seen as a methodological outlier but as an interdisciplinary method that combines traditional rhetorical analysis and the areas of grammar, syntax, and semantics.¹⁴ The result is a systematized method of reading whole texts considering the specific features of both the larger and smaller units which comprise the text. Rather than focus on the lexical or sentential level only, discourse analysis “takes into account factors that are not treated in Greek grammars (questions of morphology or syntax)” but “concerns features of the larger context than the individual sentence.”¹⁵

The Contribution of Discourse Analysis to Biblical Studies

Some may wonder if discourse analysis is worth the trouble. One analyst captures the twin hazards of positing a novel method of exegesis, saying, “you risk either being pedantic when agreeing anyways with the standard view; or else taking on a mammoth task that may not convince anyone when proposing a radically new alternative (regardless of its merits).”¹⁶ In an essay published in 1996, Jeffrey Reed acknowledged objections to the merit of discourse analysis:

¹³ Guthrie, “Discourse Analysis,” 256.

¹⁴ Hershanel York concludes that the disciplines of rhetorical criticism are complementary and advocates for a “rhetorico-discourse analysis” of biblical texts. Hershanel W. York, “An Analysis and Synthesis of the Exegetical Methods of Rhetorical Criticism and Discourse Analysis as Applied to the Structure of First John,” (PhD diss., Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, 1993), 182.

¹⁵ Stephen H Levinsohn, “Galatians,” in *Discourse Analysis of the New Testament Writings*, ed. Todd A. Scacewater (Dallas: Fontes Press, 2020), 297.

¹⁶ Aaron Sherwood, “Romans,” in *Discourse Analysis of the New Testament Writings*, ed. Todd A. Scacewater (Dallas: Fontes Press, 2020), 193.

I have been personally told by a respected senior NT scholar that discourse analysis is nothing more than exegesis disguised in the garb of linguistic terminology. . . NT discourse analysts must take this critique seriously and respond by answering two issues of methodology: (1) What is it about this hermeneutic that makes it unique with respect to traditional exegesis? (2) How can this hermeneutic support, supplement, or advance the wealth of NT interpretation already available? Future discourse analyses of the NT, I believe, must answer such questions. In other words, they must intelligently answer the questions, “What is discourse analysis, and what can it do for the NT interpreter?”¹⁷

Reed posed these questions in an essay written in 1996. George Guthrie provided compelling answers to these questions in an article written fifteen years later in 2001, in which he recognized four contributions discourse analysis makes to traditional exegesis.¹⁸ The following observations represent my own observations combined with Guthrie’s insights. First, due to its interdisciplinary nature, discourse analysis has the potential to unite several disciplines of biblical study, which are often fragmentary in relation to one another. Guthrie writes,

Rhetorical criticism, literary criticism, and sociological exegesis, for example, all have to do with discourse, and the insights they offer can be embraced within the framework of discourse analysis. Because it is a field of inquiry with tremendous breadth, it might serve to address the splintering of New Testament studies into a plethora of competing criticisms. Thus, discourse analysis may serve as a tool of integration.¹⁹

Second, discourse analysis provides specific methodologies for what are commonly ill-defined, intuitive processes. The authors of *Going Deeper with New Testament Greek* write, “While questions such as these have been asked by careful exegetes since antiquity, discourse analysis seeks to make sure that a modern reader’s perspective on a passage’s flow of thought is based on clearly labeled objective data in the text.”²⁰ Discourse analysis contributes to traditional biblical exegesis by formalizing

¹⁷ Reed, “Discourse Analysis as New Testament Hermeneutic,” 240.

¹⁸ Guthrie, “Discourse Analysis,” 253–69.

¹⁹ Guthrie, “Discourse Analysis,” 267.

²⁰ Andreas J. Köstenberger, Benjamin L. Merkle, and Robert L. Plummer, *Going Deeper with New Testament Greek: An Intermediate Study of the Grammar and Syntax of the New Testament* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2016), 460.

intuitive processes and bringing specificity to general concepts. Constantine Campbell recognizes the potential for discourse analysis to systematize such processes:

[E]ven when the results of discourse analysis seem similar to traditional exegetical outcomes, the methods set out by such analysis provide a firmer foundation for results. Discourse analysis operates with a linguistically robust methodology that provides somewhat objective criteria by which to adjudicate exegetical issues. By contrast, traditional exegetical approaches often rely on the intuitive insights of the interpreter. While the intuitive conclusions of gifted interpreters will often be correct, it is difficult to assess such conclusions without a linguistic methodology in place. Discourse analysis provides a method (or, in fact, a variety of methods) by which to assess various conclusions about the text.²¹

One specific area that is often left to informal, intuitive processes is discourse structure. A survey of significant commentaries reveals that structure is customarily addressed in the introductory material and utilized to divide the text into sections and pericopes. Beyond this, matters of interpretation are often confined to questions of syntax, grammar, and semantics within sentences or paragraphs. When consideration is given to a larger discourse structure, the results are often based on intuitive deductions without clearly defined methods for detecting these relationships. Guthrie writes,

[D]iscourse analysis provides a means for dealing with discourse structure, including the identification of boundaries between units in a discourse. Currently, little consensus exists concerning how to determine a proper outline for a book or section of a book of the New Testament—perhaps that is why the outlines vary so widely from scholar to scholar. . . It moves the discussion from merely thematic and even literary grounds to broader considerations such as transitions, cohesion, semantic patterns, and logical relationships between paragraphs or sections.²²

Discourse analysis has the potential not only to enable the interpreter to identify significant structural relationships within a discourse but can provide specific criteria for classifying these relationships.

Finally, discourse analysis introduces linguistic concepts and methods which can address interpretive questions that traditional grammatical and syntactical analysis

²¹ Campbell and Carson, *Advances in the Study of Greek*, 149.

²² Guthrie, "Discourse Analysis," 268.

cannot. Richard Young says of traditional grammars, “Because they focus only on isolated sentences, they cannot possibly be considered definitive to analyze meaning.”²³ Guthrie refers to these matters as “whole-discourse questions” which require an above-the-sentence approach.²⁴ Joseph Grimes says, “sentence grammar will not work unless it is part of a discourse grammar, because certain factors are needed for the understanding of elements in sentences that are not available within those sentences themselves but only elsewhere in the discourse.”²⁵

Difficulties in Applying Discourse Analysis to Biblical Studies

While there is great promise in applying discourse analysis to biblical studies, there has been an unfortunate disconnect between linguistics and traditional biblical exegesis. Discourse analysis has begun to receive wider acceptance but has not become fully integrated into conventional exegesis.²⁶ This is partly due to a lack of clear definitions and a lack of unification in discourse analysis practices.

Lack of terminological and methodological clarity creates a barrier to entry for newcomers to the discipline.²⁷ Early proponents of the benefits of discourse analysis for biblical interpretation quickly noticed this. Peter Cotterell and Max Turner observe, “The fact is that at the present there are no firm conclusions, no generally accepted formulae,

²³ Richard A. Young, *Intermediate New Testament Greek: A Linguistic and Exegetical Approach* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 247.

²⁴ Guthrie identifies the role of Psalm 110:1 in the book of Hebrews as a “whole discourse question” which cannot be adequately answered with traditional grammar and syntax analysis. Guthrie, “Discourse Analysis,” 267–68.

²⁵ Joseph Evans Grimes, *The Thread of Discourse* (The Hague: Mouton, 1975), 8.

²⁶ David L. Allen creatively articulates the gradual acceptance of discourse analysis, “Formerly the Cinderella of linguistics, discourse analysis has been recently elevated, if not to the position of princess, at least to that of lady-in-waiting.” David L. Allen, “Philemon,” in *Discourse Analysis of the New Testament Writings*, ed. Todd A. Scacewater (Dallas: Fontes Press, 2020), 521.

²⁷ Some even find the term “discourse analysis” vague. Thompson and Widder, “Major Approaches to Linguistics,” 121n10.

no fixed methodology, not even an agreed terminology.”²⁸ Stanley Porter humorously remarked in an essay in 1995, “there was no agreed upon method of discourse analysis, and everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”²⁹ Moisés Silva writes about the ill-defined boundaries of the discipline, “My anxiety, however, was only aggravated to realize in a fresh way that discourse analysis is about . . . *everything!* It is grammar and syntax, pragmatics and lexicology, exegesis and literary criticism.”³⁰ Reed notes this in an essay in 1996, “Terminological consistency and collaboration in the midst of creative thinking, nonetheless, are needed if discourse analysis is to have a significant impact on NT hermeneutics.”³¹

Recent scholarship has improved the situation, but conflicting and confusing terminology and methodology continue to be a barrier.³² I agree with Moisés Silva, who says that discourse analysts are often guilty of “restating the obvious using unnecessarily forbidding terminology.”³³ The biblical scholar who attempts to enter the field of discourse analysis finds that they must learn new linguistic terminology for established elements common to biblical studies. This dissertation, where possible, will utilize established terminology from traditional exegesis rather than unnecessarily redefining familiar terms. Additionally, when a term has been used in different or conflicting ways

²⁸ Peter Cotterell and Max Turner, *Linguistics & Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 233.

²⁹ Stanley E. Porter, “How Can Biblical Discourse Be Analyzed? A Response to Several Attempts,” in *Discourse Analysis and Other Topics in Biblical Greek, JSNTSup* 113 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 107.

³⁰ Moisés Silva, “Discourse Analysis and Philippians,” in *Discourse Analysis and Other Topics in Biblical Greek* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 102.

³¹ Reed, “Discourse Analysis as New Testament Hermeneutic,” 224.

³² See the detailed introduction and the various essays in Scacewater, Introduction to *Discourse Analysis of the New Testament Writings*, (Dallas: Fontes Press, 2020). The essays demonstrate the scope of the field, but also emphasize the central concerns of discourse analysis. See also Campbell’s summary of the history of discourse analysis and his summaries of the various broad approaches to discourse analysis. Campbell, *Advances in the Study of Greek*, 148–91.

³³ Silva, “Discourse Analysis and Philippians,” 103.

in the scholarly literature, it will be defined and distinguished from its other usages.

In addition to terminology, the presentation of discourse analysis studies can be a barrier to entry. Discourse analysis involves looking at larger portions of text than traditional exegesis and often requires attention to structure. This can be difficult to present in a typically written fashion, and otherwise helpful analyses of biblical texts will fail to find a wide reading due to unclear presentation. This dissertation will rely on structural representations such as charts and visual outlines to present critical portions of the argument.

The complexity of some discourse analysis methodologies can also be overwhelming. Applying an overly broad methodology can present a barrier to the novice reader. For this reason, this dissertation will limit the scope of the methodology employed and clearly define the methodology and the rationale underlying it.

A Methodology for Discourse Analysis

While discourse analysis is a broad field of study and encompasses a variety of methods, the central concerns that most analysts recognize are structure, cohesion, and prominence.³⁴ These elements of discourse analysis, combined with Robert Longacre's concept of "discourse peak," are the primary components of the methodology applied in this work.³⁵ This methodology is consistent with the methods followed by others which have produced meaningful and fruitful discourse analyses of New Testament writings.³⁶

³⁴ Porter identifies four different models of discourse analysis yet identifies their common concerns as "discourse boundaries. . . cohesion and coherence. . . and prominence." Stanley E. Porter, *Linguistic Analysis of the Greek New Testament: Studies in Tools, Methods, and Practice* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 90–91. See also Young, *Intermediate New Testament Greek*, 247; Guthrie, "Discourse Analysis," 256–58.

³⁵ Robert E. Longacre, *The Grammar of Discourse*, 2nd ed., Topics in Language and Linguistics (New York: Plenum Press, 1996), 33–50; Robert E. Longacre, "Discourse Peak as Zone of Turbulence," in *Beyond the Sentence: Discourse and Sentential Form*, ed. Jessica R. Wirth (Ann Arbor: Karoma, 1985), 83–98.

³⁶ Examples of similar methodologies include: William C. Varner, *The Book of James a New Perspective: A Linguistic Commentary Applying Discourse Analysis* (Woodlands, TX: Kress Biblical Resources, 2010); William Varner, *Philippians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Dallas: Fontes Press, 2021);

Discerning Structure

Discerning the structure of a unit of text is central to discourse analysis.

Cynthia Westfall defines structure simply as “the patterns an author uses to organize text.”³⁷ The author has not merely made choices about what to say but how to arrange what is said. Johannes Louw writes,

All this means that the structure of a discourse is a vital point in determining its intention. It is the hinge on which the communication turns; it is part and parcel of the semantics of a discourse. For in order to understand its meaning, one has to analyse the basis for selecting a particular structure.³⁸

To determine the structure of the discourse, the analyst must first identify the genre and text-type of the discourse, discern the mainline content, and discover the surface features which define the divisions within the text.

Genre and mainline content. Distinctions in discourse genre have long been acknowledged and were distinguished by the rhetoricians of ancient Greece.³⁹ Genre is a well-established hermeneutical category in biblical exegesis, which provides important constraints for interpretation.⁴⁰ Discourse analysts identify a broader category than genre,

Ernst Wendland, “Johannine Epistles,” in *Discourse Analysis of the New Testament Writings*, ed. Todd A. Scacewater (Dallas: Fontes Press, 2020), 651–93; Cynthia Long Westfall, *A Discourse Analysis of the Letter to the Hebrews: The Relationship between Form and Meaning*, Library of New Testament Studies 297 (London: T & T Clark, 2005); Stephen Levinsohn, “Galatians,” 297–330; Terry, *A Discourse Analysis of First Corinthians*; Todd Chipman, “Luke,” in *Discourse Analysis of the New Testament Writings*, ed. Todd A. Scacewater (Dallas: Fontes Press, 2020), 91–126; Guthrie, *The Structure of Hebrews*; Reed, *A Discourse Analysis of Philippians*; Robert E. Longacre, “Towards an Exegesis of 1 John Based on the Discourse Analysis of the Greek Text,” in *Linguistics and New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Discourse Analysis*, ed. David Alan Black, Katharine G. L. Barnwell, and Stephen H. Levinsohn (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992); Robert E. Longacre, “Mark,” in *Discourse Analysis of the New Testament Writings*, ed. Todd A. Scacewater (Dallas: Fontes Press, 2020), 63–89; Erwin Starwalt, *A Discourse Analysis of 1 Peter*, Studies in Koine Greek (Dallas: Fontes Press, 2020); York, “An Analysis and Synthesis,” 1993.

³⁷ Westfall, *A Discourse Analysis of the Letter to the Hebrews*, 28.

³⁸ Louw, “Discourse Analysis and the Greek New Testament,” 104.

³⁹ Louw cites Demetrius, “Demetrius writing on style in his *περί ἑρμηνείας* says in ch. 19 *τρία δὲ γένη περιόδων ἔστιν, ἱστορική, διαλογική, ῥητορική*: i.e. narration, dialogue and exposition.” Louw, “Discourse Analysis and the Greek New Testament,” 103.

⁴⁰ For a detailed treatment of biblical genres, see Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation, Revised and Expanded edition* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007), 181–344.

called text-type. Ralph Bruce Terry summarizes the distinction between the two categories:

It is important not to confuse *genre* with *texttype*. A particular *genre* is produced by a combination of several factors, among them: *texttype*, text structure, and semantic content. It is possible to have several *genres* that use the same *texttype* and thus show grammatical similarities in some ways while being structurally and semantically quite different from one another. For example, a fairy tale, a short story, and a biography have three different *genres*, but all use narrative *texttype*.⁴¹

This is an area that demonstrates the lack of definition of terms among discourse analysts. The number and classification of possible text-types and their terms vary from analyst to analyst. Four basic text-types are common among the various analysts, however. Beekman, Callow, and Kopeseć identify them as narrative, procedural, expository, and hortatory.⁴²

Identification of text-type is necessary to distinguish the mainline⁴³ content from supportive or background content, where the mainline content represents the collective propositions or main statements that carry the discourse’s main idea.⁴⁴ Whereas traditional exegesis deals with propositions and their subordinate clauses on the sentence level, from a discourse perspective, mainline content refers to the collective propositions that comprise the discourse.⁴⁵

⁴¹ Terry, *A Discourse Analysis of First Corinthians*, 6.

⁴² John Beekman, John Callow, and Michael F. Kopeseć, *The Semantic Structure of Written Communication*, 5th revision (Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1981), 36–38. Young follows Beekman et al. in his section on genre. Young, *Intermediate New Testament Greek*, 248. Longacre’s sixteen text-types are based on four main text-types which correspond with Beekman et al. with the distinction that “hortatory” is replaced with “behavioral.” Longacre, *The Grammar of Discourse*, 8–21. See also Mildred L. Larson, *Meaning-Based Translation: A Guide to Cross-Language Equivalence* (Lanham, MA: University Press of America, 1984), 365–66.

⁴³ “Mainline” is referred to by some as “foreground” or “theme line.” Paul J. Hopper and Sandra A. Thompson, “Transitivity in Grammar and Discourse,” *Language* 56, no. 2 (1980): 251–99; Christopher J. Fresch, “2 Peter,” in *Discourse Analysis of the New Testament Writings*, ed. Todd A. Scaewater (Dallas: Fontes Press, 2020), 621–50; and Steven E. Runge, “The Contribution of Verb Forms, Connectives, and Dependency to Grounding Status in Nonnarrative Discourse,” in *The Greek Verb Revisited: A Fresh Approach for Biblical Exegesis*, ed. Christopher J. Fresch (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), 221–72; Grimes, *The Thread of Discourse*, 56.

⁴⁴ Longacre, *The Grammar of Discourse*, 21–29.

⁴⁵ For traditional treatment of propositions and subordinate clauses in biblical hermeneutics,

Paul Hopper and Sandra Thompson refer to mainline material as “the main points of the discourse” which comprises “the backbone or skeleton of the text, forming its basic structure” whereas “the backgrounded clauses put flesh on the skeleton, but are extraneous to its structural coherence.”⁴⁶ The macrostructure of a discourse can be discerned by focusing on the mainline content rather than supportive content. By identifying both, the analyst is closer to discerning the author’s intention.

While the Gospel of Matthew as a whole belongs to the narrative text-type, the Sermon on the Mount, as an embedded discourse,⁴⁷ belongs to the hortatory text-type, which serves to “exhort others to fulfill certain duties.”⁴⁸ Longacre writes, “In hortatory text there is a line of exhortation carried by imperative or modal forms which command, suggest, or urge some action. Everything else in the hortatory text supplements or supports the line of exhortation.”⁴⁹ Since the purpose of the hortatory text-type is exhortation, the mainline content will typically be comprised of imperatives and other command forms. This dissertation will treat the Sermon on the Mount as hortatory discourse and interpret its imperative sayings as foregrounded and central to its interpretation.

Textual boundaries. After determining the text-type and identifying the mainline material, the discourse should be segmented according to its textual boundaries.

see: William W. Klein et al., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, rev. ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004), 352–55. Thomas R. Schreiner, *Interpreting the Pauline Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 97–124.

⁴⁶ Hopper and Thompson, “Transitivity in Grammar and Discourse,” 281.

⁴⁷ Longacre, *The Grammar of Discourse*, 16.

⁴⁸ Young, *Intermediate New Testament Greek*, 248.

⁴⁹ Robert E. Longacre, “The Discourse Strategy of an Appeals Letter,” in *Discourse Description: Diverse Linguistic Analyses of a Fund-Raising Text*, ed. William C. Mann and Sandra A. Thompson (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1992), 127n6.

This involves determining the text's overall macrostructure⁵⁰ and identifying and analyzing the microstructures within.⁵¹ This requires both a bottom-up and a top-down approach.⁵² Reed writes,

The analyst might begin at the bottom with the analysis of morphology, moving up through words, phrases, clauses, sentences and paragraphs (i.e. sequences of sentences and embedded sequences of sentences) until reaching the top, the discourse. From here the direction is reversed to see how the larger discourse influences paragraph construction and on down.⁵³

The task does not end with identifying the units of the macrostructure and microstructures. Discourse analysis seeks to understand the relationships between the units themselves. Louw says that the constituent units of a discourse “can only to a certain extent be considered separately since these units actually communicate by means of a highly integrated and complex set of dependency relations.”⁵⁴ The microstructures of a discourse constitute paragraphs that exist in a hierarchy of relationships.⁵⁵

Determining the nomenclature for the various levels of division and hierarchy within a discourse structure also reveals the lack of accord among discourse analysts.⁵⁶ I

⁵⁰ The term “macrostructure” is used by some, as it is in this study, to refer to a structural representation of discourse. Others use “macrostructure” to refer to a condensed summary idea of a discourse that is produced from analyzing mainline content. Van Dijk provides a four-step process for isolating a given text's macrostructure (summary). Teun A. van Dijk, *Text and Context: Explorations in the Semantics and Pragmatics of Discourse*, Longman Linguistics Library 21 (London: Longman, 1977), 144–46.

⁵¹ Stanley E. Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 300.

⁵² Gillian Brown and George Yule, *Discourse Analysis*, Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 234–36; Reed, *A Discourse Analysis of Philippians*, 47–48; Kathleen Callow, “Patterns of Thematic Development in 1 Corinthians 5.1–13,” in *Linguistics and New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Discourse Analysis*, ed. David Alan Black (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 194.

⁵³ Jeffrey T. Reed, “Discourse Analysis,” in *Handbook to Exegesis of the New Testament*, vol. 25, *NTTS* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1997), 191–92.

⁵⁴ J. P. Louw, *Semantics of New Testament Greek*, Semeia Studies (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 98.

⁵⁵ Stanley E. Porter, “Pericope Markers and the Paragraph: Textual and Linguistic Implications,” in *The Impact of Unit Delimitation on Exegesis*, ed. Raymond de Hoop, Marjo C. A. Korpel, and Stanley E. Porter (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2009), 175–76.

⁵⁶ Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament*, 298. Longacre, *The Grammar of Discourse*,

will utilize a simple nomenclature to denote the structure of the Sermon on the Mount. The term “section” will be used to refer to the large discourse blocks which comprise the sermon, while the smaller discourse blocks will be referred to with the common designation “pericope.”⁵⁷ To avoid being overly pedantic, the meaning of terms such as “sentence” and “clause” are considered self-evident by their traditional usage.

An indispensable step in conducting bottom-up and top-down analysis which identifies boundaries between sections and pericopes, is the identification of conjunctions and other surface features that define the discourse’s structure. Some key surface features for determining discourse boundaries are conjunctions, vocatives, rhetorical devices, temporal/spatial references, summary statements, changes in participants, verb forms, word order, transitional devices, quotations, and shift in form or theme.⁵⁸ In the next chapter, I will identify the surface features most relevant for determining the pericope and section boundaries for the Sermon on the Mount. These features will provide the rationale for the segmentation of the Sermon.

In addition to determining discourse boundaries, the microstructures of the Sermon will also be analyzed for their constituent features, which help structure the pericope as well as reinforce the segmentation of the text. The discourse features identified in the works of Stephen Levinsohn and Steve Runge will be especially relevant for discourse-level structure and tracing the internal structures of the pericopes. Since this dissertation is focused on the whole of the Sermon with particular attention given to the role of 6:19–7:11, the analysis of the individual pericopes will not be exhaustive.

291–94. Isaiah Allen, “The Pastoral Epistles,” in *Discourse Analysis of the New Testament Writings*, ed. Todd A. Scacewater (Dallas: Fontes Press, 2020), 472. Varner, *The Book of James*, 15.

⁵⁷ “A pericope has sufficient ‘body’ to communicate a manageable whole without losing the sense of its homogeneity. It is that part of a discourse telling the receptor that ‘this much of my thought I wish you to consider separately from the rest because it seems to me to have a particular unity and to advance the idea in a peculiar way.’” Louw, “Discourse Analysis and the Greek New Testament,” 103.

⁵⁸ Levinsohn, *Discourse Features of New Testament Greek*, 271–84; Porter, “Pericope Markers and the Paragraph: Textual and Linguistic Implications,” 178–82.

Cohesion

A vital component of a discourse analysis methodology is the search for cohesion within a discourse.⁵⁹ Porter defines cohesion, saying, “*Cohesion refers to grammatical, semantic and contextual factors which hold a discourse together.* Discourse analysis begins with the assumption that texts cohere or hold together in a unified way.”⁶⁰ Guthrie defines cohesion simply as “a semantic property of a text which gives the text unity.”⁶¹ Matthew O’Donnell expresses the significance of cohesion to the task of discourse analysis, saying, “Many treatments of discourse analysis are in reality simply discussions of cohesion. In many ways it is the simplest area of discourse analysis to understand.”⁶²

Cohesion makes a discourse understandable to its readers by reducing “the interpretive choices and thus decision-making labor of the reader.”⁶³ Cohesion is not an entirely foreign concept to biblical exegesis. The concern of traditional exegesis to consider the literary context of a given passage involves locating cohesion in a section or discourse and interpreting the passage cohesively with the surrounding passages.

Some analysts distinguish between cohesion and coherence, where cohesion refers to semantic unity and coherence relates to issues of pragmatics.⁶⁴ For this study, “cohesion” will follow the usage of others who consider it synonymous with

⁵⁹ *Cohesion in English* by Halliday and Hasan is a seminal work on the topic of discourse cohesion. M. A. K. Halliday and Ruqaiya Hasan, *Cohesion in English*, English Language Series 9 (Abingdon, Oxon, UK: Routledge, 2013).

⁶⁰ Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament*, 304.

⁶¹ Guthrie, *The Structure of Hebrews*, 49.

⁶² Matthew Brook O’Donnell, *Corpus Linguistics and the Greek of the New Testament* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2005), 156n81.

⁶³ Jeffrey T. Reed, “The Cohesiveness of Discourse: Towards a Model of Linguistic Criteria for Analyzing New Testament Discourse,” in *Discourse Analysis and the New Testament: Approaches and Results*, *JSNTSup* 170 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 30n7.

⁶⁴ Robert de Beaugrande and J. Wolfgang Dressler, *Introduction to Text Linguistics* (London: Longman, 1981), 7; Varner, *Philippians*, 19. See also the overview of coherence in Scacewater, Introduction to *Discourse Analysis of the New Testament Writings*, 16–23.

“coherence.”⁶⁵ While some apply cohesion to factors outside the text which affect understanding, this work will limit its analysis to cohesion within the text.⁶⁶

Cohesive ties. Cohesion can be produced by a multitude of factors in a discourse. A central concern of discourse analysis is quantifying these features to better detect discourse cohesion.⁶⁷ Porter writes,

Almost any element of the text can be seen to have cohesive properties. Obvious elements include the use of conjunctions, the presence of participant chains, the repeated use of lexis from certain semantic domains, and the deployment of various morphologically based devices, such as tense-forms, voice-forms, and mood-forms. Every one of these features (and many more besides) plays a role in creating what is called a text.⁶⁸

M.A.K. Halliday and Ruqaiya Hasan introduce the concept of “cohesive ties” to speak of the cohesive connections in a text.⁶⁹ Reed identifies two categories of ties for analyzing New Testament discourse; organic ties formed by conjunctions and other linguistic connectors and componential ties, and semantic connections between words and phrases.⁷⁰ This classification divides cohesive features into categories of structural cohesion and semantic cohesion.

Structural cohesion can be formed by various conjunctions, connectives, and textual patterns and relationships. Not only do these surface features demarcate textual boundaries and thereby reveal where cohesive units may be identified, but internal structural patterns such as chiasm, parallelism, and connectives also create cohesion.

⁶⁵ Guthrie concludes that cohesion and coherence are “somewhat synonymous,” and that while some make a distinction in the terms, others use them interchangeably. Guthrie, *The Structure of Hebrews*, 49n9. See also Van Neste, *Cohesion and Structure in the Pastoral Epistles*, 280:8.

⁶⁶ Halliday and Hasan refer to extra-textual factors as “context” and textual factors as “co-text.” For simplicity, this study will use the terms “literary context” and “cultural context.” Halliday and Hasan, *Cohesion in English*, 6–21.

⁶⁷ See Halliday and Hasan, *Cohesion in English*, 333–55.

⁶⁸ Porter. *Linguistic Analysis of the Greek New Testament*, 139–40.

⁶⁹ Halliday and Hasan, *Cohesion in English*, 329.

⁷⁰ Reed, “The Cohesiveness of Discourse, 32–36.

These structural features will be vital in tracing the cohesion of the Sermon and its microstructures.

Semantic or lexical cohesion can occur in a discourse in a number of ways.⁷¹ Repetition of the same or related words is a common example of semantic cohesion.⁷² Words that belong to the same semantic domain may also create cohesion in a discourse through various relationships.⁷³ The author can also create categories of cohesion by grouping concepts together that would not usually be connected.⁷⁴

The placement of cohesive features can also be significant. An author may link units of discourse using words placed in critical parts of discourse units. Grimes writes, “Linkage, or repetition of what was just said as a means of getting started on the next part, provides cohesion within paragraphs in some languages and between paragraphs in others.”⁷⁵ Guthrie lists several specific transitional devices that can connect two or more discourse units.⁷⁶ In the next chapter, various cohesive ties will be identified in the Sermon on the Mount, which are crucial for discerning the unity of the Sermon. These cohesive ties are central to the argument of this dissertation which maintains that the Sermon on the Mount is truly a cohesive discourse.

⁷¹ Halliday and Matthiessen identify repetition, synonymy, hyponymy, meronymy, and collocation as means of lexical cohesion. M. A. K. Halliday and M. I. M. Matthiessen, *Halliday's Introduction to Functional Grammar*, 4th ed. (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2014), 644–50.

⁷² Michael Hoey, *Patterns of Lexis in Text* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 8–10. Halliday and Hasan, *Cohesion in English*, 274–92.

⁷³ A resource such as Louw and Nida's lexicon can help identify semantic domains. J. P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996).

⁷⁴ Cynthia Long Westfall, “Hebrews,” in *Discourse Analysis of the New Testament Writings*, ed. Todd A. Scacewater (Dallas: Fontes Press, 2020), 50.

⁷⁵ Grimes, *The Thread of Discourse*, 259.

⁷⁶ George H. Guthrie, “Cohesion Shifts and Stitches in Philippians,” in *Discourse Analysis and Other Topics in Biblical Greek*, *JSNTSup* 113 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 54–56. See also H. Van Dyke Parunak, “Transitional Techniques in the Bible,” *JBL* 102, no. 4 (1983): 525–48.

Cohesion shift analysis. Structural markers and cohesive features can mutually reinforce each other. Levinsohn acknowledges that surface features alone are insufficient to determine boundaries and that the discourse unit should first be characterized by thematic unity, not surface features.⁷⁷ One way to identify thematic unity is to look for patterns of cohesion.⁷⁸ Cohesion detected within a unit of text can confirm or augment the unit delimitation determined through structural analysis. Discourse analysis is recursive in that the processes cannot be neatly separated. Unit cohesion can inform macrostructure, and features of prominence can delineate cohesive units. The categories inform and support one another. Guthrie developed a method called “cohesion shift analysis,” which seeks to identify unit transitions based on shifts in “cohesion fields.” Guthrie contends that “the highest level of cohesion” occurs “at the paragraph level” and “there should be corresponding shifts in several of the cohesion fields when the discourse moves from one paragraph to the next.”⁷⁹ Since the Sermon on the Mount is largely asyndetic at the paragraph level; cohesion shifts are crucial in determining breaks where there is no conjunction.

Prominence

Prominence refers to textual indicators which alert the reader that a given portion of a discourse is more salient and deserves particular focus. By making certain elements prominent, the author of a text may “highlight material and make some part of the text stand out in some way.”⁸⁰ Prominence complements cohesion by setting apart

⁷⁷ Levinsohn, *Discourse Features of New Testament Greek*, 271.

⁷⁸ Westfall, “Hebrews,” 543.

⁷⁹ Guthrie, *The Structure of Hebrews*, 54.

⁸⁰ Stanley E. Porter, “A Method for the Analysis of Prominence in Hellenistic Greek,” in *The Linguist as Pedagogue: Trends in the Teaching and Linguistic Analysis of the Greek New Testament*, eds. Stanley E. Porter and Matthew Brook O’Donnell, New Testament Monographs 11 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009), 75.

more salient parts of a discourse, while cohesion ties the discourse units together. Reed calls prominence “the cohesion of *dissimilarity*,” which “is used to set apart certain entities from other entities of the discourse.”⁸¹ Robert Longacre describes the role of prominence, saying,

The very idea of discourse as a structured entity demands that some parts of discourse be more prominent than others. Otherwise, expression would be impossible. Discourse without prominence would be like pointing to a piece of black cardboard and insisting that it was a picture of black camels crossing black sands at midnight.⁸²

Prominence is not a random occurrence but is an indicator of significance within a discourse. Westfall remarks, “Material is not prominent simply because it is odd. . . [P]rominence that serves a function will appear to be motivated by the author rather than as an idiosyncratic departure, defection or deviance.”⁸³ Prominence is not a foreign concept to traditional biblical exegesis. Often a commentator will refer to a biblical passage or phrase as “emphatic.”⁸⁴ Identifying these “emphatic” pericopes and understanding what the biblical author is doing with them is a hermeneutical concern addressed through the discourse analysis category of prominence.⁸⁵

Young identifies two types of prominence: natural prominence and marked prominence. Natural prominence corresponds with the concept of mainline material in a discourse. Content that is considered mainline has natural prominence: “Natural prominence pertains to those elements which are semantically more significant for the

⁸¹ Reed, *A Discourse Analysis of Philippians*, 385.

⁸² Longacre, “Discourse Peak as Zone of Turbulence,” 83.

⁸³ Westfall, *A Discourse Analysis of the Letter to the Hebrews*, 56.

⁸⁴ Runge writes, “A cursory review of Greek grammars and commentaries reveals that the term emphasis is used in much the same sense as Callow’s prominence.” Steven E. Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament: A Practical Introduction for Teaching and Exegesis* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010).

⁸⁵ Reed observes, “This is not entirely new to New Testament studies. Scholars frequently claim that certain language in the New Testament is ‘emphatic’. By this they generally mean some linguistic element (either a word or clause) is being emphasized by the author.” Reed, *A Discourse Analysis of Philippians*, 106.

development of the discourse. . . . Supporting elements are semantically less prominent.”⁸⁶ Stephen Wallace agrees, “Almost by definition, foreground in discourse is more salient than background.”⁸⁷

Marked prominence uses “various devices in the surface structure to highlight portions of the discourse,” which can often represent “the theme or major motifs.”⁸⁸ Westfall describes the way marked prominence differs from natural prominence, “Markedness functions in a similar way to the colour red on an artist’s palette. There may be touches of red in the background or foreground, but a large concentration of red will draw the eye and be prominent.”⁸⁹ Similarly to markers of cohesion, there is a multitude of features that can serve as markers of prominence.⁹⁰

Potential prominence markers are numerous, and a comprehensive list would be difficult to compile.⁹¹ However, Kathleen Callow provides three broad categories of prominence-giving devices that help classify the various textual markers. Callow identifies lexical devices, rhetorical devices, and departure from norms as elements which create marked prominence in a discourse.⁹² Of these three, Callow identifies lexical prominence as the least prominent and departure from norms as the most prominent.⁹³

⁸⁶ Young, *Intermediate New Testament Greek*, 262.

⁸⁷ Stephen Wallace, “Figure and Ground: The Interrelationships of Linguistic Categories,” in *Tense-Aspect: Between Semantics and Pragmatics*, ed. Paul J. Hopper, Typological Studies in Language 1 (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1982), 213. See also Westfall, *A Discourse Analysis of the Letter to the Hebrews*, 35.

⁸⁸ Young, *Intermediate New Testament Greek*, 263.

⁸⁹ Westfall, *A Discourse Analysis of the Letter to the Hebrews*, 56.

⁹⁰ Young provides a detailed list of possible prominence markers. Young, *Intermediate New Testament Greek*, 262–64.

⁹¹ Westfall lists some common prominence markers: “The formal features include marked choices and variation in grammar, the use of discourse markers, conjunctions, word order, deixis, the use of emphatic words or phrases and repetition.” Westfall, “Hebrews,” 546.

⁹² Kathleen Callow, *Man and Message: A Guide to Meaning-Based Text Analysis* (Lanham, MD: Summer Institute of Linguistics and University Press of America, 1998), 183.

⁹³ Callow, *Man and Message*, 185.

Lexical devices can include words that express superlatives, emotion, or are “inherently forceful.” Rhetorical prominence includes “figures of speech” and “deliberate, patterned arrangement of the material.”⁹⁴ Departure from norms can refer to numerous types of deviation in discourse, such as “departure from usual syntax” or “unusual word order.”⁹⁵ The Sermon on the Mount uses key terms, rhetorical patterns, and grammatical shifts to signal prominence. I will show that these features cluster together in the most prominent pericopes of the Sermon. The next chapter will provide a detailed list of prominence markers relevant to the Sermon on the Mount.

Discourse Peak

Peak is a concept of discourse analysis that seeks to identify the most salient or prominent portion of a discourse. Todd Scacewater describes peak as “a concept of global prominence that is distinct from these previous types of prominence.”⁹⁶ The concept of peak was developed by Robert Longacre and has since been widely adopted and utilized by discourse analysts.⁹⁷ Longacre clarifies,

While a discourse has cohesion/coherence and prominence, it just as necessarily involves *progress*, i.e., a well-formed discourse is going somewhere. The progress of a discourse typically issues in some sort of climactic development (or developments) which I have been accustomed to term peak(s).⁹⁸

Cotterell and Turner refer to discourse staging, in which a discourse progresses through an “orderly sequence” for the purpose of reaching “some kind of peak”⁹⁹ which

⁹⁴ Callow, *Man and Message*, 183.

⁹⁵ Callow, *Man and Message*, 184.

⁹⁶ Scacewater, Introduction to *Discourse Analysis of the New Testament Writings*, 29.

⁹⁷ Terry argues that the modern concept of peak has its origin in Greek rhetoric and cites Longinus’ *On the Sublime* as an example. Ralph Bruce Terry, “1 Corinthians,” in *Discourse Analysis of the New Testament Writings*, ed. Todd A. Scacewater (Dallas: Fontes Press, 2020), 243.

⁹⁸ Longacre, *The Grammar of Discourse*, 33.

⁹⁹ Cotterell and Turner, *Linguistics & Biblical Interpretation*, 241–42.

typically occurs toward the end of a discourse.¹⁰⁰ Since the peak is the climax of a given discourse, identification of the peak can help guide the interpretation of a text.¹⁰¹ Westfall states, “The element or elements that are prominent in the peak indicates the destination of the discourse, and should effect the interpretation of theme.”¹⁰²

Peak may be identified by noticing what Robert Longacre calls a “zone of turbulence in regard to the flow of the discourse in its preceding and following parts.”¹⁰³ This zone of turbulence is explicitly marked by “unusual surface features.”¹⁰⁴ Ernst Wendland refers to these unusual features as “bumps” in the text: “the ‘bumps’ (projections) refer to places in the text where we note a convergence of stylistic features, thus indicating a semantic ‘peak’ and/or an emotive ‘climax.’”¹⁰⁵ While peak can be marked by a number of features, including typical markers of prominence, Longacre identifies common criteria which mark peak: rhetorical underlining, concentration of participants, heightened vividness, change of pace, change of vantage point or orientation, and incidence of particles and onomatopoeia.¹⁰⁶

A text may have more than one discourse peak. Often analysts find an action peak and a didactic peak or, in hortatory texts, an expository peak and a hortatory peak.

¹⁰⁰ Longacre, “Discourse Peak as Zone of Turbulence,” 84. See also Longacre, *The Grammar of Discourse*, 33. Bergen observes, “The peak, or author-intended point of greatest actional/thematic interest, of a typical story occurs within the final twenty-five to fifty percent of the composition.” Robert D. Bergen, “Text as a Guide to Authorial Intention: An Introduction to Discourse Criticism,” *JETS* 30, no. 3 (September 1987): 332.

¹⁰¹ “The peak is the point of the story: a question is posed. . . and then answered, a paradox is presented... and then resolved, a competition is described. . . and then a winner produced. The identification of the peak is vital to the appreciation of the narrative; it is not surprising, therefore, to find that the peak of a narrative is often explicitly marked.” Cotterell and Turner, *Linguistics & Biblical Interpretation*, 244.

¹⁰² Westfall, *A Discourse Analysis of the Letter to the Hebrews*, 86.

¹⁰³ Longacre, *The Grammar of Discourse*, 38.

¹⁰⁴ Robert E. Longacre and Shin Ja Joo Hwang, *Holistic Discourse Analysis* (Dallas: SIL International, 2012), 53.

¹⁰⁵ Wendland, “Johannine Epistles,” 654.

¹⁰⁶ Longacre, *The Grammar of Discourse*, 38–48.

Scacewater says of hortatory texts that “there may be one peak in the argument section and another peak in the hortatory section, with the latter being the more prominent peak.”¹⁰⁷ Sometimes, peak structures can appear in close proximity to one another, with one serving as the climax and the other as the denouement. Longacre and Hwang define denouement as a “notional slot of narrative discourse after climax where a crucial event happens making possible a resolution or a way out of a difficulty.”¹⁰⁸ They further elaborate,

The surface and notional slots may correlate with each other with the climax surfacing as the peak episode, or may be skewed to have the climax as the prepeak episode and the denouement as the peak. It is possible for a text to display peak-like features in two separate episodes. Then a profile with two peaks results, either a double peak profile with two action peak episodes or one with a main peak and a final, thematic, peak.¹⁰⁹

Again, Longacre writes,

Thus, as terms for underlying structure we may speak of a climax and a denouement in narrative. The first corresponds to the point of maximum tension and confrontation in a story; the second corresponds to a decisive event that makes resolution of the plot possible. Either or both of these may be marked for peak in the surface structure of a narrative discourse.¹¹⁰

Cotterell and Turner identify pre-peak, peak, and post-peak episodes as components of discourse structure. Pre-peak episodes may “explicate the issue, perhaps to highlight the significance of the issue,” and post-peak episodes may be “explanatory or confirmatory.”¹¹¹ The irregularities caused by a peak episode may result in additional turbulence in the surrounding pericopes. Therefore, a climactic episode may have a peak construction composed of pre-peak material, peak, post-peak, and a denouement. I will

¹⁰⁷ Scacewater, Introduction to *Discourse Analysis of the New Testament Writings*, 29.

¹⁰⁸ Longacre and Hwang, *Holistic Discourse Analysis*, 214.

¹⁰⁹ Longacre and Hwang, *Holistic Discourse Analysis*, 55.

¹¹⁰ Longacre, “Discourse Peak as Zone of Turbulence,” 84.

¹¹¹ Cotterell and Turner, *Linguistics & Biblical Interpretation*, 248.

argue that the climax of the Sermon on the Mount displays a peak construction that fits this pattern.

Identifying Peak in Hortatory Texts

Longacre's concept of peak is primarily developed from and applied to narrative texts. However, the concept is applicable to expository and hortatory texts as well. Longacre addresses the relevance of peak for hortatory texts:

Hortatory discourse is likewise a struggle. Here, however, the struggle is to convince the hearers of the soundness of the advice and to launch them on the course of conduct advocated or to discourage them from a course of conduct which is being proscribed. It would seem therefore that an artful expository or hortatory discourse will have a meaningful cumulative thrust. This should correlate in at least some discourses with a marked surface structure peak.¹¹²

A formal methodology dedicated to defining peak in hortatory discourse has not been formulated.¹¹³ Analysts who have applied the concept of peak to hortatory texts have generally adapted Longacre's criteria for determining peak in narrative and sought for markers of prominence to identify peak in expository and hortatory texts.¹¹⁴ A survey of discourse analyses of hortatory writings in the New Testament reveals that additional criteria have been fruitful in discerning discourse. The following criteria are drawn from Longacre's methodology as well as a synthesis of other analysts' work on hortatory texts and are relevant for discerning peak in the Sermon on the Mount.

General dissimilarity. In addition to the peak markers which Longacre identifies, Varner identifies the general phenomenon of "general dissimilarity" as a

¹¹² Longacre, *The Grammar of Discourse*, 48.

¹¹³ Hwang acknowledges that "Peak is less well studied in non-narrative texts." Longacre and Hwang, *Holistic Discourse Analysis*, 173.

¹¹⁴ Some examples of discourse analyses that find peak in hortatory discourse are Longacre, "Towards an Exegesis of 1 John Based on the Discourse Analysis of the Greek Text"; Allen, "Philemon"; Starwalt, *A Discourse Analysis of 1 Peter*; Terry, "1 Corinthians"; Varner, *The Book of James*; William C. Varner, "James," in *Discourse Analysis of the New Testament Writings*, ed. Todd A. Scacewater (Dallas: Fontes Press, 2020), 569–87.

marker of peak.¹¹⁵ This is consistent with Longacre’s description of peak as a “zone of turbulence” that “has features peculiar to itself.”¹¹⁶ Similarly, Erwin Starwalt observes, “Basically the discourse analyst is looking for some sort of change of pattern.”¹¹⁷

Concentration of prominent features. Peak may be designated simply as the pericope which features the greatest prominence, not only in the number of features but in the degree of their cumulative effect. Westfall’s analysis of Hebrews blends prominence and peak categories.¹¹⁸ She identifies two peaks in Hebrews (4:11–16; 10:19–25) and a final “climax” (12:1–29, specifically 12:22–28) which she identifies as “the most prominent unit in the discourse.” In hortatory discourse, established features of prominence may occur with greater intensity at the peak.

Rhetorical underlining. Longacre identifies rhetorical underlining as “probably the most frequently used” means of marking peak in expository and hortatory discourse such as the Sermon on the Mount.¹¹⁹ Rhetorical underlining is the use of elaboration or inclusion of extra words to highlight a portion of discourse.¹²⁰ Longacre writes,

The narrator does not want you to miss the important point of the story so he employs extra words at that point. He may employ parallelism, paraphrase, and tautologies of various sorts to be sure that you don’t miss it. . . It’s as if you took a pencil and underlined certain lines of what you are writing.¹²¹

¹¹⁵ Varner, *The Book of James*, 29.

¹¹⁶ Longacre, *The Grammar of Discourse*, 38.

¹¹⁷ Erwin Starwalt, “1 Peter,” in *Discourse Analysis of the New Testament Writings*, ed. Todd A. Scacewater (Dallas: Fontes Press, 2020), 593.

¹¹⁸ Westfall, “Hebrews,” 546.

¹¹⁹ Longacre, *The Grammar of Discourse*, 48.

¹²⁰ Longacre cites the graphic description of the flood narrative with its use of paraphrase as an example of rhetorical underlining. Longacre, *The Grammar of Discourse*, 39.

¹²¹ Longacre, *The Grammar of Discourse*, 39.

Concentration of features. In narrative texts, the peak can be marked by “crowding the stage” with notable characters from the plot, much like the typical reveal scene of a murder mystery.¹²² While this phenomenon directly applies only to narrative texts, similar tactics can be used in hortatory or expository texts. Starwalt applies the “crowded stage” to hortatory discourse when there is “a convergence of lexical terms and concepts in the paragraph, a crowded lexical or conceptual stage of sorts.”¹²³ Varner writes, “Summary words, semantic similarity, and summary, can function like the ‘crowded stage’ of Longacre.”¹²⁴

Heightened vividness. Heightened vividness is a grammatical or semantic shift that sets a portion of discourse apart from others “by a shift in the nominal-verbal balance, by a tense shift, by shift to a more specific person, or by shift along the narrative-drama parameter.”¹²⁵ In hortatory or expository texts, rhetorical questions can be used to shift the discourse to create a “pseudodialogue” which heightens vividness.¹²⁶

Change of pace. A shift to shorter or longer sentences or a shift in the length of syntactical units can create a change of pace which marks a discourse peak. Longacre says,

Thus we may find at the peak of a story a shift to short, fragmentary, crisp sentences, which emphasize the change of pace. Quite as likely, however, is the opposite development, i.e., a shift to a long run-on open type of sentence structure.¹²⁷

A change of pace can also be created by unusual paragraph length and a shift in

¹²² Longacre, *The Grammar of Discourse*, 40.

¹²³ Starwalt, “1 Peter,” 601.

¹²⁴ Varner, *The Book of James*, 31.

¹²⁵ Longacre, *The Grammar of Discourse*, 40.

¹²⁶ Longacre and Hwang, *Holistic Discourse Analysis*, 42.

¹²⁷ Longacre, *The Grammar of Discourse*, 43.

conjunction usage, including the use of asyndeton.¹²⁸ A change of pace speeds up or slows down the action to draw attention to climactic episodes.

Change of vantage point or orientation. Longacre describes a change of vantage point as a shift in perspective where the story is viewed from a specific character's perspective. Change in orientation involves a change in "surface structure subject." Longacre writes, "One sort of shift that can occur. . . simply involves switching the particular dramatis personae which occur as subject (agent) and object (patient)."¹²⁹ A switch in vantage point or orientation can lead to "the victim becoming the aggressor and the former aggressor becoming the victim at the peak of the story."¹³⁰ Varner applies this principle to hortatory texts when the discourse shifts from a focus on the addressee to a third party, "The readers directly addressed in the discourse may be asked to consider the behavior being commended to them by viewing it as embodied by a person."¹³¹ He observes this in James 3:13–18, which he identifies as the peak of the letter.¹³²

Unique stylistic features. Since no two discourses are the same and each discourse has its own themes and interests, a discourse may have idiosyncratic features which, if identified, can help determine prominence and peak. For example, in his analysis of the Johannine epistles, Wendland concludes that in 1 John, peaks usually coincide with Christological statements.¹³³ When analyzing a particular discourse, the analyst should allow the unique features of the text to inform the methodology.

¹²⁸ Longacre, *The Grammar of Discourse*, 45.

¹²⁹ Longacre, *The Grammar of Discourse*, 47.

¹³⁰ Longacre, *The Grammar of Discourse*, 47.

¹³¹ Varner, "James," 23.

¹³² Varner, *The Book of James*, 30.

¹³³ Wendland, "Johannine Epistles," 654.

Hortatory peak as culminating imperative. Since the mainline content of hortatory discourse is comprised of its imperative forms, its peak should coincide with a prominent command.¹³⁴ Longacre characterizes hortatory peak, saying, “The peak of a hortatory discourse is its final and most effective attempt to influence someone else’s conduct.”¹³⁵ Hortatory peak often occurs near the end of a discourse, “. . .in non-narrative, surface marking is usually at the culminating exhortation, or argument, or the most adequate explanation.”¹³⁶ Hwang suggests that hortatory peak is consistent with the hortatory template constructed by Longacre: “If a text is organized according to the hortatory template, the peak unit may correspond to the motivation or command, where the speaker may have the greatest struggle convincing the hearer of the soundness of the advice and to launch into action.”¹³⁷

Macro-cohesion. A culminating imperative should draw on what has come before and “a semantic macro-theme or themes that can be traced throughout the text.”¹³⁸ Starwalt recognizes a “convergence of significant themes” as an indicator of peak.¹³⁹ Longacre says that the peak of hortatory discourse should be “where the thought of the author reaches its most detailed and developed expression.”¹⁴⁰

Peak often involves the presence of a cluster of established features of cohesion throughout the discourse: “These are places in the text where lexical and

¹³⁴ In his analysis of Philemon, David Allen identifies verses 17-20 as the peak and notes that it is characterized by a shift in verb structure from indicative to imperative forms. Allen, “Philemon,” 535.

¹³⁵ Longacre, “Discourse Peak as Zone of Turbulence,” 84. See also Longacre, *The Grammar of Discourse*, 33.

¹³⁶ Longacre and Hwang, *Holistic Discourse Analysis*, 220.

¹³⁷ Longacre and Hwang, *Holistic Discourse Analysis*, 173.

¹³⁸ Varner, *The Book of James*, 20.

¹³⁹ Starwalt, “1 Peter,” 596.

¹⁴⁰ Longacre, “Towards an Exegesis of 1 John Based on the Discourse Analysis of the Greek Text,” 285.

grammatical features noted for their cohesive force throughout the text occur with a higher degree of density.”¹⁴¹ The author draws on the established features of cohesion and prominence to mark discourse peak. The peak of hortatory discourse may be said to be prominent in relation to its immediate context and yet cohesive regarding the main themes of the whole discourse. This may result in a pericope that is prominent in its surface features yet cohesive in its meaning or theme.

Conclusion

Discourse analysis is concerned with texts. One necessary implication is that discourse analysis is more about discovering the text’s features rather than the mere application of a method. Discourse analysis has principles, not rules. The analyst must be familiar with standard discourse features and phenomena before approaching a text to be ready to identify them; however, the analyst must also be a good listener to the text to see the text’s features for what they are. Guthrie advises the analyst, “I should say that all the above steps should be accompanied by multiple readings of the whole discourse.”¹⁴² My goal is to honor the text of the Sermon on the Mount by using discourse analysis to illuminate the Sermon rather than try to fit it into a particular methodological template.

¹⁴¹ Chipman, “Luke,” 98.

¹⁴² Guthrie, “Cohesion Shifts and Stitches in Philippians,” 42.

CHAPTER 3

AN ANALYSIS OF THE MACROSTRUCTURE OF THE SERMON

This chapter will apply the methodology delineated in the previous chapter to the Sermon on the Mount. First, I will identify the genre and text-type of the Sermon and will discuss the hermeneutical implications. Then, I will provide a detailed list of features that define the macrostructure of the Sermon and propose a structural outline for the Sermon. Next, the features which contribute to the cohesion and prominence of the Sermon will be discussed. The macro-analysis of this chapter will provide the foundation for a more detailed analysis of the individual pericopes of the Sermon in the next chapter.

The Sermon's Text-Type, Mainline, and Genre

The Sermon as Hortatory Discourse

The Sermon on the Mount qualifies as what Aristotle referred to as deliberative rhetoric, “The deliberative kind is either hortatory or dissuasive; for both those who give advice in private and those who speak in the assembly invariably either exhort or dissuade.”¹ In discourse analysis terms, the Sermon belongs to the hortatory text-type, the mainline of which is comprised of command forms.² Robert Longacre posits a discourse template for the hortatory text-type, which has four moves or components that form a hortatory text:

(1) establishment of the authority/credibility of the text producer; (2) presentation of a problem/situation; (3) issuing of one or more commands, which can be mitigated

¹ Aristotle, *The Art of Rhetoric*, trans. John Henry Freese, Loeb Classical Library 193 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), 33.

² John Beekman, John Callow, and Michael F. Kopeseck, *The Semantic Structure of Written Communication*, 5th Rev. ed. (Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1981), 36–38.

to suggestions of varying urgency; and (4) resort to motivation (essentially threats with predictions of undesirable results, and promises along with predictions of desirable results).³

Each of these “moves” is represented in the Sermon. Jesus’s authority and credibility are established in 5:17, the problem of the Sermon is the need for greater righteousness (5:20, 48), the Sermon is comprised of imperatives, and the motivation for obedience can be seen in the warnings found throughout the Sermon and in the promises of the Father’s care in 6:25–34 and 7:6–11. This corresponds with my argument that 6:31–33 and 7:6–11 comprise the peak of the Sermon. Robert Longacre and Shin Ja Joo Hwang write, “If a text is organized according to the hortatory template, the peak unit may correspond to the motivation or command, where the speaker may have the greatest struggle convincing the hearer of the soundness of the advice and to launch into action.”⁴

Negative and Positive Commands as Mainline Content

The Sermon on the Mount is largely comprised of imperative sayings which belong to the mainline of hortatory discourse. The imperatives of the Sermon consist of a prohibition and a subsequent command, which creates a negative-positive pattern. This is evident in the antitheses (“you have heard. . . but I say”), but more formally in 6:1–7:11 with the use of μή to negate imperatives and subjunctives, which are followed by positive commands. This pattern contains implications for the interpretation of the Sermon. While imperatives make up the mainline of the Sermon, the positive imperatives are even more salient than the prohibitions which precede them. The negative imperatives serve to introduce or clarify the positive imperatives. Therefore, the positive imperatives rather than the prohibitions should govern the interpretation of the pericopes of the Sermon.

³ Robert E. Longacre, “The Discourse Strategy of an Appeals Letter,” in *Discourse Description: Diverse Linguistic Analyses of a Fund-Raising Text*, ed. William C. Mann and Sandra A. Thompson (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1992), 110.

⁴ Robert E. Longacre and Shin Ja Joo Hwang, *Holistic Discourse Analysis* (Dallas: SIL International, 2012), 173.

This interpretation of the prohibition-command constructions has support from linguistic theory, principles of discourse analysis, and traditional Greek syntactical analysis.

Semantic structure analysis distinguishes the relationship and roles of conjoined propositions in discourse. This semantic theory maintains that when propositions are conjoined, one may have more natural prominence than the other.⁵ John Beekman, John Callow, and Michael Kopesec discuss the juxtaposition of generic-specific relations in which a second clause provides more specific information than the first.⁶ This relationship applies to the imperatives of the Sermon. When Jesus prohibits praying like the hypocrites, this rules out one practice, but the positive command to enter one's room with the door shut and pray provides specificity. The authors classify such negative-positive relationships as "equivalence by negated antonym."⁷

The negative-positive imperative constructions in the Sermon on the Mount can also be explained by what Steve Runge calls "point-counterpoint sets." These sets are established by "negating one clause element in order to set the stage for a more important element that corrects or replaces it. . . The counterpoint functions as a foil for the point that follows, attracting more attention to it than it would otherwise have received without the counterpoint."⁸ Point-counterpoint sets can be created by relationships such as μέν/δέ constructions or by "the pairing of a negative or positive statement with a restrictive statement that follows," which corresponds to the pattern in the Sermon on the Mount.⁹ Runge states that these negative-positive sets are usually introduced by ἀλλά or ἐάν μή/εἰ

⁵ Beekman et al., *The Semantic Structure of Written Communication*, 93.

⁶ Beekman et al., *The Semantic Structure of Written Communication*, 68.

⁷ Beekman et al., *The Semantic Structure of Written Communication*, 82.

⁸ Steven E. Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament: A Practical Introduction for Teaching and Exegesis* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010), 273.

⁹ Steve E. Runge, *The Lexham Discourse Greek New Testament: Introduction* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2008).

μή. However, they can also be formed with δέ as an adversative conjunction.¹⁰ Steven Levinsohn’s description of the function of δέ supports the notion that it can denote point-counterpoint sets. He writes,

We can see the developmental nature of δέ also by comparing its usage with that of ἀλλά in similar contexts. When ἀλλά links a negative characteristic or proposition with a following positive one, the negative proposition usually retains its relevance. When δέ is used, the characteristic or proposition associated with δέ is more in focus; the negative proposition is usually discarded or replaced by the positive one.¹¹

Levinsohn’s description of the role of δέ in negative-positive imperative constructions is supported by Henry Alford, who wrote, “δέ introduces a contrast to a preceding negative. . . It makes a more sharply marked contrast than ἀλλά.”¹² Alford adds that the usage of δέ replaces the negative imperative with the positive, “It is nearly our ‘yea, rather:’ removing the thing previously negated altogether out of our field of view, and substituting something totally different for it.”¹³

This function of δέ is significant for the interpretation of the Sermon since every negative-positive construction except one relies on δέ to form the juxtaposition.¹⁴ Based on the above argument, I will assume that imperative sayings form the mainline of the Sermon on the Mount and that positive imperatives take precedence over negative imperatives.

¹⁰ In his analysis of the Sermon on the Mount in the *Lexham Discourse Greek New Testament*, Runge identifies a point-counterpoint relationship in 6:19-20 which has δέ as an adversative conjunction without a preceding μέν. Additionally, 5:18 and 7:16-20 are identified as point-counterpoint sets which do not conform to the typical criteria. Steven E. Runge, *The Lexham Discourse Greek New Testament* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2008), 5:18; 6:19-20; 7:16, 20.

¹¹ Stephen Levinsohn, *Discourse Features of New Testament Greek: A Coursebook on the Information Structure of New Testament Greek*, 2nd ed. (Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 2000), 114.

¹² Henry Alford, *Alford’s Greek Testament: An Exegetical and Critical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Guardian Press, 1976), 33.

¹³ Alford, *Alford’s Greek Testament*, 354.

¹⁴ Matthew 7:6-11 is the only pericope which does not utilize δέ to juxtapose negative and positive commands.

The Sermon as an Epitome of Jesus's Teaching

While the Sermon on the Mount belongs to the hortatory text-type, the genre may be further specified. I follow Jonathan Pennington, who argues that the Sermon is an “epitome” of Jesus’s teaching on righteousness and discipleship.”¹⁵ Hans Dieter Betz likewise sees the Sermon as an epitome that presents the “theology of Jesus in a systematic fashion” and provides “the disciple of Jesus with the necessary tool for becoming a Jesus theologian.”¹⁶ Similarly, Jack Kingsbury calls the Sermon “the example par excellence of his [Jesus’] teaching.”¹⁷ John Calvin refers to the collected sayings of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount as “the leading points of the doctrine of Christ which [relate] to a devout and holy life.”¹⁸ The pericopes surrounding the Sermon on the Mount place it squarely in the context of discipleship.¹⁹ The Sermon is bracketed by two parallel accounts concerning the cost of discipleship (4:18–22; 8:18–22).

The Sermon may also be seen as an exposition of Jesus’s initial proclamation, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”²⁰ The kingdom of heaven belongs to the beatific (repentant) people (5:3–12), observing the commandments is indicative of one’s place in the kingdom of heaven (5:19–20; 7:21), and disciples should seek the kingdom above all else (6:33). Pennington writes,

This is an important point for our primary understanding of the Sermon. The

¹⁵ Jonathan T. Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing: A Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), 111–14.

¹⁶ Hans Dieter Betz, *Essays on the Sermon on the Mount* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 15.

¹⁷ Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 106.

¹⁸ John Calvin, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke*, trans. William Pringle, vol. 1 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 258. As Spencer observes, the phrase “devout and holy life” qualifies and narrows the broader phrase “doctrine of Christ.” Stephen R. Spencer, “John Calvin,” in *The Sermon on the Mount through the Centuries*, ed. Jeffrey P. Greenman, Timothy Larsen, and Stephen R. Spencer (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2007), 141.

¹⁹ Nijay K. Gupta, *The Lord’s Prayer*, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2017), 19.

²⁰ Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing*, 101.

Sermon is meant to be read as the explanation for what it means to live according to God's coming kingdom. It is the first, epitomical exposition of what repentance toward God and his Fatherly reign looks like (4:17), of what the life of discipleship looks like.²¹

The Sermon the Mount calls disciples to live the way Jesus commands and to enter the kingdom, and in this way, it serves as an exposition of Jesus's initial message, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." R. T. France says, "The Sermon on the Mount is presented then not as a general treatise on ethics but as a prescription for the distinctive life of those who are under the rule of God ('the kingdom of heaven')." ²²

Discourse Features and Boundary Markers

To determine the macrostructure, a necessary step is to identify the high-level discourse features and boundary markers that demarcate the structure of the Sermon. The features which define the textual boundaries of the Sermon on the Mount include inclusio, chiasm, transitional passages, summary statements, structural patterning, conjunctions, word statistics, and cohesion shifts.

The Law and Prophets Inclusio (5:17–7:12)

A crucial feature of the structure of the Sermon on the Mount is the Law and Prophets inclusio formed by 5:17 and 7:12. The structural significance of inclusios has long been acknowledged by rhetorical critics and biblical scholars.²³ George Guthrie defines inclusio structures as "The bracketing of a pericope by making a statement at the beginning of the section, an approximation of which is repeated at the conclusion of the section."²⁴ A common discourse phenomenon is inclusio structures which are formed by

²¹ Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing*, 114.

²² R. T. France, *Matthew: Evangelist & Teacher* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2004), 164.

²³ In George Guthrie's analysis of the structural of Hebrews, inclusio structures are crucial to his argument. George H. Guthrie, *The Structure of Hebrews: A Text-Linguistic Analysis, NovTSup 73* (Leiden, Netherlands; Brill, 1994), 76–89.

²⁴ Guthrie, *The Structure of Hebrews*, 14.

“distant lexical parallels.”²⁵ The specific reference to the Law and the Prophets occurs only in 5:17 and 7:12 and forms a structural “ring” around the body of the Sermon and separates it from the exordium (5:3–16) and peroratio (7:13–27). On this structural division, commentators are virtually unanimous.

The Exordium (5:3–16) and the Peroratio (7:13–27)

The Law and Prophets inclusio separate 5:3–16 and 7:13–27 from the body of the Sermon on the Mount. These sections are typically referred to by the rhetorical terms “exordium” and “peroratio,” respectively. “Exordium” is a Latin term that literally means “‘beginning a web’—by mounting a woof or laying a warp,” Its primary function is to “lead the audience into the discourse.”²⁶ Quintilian describes the purpose of the exordium as to “prepare our audience in such a way that they will be disposed to lend a ready ear to the rest of our speech.”²⁷ George Kennedy recognizes the Beatitudes as a *proem* meant to “attract the attention and acquire the goodwill of an audience.”²⁸ Ernst Baasland argues that the *exordium* “gives the rhetorical keys to the rest of the sermon,” although it “does not introduce all the themes in the SM. . .” it “lays the foundation for the rest of the SM.”²⁹

The exordium and the peroratio contain parallel verbal shifts in person and mood. Within the exordium, 5:3–10 contains only third-person indicative verb forms, but

²⁵ Guthrie, *The Structure of Hebrews*, 54–55.

²⁶ Edward P. J. Corbett and Robert J. Connors, *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student*, 4th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 260.

²⁷ Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, ed. G. P. Goold, trans. by H. E. Butler, vol 2. The Loeb Classical Library 125 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1921), 9.

²⁸ George A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 48.

²⁹ Ernst Baasland, *Parables and Rhetoric in the Sermon on the Mount: New Approaches to a Classical Text*, *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen Zum Neuen Testament* 351 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 66.

in 5:11–16, three second-person imperatives are introduced (5:12, 16). Reversing the pattern, the first pericopes of the peroratio contain three second-person imperative verbs (7:13, 15, 23), then transition to only third-person indicative forms in 7:24–27.³⁰ This creates an inverse pattern in which the external pericopes of the Sermon contain only third-person indicative forms (see table 1).³¹ These patterns frame the body of the Sermon. The Sermon on the Mount is replete with imperatives, yet its introduction and conclusion consist of propositional statements; in the exordium, a list of promises, and in the peroratio, a sequence of warnings.³²

Table 1. Verbal shifts in the exordium and peroratio

A.	Exordium 1 (5:3–10): only third-person indicative verbs
B.	Exordium 2 (5:11–16): three second-person imperatives (5:12, 16)
C.	Sermon Body (5:17–7:12)
B.	Peroratio 1 (7:13–23): three second-person imperatives (7:13, 15, 23)
A.	Peroratio 2 (7:24–27): only third-person indicative verbs

Transitional Passages

Another common discourse feature in the Sermon on the Mount is the transitional pericope which “involves the overlapping of material at a text-unit boundary

³⁰ Apart from the reported speech in the judgment scene in 7:21–23 which contains first-person verbs and the imperative *ἀποχωρεῖτε* directed at the false prophets, the shift from imperative forms to third-person indicative forms actually begins at 7:21.

³¹ Luz notes the inverse shift in person in the exordium and peroratio in his structural representation of the Sermon. Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, trans. James E. Crouch, ed. Helmut Koester. Rev ed. Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 172–74.

³² Allison notes the correspondence between the blessings and warnings of the Sermon and the blessings and curses of Deuteronomy 27–29, placing the Sermon in the context of a new Law. Dale C. Allison Jr., “The Structure of the Sermon on the Mount,” *JBL* 106, no. 3 (September 1987): 430.

to facilitate a transition.”³³ This type of device is sometimes called a “hinge” in which “one unit of text serves as a transitional element between the units on either side of it.”³⁴ The presence of these constructions can complicate structural analysis and often cause disagreement about structure among commentators. Nevertheless, these “hinge” passages usually demarcate a structural boundary.

The transitional passages in the Sermon on the Mount include 5:11–12, which serves as a bridge from the Beatitudes to the salt and light admonition in 5:13–16. Another transitional passage is the heading in 6:1, which opens the second section of the body yet links to the theme of righteousness in the previous section. Also, 6:19–21, which opens the third section of the body, draws from the preceding section as well as the following pericopes. The transitional nature of these passages will be examined more closely when they are addressed in the pericope analysis in the next chapter.

Headings and Summary Statements

The Sermon on the Mount contains several summary statements that either serve as headings or conclusions to sections or pericopes. They serve as summary or heading verses, often in the imperative mood, which encapsulate or summarize the teaching of the section. Levinsohn says,

By their nature, summary statements unite together the information they summarize and thereby indicate that the preceding material should be treated as a block, over against what is to follow. Summary statements thus provide good supporting evidence for boundaries. . . Summary statements may terminate or begin units.³⁵

Luz identifies the heading passages as *kelalim*, which correspond to “the Hillel

³³ Bruce W. Longenecker, *Rhetoric at the Boundaries: The Art and Theology of New Testament Chain-Link Transitions* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2005), 5.

³⁴ Ray Van Neste, *Cohesion and Structure in the Pastoral Epistles*, *JSNTSup* 280 (London: T & T Clark International, 2004), 14–15.

³⁵ Levinsohn, *Discourse Features of New Testament Greek*, 277.

rule of the general and the specific.”³⁶ Each of the three sections of the body of the Sermon contains *kelal* headings. In the first section of the body, 5:17–20 functions as a heading for the antitheses in 5:21–48, while 5:48 functions as a concluding summary imperative. Matthew 5:17–20 serves double duty as it also introduces the entire body of the Sermon and corresponds with 7:12, which functions as a concluding summary of the Sermon.³⁷ The second section of the body opens with a heading (6:1) which is elaborated on in the subsequent pericopes concerning private righteousness (6:2–6; 6:16–18). In my analysis of 6:19–7:11, I argue that 6:19–24 functions as a heading for the entire third section of the body. The last saying of the peroratio (7:24–27) also functions as a concluding summary, not only for the peroratio but for the entire Sermon.

Internal Cohesion

While the concept of cohesion will be treated in detail separately, a brief treatment of cohesive features within a pericope is necessary for determining discourse boundaries. Patterns of cohesion within a pericope or section can reinforce textual boundaries determined by external features. In his discourse analysis of Hebrews, Guthrie discovered a method of determining structural boundaries by noticing “cohesion shifts.”³⁸

A fuller analysis of cohesion relationships in the Sermon on the Mount will be provided later, but a few remarks about structural cohesion will be helpful. Structural patterns are cohesive elements that reinforce discourse boundaries and relationships. These patterns may be created through repetition, connectives, and parallelisms. Many of these patterns are obvious in the Sermon on the Mount, which is why even without coordinating conjunctions, interpreters can easily demarcate the boundaries of the Sermon’s pericopes.

³⁶ Luz, *Matthew*, 6.

³⁷ Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing*, 131.

³⁸ Guthrie, *The Structure of Hebrews*, 54.

Examples of structural cohesion include the formulaic patterns found in the Beatitudes (5:3–12), the six antitheses (5:21–48), the three formulaic sayings on private righteousness (6:1–18), and the three parables of the peroratio (7:13–27). However, this pattern of consistent structural features is broken in the turbulent section of 6:19–7:12. Internally, consistent structural patterns are few and not readily apparent. The boundaries of this section are demarcated primarily by external features.³⁹ This lack of cohesion has baffled commentators and is the problem this dissertation seeks to address.

Another aspect of structural cohesion crucial to the structure of the Sermon is the recurring negative-positive pattern created by its prohibitions and corresponding commands. This pattern is consistent throughout the Sermon, even in the problematic third section of 6:19–7:11 and provides essential guidance for discerning the structure and theme of the section.⁴⁰

Conjunctions

Conjunctions play a crucial role in demarcating the boundaries of a discourse. In the Sermon on the Mount, conjunctions appear only a few times at high-level boundaries. Instead, most of the sections and pericopes rely on asyndeton—a lack of conjunction or connective.⁴¹ However, conjunctions and discourse markers are present at some critical junctions in the Sermon. In addition to asyndeton, the pericopes of the Sermon are connected with *καί*, *δέ*, *οὖν*, and *διὰ τοῦτο*. The use of these conjunctions is essential to understanding the logic of the Sermon (see table 2).

³⁹ Dale C. Allison Jr., *Studies in Matthew: Interpretation Past and Present* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 187.

⁴⁰ Baasland, *Parables and Rhetoric in the Sermon on the Mount*, 319.

⁴¹ De Waard and Clark remark that the Sermon is marked “by a high frequency of asyndeton.” Jan De Waard and David C. Clark, “Discourse Structure in Matthew’s Gospel,” in *Analyzing & Translating New Testament Discourse*, by David J. Clark, Studies in Koine Greek (Dallas: Fontes Press, 2019), 24–25.

Table 2. Pericope-level conjunctions

5:3–12 Beatitudes	asyndeton
5:13–16 Salt and Light	asyndeton
5:17–20 Christ and the Law	asyndeton
5:21–26 Reconciliation	asyndeton
5:27–30 Faithfulness	asyndeton
5:31–32 Marriage	δέ
5:33–37 Oaths	asyndeton
5:38–42 Tolerance	asyndeton
5:43–48 Love	asyndeton
5:48 Be Perfect	οὖν
6:1 Private Righteousness	[δέ]
6:2–4 Alms	οὖν
6:5–6 Prayer	Καὶ
6:7–15 The Lord’s Prayer	δέ
6:16–18 Fasting	δέ
6:19–24 Treasures	asyndeton
6:25–34 Seek the Kingdom	Διὰ τοῦτο
7:1–5 Judging	asyndeton
7:6–11 Ask, Seek, Knock	asyndeton
7:12 The Golden Rule	οὖν
7:13–14 The Two Gates	asyndeton
7:15–20 The Two Trees	asyndeton
7:21–23 The Judgment Scene	asyndeton
7:24–27 The Two Houses	οὖν

Asyndeton. Asyndeton, the lack of a conjunction, is used more frequently than conjunctions in both the Sermon on the Mount and the Gospel of Matthew. According to Stephanie Black’s analysis, asyndeton accounts for 31 percent of all connectives used in Matthew.⁴² Runge states that asyndeton is “the default means of connecting clauses in the Epistles and in speeches reported within narrative,” which means that asyndeton is

⁴² “But, in fact, asyndeton—the lack of a conjunction—occurs more frequently in Matthew’s Gospel than does any single sentence conjunction (721/2302, 31%).” Stephanie L. Black, *Sentence Conjunction in the Gospel of Matthew: Kai, De, Tote, Gar, Syn and Asyndeton in Narrative Discourse*. JSNTSup 216 (London; Sheffield Academic, 2002), 179.

“unmarked.”⁴³ Levinsohn states that asyndeton implies that “the author offered no processing constraint on how the following material was to be related to its context.” However, it can signal a “close connection” where two sets of information belong to the same unit, or “no direct connection,” in which case the information belongs to separate units.⁴⁴ He adds, “Asyndeton is the norm between *paragraphs* with different topics when the topic of the new paragraph is not considered to strengthen, develop from, be associated with, or be inferred from that of the previous one.”⁴⁵

Determining whether asyndeton indicates a close connection or two distinct units depends on “other potential boundary features.”⁴⁶ For example, Stephen Levinsohn says that the antitheses from the Sermon on the Mount are an example of asyndeton combined with an orienter, Ἠκούσατε ὅτι “you have heard that,” which creates discontinuity and marks each saying as distinct.⁴⁷ The presence of asyndeton at pericope and section boundaries in the Sermon on the Mount seems to signal no direct connection with the preceding material and demarcates a new saying with its own “nucleus.”⁴⁸

Δέ. The conjunction δέ is used four times at pericope boundaries in the Sermon on the Mount (5:31; 6:1, 7, 16).⁴⁹ Δέ is used to “mark new developments” and can be either “adversative” or “connective”⁵⁰ Each of the four uses of δέ in the Sermon are developmental and will be examined in detail in the commentary in the next chapter.

⁴³ Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 20–21.

⁴⁴ Levinsohn, *Discourse Features of New Testament Greek*, 118.

⁴⁵ Levinsohn, *Discourse Features of New Testament Greek*, 119.

⁴⁶ Levinsohn, *Discourse Features of New Testament Greek*, 276.

⁴⁷ Levinsohn, *Discourse Features of New Testament Greek*, 15, 118n14, 276.

⁴⁸ Levinsohn, *Discourse Features of New Testament Greek*, 276.

⁴⁹ The occurrence of δέ in 6:1 is enclosed in brackets in the NA and UBS texts, indicating a difficult textual variant.

⁵⁰ Levinsohn, *Discourse Features of New Testament Greek*, 112.

Καί. In the New Testament, *καί* can be used adverbially (e.g., also, even) or as a conjunction.⁵¹ Conjunctive *καί* is used to connect “two items of equal status.”⁵² Unlike *δέ*, *καί* does not represent new development,⁵³ but “represents the writer’s choice to ‘add’ the one element to the other.”⁵⁴ In the Sermon on the Mount, *καί* is only used at the pericope level once in 6:5, where the saying on prayer (6:5–6) follows from the saying on almsgiving (6:2–4). This single usage of *καί* contrasts with the use of *δέ* in the following pericopes in 6:7–15 and 6:16–18. The significance of the shift in connectives will be discussed in the analysis of those pericopes.

Οὖν. Levinsohn describes *οὖν* as “a marked developmental conjunction” used “inferentially” or “as a resumptive, usually following material of a digressional nature”⁵⁵ In the Sermon on the Mount, *οὖν* is used to introduce pericopes three times (6:2; 7:12, 24). *Οὖν* can also occur at the end of a pericope with summary statements or inferences which signal the end of a unit.⁵⁶ In the Sermon, *οὖν* appears at the end of pericopes in 5:48, 6:34, and 7:11.

Διὰ τοῦτο. While *διὰ τοῦτο* is not a conjunction in the technical sense, Runge notes that “as a set expression it has come to function as a connective in Koine Greek.” Runge elaborates that while *διὰ τοῦτο* is similar to *οὖν* in that it indicates development and continuity, *διὰ τοῦτο* is narrower in meaning because the clause it introduces is

⁵¹ A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, 4th ed (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1934), 1179–82.

⁵² Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 24.

⁵³ Levinsohn, *Discourse Features of New Testament Greek*, 124.

⁵⁴ Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 25.

⁵⁵ Levinsohn, *Discourse Features of New Testament Greek*, 126.

⁵⁶ Cynthia Long Westfall, *A Discourse Analysis of the Letter to the Hebrews: The Relationship between Form and Meaning*, Library of New Testament Studies 297 (London: T & T Clark, 2005), 47.

“constrained to have a causal relation with the preceding discourse.”⁵⁷ Διὰ τοῦτο occurs only once in the Sermon on the Mount in 6:25 and connects 6:25–34 to the preceding pericope in 6:19–24. This unique appearance of διὰ τοῦτο has significance for interpretation as it introduces the pericope which contains the climax or peak of the Sermon (6:31–33).

The Structure of the Sermon on the Mount

The Sermon on the Mount as an embedded discourse is framed within the immediate narrative of Matthew. The immediate frame of 5:1–2 and 7:28–8:1 contain mirrored progressions in terms of the action described: great crowds follow, Jesus goes up (down) the mountain, and Jesus teaches them.⁵⁸ In 4:23–24 and 8:2–17, Jesus is shown attracting crowds through his miracles, and in 4:18–22 and 8:18–23, Jesus calls his disciples, and they follow him. The narrative frame surrounding the Sermon may be depicted chiastically:

1. Jesus calls his disciples to follow him (4:18–22)
 - a. Jesus’s miracles draw crowds (4:23–24)
 - i. Ascends, crowds gather, and teaching begins (4:25–5:2)
 1. The Sermon on the Mount (5:3–7:27)
 - ii. Teaching finished, crowds astonished, descends (7:28–8:1)
 - ii. Teaching finished, crowds astonished, descends (7:28–8:1)
 - b. Jesus’s miracles draw crowds (8:2–17)
2. Jesus calls his disciples to follow him (8:18–23)

Internally, the Sermon begins and ends with the *exordium* and *peroratio*, the Beatitudes (5:3–16), and the Two Ways (7:13–27) section, respectively. The body of the Sermon is framed by two statements concerning the Law and the Prophets (5:17; 7:12) and is divided into three major sections: The Law of the Kingdom (5:17–48), Worship and the Kingdom (6:1–18), and Seeking the Kingdom (6:19–7:11). The following outline

⁵⁷ Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 48.

⁵⁸ Allison notes several lexical parallels between the opening and closing narrative statements: “great crowds followed him,” mountain, going up/down, and “teaching.” Allison Jr., “The Structure of the Sermon on the Mount,” 429.

will form the basis for this study:

1. The Exordium (5:3–16)
 - a. The Beatitudes (5:3–12)
 - b. Salt and Light (5:13–16)
2. The Body of the Sermon (5:17–7:12)
 - a. Inclusio: Law and Prophets (5:17–20)
 - i. The Law of the Kingdom (5:21–48)
 1. Three Antitheses (5:21–32)
 2. Three Antitheses (5:33–47)
 3. Summary Imperative (5:48)
 - ii. Worship and the Kingdom (6:1–18)
 1. General Heading: Hypocrisy (6:1)
 2. Secret Giving (6:2–4)
 3. Secret Prayer (6:5–6)
 4. The Lord’s Prayer (6:7–15)
 5. Secret Fasting (6:16–18)
 - iii. Desiring the Kingdom (6:19–7:11)
 1. Rightly Evaluate the Kingdom (6:19–24)
 2. Seek the Kingdom (6:25–34)
 3. Rightly Evaluate Your Brother (7:1–5)
 4. Seek and You Will Find (7:6–11)
 - b. Inclusio: Law and Prophets (7:12)
3. The Peroratio (7:13–27)
 - a. The Two Gates (7:13–14)
 - b. The Two Trees (7:15–20)
 - c. The Judgment Scene (7:21–23)
 - d. The Two Builders (7:24–27)

Discourse-level Cohesion in the Sermon on the Mount

For the purpose of this study, three levels of cohesion will be observed: pericope cohesion, section cohesion, and discourse cohesion. It would be unmanageable to list all the factors which contribute to cohesion on a microstructural level. These will be examined in turn in the pericope and section analysis below. Here, I will provide a summary of cohesive themes and terms that work at the discourse level.

Cohesion at the level of discourse involves terms and concepts usually addressed in commentaries as “major themes.” Cohesion provides a category for the identification of these themes in order to analyze how they pervade and unite a discourse.

Guthrie refers to these as “semantic threads,” which “are woven most often with the same, or related, lexical items” and “may relate two or more non-structurally aligned units of text.”⁵⁹ Discourse level cohesion should be traced in the most prominent sections of the discourse. Prominence and cohesion work together to simultaneously emphasize certain portions while maintaining discourse cohesion. Items that are cohesive at the discourse level often appear with prominence within their respective pericope and section.

Key Terms: Kingdom and Righteousness

Two key terms are repeated throughout the Sermon. First, the “kingdom of heaven” is a recurring phrase that occurs eight times and appears in every section of the Sermon (5:3, 10, 19, 20; 6:10, 33; 7:21). This repetition recalls Jesus’s first proclamation in 4:17 which I have argued sets the context for the Sermon. Another key term that is closely associated with the kingdom is δικαιοσύνη, “righteousness.” It occurs five times in the Sermon, often in close proximity to a mention of the kingdom (5:6, 10, 20; 6:1, 33).⁶⁰ Many scholars identify these two terms as the central ideas of the Sermon.⁶¹ Others note the centrality of these terms to Matthew’s Gospel.⁶² These central terms bring cohesion to the Sermon and are foundational concepts for the Sermon.

Negative and Positive Command Forms

The body of the Sermon reveals a key structural pattern which creates

⁵⁹ George H. Guthrie, “Cohesion Shifts and Stitches in Philippians,” in *Discourse Analysis and Other Topics in Biblical Greek*, JSNTSup 113 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 41.

⁶⁰ The adjective *δίκαιος* occurs in 5:45. There are 26 occurrences of the *dikai-* root in Matthew’s Gospel and six in the Sermon. Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing*, 88.

⁶¹ Notably, Luz posits a possible title for the Sermon as “Discourse on the Righteousness of the Kingdom of Heaven.” Luz, *Matthew*, 177.

⁶² R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2007), 262; Donald Alfred Hagner, *Matthew. 1-13*, WBC, vol. 33A (Dallas: Word Books, 1993), lx; Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing*, 87–102.

cohesion. I have previously demonstrated the importance of negative imperatives, which are followed by positive imperatives. This pattern is key to every pericope of the Sermon and creates structural cohesion. This pattern is established in the antitheses, which contrast what the reader has heard with what Jesus says and continues throughout the body of the Sermon until the peroratio changes the pattern (7:13–27).

Horizontal and Vertical Relationships

A key theme that appears in the exordium and each section of the body of the Sermon is the connection between our relationship with others and our relationship with God. Beginning with the fifth beatitude (5:7), this theme reappears in the antitheses (5:21–26), the Lord’s Prayer (6:14–15), the saying on brotherly correction (7:1–5), and culminates in the Golden Rule (7:12). That the Golden Rule so centralizes our treatment of others as “the Law and the Prophets” reveals that this is meant to be seen as a dominant and cohesive theme.

The Generosity of the Father

A final cohesive theme is central to the argument of this dissertation. The generosity of the heavenly Father undergirds the logic of the Sermon on the Mount and provides the basis for its exhortations and promises. The Beatitudes open the Sermon in the context of promises which are given to the *makarioi*. The antitheses emphasize warnings against disobedience, but in the final and culminating saying, the command to love one’s enemies is grounded in the love of the Father (5:45). The three admonitions of secret righteousness rely on the logic that one may be confident in the Father’s willingness to reward obedience. The Lord’s Prayer is grounded in confidence in the Father’s care (6:8), as is the admonition to seek the kingdom above earthly needs (6:25–34). Finally, in the penultimate saying of the body of the Sermon, the grace and goodness of the Father is portrayed as “much more” than that of earthly fathers (7:11). While one often hears the Sermon’s demanding imperatives emphasized, the theme of grace

pervades the Sermon, yet is often underemphasized.

Discourse-Level Prominence in the Sermon on the Mount

As was previously demonstrated, prominence can be created in a myriad of ways and to greater or lesser degrees. A phrase may have prominence with a pericope, a pericope may be prominent within a larger section, and various units of text can show discourse level prominence. I have identified several prominence-giving features which occur throughout the Sermon, which I list below. These features often are grouped together within a pericope or section to create a cluster of prominent features. Any single one of these features occurring in isolation would probably not arrest the reader's attention. However, the proximity and quantity of these features appearing in the same pericopes create patterns that deserve closer analysis. All these features are abundant in the three pericopes in 6:25–7:11.

Multiple pericopes in the Sermon occur with varying degrees of prominence within their respective sections, and these will be noted in the following analysis. However, Matthew 6:19–7:12, commonly noted for its departure from the Sermon's patterns, is the most prominent section of the Sermon. All the features of prominence identified here appear in this section and are particularly concentrated in 6:25–34 and 7:6–11. I will argue that 6:31–33 combined with 7:6–11 constitute the most prominent portion, or peak, of this section and the entire Sermon.

Shift in Verbal Forms

A common marker of discourse prominence is a shift in verbal forms. As I have already addressed, the Sermon is comprised of second-person imperative and subjunctive forms, which form negative and positive commands. Among these second-person command forms, Matthew shifts from singular to plural in specific passages,

which Westfall argues indicates a shift from an unmarked to marked form.⁶³ Most notable is the total shift to plural forms beginning in 6:19 through the end of the Sermon. Only two singular imperatives appear after 6:19; one occurs in reported speech in 7:4, and the other occurs immediately after in 7:5 in the command addressed to the “hypocrite” who judges his brother.

Divine Passives

Another verbal phenomenon that creates prominence in the Sermon is the use of divine passives in significant pericopes.⁶⁴ The Sermon contains thirteen future passive verbs, twelve of which refer to an action taken by God (see table 3).⁶⁵ These divine passives all occur in ways that create prominence but also highlight the gifts and care of the Father. The presence of divine passives further reinforces the significance of the Father’s generosity to the message of the Sermon. Of twelve divine passives in the Sermon, six occur in a concentrated fashion in 5:4–19, while the other six occur in the third section of the body (6:19–7:11).

⁶³ Westfall, *A Discourse Analysis of the Letter to the Hebrews*, 61.

⁶⁴ Wallace classifies divine passives as passives “without agency expressed” in which “God is the obvious agent.” Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 437–38.

⁶⁵ Since *εἰσακουσθήσονται* in 6:7 occurs in the context of Gentile prayers, the agent is likely not to be equated with the heavenly Father.

Table 3. Divine passives in the sermon

Matt 5:4	παρακληθήσονται	to be comforted
Matt 5:6	χορτασθήσονται	to be satisfied
Matt 5:7	ἐλεηθήσονται	to be shown mercy
Matt 5:9	κληθήσονται	to be called
Matt 5:19	κληθήσεται	to be called
Matt 5:19	κληθήσεται	to be called
Matt 6:7	εἰσακουσθήσονται	to be heeded
Matt 6:33	προστεθήσεται	to be added
Matt 7:2	κριθήσεσθε	to be evaluated
Matt 7:2	μετρηθήσεται	to be measured out
Matt 7:7	δοθήσεται	to be granted
Matt 7:7	ἀνοιγήσεται	to be open
Matt 7:8	ἀνοιγήσεται	to be open

Rhetorical Questions

Rhetorical questions are used in climactic portions of the Sermon to create prominence. Runge identifies rhetorical questions as a “forward-pointing reference” and a “prominence-marking device” and says, “expressions like these are a way of slowing down the flow of the discourse before something surprising or important.”⁶⁶ By utilizing rhetorical questions, the author creates a pseudo-dialogue that heightens the vividness of the passage.⁶⁷ The Sermon on the Mount contains fifteen rhetorical questions.

The peroratio and the exordium contain one rhetorical question each (5:13; 7:16). The remaining thirteen rhetorical questions are concentrated in two places. In the final and climactic antithesis (5:43–48), four consecutive rhetorical questions lead to the final summary saying in 5:48. The third section of the body of the Sermon contains nine rhetorical questions. In 6:25–34, five rhetorical questions lead to the climactic admonition to seek the kingdom in 6:33. The following pericopes each contain two

⁶⁶ Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 61–62.

⁶⁷ Longacre and Hwang, *Holistic Discourse Analysis*, 42.

rhetorical questions (7:1–5; 7:6–11). These rhetorical questions occur in a patterned arrangement with other features in these three pericopes which will be examined in detail below (see table 4).

Table 4. Distribution of rhetorical questions

Pericope	Occurrences	References
The Exordium (5:3–16)	1	5:13
The Climactic Antithesis (5:43–48)	4	5:46–47
Seeking the Kingdom (6:25–34)	5	6:25–28, 30
Judging Graciously (7:1–5)	2	7:3–4
Asking, Seeking, Knocking (7:6–11)	2	7:9–10
The Two Trees (7:15–20)	1	7:16

Key Terms: Kingdom and Righteousness

As I mentioned previously, the terms βασιλεία, “kingdom,” and δικαιοσύνη, “righteousness,” are key terms which provide discourse cohesion. These terms bring cohesion by occurring in prominent pericopes throughout the discourse (see table 5).⁶⁸ These terms usually occur within close proximity to one another. The terms each occur in the Beatitudes (5:3–12), the first Law and Prophets saying (5:17–20), and the climactic command in 6:33. Outside of these pericopes, righteousness occurs only in 6:1, and the kingdom of heaven is mentioned in the Lord’s Prayer (6:10) and in the judgment scene (7:21). Only in 6:33 are these two terms explicitly connected. They are joined with καί and together are the object of the disciples’ seeking. The fact that these two terms are connected so markedly in 6:33 underscores the climactic nature of the saying.

⁶⁸ Pennington remarks that “kingdom” occurs “at critical junctures” in the Sermon. These junctures are identified here as prominent. Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing*, 101.

Table 5. Occurrences of βασιλεία and δικαιοσύνη in the Sermon on the Mount

	βασιλεία	δικαιοσύνη
The Beatitudes	Matt 5:3	
		Matt 5:6
	Matt 5:10	Matt 5:10
Inclusio: Law and Prophets	Matt 5:19	
	Matt 5:19	
	Matt 5:20	Matt 5:20
Introductory Warning: Hypocrisy		Matt 6:1
The Lord's Prayer	Matt 6:10	
Seek the Kingdom (joined with καί)	Matt 6:33	Matt 6:33
The Judgment Scene	Matt 7:21	

Gentiles

Another indicator of prominence in the Sermon on the Mount is the mention of Gentiles at climactic moments in the Sermon. Gentiles are mentioned three times, once in each section of the body of the Sermon. The adjective ἔθνικός is used in 5:47 and 6:7, and the noun ἔθνος is used in 6:32. The term is employed emphatically to create a shocking pathos to discourage certain behaviors and to encourage others.

What makes the mention of Gentiles prominent is that the “scribes and Pharisees” are explicitly identified as the negative foil for the Sermon (5:20). As Jesus delivers the antitheses, he provides his new standard of higher righteousness against the negative backdrop of the lower righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. The scribes and Pharisees continue to serve as the negative foil throughout 6:1–18 and are referred to as hypocrites (cf. Matt 23). Given that the scribes and Pharisees are explicitly established as the negative foil for the Sermon, the unexpected introduction of Gentiles gives prominence within its immediate context.

The identification of Gentiles as a marker of prominence is further justified by the fact that Matthew explicitly marks the term by thematic addition in 5:46–47: οὐχὶ καὶ οἱ τελῶναι. . . οὐχὶ καὶ οἱ ἔθνικοι. The ascensive καί emphasizes the mention of tax-

collectors and Gentiles, “Do not *even* Gentiles do the same?” (cf. Matt 18:17).⁶⁹ Matthew establishes Gentiles as an extremely negative example in 5:47. At least scribes and Pharisees are insiders to the Jewish community; Gentiles are pagans and outsiders.⁷⁰ The mention of Gentiles in 6:7 is prominent in that the surrounding exhortations are given against the negative foil of οἱ ὑποκριταί, which refers to the scribes and Pharisees. Gentiles will reappear as the negative foil in conjunction with the climactic exhortation to “seek the kingdom” in 6:33.

Metacomments

Metacomments can be used to mark prominence in discourse. Runge defines metacomments as “When speakers stop saying what they are saying in order to comment on what is going to be said, speaking abstractly about it.”⁷¹ Runge indicates that metacomments can signal important material, “They prototypically create a break in the discourse just before something surprising or important.”⁷²

In the Sermon on the Mount, the metacomment ἀμὴν γὰρ λέγω ὑμῖν (“for truly I say to you”) or slight variations of it, occurs fourteen times (see table 6). This phrase is characteristic of Matthew’s Gospel.⁷³ David Clark observes, “The formula is frequently found in a context where surprise or reversal of expectation is a prominent element, especially when it opens a (sub-)unit.”⁷⁴ Runge sees two highlighting devices in this

⁶⁹ Emphasis mine. Runge calls this usage in 5:46-47 “sarcastic confirmation.” Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 347.

⁷⁰ In 1 Cor. 5:1, Paul uses ἔθνος as an example of extreme morality when he says that the type of sexual immorality in the church at Corinth is “not tolerated even among pagans” (ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν).

⁷¹ Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 101.

⁷² Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 118.

⁷³ Clark notes, “The total number of occurrences of the phrase unquestionably including ἀμὴν is therefore 30 for Matthew, 13 for Mark, and 6 for Luke. . . . John uses the similar expressions ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν/σοι 25 times. . . .” David J. Clark, *Analyzing & Translating New Testament Discourse*, Studies in Koine Greek (Dallas: Fontes Press, 2019), 195.

⁷⁴ Clark, *Analyzing & Translating*, 207.

formulaic phrase: “The combined use of the attention-getter ἀμήν and the metacomment. . . has the effect of attracting extra attention to the proposition introduced in the subordinate clause.”⁷⁵

Table 6. Metacomments in the Sermon on the Mount

Matt 5:18		ἀμήν	γὰρ			λέγω		ὕμῃν	
Matt 5:20						λέγω	γὰρ	ὕμῃν	ὅτι
Matt 5:22				ἐγὼ	δὲ	λέγω		ὕμῃν	ὅτι
Matt 5:26		ἀμήν				λέγω		σοι	
Matt 5:28				ἐγὼ	δὲ	λέγω		ὕμῃν	ὅτι
Matt 5:32				ἐγὼ	δὲ	λέγω		ὕμῃν	ὅτι
Matt 5:34				ἐγὼ	δὲ	λέγω		ὕμῃν	
Matt 5:39				ἐγὼ	δὲ	λέγω		ὕμῃν	
Matt 5:44				ἐγὼ	δὲ	λέγω		ὕμῃν	
Matt 6:2		ἀμήν				λέγω		ὕμῃν	
Matt 6:5		ἀμήν				λέγω		ὕμῃν	
Matt 6:16		ἀμήν				λέγω		ὕμῃν	
Matt 6:25	Διὰ τοῦτο					λέγω		ὕμῃν	
Matt 6:29						λέγω	δὲ	ὕμῃν	ὅτι

In the Sermon on the Mount, metacomments are almost always used within a pericope to highlight Jesus’s correction to a negative practice. Two metacomments are used in 5:17–20 to highlight Jesus’s positive remarks about the Law. They are used in a formulaic pattern in the antitheses and in the three sayings on private righteousness (5:18, 20, 22, 26, 28, 32, 34, 39, 44; 6:2, 5, 16). In all these cases, metacomments function internally within a pericope to emphasize an affirmation against a negative example. There is only one example of a metacomment which introduces a pericope as whole. This occurs in 6:25 and is combined with διὰ τοῦτο to introduce the passage about seeking the kingdom. I will argue that this singular instance of metacomment introducing a pericope

⁷⁵ Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 114.

is a signal of prominence.

Thematic Address

A final prominence marker in the Sermon on the Mount is thematic address and changes of reference. Runge refers to these two devices as “thematically motivated name calling” which “have exegetical significance.”⁷⁶ He further defines these terms,

Thematic address and changes of reference both exploit the same principle of discourse to accomplish the similar pragmatic effect of recharacterizing the participant in a particular way. This effect comes about when the expression used is different from the default or expected referring expression. The characterization stands out because it differs from how readers currently conceive of the participant in their mental representation of the discourse. This dissonance is what brings about the thematic effects.⁷⁷

The Sermon on the Mount achieves this through the use of vocatives and nominatives which describe the hearers. Cynthia Westfall writes, “when the vocative and plural nominative of direct address refers to the recipients in discourse, it is a common involvement strategy that an author uses to draw attention and highlight content.”⁷⁸

Until the third section of the body of the Sermon (6:19–7:11), Jesus never identifies his hearers through direct address.⁷⁹ The only vocatives which appear in the Sermon outside of this section occur in indirect discourse (5:22; 6:9; 7:21, 22). However, each of the three pericopes in 6:25–7:11 identify the disciples with either a vocative or a nominative. The disciples are identified as *ὀλιγόπιστοι* (6:30, vocative), *ὑποκριτά* (7:5, vocative), and *πονηροί* (7:11, predicate nominative). Levinsohn says, “I see a parallel between the presence of a vocative and the use of a ‘redundant’ noun phrase reference to

⁷⁶ Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 349.

⁷⁷ Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 354.

⁷⁸ Westfall, *A Discourse Analysis of the Letter to the Hebrews*, 60.

⁷⁹ The hearers who suffer for righteousness are called *μακάριοι*. However, the warnings of the Sermon seem to create an uncertainty as to whether all the hearers are to be identified as *μακάριοι*. Jesus identifies the hearers metaphorically as “salt” and “light” in 5:13-16, but even here, the salt may become unsalty.

a participant. Both are found at the beginning of units and in connection with key statements such as nuclear propositions.”⁸⁰ Runge addresses the use of ὀλιγόπιστοι in 6:30, saying,

Jesus is speaking to his disciples, and he has been since v. 22. It makes no sense to identify them at the end of the speech for semantic reasons. No other information has been provided in the context that identified them as anything other than disciples. Although the address is not semantically required, it serves the pragmatic function of explicitly stating how Jesus views the listeners at this point in the discourse.⁸¹

These three terms of address are notable because they are surprisingly negative. This is a marked shift from the designation μακάριοι and the positive metaphors “salt” and “light” (5:11, 13, 14). The usage of ὀλιγόπιστοι (6:30) and ὑποκριτά (7:5) could be characterized as what Longenecker calls the “vocative of rebuke.”⁸² Runge writes of this type of change of reference, “The change constrains readers to update their mental representation of the participant. These changes often highlight exegetically significant thematic information that shapes our processing of the discourse.”⁸³ The fact that these examples of thematic address occur with a confluence of other prominent features in the third section makes them even more significant.

Conclusion

This chapter has surveyed the genre, macrostructure, and discourse features of the Sermon on the Mount as a whole. The macroanalysis conducted here will provide a foundation for the microanalysis of the individual sections and pericopes of the Sermon in the subsequent chapter. The structural outline provided here will serve as the outline for the analysis in the following chapter which will note in greater detail the specific

⁸⁰ Levinsohn, *Discourse Features of New Testament Greek*, 278.

⁸¹ Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 356.

⁸² Longenecker applies this term to Paul’s rebuke in Galatians 3:1, Ἰσχυροὶ ἀνόητοι Γαλάται. Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians*, WBC, vol. 41 (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), cvii.

⁸³ Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 363.

discourse features and prominence markers identified in this chapter.

CHAPTER 4
AN ANALYSIS OF THE MICROSTRUCTURES OF
THE SERMON

The previous chapter examined discourse features from a macrostructural perspective, examining the larger structural features of the Sermon on the Mount. Additionally, the chapter provided an overview of cohesive and prominence-giving features in the Sermon. This chapter will zoom in and examine the microstructures of the Sermon by analyzing the individual pericopes and how they fit into their larger sections.

The Exordium (5:3–16)

The Meaning of *Μακάριος*

The exordium begins with the Beatitudes, a series of macarisms that describe the good life of discipleship.¹ The form of the macarism is an established rhetorical convention in Jewish literature.² George Kennedy identifies the form of the macarism as an enthymeme, in which a premise of the argument is omitted or assumed; the assumed premise being, “All who obtain the kingdom of heaven are blessed.”³ Each of the beatitudes contains a unique promise of God that gives them their “blessedness.”

Beyond the usage in Matthew 5:3–12, *μακάριος* is used four times in Matthew, all in the form of macarisms (Matt 11:6; 13:16; 16:17; 24:46).⁴ Most English translations

¹ Green argues that the Beatitudes are arranged as Hebrew poetry. H. Benedict Green, *Matthew, Poet of the Beatitudes*, JSNTSup 203 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001).

² Keener notes several occurrences of macarisms in Jewish literature. Craig S. Keener, “Suggestions for Future Study of Rhetoric and Matthew’s Gospel: Original Research,” *HTS: Theological Studies* 66, no. 1 (2010): 3n31.

³ George A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, Studies in Religion (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 49.

⁴ Luke records a set of beatitudes and corresponding woes in Luke 6:20-26. Luke is the only

obscure the meaning by rendering the word as “blessed” which more closely corresponds with εὐλογητός.⁵ R. T. France summarizes the problematic nature of this gloss:

“Blessed” is a misleading translation of makarios, which does not denote one whom God blesses (which would be eulogētos, reflecting Heb. bārûk), but represents the Hebrew ‘ašrê, “fortunate”, and is used, like ‘ašrê, almost entirely in the formal setting of a beatitude. It introduces someone who is to be congratulated, someone whose place in life is an enviable one. “Happy” is better than “blessed”, but only if used not of a mental state but of a condition of life. “Fortunate” or “well off” is less ambiguous. It is not a psychological description, but a recommendation.⁶

Most of the uses of רָשָׁע (‘ašrê, the correspondent Hebrew term) in any of the Old Testament books is in the form of a macarism or beatitude. Jonathan Pennington argues that רָשָׁע is to be understood as a poetic and wisdom-related word.⁷ Rather than depicting an active blessing bestowed by God, it describes human flourishing and well-being which is the result of being blessed by God. Macarisms occur to some degree as wisdom sayings, spoken by Jesus to disclose the truly happy life.⁸ The Matthean beatitudes are eschatological in nature and are therefore consistent with other macarisms in contemporary Jewish literature.⁹ Garland notes a shift in the nature of macarisms during the second-temple period, saying, “The thrust of the beatitudes in Jewish literature from the intertestamental period marks a distinct change of emphasis from how to be

NT book to exceed Matthew’s usage of μακάριος with fifteen occurrences.

⁵ Notable exceptions are *The Bible in Basic English*, the *Common English Bible*, the *Good News Translation*, the *New Century Version*, and *Young’s Literal Translation* which render μακάριος as “happy.”

⁶ R. T. France, *Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 114.

⁷ Jonathan T. Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing: A Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), 50.

⁸ This understanding of the Beatitudes accords well with John Calvin’s exposition of the Beatitudes. Although he does not explicitly state this as his understanding, his translation of μακάριος as “happy” and his interpretation of the macarisms as descriptive, indicative statements reveals that he viewed the Beatitudes in a similar way. John Calvin, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke*, trans. William Pringle, vol. 1 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 258–68.

⁹ Pennington states that the Beatitudes possess an “eschatological kingdom orientation.” Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing*, 119.

happy in this life to how to be happy in the life to come.”¹⁰

The Structure of the Exordium

The structure of 5:3–12 has led to disagreement over the number of beatitudes, varying between seven and nine.¹¹ The first eight beatitudes have an identical structure—an indicative statement, followed by a *ὅτι* grounding clause which explains why the statement is true: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, *for* theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” This pattern is repeated eight times, and the first and eighth beatitudes both conclude with the promise of “the kingdom of heaven,” forming an *inclusio*. This structure causes the reader to group the sayings together and read them as one unit.¹² The first four beatitudes are alliterated, with each descriptor of the blessed ones beginning with *π*. This divides the first eight beatitudes into two parallel sections. David Wenham observes:

It is intriguing to note that in the Greek the first four beatitudes (which all incidentally use words beginning with the letter *π*, *πτωχός*, *πραεῖς*, *πενθοῦντες*, *πεινῶντες*) are 36 words, and the second four are also 36 words; beatitude no. 1 is 12 words, and so is beatitude no. 8. This could be accidental, but is much more likely an indication of careful design.¹³

Matthew 5:3–12 contains nine beatitudes in total; eight unique beatitudes with a ninth which elaborates on the eighth. The ninth beatitude (5:11–12) is unique because of its length, its expansion on the protasis of the previous beatitude, its shift to the second person, and its inclusion of the double command, *χαίρετε καὶ ἀγαλλιᾶσθε*, “rejoice and be glad.” These features give it greater prominence than the other eight. Allison writes,

¹⁰ Garland cites several passages from second-temple literature as evidence of this shift. David E. Garland, *Reading Matthew: A Literary and Theological Commentary*, Reading the New Testament (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2001), 54.

¹¹ Augustine saw only seven beatitudes which were parallel to the seven gifts of the Spirit in Isaiah 11:2. Augustine, *The Lord’s Sermon on the Mount*, ed. Johannes Quasten and Joseph C. Plumpe, trans. John J. Jepsen, Ancient Christian Writers, vol. 5 (New York: Paulist Press, 1948), 18, 125.

¹² Charles L Quarles, *Matthew*, EGGNT (Broadman and Holman, 2017), Matt 5:3.

¹³ David Wenham, “The Rock on Which to Build: Some Mainly Pauline Observations about the Sermon on the Mount,” in *Built Upon the Rock: Studies in the Gospel of Matthew*, ed. Daniel M. Gurtner and John Nolland (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2008), 199n31.

Good precedent exists both for the last member of a series being much longer than the preceding members and for abruptly switching from one person to another, in this case from the third to the second person. Both things appear in the Bible, in Jewish prayer texts, and in English literature.¹⁴

In addition to completing the Beatitudes, 5:11–12 functions as a bridge between 5:3–10 and 5:13–16 by shifting to second-person imperatives while retaining the form of beatitude.¹⁵ This creates cohesion within the section and binds the pericopes together. Matthew 5:11–12 serves as a thematic bridge as well. Matthew 5:3–10 focuses on the inner characteristics of the makarioi, but 5:11–12 introduces the public implications—the disciple will suffer persecution. Matthew 5:13–16 contains the first true metaphors employed in the sermon and depicts the public impact of living as a disciple—others will “glorify your Father in heaven.” Matthew 5:11–12 also grounds the Sermon in the tradition of the Old Testament by mentioning the prophets. David Garland writes, “If the disciples are likened to prophets, it implies that they too have a divine mission to fulfill as the prophets did. . . . The images of salt, light, and a city on a hill clarify the disciples’ vocation in the world.”¹⁶ The disciple of Jesus who lives obediently before others has a prophetic presence that simultaneously leads some to know God and draws hatred from others.

The salt and light sayings exhibit parallelism. The initial sayings in 5:13 and 5:14 are nearly identical except for the metaphors employed, yet even these both have genitive modifiers that are nearly synonymous (τῆς γῆς and τοῦ κόσμου).¹⁷ Both sayings are followed by an elaborating statement and a point-counterpoint set, which present a set of alternatives (“good for nothing except. . .” and “not under a basket but on a

¹⁴ Dale C. Allison Jr., *Studies in Matthew: Interpretation Past and Present* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 176.

¹⁵ Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing*, 119.

¹⁶ Garland, *Reading Matthew*, 59.

¹⁷ J. P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 105–6.

stand. . .”).¹⁸ The sayings are then concluded with a summary imperative, “let your light shine,” followed by a purpose clause introduced by ὅπως.

Discourse Cohesion of the Exordium

The exordium serves an essential purpose in the Sermon on the Mount. It introduces the major themes and key terms used throughout the Sermon. Ernst Baasland argues that the *exordium* “gives the rhetorical keys to the rest of the sermon,” although it “does not introduce all the themes in the SM. . .” it “lays the foundation for the rest of the SM.”¹⁹ The key terms “kingdom of heaven” and “righteousness” each occur twice in the Beatitudes (5:3, 6, 10). While some have argued for patterns of arrangement between each beatitude and subsequent parts of the Sermon, the best option is to see the Beatitudes as thematically related to the rest of the Sermon without drawing specific connections and complicating the Sermon’s structure and logical flow.²⁰

The exordium shares several common features with the peroratio (7:13–27). As I addressed in the previous chapter, 5:3–16 is characterized by a verbal shift from indicative 3rd person verbs to 2nd person imperatives beginning in 5:12. This creates an inverse pattern with the peroratio. In addition to the parallel verbal mood shifts, the exordium and peroratio both mention “prophets.” The “prophets” of 5:12 contrast with the “pseudoprophets” of 7:15.

The “salt of the earth” saying in 5:13 represents the first of several warning statements which characterize the Sermon. The unsalty salt is in danger of being “cast

¹⁸ Runge, *The Lexham Discourse Greek New Testament*, 5:13-15.

¹⁹ Ernst Baasland, *Parables and Rhetoric in the Sermon on the Mount: New Approaches to a Classical Text*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen Zum Neuen Testament 351 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 66.

²⁰ Some examples of analyses which see the Beatitudes as a structural guide for the Sermon include: Green, *Matthew, Poet of the Beatitudes*, 256–61; Michael D. Goulder, *Midrash and Lection in Matthew* (London: SPCK, 1974), 252; Austin Farrer, *St. Matthew and St. Mark* (Westminster England: Dacre Press, 1954), 160–76; Kodjak relates the Beatitudes to the petitions of the Lord’s Prayer. Andrej Kodjak, *A Structural Analysis of the Sermon on the Mount* (Berlin; New York: M. de Gruyter, 1986), 112–15.

out.” The fact that the same word βάλλω is used for being “thrown into hell” in 5:29 strengthens the case that this is a warning for unsalty disciples. Additionally, a distant reference to 7:6 could exist in the presence of καταπατέω, as both uses have negative connotations.

Grace as A Recurring Theme

The Beatitudes provide promises of divine favor and, as such, provide a gracious introduction to the Sermon on the Mount.²¹ Davies and Allison remark, “. . .the beatitudes are first of all blessings, not requirements. So by opening the sermon on the mount [*sic*] they place it within the context of grace.”²² The presence of divine passives in the Beatitudes strengthens this theme. The Sermon on the Mount contains thirteen divine passives, four of which appear in the beatitudes (5:4, 6, 7, 9), which is more than any other pericope in the Sermon.²³ The use of divine passives in the exordium prepares us for their presence throughout the Sermon which emphasizes the Father’s gracious promises. The use of divine passives culminates in 7:6–11, which contains three occurrences.

Law and Prophets Inclusio (5:17–20)

The Structural Function of 5:17–20

Matthew 5:17–20 functions as a heading, or *kelal*, for the following section

²¹ Jeremias finds support for Paul’s doctrine of justification in the first beatitude. “Paul’s greatness was that he understood the message of Jesus as no other New Testament writer did. He was the faithful interpreter of Jesus. This is especially true of his doctrine of justification. It is not of his own making, but in its substance, it conveys the central message of Jesus as it is condensed in the first beatitude, ‘Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God’ (Luke 6:20).” Joachim Jeremias, *Jesus and the Message of the New Testament* (Minneapolis, MN : Fortress Press, 2002), 96. Bornkamm shows a connection between the first four beatitudes and the requirement of humility to enter the kingdom of God in Matthew 18:1-4. Günther Bornkamm, *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963), 123.

²² W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., *Matthew 1-7*, vol 1. of *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, ICC (London: T & T Clark, 1988), 466.

²³ Matthew 7:6-11 comes nearest with three divine passives.

(5:21–48) as well as the body of the Sermon (5:17–7:12). I follow others who see this pericope as the “thesis statement” or *propositio* of the Sermon.²⁴ Dale Allison notes that this passage has both negative and positive functions:

Negatively, 5:17–19 is *prokatalipsis*. It anticipates an incorrect interpretation of 5:21–48, which is that Jesus’ words contradict the Torah, and it states in advance the truth, which is that Jesus comes not to abolish but to fulfill the law. Positively, 5:20 announces what 5:21–48 is really all about, the greater righteousness. . .²⁵

In addition to its function as a heading, 5:17–20 functions with other passages to enclose parts of the Sermon. Together with 7:12, this passage forms perhaps the most clearly defined and universally recognized structural division in the Sermon. The Law and Prophets *inclusio* demarcates the body of the Sermon on the Mount and separates it from the exordium (5:3–16) and the peroratio (7:13–27). Matthew 5:17–20 also functions with 5:48 to enclose the six antitheses. These verses define the standard of righteousness God requires with a negative and positive statement. Matthew 5:20 negatively states that the disciple must have a higher standard of righteousness than the scribes and Pharisees, while 5:48 clarifies what specifically is positively required—“be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

The enclosed antitheses then serve as examples of this “surpassing” (*περισσεύση*) righteousness. This is strengthened by the repetition of the term in 5:47 when Jesus asks, “what more (*περισσόν*) are you doing than others?”²⁶ The six sayings, typically referred to as antitheses, are better understood as “exegeses” of the Law. Pennington writes, “They are illustrations that interpret, or exegete, both the Old Testament teachings and Jesus’s words together, showing how the fulfillment-not-

²⁴ Johan Thom, “Justice in the Sermon on the Mount: An Aristotelian Reading,” *NovT* 51, no. 4 (2009): 315; Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing*, 120.

²⁵ Allison, *Studies in Matthew*, 181.

²⁶ Allison, *Studies in Matthew*, 182.

abolishment of 5:17–20 is worked out.”²⁷ As such, they do not present a comprehensive ethic for the Christian life but function as demonstrations of how greater righteousness may be practiced.

Cohesion with the Exordium

While this passage belongs to the body proper of the Sermon and is separated from the exordium (5:3–16), many terms and themes introduced in the previous section resurface, creating cohesion. Whereas the Beatitudes reveal the kind of people to whom the kingdom of heaven is given, this passage reveals who will and will not enter the kingdom (5:19–20). The terms “kingdom of heaven” and “righteousness,” which were first introduced in 5:3–10, reappear in 5:17–20 and are further explicated.

“The Law and the Prophets” is a traditional metonymy that refers to the entire Old Testament Scriptures (cf. 7:12; 11:13; 22:40; John 1:45; Acts 13:15; 24:14; 28:23; Rom. 3:21).²⁸ “Prophets” recalls the reference to the prophets in 5:12, which has already established continuity between the Old Testament and Jesus’s teaching. Additionally, the public witness of 5:11–16 may find its expression here in the “doing and teaching” ministry of Jesus’s disciples (5:19). Finally, the use of the divine passive *κληθήσεται* connects the two passages. It is used twice in 5:19 and is also used in 5:9. The peacemakers are “called sons of God,” and those who relax the Law are “called least,” while those who obey it are “called great” in the kingdom of heaven. These three sayings are the only occurrences of *καλέω* in the Sermon.

Introduction of Concepts and Discourse Features

As the heading for the body of the Sermon on the Mount, 5:17–20 introduces

²⁷ Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing*, 181.

²⁸ Davies and Allison, *Matthew 1-7*, 484.

key concepts and discourse devices central to the Sermon. The Sermon makes use of prohibitory subjunctives which function as imperatives,²⁹ especially in the second and third sections (6:1–7:11). Jesus’s words, *Μὴ νομίσητε* “do not think,” establish this pattern of opening a pericope with a prohibitory subjunctive and supplying a positive corollary.

The double use of metacomments in 5:18 and 5:20 prepares for their consistent usage throughout 5:21–48, where they function to emphatically introduce Jesus’s corrective to what “you have heard,” and in 6:1–18, where they are employed to emphasize the futility of publicizing one’s piety. Metacomments combined with the attention-getter *ἀμὴν* give the saying added prominence.³⁰

Matthew 5:20 introduces the foil to Jesus’s teaching on the Law—the scribes and Pharisees. Davies and Allison refer to Jesus’s words in 5:20 as a “backhanded compliment” since “their achievement in righteousness marks out the goal to be surpassed by Christians.”³¹ These groups are the target of much of Jesus’s harshest rhetoric (cf. Matthew 23). In the Sermon, they serve as negative examples for many of Jesus’s sayings. They are the presumed source of the “you have heard it said” sayings and the “hypocrites” of 6:1–18.

Prominence of 5:17–20

As the heading to the body of the Sermon, 5:17–20 possesses natural prominence, but it also is marked with special prominence features. The key terms “kingdom of heaven” and “righteousness” occur together here. “Kingdom of heaven” is mentioned three times (5:19–20), and “righteousness” is used once (5:20). The repetition

²⁹ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 469.

³⁰ Steven E. Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament: A Practical Introduction for Teaching and Exegesis* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010), 114.

³¹ Davies and Allison, *Matthew 1-7*, 500.

and proximity of these terms give this passage prominence. The double usage of metacomments combined with the attention-getter ἀμὴν also draws attention to what is being said.³² The passage possesses special prominence because of its Christological pronouncement. Jesus presents himself as the one who fulfills (πληρώω)³³ the Law and the Prophets. This high Christology becomes even more explicit in the peroratio when Jesus reveals that he is the eschatological judge and “Lord” in the judgment scene (7:21–23).

The Law of the Kingdom (5:21–48)

Following his statement concerning the Law, Jesus expounds the Law in a set of six antitheses, or “exegeses.”³⁴ In each of these statements, Jesus cites the Law and provides his authoritative interpretation in contrast with what his hearers have heard. The antitheses share the same basic formula. With only minor variation, each antithesis begins with the phrase, “You have heard that it was said,” which introduces some ethical prescription, followed by Jesus’s interpretation which begins with the metacomment, ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν.³⁵ While the aorist tense is typically unmarked, the repeated use of ἠκούσατε at pericope boundaries functions here as a discourse marker.³⁶

The Structure of the Antitheses

While six in number, the antitheses are structurally arranged into two sets of three sayings. This arrangement is distinguished by the adverb πάλιν “again” in 5:33, which separates the last three antitheses from the first three. Significantly, πάλιν occurs

³² Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 114.

³³ πληρώω is used sixteen times in Matthew, often in the context of fulfillment quotations (1:22; 2:15, 17; 23; 8:17; 12:17; 13:35; 21:4; 27:9).

³⁴ Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing*, 181.

³⁵ Irons indicates that the ἐγὼ is an “emphatic ἐγὼ of Messianic authority.” Charles Lee Irons, *A Syntax Guide for Readers of the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2016), 28.

³⁶ Cynthia Long Westfall, *A Discourse Analysis of the Letter to the Hebrews: The Relationship between Form and Meaning*, Library of New Testament Studies 297 (London: T & T Clark, 2005), 55.

nowhere else in the Sermon. Allison observes,

The word's presence, which in no way affects the content of the surrounding material but which does break the rhythm of chap. 5, becomes explicable only if Matthew wished to indicate that with v. 33 he was in some sense making Jesus start over or begin a new series. That is, *πάλιν* marks an editorial dividing line.³⁷

In addition to the use of *πάλιν*, the first three instances of the phrase, “*ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν*” are followed by the conjunction *ὅτι*, which is missing from the last three sayings. The *ὅτι* in the first three antitheses introduces a substantival participle beginning with *πᾶς ὁ*. Both the *ὅτι* and the participles are absent in the second set of antitheses. Instead, the metacomments are followed by verbal forms; infinitives in the first two sayings and the imperative *ἀγαπᾶτε* in the final saying. Further, the addition “*τοῖς ἀρχαίοις*” occurs only in verses 21 and 33, the first and fourth antitheses (see table 7). Finally, in his *Studies in Matthew*, Allison notes that 5:21–32 contains 1,138 letters, and 5:33–48 has 1,133 letters, demonstrating incredible symmetry.³⁸ Some have concluded that the two triads are further distinguished by their Old Testament sources; the first set dealing with laws from Exodus and Deuteronomy, and the second set dealing with laws from Leviticus.³⁹ By subdividing the antitheses into two threefold arrangements, Jesus brings consistency with tripartite structures throughout the rest of the sermon. Every antithesis except the third on divorce (5:31–32) contains a second person imperative verb, which constitutes the command to be obeyed.

The third antithesis, which addresses divorce (5:31–32), is the most irregular. It omits *ἠκούσατε* and includes *δέ*, which joins it to the preceding saying on adultery (5:27–30). Additionally, the third saying is the only one that does not include an imperative. Given the conjunction, the lack of an imperative, the repetition of *μοιχάω*, and the

³⁷ Dale C. Allison Jr., “The Structure of the Sermon on the Mount,” *JBL* 106, no. 3 (September 1987): 432.

³⁸ Allison, *Studies in Matthew*, 182–83.

³⁹ Garland, *Reading Matthew*, 63; Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 187.

continuity of thought between divorce and adultery, it seems likely that the reader is meant to understand the second and third antitheses together as addressing sins grounded in lust which disrupt the covenant of marriage.⁴⁰ Both sayings receive further treatment in Matthew 18:8–9 and 19:1–12.

Table 7. Introductory formulas for the antitheses

5:21–26		Ἐκούσατε ὅτι ἐρρέθη	τοῖς ἀρχαίοις,
5:27–30		Ἐκούσατε ὅτι ἐρρέθη	
5:31–32		Ἐρρέθη δέ,	
5:33–37	Πάλιν	ἤκούσατε ὅτι ἐρρέθη	τοῖς ἀρχαίοις,
5:38–42		Ἐκούσατε ὅτι ἐρρέθη	
5:43–48		Ἐκούσατε ὅτι ἐρρέθη	
5:21–26	ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν	ὅτι	πᾶς ὁ ὀργιζόμενος
5:27–30	ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν	ὅτι	πᾶς ὁ βλέπων
5:31–32	ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν	ὅτι	πᾶς ὁ ἀπολύων
5:33–37	ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν		μὴ ὁμόσαι
5:38–42	ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν		μὴ ἀντιστῆναι
5:43–48	ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν		ἀγαπᾶτε

The Climactic Antithesis (5:43–48)

Pennington notes that the final antithesis (5:43–48) is distinct “both in its structure and in its content.”⁴¹ The final antithesis is the only one of the six sayings to include any purpose statement. It includes a purpose statement introduced by ὅπως which reveals the purpose for loving one’s enemies: “that you may be sons of your Father in heaven” (cf. 5:9).⁴² Additionally, the verbal shift from singular to plural gives this

⁴⁰ I am indebted to Randy Leedy for this observation who convinced me of this connection in private conversation at the Greek and Hebrew for Life Conference at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, July 30, 2021.

⁴¹ Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing*, 199.

⁴² Frederick W. Danker, Walter Bauer, and William F. Arndt, *BDAG*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 718.

passage prominence. The first five antitheses contain fifteen imperative verbs, all of which are singular. Both ἀγαπᾶτε and προσεύχεσθε in 5:44, however, are second-person plural imperatives. The positive imperative ἀγαπᾶτε stands in contrast to the negated aorist infinitives of the previous two antitheses.

Matthew 5:43–48 contains four consecutive rhetorical questions which slow the action down and focus the reader’s attention, thus creating prominence (5:46–47). Furthermore, the mention of tax collectors and Gentiles is unexpected and serves as a marker of prominence. The scribes and Pharisees have been established as the negative foil for the Sermon in 5:20, so the introduction of other negative examples is significant. The word τελώνης occurs only here in the Sermon, while ἐθνικός occurs here in 5:47 and again in 6:7 (ἔθνος occurs in 6:32). Both terms are introduced by an ascensive καί, which reveals that these two classes are being introduced for emphasis (“even the tax collectors. . . even the Gentiles”). In contrast to “scribes and Pharisees,” the “tax collectors and Gentiles” are outsiders, and even they love their own friends. Runge calls this “sarcastic confirmation.”⁴³

Matthew 5:48 is a concluding summary which could be read as simply following from 5:43–47, since the concept of being like the Father is introduced in 5:45. However, 5:48 more significantly functions as the summary of the entire section of 5:17–48.⁴⁴ Runge notes that οὖν often occurs at “high-level boundaries in the discourse,” which describes its function here.⁴⁵ The inferential conjunction οὖν functions as a discourse marker and is a logical connective with the entire section on Christ and Law.⁴⁶ The section begins with the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees (5:20) and ends with

⁴³ Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 347.

⁴⁴ Pennington sees this verse as serving “double duty.” Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing*, 121.

⁴⁵ Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 43.

⁴⁶ Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing*, 204.

the perfection of the Father (5:48). These sayings act as a “frame” for the antitheses.⁴⁷ These contrary ethical standards provide the hierarchy of ethics for the Sermon on the Mount. In fact, one could omit 5:21–47 and read 5:17–20 and 5:48 together coherently and without significant loss of meaning. Matthew 5:48 summarizes and clarifies what the standard of righteousness truly is—to be τέλειος.⁴⁸

Another factor that gives this verse prominence is that it stands as an alteration of an Old Testament citation. Each antithesis is built around an Old Testament citation. However, this saying is an emendation of Leviticus 19:6, “You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.” By substituting τέλειος for ἅγιος, Jesus is interpreting for his hearers what true holiness should look like and displaying his authority to interpret and “fulfill” the Law and the Prophets.⁴⁹ Pennington says, “To say that disciples must be teleios as God is teleios is to say that they must be whole or virtuous—singular in who they are—not one thing on the outside but another on the inside.” He continues, “I believe Matthew/Jesus has chosen to restate Leviticus 20:26 in terms of teleios-ity because ‘holiness’ in the Pharisees’ world had come to mean primarily external matters of purity and behavior.”⁵⁰ The future indicative verb ἔσεσθε is carried over from the Septuagint text of Leviticus 19:2 and functions imperatively.⁵¹ Although ἔσεσθε is morphologically indicative, it functions imperatively both in Leviticus 19:2 and in Matthew 5:48. Additionally, it is a second-person plural form like ἀγαπᾶτε in 5:44.

⁴⁷ Graham, Stanton, *A Gospel for a New People: Studies in Matthew* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), 302.

⁴⁸ For a detailed treatment of the meaning of τέλειος here, see Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing*, 69–85.

⁴⁹ Τέλειος occurs only here in the Sermon.

⁵⁰ Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing*, 204.

⁵¹ Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics*, 569.

6:1–18 Worship and the Kingdom

The Structure of the Three Sayings

The section on true worship begins with a summary heading, or *kelal*, which gives a general warning against hypocrisy (6:1).⁵² This imperative statement is followed by three specific examples about almsgiving (6:2–4), prayer (6:5–15), and fasting (6:16–18).⁵³ The three sections follow an almost identical structure, with the section on prayer including an additional, similar formula that introduces the Lord’s Prayer (see table 8).⁵⁴ Each section thus demonstrates a negative example and a positive imperative. There is the negative example of the hypocrites, which seeks public recognition, and conversely, there is the prescribed method of Jesus which seeks only to be seen by God.

Table 8. Structure of the three sayings about private righteousness

Temporal frame	“And when you. . .”
Prohibition	Don’t be like the “hypocrites”
Metacomment	“Truly, I say to you. . .”
Temporal clause	“But when you. . .”
Positive imperative	Type of worship commanded
Purpose clause	In order to keep worship secret
Result clause	“your Father who sees in secret. . .” (verbatim except for use of κρυφαῖος in 6:18 instead of κρυπτός)

Boundaries and Cohesion with 5:17–48

The section boundary between 5:17–48 and 6:1–18 is made clear by several factors. The summary conclusion of 5:48 marks the closing of 5:17–48, and the *kelal*

⁵² Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, trans. James E. Crouch, ed. Helmut Koester. Rev ed. Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 296.

⁵³ A. T. Robertson, *Commentary on the Gospel According to Matthew* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1911), 104–5.

⁵⁴ For a detailed presentation of the identical features of these three pericopes, see Allison, *Studies in Matthew*, 185–86.

heading of 6:1 functions as a heading for the following sayings. Additionally, there is a shift in discourse structure. 6:1–18 abandons the pattern of antitheses and introduces a new pattern that is highly formulaic. If the post-positive δέ in 6:1 is original, it would signal a new development in the discourse and further reinforce the section boundary.⁵⁵

While 5:17–48 and 6:1–18 are distinct sections, there is also cohesion between the sections. Both are concerned with righteousness and signal this by including δικαιοσύνη in the introductory pericopes of each section (5:20; 6:1).⁵⁶ Both sections also frame positive imperatives against a negative foil. Whereas 5:21–48 was concerned with what was heard (the Old Testament as interpreted by scribes and Pharisees), 6:1–18 is concerned with what is observed. The “hypocrites” are likely the scribes and Pharisees of 5:20 since Jesus describes religious practices common to the Jewish cult. This is strengthened by the fact that ὑποκριτής is a favorite term of Jesus for this group and their associates (cf. 15:7; 22:18; note especially the sixfold usage in 23:13, 15, 23, 25, 27, 29, where ὑποκριτής is used appositionally with the phrase “scribes and Pharisees”). There is cohesion between both sections in the consistent use of metacomments to reinforce Jesus’s teaching, although the form is altered from 5:21–48.⁵⁷

The Three Sayings as Expositions of the *Kelal* in Matthew 6:1

The three sayings on piety (6:2–4, 5–6, 16–18) function as illustrations of the first principle in 6:1. The sayings are introduced by an inferential οὖν (6:2) which is joined with the adverbial clause (“Ὅταν οὖν ποιῆς ἐλεημοσύνην”) to form a temporal “point

⁵⁵ The NA and UBS texts include the δέ in brackets signaling that some witnesses omit the conjunction. The evidence is fairly even for both readings.

⁵⁶ Ridlehoover finds a connection between the “righteousness” of 6:1 and the concept of “perfection” in 5:48. Charles Nathan Ridlehoover, *The Lord’s Prayer and the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew’s Gospel*, Library of New Testament Studies 616 (London: T & T Clark, 2021), 102.

⁵⁷ The antitheses have ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν (5:22, 28, 32, 34, 39, 44) while the sayings in 6:1–18 have ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν (6:2, 5, 16).

of departure” from 6:1.⁵⁸ As illustrations of the first principle, the three sayings do not provide guidance for the acts mentioned beyond the instruction to observe them secretly. The acts of almsgiving, prayer, and fasting only provide the situation for the guidance given. This is made clear by the temporal frame established with ὅταν which introduces each saying.

The positive imperatives regarding these acts all have to do with secrecy. The measures taken to keep each act secret increase with each saying. In the first saying, the disciple is simply to draw no attention to their almsgiving. In the second saying, the disciple is commanded to pray in the secret chambers. In the final saying, the disciple must not only fast secretly but also wash his face and anoint his head to conceal the act. Thus, the actions prescribed in this section progress from drawing no attention to secret observance to actively concealing acts of piety.

6:7–15 The Lord’s Prayer

Although it follows the saying on secret prayer (6:5–6), the Lord’s Prayer is an excursus in the section of 6:1–18, creating a zone of turbulence. The Lord’s Prayer is highly structured like other parts of the Sermon, and is introduced with a formulaic saying like the three sayings on worship (6:7–9a). The body of the prayer (6:9b–13) is comprised of two triads for a total of six petitions. The prayer is closed with a warning about unforgiveness (6:14–15), which elaborates on the fifth petition of the prayer.⁵⁹

Cohesion Shifts in the Lord’s Prayer

Several factors in the introductory formula (6:7–9a) set the Lord’s Prayer apart from its context. While 6:5–6 begins with καί showing continuity with 6:1–4, the Lord’s

⁵⁸ Stephen Levinsohn, *Discourse Features of New Testament Greek: A Coursebook on the Information Structure of New Testament Greek*, 2nd ed. (Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 2000), 9.

⁵⁹ Allison recognizes these divisions as triadic subunits. Allison Jr., “The Structure of the Sermon on the Mount,” 434.

Prayer begins with δέ, showing a new direction.⁶⁰ The opening formula (6:7–9) which is roughly like the other three sayings, has several significant deviations. The other three sayings begin with the same temporal construction containing ὅταν plus a subjunctive verb (ὅταν προσεύχησθε in 6:5), while 6:7 begins with the participle προσευχόμενοι.⁶¹ The introductory formula does not have the metacomment ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν featured in the other three sayings (6:2, 5, 16). The shift from singular command verbs to plural combined with the disappearance of οἱ ὑποκριταί and the introduction of ἔθνικοί will be discussed in greater detail below but also represent deviations in the opening formula. The forward-pointing adverb, οὕτως in 6:9 gives even greater prominence to the body of the prayer itself.⁶²

The Structure of the Lord’s Prayer

The body of the Lord’s Prayer is composed of two sets of three petitions, in a similar fashion as the six antitheses of 5:21–48, which form two sets of three sayings. The first three petitions pertain to God and his kingdom, and the latter three deal with the disciple’s immanent physical and spiritual needs. The first triad of petitions is comprised of third-person imperatives, while the second triad of petitions is formed with second-person imperatives.

The first triad (6:9–10) begins with an address, “Our Father in heaven,” and a closing adverbial clause, “on earth as it is in heaven.” The address and concluding adverbial clause both contain six words, while the three enclosed petitions each contain four words. This creates an inclusio which is made even more explicit by the double

⁶⁰ Wesley G. Olmstead, *Matthew 1-14: A Handbook on the Greek Text*, BHGNT (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2019), 118.

⁶¹ Runge states that adverbial participles which precede the phrase they modify “have the effect of backgrounding the action of the participle, indicating that it is less important than the main verbal action.” Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 249.

⁶² Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 68.

reference to “heaven” in the address and adverbial clause. The address identifies the Father as ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς, while the concluding adverbial clause speaks of God’s will, which is done ἐν οὐρανῶ. The concluding phrase, ὡς ἐν οὐρανῶ καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς, probably qualifies all three petitions in this section (see table 9).⁶³

Table 9. Structure of the first three petitions of the Lord’s Prayer

		words	parsing
address	Πάτερ ἡμῶν ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς	6	
petition A1	ἁγιασθήτω τὸ ὄνομά σου	4	APM3S
petition A2	ἐλθέτω ἡ βασιλεία σου	4	AAM3S
petition A3	γενηθήτω τὸ θέλημά σου,	4	APM3S
adverbial clause	ὡς ἐν οὐρανῶ καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς	6	

The second set of petitions shifts to second person imperatives which ask the Father for personal needs. The personal nature of these petitions is explicit in the usage of first-person plural pronouns, whereas the first set utilized second-person pronouns.⁶⁴ These three petitions are explicitly joined by the connective καί, whereas the first three were asyndetic. This triad has no framing statements or inclusio as the first but contains longer petitions.

The fourth petition concerns earthly needs. The reference to “our daily bread” (τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον) is an example of synecdoche and stands for all our material needs.⁶⁵ The fifth petition for forgiveness is followed by a comparative adverbial

⁶³ Jan De Waard and David C. Clark, “Discourse Structure in Matthew’s Gospel,” in *Analyzing & Translating New Testament Discourse*, by David J. Clark, Studies in Koine Greek (Dallas: Fontes Press, 2019), 28.

⁶⁴ De Waard and Clark notice a pattern in the usage of first-person pronouns in the second triad, “In all three there is the first person pronoun in both halves of the request (just as there was a second person pronoun in each request in the first set). In the first and third the pronoun comes once in each half, and in the second one, twice in each half.” De Waard and Clark, “Discourse Structure in Matthew’s Gospel,” 28.

⁶⁵ BDAG follows Origen in accepting that ἐπιούσιον was “coined by the evangelists.” *BDAG*,

clause introduced by ὡς which assumes the disciple's practice of forgiveness. This petition receives elaboration in 6:14–15. The sixth petition is comprised of a point-counterpoint set formed by the prohibitory subjunctive μὴ εἰσενέγκῃς, followed by the contrastive ἀλλά and the positive imperative ῥῦσαι.⁶⁶

The concluding warning in 6:14–15 is an elaboration of the fifth petition concerning forgiveness. This striking warning continues the message that our relationship with God is directly affected by our relationship with others (5:23–24; 7:1–5). The sixth petition, “deliver us from evil,” appears to cause an abrupt separation between the fifth petition and its elaborating warning and raises structural questions. However, Matthew is not averse to breaking continuity, as evidenced by the placement of the Lord's Prayer itself between the second and third sayings on private worship. The reason for this arrangement could be as simple as a lack of desire to disrupt the unity of the prayer, or this could be a rhetorical signal to read 6:12–15 together as dealing with spiritual needs in contrast to the material needs of 6:11. The elaborating comments which expand the fifth and sixth petitions could emphasize forgiveness and deliverance as more critical and deserving of greater explanation. This reading would agree with Jesus's words in 6:25–34, which subordinate earthly needs to pursuing the kingdom and righteousness.

The Prominence of the Lord's Prayer

The deviations in the introductory formula from the other three sayings in this section have already been considered. These features set the Lord's Prayer apart and give it prominence. Additionally, the Lord's Prayer is the most structurally prominent pericope in the Sermon on the Mount. This is due in great part to its position, both as an excursus in the immediate context of 6:1–18 but also as the central pericope of the Sermon. Luz

376. Gupta suggests that the difficulty of ἐπιούσιον indicates “an Aramaic origin to the prayer, translated later into Greek.” Nijay K. Gupta, *The Lord's Prayer*, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2017), 16.

⁶⁶ Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 73–74.

provides a structural analysis that sees the Sermon as a series of “ring constructions” of which the Lord’s Prayer is the center.⁶⁷ Its central position is accentuated by its abrupt appearance. Kennedy notes that the Lord’s Prayer is central to the structure of the Sermon, “occurring just past its midpoint.”⁶⁸ Pennington agrees, arguing that the Lord’s Prayer “fits into this structure as a central excursus. . . this structure puts the Lord’s Prayer at the center of the center of the center of the Sermon, something that is certainly not an accident.”⁶⁹

The Lord’s Prayer includes many of the prominent features previously identified in this study. There is a marked shift from singular to plural command forms. This verbal shift was last seen in the climactic pericope of the previous section (5:43–48), in which all three imperatival verbs are plural and are the only plural commands in the antitheses. Like the climactic antithesis in 5:43–48, the Lord’s Prayer is the only pericope in its section to shift entirely to plural command forms, giving it special prominence. In addition to the command forms, the first-person pronouns which appear in the prayer are all plural and emphasize the corporate context of the Lord’s Prayer.

Matthew 6:1–18 contains three plural command forms outside of the Lord’s Prayer, yet these can be explained while maintaining the prominence of the plural commands in the Lord’s Prayer. The *kelal* heading in 6:1 contains a single plural imperative, much like the prohibition in the *kelal* heading of the antitheses in 5:17–20. The temporal clauses and the prohibitions in 6:5 and 6:16 contain plural forms, but the pericopes revert to singular verbs for the subsequent positive commands, unlike the Lord’s Prayer, which shifts entirely to plural command forms.⁷⁰ The shift to plural in 6:5

⁶⁷ Luz, *Matthew*, 172.

⁶⁸ Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, 58.

⁶⁹ Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing*, 125.

⁷⁰ The use of ἔσεσθε in 6:5 is one of the rare uses of the imperatival future which is not an Old Testament quotation (5:48). Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics*, 452.

and 6:16 may be explained by the fact that the plural commands are copulative verbs joined with a comparative clause in which the disciples are not to be “like the hypocrites.”⁷¹ This would result in a contrast of two classes of people: disciples and hypocrites, in which case, the shift to plural would be expected (see table 10).

Again, Matthew shifts the focus from the scribes and Pharisees, who are the foil in the surrounding sayings, to Gentiles, or ἔθνικοί. As in 5:47, their introduction is abrupt and unexpected. The two preceding sayings have formulaically established “the hypocrites” as the foil. The placement of the third mention of hypocrites in 6:16 makes the mention of Gentiles even more prominent as Matthew shifts from ὑποκριταί to ἔθνικοί and back to ὑποκριταί. The Gentiles’ lack of knowledge about God contrasts with the disciples’ theologically informed prayer. The corrective to praying amiss like Gentiles who “heap up empty phrases” (βατταλογέω) is to pray from a position of confidence in the Father’s care and generosity “for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. Pray then like this.”⁷² The Lord’s Prayer is a theologically informed prayer.

The second petition of the Lord’s Prayer mentions “the kingdom.” This is the first occurrence of βασιλεία since the warning of 5:20 and is the only mention of the kingdom in the second section of the Sermon. The kingdom of heaven is a central theme of the Sermon yet is only mentioned eight times in five pericopes (5:3, 10, 19–20; 6:10, 33; 7:21). The Lord’s Prayer anchors the second section of the Sermon to the dominant theme of the kingdom.

The Lord’s Prayer represents a change of vantage point and a change of pace, which are peak markers identified by Robert Longacre.⁷³ While spoken from the lips of

⁷¹ Davies and Allison also recognize the curious shift from singular to plural in 6:5 and suggest that Matthew is conforming to the “traditional plurals, προσευχόμενοι and προσεύχεσθε, in 6:7 and 9.” This explanation ignores the reoccurrence of this verbal shift in 6:16. Davies and Allison, *Matthew 1-7*, 584.

⁷² BDAG describes βατταλογέω as an “onomatopoetic word” which “images the kind of speech pattern of one who stammers.” *BDAG*, 172.

⁷³ Robert E. Longacre, *The Grammar of Discourse*, 2nd ed., Topics in Language and

Jesus, the Lord’s Prayer is delivered from the vantage point of a disciple (the petition to “forgive our debts” can only be prayed by one who needs forgiveness). Finally, the Lord’s Prayer dramatically changes pace. The brief yet pointed petitions of the Lord’s Prayer stand out from the surrounding text.

Table 10. Command forms in Matthew 6:1–18

	Verb	Comparative	Tense	Mood	Person	Number
Matt 6:1	Προσέχετε		present	imp	2	P
Matt 6:2	μὴ σαλπίσσης		aorist	subj	2	S
Matt 6:3	μὴ γνώτω		aorist	imp	3	S
Matt 6:5	οὐκ ἔσεσθε	ὡς οἱ ὑποκριταί	future	ind	2	P
Matt 6:6	εἴσελθε		aorist	imp	2	S
Matt 6:6	πρόσευξαι		aorist	imp	2	S
Matt 6:7	μὴ βατταλογήσητε		aorist	subj	2	P
Matt 6:8	μὴ οὖν ὁμοιωθῆτε	αὐτοῖς ⁷⁴	aorist	subj	2	P
Matt 6:9	προσεύχεσθε		present	imp	2	P
Matt 6:16	μὴ γίνεσθε	ὡς οἱ ὑποκριταί	present	imp	2	P
Matt 6:17	ἄλειψαί		aorist	imp	2	S
Matt 6:17	νίψαι		aorist	imp	2	S

Discourse Cohesion of the Lord’s Prayer

The cohesion of the Lord’s Prayer within the Sermon on the Mount is evident from several factors. Its placement, though it interrupts the immediate section, is at the structural center of the Sermon. The Lord’s Prayer is both structurally prominent and essential to the cohesive macrostructure of the Sermon. Despite several key deviations, the overall structure of the introductory formula for the Lord’s Prayer is much like the other sayings in 6:1–18. The various prominence-giving factors in the Lord’s Prayer are

Linguistics (New York: Plenum Press, 1996), 38–48.

⁷⁴ The prohibition in 6:8 does not contain a copulative verb but carries a similar sense with the use of ὁμοιωθῆτε to forbid being like Gentiles “do not be like them.”

used with consistency with other parts of the Sermon. The mention of the kingdom, the use of second person plural commands, and the mention of Gentiles are all common to other prominent pericopes in the Sermon.

The Lord's Prayer contains several close connections with the following section (6:19–7:11), particularly with 7:6–11. Some scholars have attempted to draw formal connections between the Lord's Prayer and the subsequent material.⁷⁵ The emphasis on trusting the Father for material needs connects the passages. The specific phrase “your heavenly Father knows” occurs in both sections. The mention of Gentiles concerning their orientation to material needs appears in both sections. The repetition of *αἰτέω* in 7:7–8 further connects these pericopes. The Lord's Prayer is concerned with today's needs (“daily bread”), and 6:34 prohibits worry about “tomorrow.”⁷⁶

6:19–7:11 Seeing and Seeking the Kingdom

Since chapter six provides a detailed analysis of Matthew 6:19–7:11, the analysis here will be brief and primarily focused on the cohesion of the section within the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew 6:19–7:11 comprises the third in a set of three sections in the body of the Sermon on the Mount. Though disagreement reigns regarding the internal unity of 6:19–7:11, scholars widely agree on the demarcation of 6:19–7:11 as a discrete section in the Sermon.⁷⁷ The Law and Prophets inclusio (5:17; 7:12) enclose this portion of the Sermon with the rest of the body, and the transition of theme and structure separate it from 6:1–18. The unity of this section and its position within the Sermon are further strengthened by its proportional symmetry with 5:21–48. Matthew 5:21–48 contains 519

⁷⁵ Günther Bornkamm, “Der Aufbau Der Bergpredigt,” *NTS* 24, no. 4 (July 1978): 419–32. Robert A. Guelich, *Sermon on the Mount: A Foundation for Understanding* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1982), 321–25.

⁷⁶ Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church under Persecution*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1994), 107–8.

⁷⁷ Allison remarks, “6:19-7:11 is clearly set off from what goes before and from what comes after. The main issue, then, is the internal division of the passage.” Allison, *Studies in Matthew*, 187.

words, while 6:19–7:12 contains 520, each comprising 56 lines in the Nestle-Aland text.⁷⁸

Cohesion Shifts in 6:19–7:11

Matthew 6:19–7:11 stands out as unique from the other sections in the Sermon on the Mount. This is partly because the four pericopes of 6:19–7:11 do not conform to an obvious rhetorical template. The predictable patterns of the preceding pericopes of the Sermon create an expectation of structure which 6:19–7:11 does not deliver. This structural dissimilarity has led to many competing understandings of the section.

Another fundamental shift is the absence of the Law and Prophets and the Jewish cult. The exordium specifically mentions the prophets, thus grounding the section in the Old Testament tradition (5:12). Matthew 5:17–48 is explicitly related to the Law and the Prophets and provides Jesus's interpretation of the Law. Matthew 6:1–18 is grounded in Jewish religious practices. The Golden Rule in 7:12 returns to the theme of the Law and Prophets and completes an *inclusio* with 5:17. The *peroratio* brings the reader back to the Old Testament with the citation of Psalm 6:8 in 7:23. However, the entire section of 6:19–7:11 makes no reference to the Law and Prophets or the Jewish cult. The only direct connection to the Old Testament is the mention of Solomon in 6:29; the only proper name used in the Sermon.

Additionally, there is no mention of the scribes or Pharisees who have served as the negative foil throughout the Sermon until now. In fact, the word *ὑποκριτής*, which has been used to refer to the scribes and Pharisees (6:2, 5, 16; see also Matt 23:13–29), is here directed toward the disciples (7:5). Jesus shifts from the Law and Prophets, the Jewish cult, and the scribes and Pharisees. He now directly addresses the spiritual priorities of his disciples. This topical shift sets the third section of the Sermon apart from

⁷⁸ Luz, *Matthew*, 172–74.

the other sections of the Sermon.

Finally, there is a verbal shift. Beginning with the negated imperative *θησαυρίζετε* in 6:19, the imperatives and subjunctives shift completely to plural forms with only one exception in 7:5, which instructs the disciple to “cast the log out” from their eye. The other twenty command forms from 6:19–7:23 are plural imperatives or subjunctives. This is a dramatic stylistic change from the previous sections.

Cohesion within the Sermon

Matthew 6:19–7:11 is distinct in many ways from the rest of the Sermon, contributing to its overall prominence in the discourse. These differences will be considered in further detail in chapter six. However, significant cohesive ties connect 6:19–7:11 with the preceding sections of the Sermon. These cohesive ties include key terms, repeated themes, and structural patterns.

The central terms “kingdom” and “righteousness” appear conjoined with *καί* in the climactic saying of 6:33. This is the only place where the two terms are so closely associated. Both terms appear in every section of the Sermon except for the peroratio, which includes “kingdom” but not “righteousness” (5:3, 6, 10, 19, 20; 6:1, 10, 33; 7:21). The section on judging in 7:1–5 relates to the greater context of the Sermon in two ways. First, the use of *ὑποκριτής* in 7:5 recalls the threefold usage in the three sayings on private worship (6:2, 5, 16). Second, Matthew 7:1–5 continues the Sermon’s emphasis on the interrelatedness of the disciple’s horizontal and vertical relationships, which is emphasized in every section of the Sermon’s body (5:9, 23–24; 6:14–15; 7:1–2, 12). As I noted in the previous section, several connections exist between this section and the Lord’s Prayer. One meaningful connection is the repetition of the phrase *οἶδεν γὰρ ὁ πατήρ ὑμῶν*, which affirms that the Father knows our needs (6:8, 32).

The Four Pericopes of 6:19–7:11

In this dissertation, I argue for a fourfold structure of Matthew 6:19–7:11. This

structure consists of four distinct pericopes: 6:19–24; 6:25–34; 7:1–5; and 7:6–11. Each pericope begins with a μή-negated imperative with a corresponding positive imperative, which creates a point-counterpoint relationship (see table 11). Baasland argues for this structure, stating that the four negative imperatives (6:19, 6:25; 7:1; 7:6) “are consciously formed and . . . have a structural function.”⁷⁹ The structure I propose also solves some of the structural quandaries regarding 6:19–7:11 as it accounts for the problematic function of the saying in 7:6 by grouping it with the subsequent verses (7:7–11). I will provide a detailed argument for this grouping in chapter five.

Table 11. Negative and positive command structures in 6:19–7:11

	Mή-negated prohibition		Positive Command
6:19	Μὴ θησαυρίζετε	6:20	θησαυρίζετε δὲ
6:25, 32	μὴ μεριμνᾶτε	6:33	ζητεῖτε δὲ πρῶτον
7:1	Μὴ κρίνετε	7:5	ἔκβαλε πρῶτον
7:6	Μὴ δῶτε	7:7	Αἰτεῖτε καὶ δοθήσεται

This fourfold division contributes to the structural cohesion within the preceding section. This arrangement follows the pattern established in 6:1–18, which also consists of four pericopes that begin with Μή + imperative or subjunctive.⁸⁰ The only exception to this pattern is 6:5, which has οὐκ instead of μή due to the imperatival future indicative ἔσεσθε.⁸¹ This structural pattern is established in 6:1–18 and continues through 6:19–7:11. This pattern is unique to the two sections spanning 6:1–7:11 and creates structural cohesion.

⁷⁹ Baasland, *Parables and Rhetoric in the Sermon on the Mount*, 319.

⁸⁰ The fact that 7:13–27 contains four pericopes also supports this fourfold division.

⁸¹ Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics*, 452.

Matthew 6:19–24 as a Transitional Heading

Matthew 6:19–24 functions as a *kelal* heading for the entire section but also functions as a transitional passage that shares features both with what precedes and with what follows (cf. 5:13–14; 6:1). In 6:1–18, the disciple is told to prioritize the reward (*μισθός*) which comes from the Father in heaven rather than the recognition which comes from others on earth. This emphasis is cohesive with 6:19–21, in which the disciple is admonished to value and store up heavenly treasure (*θησαυρός*) instead of earthly treasures.⁸²

The verb ἀφανίζω serves as a lexical tie between both sections. The word is used in 6:16 to refer to disfiguring one’s face in order to publicize fasting and is used twice in 6:19–20 to refer to the destruction caused by moths and rust.⁸³ Pennington refers to this as “a satisfying wordplay, one that is lost in translation.”⁸⁴ Baasland agrees that the word “keeps the two texts together.”⁸⁵ The transitional character of 6:19–24 further contributes to the cohesion between the second and third sections of the Sermon.

While some commentators separate the three sayings in 6:19–24 as individual pericopes, the triad should be considered a unit. The mention of treasures in 6:19 and “mammon” in 6:24 encloses the parable of the eyes in 6:22–23 and makes clear that the pericope should be understood together. Jan De Waard and David Clark write, “The illustrations. . . are usually presented as separate paragraphs. This makes the ‘light of the body’ seem like an irrelevant intrusion, and breaks the clear train of thought linking vv.

⁸² Osborne notes several Jewish parallels which connect the ideas of 6:1-18 and 6:19-24: “The idea of reward stored in heaven via good works, almsgiving, and acts of piety was frequent in Judaism (*Pss. Sol.* 9:5; *Tob* 4:8–9; *4 Ezra* 6:5; 7:77; 8:33; *2 Bar.* 24:1; *Sir* 29:10–13; *T. Levi* 13:5).” Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew*, ZECNT, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 242.

⁸³ Both meanings are consistent with the term. BDAG provides two main definitions for ἀφανίζω, “to cause something to disappear” and “to cause to become unrecognizable through change in appearance.” *BDAG*, 154–55.

⁸⁴ Pennington takes a unique approach and includes 6:19-21 as the closing pericope to the second section (6:1-21). Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing*, 232.

⁸⁵ Baasland, *Parables and Rhetoric in the Sermon on the Mount*, 325.

19–21 with vv. 24ff.”⁸⁶ The *διὰ τοῦτο* of 6:25 should therefore be understood to draw an inference from the entire pericope of 6:19–24.

Discourse Prominence in 6:19–7:11

As I will argue in detail in chapter six, 6:19–7:11 is the most prominent section in the Sermon on the Mount. The shift in structure, verbal forms, and topic, which I have previously addressed, contribute to the overall prominence of this section in the context of the Sermon. The irregular structure and composition of this section creates a zone of turbulence for the reader and interpreter. Rather than dismissing these irregularities as a disorganized composition of sayings, there is warrant and hermeneutical merit in reading this as an intentional strategy in bringing the Sermon to its climax.

In addition to these comprehensive shifts in 6:1–7:11, there is a dense concentration of features that mark prominence in the Sermon. Divine passives play an important role in this section. Of thirteen divine passives present in the Sermon, six appear here in close proximity in four verses (6:33; 7:2, 7–8). Rhetorical questions feature as markers of prominence in this section. The Sermon contains a total of fifteen rhetorical questions, and nine appear in the three pericopes in 6:25–7:11. Finally, Matthew 6:19–7:11 contains the only vocatives applied to the disciples (6:30; 7:5). The vocatives *ὀλιγόπιστοι* and *ὑποκριταί* possess additional prominence because they represent a shift to a negative tone toward the disciples. I will argue in chapter six that the predicate adjective *πονηροί* should be read in relationship to these vocatives as the final negative form of thematic address applied to the disciples. The significance of these features and others will be examined in detail in chapter six.

⁸⁶ De Waard and Clark, “Discourse Structure in Matthew’s Gospel,” 29.

The Law and Prophets Inclusio (7:12)

Commonly called “The Golden Rule,”⁸⁷ 7:12 functions as an inclusio with 5:17 to bracket off the main body of the sermon. The phrase “the Law and the Prophets” forms an inclusio with the phrase “the Law or the Prophets” in 5:17–18. These are the only times the terms are used in the Sermon. The inclusio sets this body of Jesus’s teaching apart as his summation of the demands of the Law and the Prophets. The imperative *ποιεῖτε* is plural which is consistent with the shift to second-person imperatives from 6:19 onward.

Several commentators take 7:12 as an inference from the preceding pericopes, even though a tight connection is difficult to draw.⁸⁸ A more satisfying interpretation, given that 7:12 functions as an inclusio with 5:17 is that the *οὖν* marks 7:12 as a concluding summary to the entire body of the sermon (5:17–7:12).⁸⁹ This is how Luz understands the function of 7:12:

“Therefore” (*οὖν*) is a loose connecting word that presents the golden rule as a summary of the preceding material. It makes clear that v. 12 is not to be read in isolation. Here *οὖν* cannot refer to the immediately preceding text (vv. 7–11), for the subject there was the relationship of people to God. Instead, v. 12 gathers together in particular those texts that speak of human interpersonal relationships, that is, the antitheses framed by the love command and 7:1–5.⁹⁰

The unity of 7:6–11 also reinforces the discontinuity between 7:12 and the preceding verses. I will argue for the unity of 7:6–11 in the next chapter.

Additionally, the content of 7:12 elevates the concept of reciprocity and treatment of others present in each section of the Sermon’s body (5:7, 21–24; 6:14–15;

⁸⁷ For a discussion of extrabiblical parallels of the golden rule, see Davies and Allison, *Matthew 1-7*, 686–88.

⁸⁸ Osborne, *Matthew*, 257; Baasland, *Parables and Rhetoric in the Sermon on the Mount*, 486–91; Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing*, 266.

⁸⁹ Olmstead, *Matthew 1-14*, 148. D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, In *EBC*, vol. 9, *Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. by Frank E. Gaebelain (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 187–88. Stanton says “Matthew intends *οὖν* to indicate to the reader that 7.12 is a summary of and a conclusion to *all* the material in the central section of the Sermon which starts at 5.17.” Stanton, *A Gospel for a New People*, 303.

⁹⁰ Luz, *Matthew*, 366–67.

7:2). We must forgive to be forgiven, and we will be measured with the same measure we use. This reciprocity is again emphasized in the command, “whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them.”

The Peroratio: The Two Ways (7:13–27)

The Law and Prophets inclusio in 7:12 marks the boundary between the body of the Sermon (5:17–7:12) and the peroratio (7:13–27). The peroratio is given inner cohesion by the presence of three parables depicting the eschatological results of the “two ways” of higher righteousness and lower righteousness (5:20, 48). This is consistent with the other four discourses in Matthew, which also end with eschatological sayings (10:26–42; 13:47–50; 18:23–35; 24:31–46). The two ways are depicted by two gates (7:13–14), two trees (7:15–20), and two builders (7:24–27).

Cohesion within the Peroratio

Several lexical ties create cohesion within the peroratio. The terms “many” πολλοί and “enter” εἰσέρχομαι occur in 7:13 and 7:21–22 to refer to the many who will not enter the kingdom. Matthew 7:15–20 introduces the usage of πᾶς, which speaks of groups that enter the kingdom and those who do not (7:17, 19, 21, 24, 26). The use of ψευδοπροφήτης prepares for the description of the false prophets’ ministry in 7:22. “Doing” ποιέω occurs nine times in 7:17–26 and highlights the importance of obeying what is heard.⁹¹

The judgment scene of 7:21–23 should be seen as a transitional passage, much like 5:13–16 and 6:19–24, although it joins two pericopes rather than two sections. The mention of “prophets” connects it to 7:15–20, as does the elaboration on doing the will of the Father, which explains the “fruit” of 7:15–20. However, the οὖν in 7:24 connects

⁹¹ Osborne, *Matthew*, 275.

7:24–27 to 7:21–23 inferentially.⁹² The participial phrases in 7:21, 24, and 26 create a cohesive pattern, further connecting the pericopes. The elaboration on “saying and doing” in 7:24–27 follows naturally from the words of Jesus in 7:21–23. For these reasons, I demarcate 7:21–23 as a distinct pericope rather than grouping it with 7:15–20.

Discourse Cohesion of the Peroratio

As the conclusion to the Sermon on the Mount, the peroratio naturally includes several key concepts from previous sections. The final section draws on all the negative and positive commands, promises of blessing, and warnings of judgment present in the previous sections and demonstrates the bifurcation of eschatological destinies of those who either obey or disobey Jesus’s words.⁹³ Hans Dieter Betz summarizes the rhetorical unity of the Two Ways presented in the Sermon, “The road to eternal life is identical with all that is prescribed in the SM, while the road to destruction includes all that is explicitly or implicitly rejected.”⁹⁴

The phrase “these words of mine” (7:24, 26) refers to the entirety of the Sermon on the Mount. This explicitly links the closing admonition to everything which has come before. The final saying in 7:24–27 calls for a wise response from the disciples and serves as a conclusion to the entire sermon as well as the peroratio.⁹⁵

⁹² Olmstead, *Matthew 1-14*, 156.

⁹³ Luz observes that the conclusion of the Two Ways has rhetorical precedent in Jewish literature: “In a way similar to the ending of the Holiness Code (Lev 26), Deuteronomy (30:15–20*), the final redaction of the *Book of Enoch* (*I Enoch* 108), and the *Assumption of Moses* (12.10–13), the readers are confronted once again with the great choice.” Luz, *Matthew*, 386.

⁹⁴ Hans Dieter Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount: A Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, Including the Sermon on the Plain*. Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 60.

⁹⁵ The fact that the final characterization of the obedient disciples is that of a “wise man,” grounds the Sermon in wisdom tradition. True wisdom and folly are defined by adherence to Jesus’ teaching. The mention of Solomon in 6:29 may further support this wisdom reading of the Sermon (cf. 12:42). Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing*, 280.

Cohesion with the Exordium (5:3–16)

Like the exordium, the peroratio is characterized by a sharp transition from second-person imperative verbs to third-person indicatives. I have previously addressed this pattern in greater detail. Three second-person imperative verbs occur in this section, only two of which are directed at the hearer, and only one of those two, εἰσέλθατε “enter” (7:13), stands as an ethical command.⁹⁶ Strikingly, the abrupt change in person is seen even in the alteration of the description of God from the second-person “your Father who is in heaven” to the first-person, “my Father who is in heaven” in 7:21. This is the only time in the Sermon that Jesus refers to the Father with the first-person possessive pronoun. Every other occurrence is in the third-person or second-person (one occurrence, “Our Father” in 6:9). This lexical shift creates a parallelism between the peroratio with the exordium.

In addition to the shift in verbal forms, both the exordium and peroratio contain eschatological themes. Whereas the Beatitudes speak of the promises which belong to the μακάριοι, the Two Ways warn of the destruction which awaits the many who do not find the way of life. This positive-negative relationship is reinforced by the contrasting parallelism of prophets (5:12) and pseudoprophets (7:15, 22). The term προφήτης is used three times in the Sermon, once in the exordium (5:12), and in the Law and Prophets inclusio (5:17; 7:12). The term ψευδοπροφήτης is used only here in the Sermon.⁹⁷ This creates another inclusio outside the inclusio of 5:17–7:12:

⁹⁶ The pericope of the two gates and roads begins with the imperative, εἰσέλθατε “enter” and the pericope of the false prophets begins with the second-person imperative προσέχετε “beware,” which doesn’t function so much as a command as it does as a warning. A third second-person imperative, ἀποχωρεῖτε “depart,” is spoken to the false prophets by Jesus.

⁹⁷ Ψευδοπροφήτης is used only three times in Matthew, here and twice in the Olivet Discourse (24:11, 24).

- A. Prophets (5:12)
- B. The Law and Prophets (5:17)
- B. The Law and Prophets (7:12)
- A. Pseudoprophets (7:15)

The *μακάριοι* function in the world in a similar way to the Old Testament prophets and therefore enter the kingdom (5:3, 10), but those who do not do the Father’s will in 7:13–27 are characterized as “pseudoprophets,” and will not enter the kingdom (5:20; 7:21).

Cohesion with the Law and Prophets Saying (5:17–20)

The peroratio also has several features in common with the Law and Prophets statement in 5:17–20. In addition to the thematic connection with the “prophets” in 5:17, the phrase “enter the kingdom of heaven” appears only in 5:20 and 7:21. Both passages are unique in their use of exalted Christological language. In 5:17, Jesus fulfills the Law and the Prophets; in the judgment scene of 7:21–23, he is the eschatological judge and Lord. The apparent equivocation of “the will of the Father” with Jesus’s words (7:21, 24) further strengthens this Christological connection and supports Jesus’s authoritative exposition of the Law in 5:21–48. A further connection can be noted in the Old Testament citation of Psalm 6:8 in 7:23. This is the first Old Testament citation since the antitheses in 5:21–48, which follow from 5:17–20. Finally, there is a striking parallel between the “doing and teaching” of 5:19 and the “hearing and doing” of 7:21–27, contrasting the true prophetic ministry with the counterfeit ministry of the pseudoprophets.

The Christology and Prominence of 7:21–23

Matthew 7:21–23 stands out as the most prominent pericope of the peroratio and one of the most prominent in the Sermon due to several unique features. It is the only pericope in the Sermon that has the form of a dialogue and narrative-like form.⁹⁸ 7:21–23

⁹⁸ De Waard and Clark, “Discourse Structure in Matthew’s Gospel,” 33.

is given particular prominence because it contains the only reference to the kingdom of heaven in the peroratio (7:21). This passage also reveals a high Christology paralleled only by 5:17, where Jesus is said to fulfill the Law and the Prophets. Here Jesus is depicted as the eschatological judge and is addressed as “Lord.” This is the first time Jesus is addressed as κύριος in the Gospel of Matthew.⁹⁹

The description of the false prophets’ ministry in 7:22 includes vivid terms such as προφητεύω “prophecy,” δαιμόνιον “demons,” and δύναμις “mighty works.” These terms usually have a positive connotation in the context of the New Testament and are associated with Jesus’s messianic ministry (Matt 10:8; 11:20; 12:28; 13:54; 17:18), yet here they are associated with false prophets. Demons feature prominently in Matthew’s Gospel, and exorcisms are a key component of Jesus’s ministry and are first introduced in this saying.

Furthermore, this passage contains an Old Testament citation spoken by Jesus. The citation alone gives this passage prominence since this is the first Old Testament citation since 5:48. However, additional significance exists due to the fact that it is a citation of God’s speech from Psalm 6:8 and is spoken in the first person by Jesus. Combined with the double address of κύριε, this is the most explicit reference to Jesus’s divinity in the Sermon.

A unique reference to the Father is present here when Jesus refers to God as “my Father.” Of seventeen references to God as Father in the Sermon, all refer to God as “your Father” except for the reference to “our Father” in the Lord’s Prayer (which is presented from the vantage point of the disciples), and Jesus’s personal reference to “my Father” here. This reveals the unique relationship of the Father and the Son (cf. Matt 11:27). The exalted Christology and close identification with the Father prepare the

⁹⁹ A possible exception would be the citation of Isaiah 40:3 by John the Baptist in Matthew 3:3.

reader for the reference to Jesus's words as divine revelation in 7:24–29. This is made clear by comparing 7:21 and 7:24–26, which identifies the criterion of judgment as “the will of the Father” (7:21), and also Jesus words, “these words of mine” (7:24, 26). Those who do the will of the Father are those who hear and obey the words of Jesus.¹⁰⁰ The authority ascribed to Jesus here is reminiscent of Jesus's words in 5:17–20.

7:13–14 relates to the judgment scene in 7:21–23 through references to the many who enter the gate of destruction (πολλοί εἰσιν οἱ εἰσερχόμενοι). “Many” πολλοί enter the gate of destruction, and “many” will appeal to Jesus on the day of judgment who will not “enter” εἰσέρχομαι the kingdom.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided a brief analysis of the five sections of the Sermon on the Mount and the relationships and features of the pericopes which comprise them. This chapter has demonstrated patterns of prominence and cohesion and forms a foundation for the subsequent chapters, especially chapter six. Chapter five will provide a detailed case for understanding 7:6–11 as an intentionally constructed unit of text. Chapter six will build on the work of this chapter and provide a detailed analysis of 6:19–7:11, which will identify key patterns of cohesion and prominence which indicate unity within the section and cohesion within the entire Sermon.

¹⁰⁰ Olmstead, *Matthew 1-14*, 156.

CHAPTER 5

THE PERICOPAL UNITY OF MATTHEW 7:6–11

Before conducting a detailed analysis of the cohesion of 6:19–7:11, a detailed analysis of 7:6–11 is necessary to provide support for the unity of the pericope. This pericope demarcation is critical to the analysis of the third section of the Sermon on the Mount and the overall argument of this dissertation. A survey of the prominent commentaries reveals that most scholars either treat 7:6 as an independent logion or group it with 7:1–5 as a counterbalance to the warning against judging others. Though some group 7:6–11 as a unit, this is a minority position. I will first provide a summary of research concerning the treatment of 7:6 in relation to its surrounding context. I will then offer my analysis of 7:6–11 with structural and thematic reasons for its unity as a pericope.

Summary of Research

Mistranslation of an Aramaic Original

Some scholars question the accuracy of the Greek text of 7:6. This has led to speculation that an Aramaic original lies behind the text, which originally read אִשְׁתְּךָ meaning “amulet” or “ring,” which was mistakenly rendered τὸ ἄγιον in Greek. This position originated with Johann Bolten in 1792 but has found many adherents since then.¹

¹ Johann Adrian Bolten, *Der Bericht des Matthäus von Jesu dem Messia* (Altona: Kaven, 1792), 119; Joachim Jeremias, “Matthäus 7, 6a,” in *Abraham unser Vater: Juden und Christen im Gespräch über die Bibel: Festschrift für Otto Michel zum 60. Geburtstag*, by Otto Michel et al., *Arbeiten zur Geschichte des Spätjudentums und Urchristentums*, V (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1963), 271–75; Felix Perles, “Zur Erklärung von Mt 7 6.,” *Zeitschrift Für Die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft Und Die Kunde Der Älteren Kirche* 25, no. 1 (1926); Günther Schwarz, “Matthäus VII 6a: Emendation Und Rückübersetzung,” *NovT* 14, no. 1 (1972): 18–25; Matthew Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts*, 3rd Edition (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2020), 200–202. Maxwell-Stuart argues that the original

Hans Dieter Betz rightly criticizes this speculative emendation, “Since only the Greek text is extant, the Greek text must be the basis of the interpretation, and not a hypothetical Aramaic source, which, if it ever existed, has disappeared without a trace.”²

Counterbalance to 7:1–5

The most common treatment of Matthew 7:6 groups it with 7:1–5.³ This is the pericope grouping in the Nestle-Aland and UBS Greek New Testaments.⁴ One interpretation drawn from this grouping is that 7:6 provides a counterbalance to the warning against judging others in 7:1–5; while the disciple should not judge others, he also should not be completely undiscerning.⁵ Craig Keener acknowledges that the text does not make this relationship explicit between 7:1–5 and 7:6 and remarks, “given the possibility that the self-evaluated person would evaluate others in verse 4, one would expect verse 6 to contain some note of disjunction.”⁶

Discernment in Evangelism

An interpretation that expands on the counterbalance view sees Matthew 7:6 as

text may have read τὸ τίμιον instead of τὸ ἅγιον, creating a parallel with μαργαρίτας as something of value. P.G. Maxwell-Stuart, “Do Not Give What Is Holy to the Dogs,” *ExpTim* 90, no. 11 (1979): 341–42. Schwarz argues that the saying regards the use of jewelry by Christian women. Günther Schwarz, “*Und Jesus sprach*”: *Untersuchungen zur aramäischen Urgestalt der Worte Jesu* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1985).

² Hans Dieter Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount: A Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, Including the Sermon on the Plain*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 494–95.

³ There is at least one advocate for the view that 7:6 supports 7:1–5. According to Perry, 7:6 expresses the admonition of 6:1–18 as “a warning against ostentation in religious practices.” Alfred M. Perry, “Pearls Before Swine,” *ExpTim* 46, no. 8 (May 1935): 381–82.

⁴ The UBS Handbook acknowledges the difficulty of determining the pericope boundary here. “Both its interpretation and the reason for its inclusion here are problematic.” Barclay Moon Newman and Philip C. Stine, *A Handbook on the Gospel of Matthew*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1992), 194.

⁵ Jonathan T. Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing: A Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), 262; W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., *Matthew 1–7*, vol 1 of *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, ICC (London: T & T Clark, 1988), 672.

⁶ Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans, 2009), 243.

an admonition to exercise discernment in evangelism, often connected with Jesus's words in Matthew 10:11–15.⁷ W. D. Davies and Dale Allison write, “The saying is an admonition about the necessity to limit the time and energy directed towards the hardhearted.”⁸ D. A. Carson clarifies that the dogs and pigs are “persons of any race who have given clear evidences of rejecting the gospel with vicious scorn and hardened contempt.”⁹ For Carson, this verse should only be utilized among those who have exhibited vehement rejection of the gospel. Jonathan Pennington interprets this verse to speak of limiting evangelistic efforts among Jews who are resistant to the message.¹⁰ John Nolland sees 7:6 as relating to our stewardship of resources; we are to expend our resources in a way that is focused on God rather than dispersing them to unworthy recipients.¹¹

Grant Osborne summarizes the awkwardness of the evangelistic view, “This 7:6 is a difficult passage to apply. If we go far in this, we may leave every seeker too early.” He continues, “Should Samuel Zwemer have left the Muslims long before his seventy-year ministry was over (with only seven converts)? Should the Auca martyrs’ wives have left the tribe who murdered their husbands?” He concludes that this verse should be applied to cults and apostates “but even then only when it is clear that they are

⁷ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2007), 277; Davies and Allison, *Matthew 1-7*, 676; Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 128; Donald Alfred Hagner, *Matthew. 1-13*, WBC, vol. 33A (Dallas: Word Books, 1993), 172; David L. Turner, *Matthew*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 109; Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 244; Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1992), 168; John Calvin, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke*, trans. William Pringle, vol. 1 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 350. *Ps.-Clem. Rec.* (2.3.4–5 and 3.1.4–7) is an early witness to this view.

⁸ Davies and Allison, *Matthew 1-7*, 676.

⁹ D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, In *EBC*, vol. 9, *Matthew, Mark, Luke*. ed. by Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 185.

¹⁰ Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing*, 262.

¹¹ John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2005), 323–24.

closed to the truth.”¹²

Osborne’s observation highlights one weakness of this view. While there is some agreement with Jesus’s words in 10:11–15, this is not the immediate context surrounding 7:6. In addition to the difficulty with applying this verse evangelistically, it is inconsistent to link 7:6 with 7:1–5 while interpreting the verse in the context of evangelism. 7:1–5 gives instruction towards one’s brothers—insiders. Evangelism is a different enterprise altogether. Furthermore, the Sermon on the Mount does not directly address missionary activity.¹³ It would seem out of place to introduce such an important theme here using such an obscure saying. Concerning this view, Ulrich Luz asks, “what readers could anticipate that in this context?”¹⁴ Robert Guelich likewise concludes that the evangelistic reading “lacks any supportive basis in the immediate context of 7:6.”¹⁵

Restricting Gentile Mission

Another interpretation relates this verse to evangelistic activity among the Gentiles before the resurrection.¹⁶ Since Jesus has restricted the mission to Israel at this time; this saying instructs the disciples not to take the gospel to the Gentiles until after the resurrection. N. T. Wright remarks, “For the moment, the disciples are to treasure the gospel like priests in the Temple guarding their holy things.”¹⁷ This interpretation seems unlikely as the saying would be irrelevant for Matthew’s first readers who would read the

¹² Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 263–64.

¹³ A potential exception to this might be Matthew 5:13–16, but even this passage deals with one’s lifestyle before the world, not explicit communication of the gospel.

¹⁴ Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, trans. James E. Crouch, ed. Helmut Koester. Rev ed. Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 355–56.

¹⁵ Robert A. Guelich, *Sermon on the Mount: A Foundation for Understanding* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1982), 354.

¹⁶ Scot McKnight, *Sermon on the Mount*, Story of God Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 238–39.

¹⁷ N. T. Wright, *Matthew for Everyone*, 2nd ed, New Testament for Everyone (London: SPCK, 2004), 71.

Great Commission as the conclusion to the Gospel (Matthew 28:16–20).

Church Discipline

Another option is to see 7:6 in the context of church discipline, which is thematically consistent with 7:1–5.¹⁸ Robert Gundry applies this verse specifically to admitting others into church membership. Easy conditions for entrance into the church could “contaminate the fellowship” or result in individuals betraying other believers “by informing on them in times of persecution.”¹⁹ This is consistent with the interpretation by the author of *The Didache*, who interprets 7:6 as fencing the Eucharist from participation by outsiders (Didache 9:5).²⁰

Apostasy

Guelich treats 7:6 as an independent saying related to apostasy, or “the failure to take discipleship seriously.”²¹ Guelich follows Günther Bornkamm in interpreting 6:19–7:11 as a series of expositions of the Lord’s Prayer. Bornkamm and Guelich both relate 7:6 to the petition of 6:13.²² Guelich says, “It warns against the temptation of apostasy, of falling prey to the Evil One by forfeiting what is holy and precious, namely, one’s privileged rights as a son of the Father and one’s life as a disciple in the Kingdom.”²³

¹⁸ Eduard Schweizer, *The Good News According to Matthew*, trans. David E. Green (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975), 170.

¹⁹ Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church under Persecution*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1994), 122.

²⁰ Betz agrees that 7:6 could refer to the Eucharist as well as Christian teachings. Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 496.

²¹ Guelich, *Sermon on the Mount*, 354.

²² Günther Bornkamm, “Der Aufbau Der Bergpredigt,” *NTS* 24, no. 4 (July 1978): 428–29; Guelich, *Sermon on the Mount*, 354.

²³ Guelich, *Sermon on the Mount*, 356.

Reinforcing 7:1–5

Another perspective sees 7:6 as reinforcing rather than qualifying 7:1–5. Thomas Bennett argues that Jesus is sarcastically restating 7:1, “Judge not, that you be not judged.” He understands the warning to mean that if you judge others, they will become hostile and “judge” you.²⁴ Michael Goulder interprets 7:6 as a prohibition of exposing “what is precious, your brother’s character, to the malice of the godless.”²⁵

Gnostic Secrets

Some commentators suggest that 7:6 could refer to gnostic secrets or teachings not to be revealed to outsiders.²⁶ This is supported by the parallel passage in the Gospel of Thomas, where the immediate context concerns additional, undisclosed teachings of Jesus (*Gos. Thom.* 92–94).²⁷ Betz says that the saying could refer to the Sermon on the Mount itself as “inside information only.”²⁸ Betz remarks, “the language reminds us of arcane teaching (*Arkandisziplin*) as it was used in the Greek mystery religions and in philosophy.”²⁹

Meaning Unknown

Other commentators ultimately conclude that the meaning of 7:6 cannot be known with certainty; that its meaning might have been apparent to the first readers of Matthew but is lost to modern audiences.³⁰ Luz concludes that Matthew merely

²⁴ Thomas J. Bennett, “Matthew 7:6: A New Interpretation,” *WTJ* 49, no. 2 (1987): 384–85.

²⁵ Goulder confidently remarks of his conclusion, “It is the chief glory of my interpretation to have made sense of [these words] in their context, I think alone of all proposals.” Michael D. Goulder, *Midrash and Lection in Matthew* (London: SPCK, 1974), 265–66.

²⁶ Davies and Allison, *Matthew 1-7*, 676.

²⁷ Bart D. Ehrman and Zlatko Pleše, *The Apocryphal Gospels: Texts and Translations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 331.

²⁸ Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 498.

²⁹ Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 495.

³⁰ Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 354; France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 276; Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 171; Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 499.

transcribed the verse from Q and recommends that the church not use the verse: “What is one to do with this biblical word in the church today? My advice is radical: one should not use it as a biblical word.”³¹

Matthew 7:6–11 as a Unit

G. H. Stassen provides a unique interpretation. He groups 7:6–12 as a triadic unit which describes the disciple’s dependency. For Stassen, the dogs and pigs symbolize the Romans and the power and protection they offer. Rather than trust the Romans, disciples should rely on the heavenly Father, who gives good gifts to those who ask.³² Talbert groups 7:6–12 together and interprets the unit as an admonition to discernment: “Do not fail to discern the difference between holy and unclean things, and do not fail to act appropriately.”³³ The disciple is admonished to be discerning in 7:6 and instructed to seek wisdom from God to discern correctly. In 7:12, the disciple properly exercises this discernment.

Osborne treats 7:6 independently as guidance for evangelism but sees a connection with 7:7–11 as a prayer for wisdom in exercising this discernment and dealing with other believers’ sins.³⁴ Neil McEleney believes 7:6 to be a well-known proverb that Jesus uses as a foil for his teaching on God’s generosity toward us (7:7–11) and the generosity we should show to others (7:12). According to McEleney, since God is generous with us, we should be generous to others rather than withholding good gifts from others as the proverb warns: “A disciple of Jesus must be willing to share even such

³¹ Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 355–56.

³² Glen H. Stassen, “The Fourteen Triads of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:21-7:12),” *JBL* 122, no. 2 (2003): 267.

³³ Charles H. Talbert, *Matthew*, Paideia: Commentaries on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 93.

³⁴ Osborne, *Matthew*, 264.

precious and holy objects as the Mosaic law and its interpretation with the Gentiles.”³⁵

Ernst Baasland’s treatment is the most comprehensive treatment of the pericope from a socio-rhetorical perspective. Baasland draws on Graeco-Roman texts and Jewish tradition to place 7:6–12 in the context of the benefactor institution. Matthew 7:6 portrays a warning against foolish and misguided generosity, 7:7–8 provides a positive example of appropriate benefaction, and 7:9–11 identifies God as the true benefactor of those who come to him. The Golden Rule in 7:12 shows how we should be appropriately generous to others for their benefit.³⁶ Along with the saying on judging in 7:1–5, Baasland identifies the basic theme of 7:1–12 as reciprocity.³⁷

Matthew 7:6–11 as a Unified Pericope

Most commentators who group 7:6 with either the preceding or subsequent pericope tend to base their decision on thematic correspondence. Few argue based on the structure of the text.³⁸ Rather than begin with thematic connections, the following section will demonstrate that 7:6–11 is a discrete and definable unit based on structural considerations. After examining the structure, interpretive options and thematic correspondence will be considered.

Μή Negation as a Structural Marker

The Sermon on the Mount is characterized by rhetorical units comprised of negative and positive imperatives, which result in point-counterpoint sets. The seven

³⁵ Neil J. McEleney, “The Unity and Theme of Matthew 7:1-12,” *CBQ* 56, no. 3 (1994): 498.

³⁶ Ernst Baasland, *Parables and Rhetoric in the Sermon on the Mount: New Approaches to a Classical Text*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen Zum Neuen Testament 351 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 487.

³⁷ Baasland, *Parables and Rhetoric in the Sermon on the Mount*, 486.

³⁸ Exceptions include Allison who groups 7:1-6 together and Baasland and Stassen who group 7:6-11 together. Dale C. Allison Jr., “The Structure of the Sermon on the Mount,” *JBL* 106, no. 3 (September 1987): 435; Stassen, “The Fourteen Triads of the Sermon on the Mount,” 267; Baasland, *Parables and Rhetoric in the Sermon on the Mount*, 420ff.

preceding pericopes in 6:1–7:5 are introduced with a negated imperative or subjunctive verb and contain a positive command which is the corollary to the prohibition. With the exception of 6:5, which has a future indicative verb instead of an imperative or subjunctive, each of these pericopes begins with a command form negated by μή (see table 12).

Table 12. Fourfold structure in 6:1–7:11 created by prohibitions

6:2	μή σαλπίζης
6:5	οὐκ ἔσεσθε
6:7	μή βατταλογήσητε
6:16	μή γίνεσθε
6:19	Μὴ θησαυρίζετε
6:25	μή μεριμνᾶτε
7:1	Μὴ κρίνετε
7:6	Μὴ δῶτε

Matthew 7:6 is usually either attached to 7:1–5, creating a negative-positive-negative saying or left as an independent saying with no positive counterpart. On the other hand, Matthew 7:7–11 as a standalone unit is entirely positive with no negative prohibition.

However, combining 7:6 with 7:7–11 results in a negative/positive saying which fits the pattern of the preceding pericopes. The negative command “Do not give” corresponds to the positive “Ask, and it will be *given*.”³⁹ Not only is this consistent with the pattern in the Sermon on the Mount, but this creates inner cohesion within 6:19–7:11 with four definable pericopes with prohibitions and admonitions. Baasland agrees that the

³⁹ Betz acknowledges this connection. Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 494.

four μή prohibitions in 6:19–7:11 “are consciously formed and . . . have a *structural* function.”⁴⁰ Therefore, the pericope divisions should be adjusted for structural cohesion (see table 13).

Table 13. Structural function of negative and positive forms in the Sermon

	Negative	Positive
Antitheses (5:21–48)	“You have heard that it was said. . .”	“But I say to you. . .”
Private Righteousness (6:1–6, 16–18)	Publicized righteousness	Secret righteousness
The Lord’s Prayer (6:7–15)	“do not heap up empty phrases. . .”	“Pray then like this. . .”
Treasure (6:19–24)	“Do not lay up. . . treasures on earth. . .”	“lay up treasures. . . in heaven. . .”
Worry (6:25–34)	“do not be anxious. . .”	“seek first the kingdom. . .”
Judging (7:1–5)	“Judge not. . .”	“take the log out of your eye. . .”
Dogs and Pigs (7:6–11)	“Do not <i>give</i> . . .”	“Ask, and it will be <i>given</i> . . .” ⁴¹

Two Pairs of Parables About Foolish Giving

Internal features indicate that 7:6–11 should be considered a unit. Matthew 7:6 is parallel with 7:9–10 in that both contain two examples of inappropriate giving.

Baasland writes, “The key word in Matt 7,6–11 is giving (*διδόναι*). The imageries in 7,6

⁴⁰ Baasland, *Parables and Rhetoric in the Sermon on the Mount*, 319.

⁴¹ Emphasis mine.

and 7,9–11 are both examples of ridiculous behaviour.”⁴² These examples enclose the invitation to “ask, seek, and knock” in 7:7–8:

- A. Giving holy things to dogs (7:6a)
- A. Giving pearls to pigs (7:6b)

- B. Ask, seek, knock (7:7–8)

- A. Giving your son a stone (7:9)
- A. Giving your son a snake (7:10)

- B. How much more will your Father give (7:11)

The two sets of negative examples are in contrast. Guelich notes, “pearls are conversely to swine swill what stones are to bread.”⁴³ While both sets represent gifts inappropriate to the recipient; the first examples involve higher gifts given to the unworthy recipients—dogs and pigs. The second examples depict unworthy gifts given to higher recipients—children. The pericope thus has a “Goldilocks and the Three Bears” effect: the first gifts are too lavish, the last gifts are too lacking, but God’s gifts are just right. When one adds verse eleven, it becomes clear that there is an ABAB parallel construction.

- A. Two examples of foolish giving (7:6)
- B. Assurance of God’s generosity (7:7–8)
- A. Two examples of foolish giving (7:9–10)
- B. Assurance of God’s generosity (7:11)

The division of this pericope into two A-B subunits is strengthened by the fact that the first subunit (7:6–8) contains 49 words and the second subunit (7:9–11) contains 50 words, making them nearly identical in size (according to the UBS text).⁴⁴

⁴² Baasland, *Parables and Rhetoric in the Sermon on the Mount*, 459.

⁴³ Guelich, *Sermon on the Mount*, 355.

⁴⁴ Kurt Aland, Barbara Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carla M. Martini, and Bruce M. Metzger, eds. *The Greek New Testament*, 5th ed. edition (Stuttgart: German Bible Society, 2014), 7:6-11.

1. Subunit 1 – 49 words (7:6–8)
 - a. 2 negative examples—higher gifts to lower recipients (7:6)
 - i. Example A1 (7:6a)
 - ii. Example A2 (7:6b)
 - b. Gracious promise 1 (7:7–8)

2. Subunit 2 – 50 words (7:9–11)
 - a. 2 Negative examples—lower gifts to higher recipients (7:9–10)
 - i. Example B1 (7:9)
 - ii. Example B2 (7:10)
 - b. Gracious promise 2 (7:11)

Evidence from the Gospel of Thomas and Q

Additional evidence for the unity of 7:6–11 can be found from other literature. The Gospel of Thomas retains the saying from Matthew 7:6 and includes it with the invitation and promise of Matthew 7:7–8. In fact, the Gospel of Thomas places Matthew 7:6 between 7:7 and 7:8 (see table 14). Baasland determines that this parallel, combined with the early reference to 7:6 in Didache 9.5, supports a Q-tradition that preserved these sayings. While the Didache uses 7:6 in a different context, the Gospel of Thomas shares the same immediate context. In his proposed original sequence of Q material, John Dominic Crossan has Matthew 7:6–11 as a unit immediately preceded by the Lord’s Prayer (Matt 6:9–13; Luke 11:2–4).⁴⁵ Davies and Allison take the saying’s use in the Gospel of Thomas as a Q tradition which includes 7:6 with 7:7–11, not 7:1–5:

If Gos. Thom. 93 is, as we have affirmed, independent of Matthew, this supports our suggestion that Mt 7:6 might come from Q; for Gos. Thom. 92 recalls Mt 7:7 while Gos. Thom. 94 recalls Mt 7:8. So Matthew and the author of Gos. Thom. have Mt 7:6 in similar contexts. Furthermore, it would seem to follow that, in Q, Mt 7:6 stood beside Mt 7:7–11 = Lk 11:9–13, not beside Mt 7:1–5 = Lk 6:37, 38, 41, 42.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ John Dominic Crossan, *In Fragments: The Aphorisms of Jesus*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983), 343.

⁴⁶ Davies and Allison, *Matthew 1-7*, 675n13.

Table 14. Comparison of Gospel of Thomas 92–94 and Matthew 7:6–8

Gospel of Thomas	Matthew
(92) Jesus said, “Seek and you will find. Yet, the things you asked me about in the past and I did not tell you then, now I am willing to tell you, and you no longer seek after them.”	7:7 Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.
(93) “Do not give holy things to dogs, or they might throw them on the dung heap. Do not throw pearls to swine, or else they might make it. . .”	7:6 Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you.
(94) Jesus said, “The one who seeks will find; the one who knocks will have it opened.” ⁴⁷	7:8 For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.

Several authors conclude that 7:6 is indeed a saying from Q.⁴⁸ Luz says Matthew “is a conservative author; he took this logion over because of his loyalty to the tradition simply because he found it in his copy of Q.”⁴⁹ Davies and Allison suggest, “The verse just may have stood in Q^{mt}, Luke or Q^{lk} having omitted it as being potentially offensive.”⁵⁰ Whether Matthew 7:6–11 goes back to Q or some other source, the Gospel of Thomas provides us with an early witness to the close relationship between 7:6 and 7:7–8. The independent usage of 7:6–8 provides support to the hypothesis that this section is a subunit that merits some distinction from 7:9–11. At least in the *Gospel of*

⁴⁷ Ehrman and Pleše, *The Apocryphal Gospels*, 331.

⁴⁸ Perry, “Pearls Before Swine,” 381; Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 496; James M. Robinson and Helmut Koester, *Trajectories through Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 182.

⁴⁹ Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 356.

⁵⁰ Davies and Allison, *Matthew 1-7*, 674.

Thomas, this section was self-sufficient to stand without 7:9–11.

Background and Interpretation of 7:6

Based on structural and discourse features, Matthew 7:6–11 seems to form a cohesive unit, but the interpreter must determine how the pericope is to be understood. The primary reason for the confusion surrounding this text is the use of metaphors with little indication of how they should be decoded. Pennington acknowledges the problematic nature of the metaphors: “it makes for a pithy saying but not always clarity of intention. Or, to understand this phenomenon more positively, this is the beautiful nature of poetic and proverbial sayings: they invite many applications. This is certainly the case here.”⁵¹

Some conclude that the metaphors were not ambiguous to the first readers, who would have shared a socio-cultural context in which the saying would have been clearer. Pennington writes, “We may face a problem of cultural distance; what may not appear coherent to us may likely be something that the original writer and readers may not have stumbled over.”⁵² Betz is confident “the original hearers or readers of the SM knew what the terms meant.”⁵³

7:6 as a Common Proverb

One explanation for the awkwardness of 7:6 in its immediate context is that the saying was a common proverb that was known to its first audience. This view has several proponents. Rudolf Bultmann says 7:6 is a folk saying, or a “secular meshalim,”⁵⁴ while

⁵¹ Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing*, 260–61.

⁵² Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing*, 264.

⁵³ Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 499.

⁵⁴ Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, trans. John Marsh, Rev. ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), 107.

BDAG concludes that 7:6 “must be a proverbial saying.”⁵⁵ Donald Hagner says, “It has the character of a proverb, which may have had a range of application.”⁵⁶ If 7:6 is a common proverb, its awkward nature may be explained by unaltered transmission by Jesus or Matthew.⁵⁷ Guelich writes,

The lack of contextual coloring and redactional elaboration imply its proverbial and almost self-evident usage by the evangelist. Unfortunately, what might have been clear to his audience because of a common understanding of this saying appears lost to the reader today.⁵⁸

Care in reproducing the original form of a familiar saying would help explain the nature of 7:6. Keener writes, “it is inconceivable that Matthew would simply create a saying that fits his context with such difficulty.”⁵⁹ This is consistent with Pennington’s observations that Matthew’s faithfulness to transmit his sources led to “a slightly more fragmented section.”⁶⁰ Betz likewise concludes that Matthew is faithfully transmitting the saying, “In this context, the sentence had a meaning, which Matthew himself may or may not have understood; he took it over together with the rest of the SM.”⁶¹ Understanding whether Jesus crafted this saying to speak to a particular context or whether it stood as a common saying that Jesus adapted could explain its resistance to neat contextualization and affect how this logion is interpreted.

Greco-Roman Parallels

Several Greco-Roman and Jewish parallels predate this saying’s use by Jesus.

⁵⁵ Frederick W. Danker, Walter Bauer, and William F. Arndt, *BDAG*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 579.

⁵⁶ Hagner, *Matthew. 1-13*, 171.

⁵⁷ Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 356.

⁵⁸ Guelich, *Sermon on the Mount*, 354.

⁵⁹ Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 242.

⁶⁰ Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing*, 126.

⁶¹ Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 494.

A quote from Isocrates in the fourth century is strikingly similar: “If you benefit bad men, you will have the same reward as those who feed stray dogs; for these snarl alike at those who give them food and at the passing stranger; and just so base men wrong alike those who help and those who harm them” (*Demon.* 29).⁶² In *Life of Apollonius* by Philostratus, a young man is accused of wasting his wealth by giving recklessly to others: “You will have to drain your property dry, throw gold to them like cakes to dogs” (6.36).⁶³ Horace refers to dogs and pigs together as despised animals when he refers to one who lives as “an unclean dog or sow who loves the mire” (Ep. I 2:26).⁶⁴ Geo Widengren identifies a similar proverb in the Parthian sapiential text, *The Babylonian Tree*, in which a goat says to a tree, “Here are my golden words which I have scattered before you as before a pig or a boar.”⁶⁵

Jewish Parallels

Jewish literature is full of negative references to dogs.⁶⁶ Otto Michel writes, “Although there are Jews who speak of the faithfulness of the dog, in the main it is regarded as ‘the most despicable, insolent and miserable of creatures’ (Str.-B., I, 722).”⁶⁷

⁶² “τοὺς κακοὺς εὖ ποιῶν ὁμοία πείσει τοῖς τὰς ἀλλοτρίας κύνας σιτίζουσιν· ἐκεῖναί τε γὰρ τοὺς διδόντας ὡσπερ τοὺς τυχόντας ὑλακτοῦσιν, οἱ τε κακοὶ τοὺς ἀφελούοντας ὡσπερ τοὺς βλάπτοντας ἀδικοῦσι.” Isocrates, “Discourses I: To Demonius,” in *Isocrates*. Vol 1. Translated by George Norlin, 1-36. The Loeb Classical Library 209 (London: W. Heinemann, Ltd., 1928), 20–21.

⁶³ “ἐπαντλεῖν χρῆ τῶν ὄντων καὶ προβάλλειν αὐτοῖς τὸ χρυσίον, ὡσπερ τὰ μείλιγματα τοῖς κυσὶ” Philostratus, *Apollonius of Tyana, Volume II: Life of Apollonius of Tyana, Books 5-8*, ed. and trans. Christopher P. Jones, Loeb Classical Library 17 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 127.

⁶⁴ “canis immundus vel amica luto sus” Horace, *Satires. Epistles. The Art of Poetry*, trans. H. Rushton Fairclough, Loeb Classical Library 194 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926), 264–65.

⁶⁵ Geo Widengren, “Quelques Rapports Entre Juifs et Iraniens à l’époque Des Parthes,” in *Volume Du Congress: Strasbourg, VTSup 4* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1957), 217.

⁶⁶ 1 Sam. 17:43; 24:14, 15; 2 Sam 9:8; 16:9; 1 Kings 21:19; 22:38; 2 Kings 8:13; Ps 22: 16, 20; 59:6, 14; Prov 26:11; Isa. 56:10-11; Gen. Rab. 63:8; 65:1; Ex. Rab. 9:2. The New Testament also uses “dog” pejoratively: Php. 3:2; 2 Pet. 2:22; Rev. 22:15.

⁶⁷ Otto Michel, “Κύων, Κυνάριον,” in *TDNT*, vol. 3, eds. by Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey William Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich 1101-04 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 1101.

Pigs were designated as unclean animals under the Old Testament Law (Lev 11:7; Deut 14:8) and are frequently mentioned together with dogs unfavorably.⁶⁸

Casting τὸ ἅγιον to Dogs as A Cultic Rule

The phrase “Do not give dogs what is holy” recalls several Old Testament and Jewish texts regarding sacrificial meat. Several texts from the Septuagint apply τὸ ἅγιον to sacrificial meat (Exod 29:33; Lev 2:3; 22:6, 7, 10–16; Num 18:8–19).⁶⁹ The author of 4QMMT wrote, “one may not bring dogs into the holy camp because they may eat some of the [b]ones from the sanc[tuary and] the meat which is still on them.”⁷⁰ On the other hand, meat rendered unclean due to being killed by another animal is to be thrown to the dogs (Exod. 22:31). After her conversion, Asenath threw the sacrificial meat dedicated to Egyptian idols to wild dogs, for she would not feed it to her domestic dogs (Jos. and Asen. 10:13).⁷¹ Davies and Allison collect several rabbinic prohibitions against giving sacrificial meat to dogs.⁷² Scot McKnight writes,

the temple’s sacredness permeated the consciousness of all of his followers. So we

⁶⁸ Davies and Allison write, “For ‘pig’ occurring with ‘dog’ as an unclean or despised animal see 1 En. 89:42; 2 Pet 2:22; *P. Oxy.* V 840:33; *b. Sabb.* 155b; Horace, *Ep.* 1:2:26; 2:2:75.” Davies and Allison, *Matthew 1-7*, 677.

⁶⁹ Quarles observes, “The LXX frequently used the plural form *ta agia* to refer to sacrificial meat. However, Hb. and Aram. texts normally used the sing. form and the LXX sometimes retains the sing. (Lev 2:3; 22:14; Ezra 2:63; Neh 7:65).” Charles L. Quarles, *Sermon on the Mount: Restoring Christ’s Message to the Modern Church*, NAC Studies in Bible & Theology (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2011), 290n602.

⁷⁰ Michael Owen Wise, Martin G. Abegg Jr., and Edward M. Cook, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation*, Revised Edition (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005), 459.

⁷¹ C. Burchard, trans. “Joseph and Asenath,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol 2, *Expansions of the “Old Testament” and Legends, Wisdom, and Philosophical Literature, Prayers, Psalms and Odes, Fragments of Lost Judeo-Hellenistic Works*, ed. by James. H. Charlesworth, 177-247 (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 1985), 216.

⁷² Davies and Allison write, “‘Do not give that which is holy to dogs’ takes up for a novel end a known rule (*cf. m. Tem.* 6:5; *b. Bek.* 15a; *b. Pesah.* 29a; *b. Šebu.* 11 b; *b. Tem.* 117a, 130b) in which τὸ ἅγιον means sacrificial meat or leaven.” Davies and Allison, *Matthew 1-7*, 675. Strecker remarks, “The profane meaning is attested by numerous texts for the New Testament environment which contain near parallels to the first two lines. To verse 6a: ‘One does not remove something holy in order to have it eaten by the dogs’ (*b. Ber.* 15a on Deut 12:15). To verse 6b: ‘Words of the wise man to the fool are like pearls to a sow’ (*Ginza R VII* 218:30).” Georg Strecker, *The Sermon on the Mount: An Exegetical Commentary* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988), 146.

dare not forget that when Jesus said, “Do not give dogs what is *sacred*,” none of his followers thought it inappropriate to see some things as profoundly sacred. . . Jesus has obviously adapted a typical expression and applied it to his own sense of the sacred.⁷³

Pearls Before Swine

While the first line has a specifically cultic referent, the second line is less theologically loaded. Where τὸ ἅγιον indicates something specifically related to the Jewish cult, μαργαρίτας “pearls” are of immense value though not particularly sacred.⁷⁴ Due to their extreme value, pearls became a common metaphor for things deemed precious.⁷⁵ Pearls are used in the book of Job to illustrate the value of wisdom (“the price of wisdom is above pearls,” Job 28:18). Pearls are used metaphorically to refer to wise sayings, “The mouth which produced pearls . . .” (*Qidd.* 39b).⁷⁶ Jewish teaching of Scripture was compared to strings of pearls.⁷⁷ Pearls are spoken of in the New Testament as being especially valuable (Matt 13:45, 46; 1 Tim. 2:9; Rev. 17:4; 18:12, 16; Rev. 21:21).

Chiastic Structure of 7:6

The saying in Matthew 7:6 has an ABBA chiastic structure.⁷⁸ The pigs trample the pearls, while the dogs are those which turn to attack (see table 15). This chiastic

⁷³ McKnight, *Sermon on the Mount*, 237-238.

⁷⁴ According to *BDAG*, “Among the Indians worth 3 times as much as pure gold: Arrian, *Ind.* 8, 13 and always in great demand.” *BDAG*, 616.

⁷⁵ Hauck writes, “Pearls were usually regarded as precious stones in antiquity. They were taken esp. from the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean. In the Gk. West they first came to be better known after the conquest of the Orient by Alexander, and in Rome only after the annexation of Greece by Sulla (69). In Egypt the cult of pearls reached its height under the Ptolemies, in Rome during the imperial period. Pearls, used for necklaces and other ornaments, were regarded as very costly, so that the word came to be a figure of speech for something of supreme worth.” Friedrich Hauck, “Μαργαρίτης,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey William Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 472.

⁷⁶ Hermann Leberecht Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* (München: Beck, 1965), 447.

⁷⁷ Strack and Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*, 176.

⁷⁸ T. Francis Glasson, “Chiasmus in St. Matthew VII . 6,” *ExpTim* 68 no. 57 (1956): 302.

grouping reinforces the parallel nature of the sayings. First, the two foolish actions are presented together, then the two consequences follow in sequence. Rather than interpreting the sayings narrowly as addressing specific scenarios, the wisest course is to take the parallel statements as conveying the same general truth: “[T]his is an example of synonymous parallelism. The sense of 6a is the sense of 6b, and ‘do not throw’ corresponds to ‘do not give,’ ‘your pearls’ to ‘that which is holy,’ and ‘dogs’ to ‘swine.’”⁷⁹

Table 15. Chiastic structure of 7:6

A.	Do not give dogs what is holy,
B.	and do not throw your pearls before pigs,
B.	lest they trample them underfoot
A.	and turn to attack you.

The proverbial nature of the saying, combined with its chiastic structure, strongly suggests that the saying has a single meaning expressed by the two images. Some commentators have tried to attach specific meaning to the symbols, particularly the cultic reference to “holy things,” but this causes unnecessary complications. Baasland writes,

The problem with this interpretation is not only the allegorical tendency, but also that it does not take the literary structure seriously—The parallel sentences are really parallels. . . Instead of reading the text as allegorical riddles, one can read the saying as a general wisdom rule, about not to waste something valuable on the unworthy, about discernment, about laxity, or about appropriate relations to other people.⁸⁰

Baasland also says,

⁷⁹ Davies and Allison, *Matthew 1-7*, 677.

⁸⁰ Baasland, *Parables and Rhetoric in the Sermon on the Mount*, 453.

The imagery is never arbitrary and aspects of the imagery must often be conveyed in the interpretation. No single aspect is the key. The comprehensive view takes us on the right track and is the best way to avoid allegorical interpretation. A one-sided focus on certain features instead of the whole saying lacks sensitivity for its character as a parable.⁸¹

Pennington says the two sets of metaphors “are put in parallel and thus mutually color each other’s sense.”⁸²

Von Lips understands the saying to combine two well-known sayings to create a proverb that helps the hearer understand wrong actions.⁸³ Von Lips makes the astute observation that the saying is well-suited for Galilean usage as it combines the cultic rule concerning holy food as well as a secular expression about pigs which would be expected to be used by those accustomed to the presence of pigs. This combination of two sayings fits well with a Hellenized Jewish territory.⁸⁴ Von Lips concludes that Jesus has combined two sayings from separate origins and traditions, a Jewish cultic rule and a folk saying, to create a single, generalized caution against wrong actions.⁸⁵

While this dissertation does not indulge the speculation of a mistranslation from Aramaic, the fact that an Aramaic original can be easily reconstructed is an argument for the authenticity and unity of this saying.⁸⁶ Some have indicated that an Aramaic original has a rhythmic structure like Semitic poetry.⁸⁷ Charles Burney identifies the poetic meter of 7:6 as a “three beat rhythm” which “seems mainly to characterize pithy sayings of a gnomic character, akin to the proverbs of the Old Testament, such as

⁸¹ Baasland, *Parables and Rhetoric in the Sermon on the Mount*, 458.

⁸² Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing*, 261.

⁸³ Hermann von Lips, “Schweine Fëuttert Man, Hunde Nicht -- Ein Versuch, Das Rëatsel von Matthëaus 7 6 Zu Lëosen,” *Zeitschrift Für Die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 79, no. 3–4 (1988): 182.

⁸⁴ von Lips, “Schweine Fëuttert Man, Hunde Nicht,” 181.

⁸⁵ von Lips, “Schweine Fëuttert Man, Hunde Nicht,” 185.

⁸⁶ Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 242; Davies and Allison, *Matthew 1-7*, 675.

⁸⁷ Joachim Jeremias, *New Testament Theology* (New York: Scribner, 1971), 25; Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts*, 202.

are found in the Sermon on the Mount.”⁸⁸

Considering the evidence surveyed, 7:6 should be understood as a general proverb that likely predates Jesus’s usage and speaks to the folly of giving precious gifts to the unworthy. This is supported by the wide attestation of similar sayings in the Jewish and Greco-Roman worlds. The parallelism created by the chiasmic structure binds the metaphors into one saying with a single meaning. Like many proverbial sayings, 7:6 has a general sense but can take on special significance when inserted into a specific context. Baasland writes, “Each parable in the SM can have a double meaning: what the parable possibly means isolated from the context and what it means within Matthew’s context.”⁸⁹ Next, we will consider its contextual usage in 7:6–11 and the Sermon.

Interpretation of 7:6–11

The structure of the passage supports a twofold division between 7:6–8 and 7:9–11. This creates a parallel relationship between the two foolish examples of 7:6 and the two foolish examples in 7:9–10. These sayings should be interpreted similarly as negative examples of giving, complemented by descriptions of God’s appropriate giving. God is not a wasteful giver (7:6), nor is he a withholding giver (7:9–10).

This reading is supported by the shift in benefactor in 7:6–7. In 7:6, the giver is the addressee. The disciple is told not to give foolishly; however, in 7:7, the disciple becomes the one who asks for what is given. This is consistent with the examples of 7:9–10, where the hearers are hypothetically bad givers, followed by the subsequent saying about God’s generosity in 7:11. In both cases, the focus shifts from the hearer’s practice in giving to God’s. Baasland says, “After the warning against wasteful, extravagant,

⁸⁸ Burney also identifies Matt 5:3-12, 5:14-16, 6:22-23 as similar examples. Charles Fox Burney, *The Poetry of Our Lord: An Examination of the Formal Elements of Hebrew Poetry in the Discourses of Jesus Christ* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925), 130–32, 169.

⁸⁹ Baasland, *Parables and Rhetoric in the Sermon on the Mount*, 460.

lavish, prodigal behaviour, Matt 7,7ff now explains how a genuine benefactor acts.”⁹⁰

The promise of God’s generosity is framed with a proverbial saying about showing discretion in giving. The juxtaposition could be understood in a contrastive sense in which God is shown to be more generous than men who discriminate in giving,⁹¹ but more likely indicates that God doesn’t give to those who do not ask, but he gives generously to those who ask and seek. The givers are not the subject of contrast, but the recipients: the unworthy and the seekers.

Since the two pairs of examples are parallel, they should be interpreted similarly. The first two are phrased imperatively; the last two are phrased as rhetorical questions. If this interpretation is accepted, then 7:6 should not be taken as a prescriptive command to be deciphered but as a rhetorical saying parallel to the examples given in 7:9–10. In fact, the entire subunit of 7:6–8, taken as a whole, reads like a set of wisdom sayings. The same truth is expressed again in more specific terms in 7:9–11 which says, “how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!” Baasland writes,

The goal of Matt 7,6 is therefore the admonitions in 7,7-8 with their positive impvs. and double triads. The humorous parable illustrates stupid behaviour. It is something else to ask for a thing one really needs. The positive impvs. have a general character (παῖς γὰρ ὁ) and give the reason (γάρ) for the three positive impvs. The desperate asking, seeking, knocking should get a response.⁹²

Understanding 7:6 to function as a parallel pair of negative examples with 7:9–10 is a structurally satisfying interpretation. An objection one might raise is that the sayings in 7:9–10 are specifically phrased as rhetorical questions, whereas 7:6 is phrased imperatively. However, if 7:6 was a common proverb that Jesus adapted, it may have been quoted in its common form for the sake of familiarity. In which case, the saying

⁹⁰ Baasland, *Parables and Rhetoric in the Sermon on the Mount*, 459.

⁹¹ McEleney, “The Unity and Theme of Matthew 7,” 498–500.

⁹² Baasland, *Parables and Rhetoric in the Sermon on the Mount*, 460.

would be received by the hearer similarly to “You have heard it said, don’t give holy things to dogs. . . but I say to you, ask and it will be given.” The audience would immediately pick up on the reference and contextualize it appropriately, similarly to how modern audiences would react to the insertion of a familiar quote from a book or movie. McElenny understands the text in this way. In his thematic translation, he inserts the bracketed phrase “You have heard this proverb” to show the rhetorical effect 7:6 was intended to have.⁹³

While the saying might have fit more neatly if it were phrased differently, in its current phrasing, it fits the μή negation pattern creating cohesion with the preceding pericopes (6:1–7:5). Perhaps this was a deliberate adaptation to create discourse cohesion even though it led to a more awkward reading of the pericope. If it were a common proverbial saying, its citation likely would not have confused its first hearers and readers as it has subsequent generations. Von Lips surmises that the saying in 7:6 might have been adapted from a more typical proverbial form (“You don’t give the dogs sacrificial meat. . .”) but was transformed into its current form. He cites Jesus’s saying about the light under the bushel (a question in Mark 4:21; a sentence in Matt 5:15) and the antitheses as examples of synoptic tendencies to transform sayings.⁹⁴ It might have had the rhetorical impact of the parallel sayings in 7:9–10, which are prefaced with the phrase “Which one of you.”⁹⁵

⁹³ McElenny, “The Unity and Theme of Matthew 7,” 500.

⁹⁴ von Lips, “Schweine Füttert Man, Hunde Nicht,” 183.

⁹⁵ Baasland understands 7:6 to be a deliberate overstatement of absurd behavior, “The overstatement is obvious: nobody is inclined to throw pearls to pigs, only idiots do so. Only idiots would give holy meat to dogs, and to do so in addition is irreligious behaviour.” This understanding is similar to the sense of Matthew 5:15. Baasland, *Parables and Rhetoric in the Sermon on the Mount*, 458.

Conclusion

Having analyzed the passage and argued for its unity, I provide the following interpretive paraphrase, which gives the sense of the pericope based on the argument of this chapter:

You have heard that you should not give valuable things to those who are undeserving. However, if you ask, it will be given to you. To put it another way, would you withhold good things from your son? Of course not. That's how God relates to you, yet his generosity is even greater than yours. The Father does not waste his gifts on the undeserving nor does he withhold his gifts from those who seek them. God gives good things to his children.

In my analysis of 6:19–7:11 in the subsequent chapter, I will demonstrate how this reading of Matthew 7:6–11 is consistent with the preceding context, especially the climactic saying in 6:31–33.

CHAPTER 6
COHESION AND PROMINENCE IN MATTHEW 6:19–
7:11

Chapter four provided an analysis of the microstructures of the Sermon on the Mount, including a brief analysis of the cohesion of 6:19–7:11 within the greater context of the Sermon. Chapter five provided evidence for accepting 7:6–11 as an intentional unit within the Sermon. This provides the basis for understanding 6:19–7:11 as a unit comprised of four pericopes which is consistent with the preceding section (6:1–18) and the subsequent peroratio (7:13–27), which both have four pericopes. This chapter will build on the previous two chapters and examine the internal cohesion and prominence in 6:19–7:11, identify 6:31–33 and 7:6–11 as a peak construction, and provide an interpretation of the section's theme.

Internal Cohesion in 6:19–7:11

The structural and thematic cohesion of 6:19–7:11 has been the source of much scholarly investigation and debate. Some have concluded that the difficulty of this section is due to Matthew's redactional activity and a concern for faithfulness to his sources. Others have maintained that there is unity in the section and have proposed various models. Here, I provide an argument for the unity of the section, which builds on the work of others yet draws on discourse analysis principles to highlight features often neglected. I propose that three levels of cohesion exist among the four pericopes. The first level binds the entire section. The second level unites the three pericopes in 6:25–7:11, which follow the heading of 6:19–24. The third level binds 6:25–34 and 7:6–11 with features unique to both pericopes (see table 16).

Table 16. Distribution of prominence features in 6:19–7:11

	6:19–24	6:25–34	7:1–5	7:6–11
Μή-negation	X	X	X	X
Plural imperatives	X	X	X	X
Animal imagery	X	X		X
Bad eye	X		X	
Pos. imperative + protos		X	X	
Reported speech		X	X	
Divine passives		X	X	X
Rhetorical questions		X	X	X
Thematic address		X	X	X
Seeking		X		X
Gentiles		X		X
How much more?		X		X
Who among you?		X		X
Father		X		X
Food		X		X

In chapter four, I identified features that help bind the entire section together. I'll mention them here briefly to support the cohesion of the section. Key to the structure of the section is the pattern of using μή-negated imperatives with a corresponding positive imperative. The section is comprised of four pericopes that use this structure.¹ This pattern frames the pericopes as point-counterpoint sets which prohibit one action in

¹ Ernst Baasland, *Parables and Rhetoric in the Sermon on the Mount: New Approaches to a Classical Text*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen Zum Neuen Testament 351 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 319.

favor of another.

There is a nearly total shift to plural imperative forms beginning with the negated imperative *θησαυρίζετε* in 6:19. This pattern continues through the section and into the peroratio. The only exceptions to this pattern occur in reported speech in 7:4, where a hypothetical individual is addressed, and in 7:5, where the singular aorist imperative *ἐκβάλε* agrees with the singular vocative of rebuke *ὑποκριτά*.

Another phenomenon that characterizes 6:19–7:11 is the introduction of vivid animal and agricultural imagery, which is unique to this section. Moths, birds, flowers, dogs, pigs, fish, and snakes are utilized in the arguments of 6:19–7:11. Apart from the reference to wolves in sheep’s clothing in 7:15, these are the only references to animals in the Sermon. Jesus’s words here are characteristic of his later parables, which use similar language.

Matthew 6:19–24 as *Kelal* Heading

Following the pattern of the previous two sections, Matthew 6:19–24 functions as a *kelal* heading for what follows (cf. 5:17–20; 6:1). Several features support this relationship. First, 6:19–24 raises the concept of material wealth and substance, which characterizes the following passage. Several critical lexical and thematic links unite 6:19–24 with the pericopes which follow. Moths are mentioned in 6:20 as a threat to material goods, but moths are typically only a threat to garments which are not explicitly identified until 6:25. Additionally, the mention of moths is the first of several references to animals throughout 6:19–7:11. The mention of healthy and bad eyes in 6:22–23 anticipates the obscured eye of 7:1–5. Finally, 6:25–34 explicitly follows this passage with the connecting phrase *διὰ τοῦτο*.² Given the general lack of conjunctions and

² Runge notes that in both this passage and the parallel passage in Luke 12:22–31, *διὰ τοῦτο* connects the saying to what comes before. In the Lucan version, this saying is also preceding by a saying on riches (Luke 12:13–21) Steven E. Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament: A Practical Introduction for Teaching and Exegesis* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010), 50.

connecting words at high discourse levels in the Sermon, the explicit connection established by this phrase must not be overlooked.

If Matthew 6:19–24 is understood as a summary heading of 6:19–7:11, it may hold a clue as to the arrangement of the following pericopes. Matthew 6:19–24 contains three statements that form an ABA pattern. A saying about treasure, a parable of the eye, and another statement about wealth. Grant Osborne writes,

There is an ABA structure, with the parable on the healthy/unhealthy eye separating the two discipleship sayings. All three stem from wisdom motifs and have parallel structures, contrasting two alternatives and providing a concluding observation that establishes the consequences of making the wrong choice.³

The following pericopes also possess a parallel ABA arrangement: an admonition to seek the kingdom above material things,⁴ a parable of the eye, and another admonition to seek, with a promise to find (see table 17).⁵

I have shown that 6:19–24 functions as a heading for the third section of the Sermon on the Mount and has cohesive ties with the subsequent pericopes. However, as a *kelal* heading, 6:19–24 is set apart somewhat from what follows. Additionally, unique patterns of cohesion unite the three subsequent pericopes in 6:25–7:11 and set them apart from the heading. This is consistent with 5:17–48, where the antitheses (5:21–48) have structural cohesion not shared with the *kelal* saying of 5:17–20. Likewise, the pericopes of the second section (6:2–4, 5–6, 16–18) share features that are not present in the *kelal* heading of 6:1. Next, I will provide a detailed analysis of these cohesive relationships, which are unique to the three pericopes in 6:25–7:11.

³ Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 240.

⁴ Strengthening this connection is the mention of moths in 6:19-21 which corresponds to the clothing mentioned in 6:25-34.

⁵ Allison notices this triadic pattern in 6:19-24 but finds a parallel structure in 7:1-5 rather than the following three pericopes. Dale C. Allison Jr., “The Structure of the Sermon on the Mount,” *JBL* 106, no. 3 (September 1987): 435. Osborne sees parallel triadic patterns between 6:19-24 and 6:25-34. Osborne, *Matthew*, 249.

Table 17. ABA pattern in 6:19–7:11

	6:19–24	6:25–7:11
A	store up true wealth (6:19–21)	seek the kingdom (6:25–34)
B	warning about a bad eye (6:22–23)	warning about a bad eye (7:1–5)
A	serve God not money (6:24)	Ask, seek, and knock (7:6–11)

Cohesive Features in 6:25–7:11

In addition to the relationship between 6:19–24 to the subsequent material, the three pericopes in 6:25–7:11 have cohesive relationships distinct from 6:19–24. The use of thematic address, divine passives, and rhetorical questions are all significant shifts that are introduced in 6:25–7:11. In addition to this, 6:25–34 and 7:1–5 both contain reported speech (6:31, 7:4) and share the use of *πρῶτον* in conjunction with their respective positive imperatives (6:33, 7:5). Matthew intends for us to see 6:25–7:11 as a break from what has come before; it has a general dissimilarity with the preceding material as well as the peroratio. These features are mostly lexical and structural, but some, such as divine passives and thematic address, also affect the interpretation of the theme. The significance of these features is strengthened by the number of occurrences, repeated patterns, and the fact that several features are unique to these pericopes.

Divine passives. Thirteen divine passives appear in the Sermon on the Mount, twelve of which have God as the implied agent.⁶ Of these twelve, half occur in the three pericopes of 6:25–7:11 (see table 18). The six which appear before 6:19 each have the disciple as the subject who receives the action carried out by God, whether blessing or judgment (5:4, 6, 7, 9, 19). Of the six divine passives which occur in 6:25–7:11, only one

⁶ I am excluding *εἰσακουσθήσονται* (6:7) since it refers to the undefined addressee of the Gentiles' prayers. A safe assumption is that the Gentile prayers are not offered to the heavenly Father but to pagan deities.

has the disciple as the subject (κριθήσεσθε “you will be judged” in 7:2). The other five use the dative of indirect object to refer to the hearer as the one who receives the action or gift (except for the second occurrence of ἀνοιγήσεται in 7:8 which omits the dative pronoun).⁷

Table 18. Divine passives in 6:25–7:11

6:25–34	7:1–5	7:6–11
προστεθήσεται (6:33)	κριθήσεσθε (7:2) μετρηθήσεται (7:2)	δοθήσεται (7:7) ἀνοιγήσεται (7:7) ἀνοιγήσεται (7:8)

Each pericope contains a divine passive concerning giving something to the disciple in response to his actions. In 6:33, the disciple who rightly seeks will have earthly needs added. In 7:2, the disciple who measures will receive the same measurement. In 7:7, the disciple who asks will have the object of their petition given to them. Each of these three verbs are divine future passives and indicate something being given to the disciple by God (see table 19). The semantic connection is made clear by Louw and Nida. They group all three words in the same semantic domain as verbs meaning “take, obtain, gain, lose” (57.55–57.70 in LN).⁸ The use of μετρέω may seem to contrast with προστίθημι and δίδωμι at first since it seems to have a negative or punitive usage while προστίθημι and δίδωμι have positive usages. However, μετρέω can be taken in a neutral sense. The measure received by the disciple is only severe if they have measured severely. The parallel passage in Luke 6:38 follows the saying on judging but

⁷ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 141.

⁸ J. P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 563.

uses *μετρέω* in the positive sense of generosity.⁹

Table 19. Semantically related divine passives concerning giving in 6:25–7:11

Matt 6:33	seek first the kingdom. . . and all these things will be added to you	προστεθήσεται	LN 57.78
Matt 7:2	with the measure you use it will be measured to you	μετρηθήσεται	LN 57.92
Matt 7:7	Ask, and it will be given to you	δοθήσεται	LN 57.71

The concentration of divine passives in 6:25–7:11 binds the three pericopes together, especially since half of the Sermon’s divine passives occur here. The fact that each pericope contains a divine passive, which corresponds to the general semantic domain of “giving” and is used to describe an action of God that rewards the disciple, strengthens the link between the pericopes of 6:25–7:11.

Rhetorical questions. Another feature that connects the three pericopes in 6:25–7:11 is the high concentration of rhetorical questions. The Sermon on the Mount contains fifteen rhetorical questions, nine of which occur in these three pericopes. Matthew 6:25–34 contains five rhetorical questions, while 7:1–5 and 7:6–11 each have two. Both 6:25–34 and 7:6–11 contain rhetorical questions which begin with the phrase “who among you.” Both Matthew 6:30 and 7:11 use the phrase “how much more,” although only 6:30 uses it in the form of a question.

Negative thematic address. There is a tonal shift in 6:25–7:11 in which the hearers are addressed with three increasingly negative monikers. The first two are

⁹ The saying comes from grain contracts which “specified that grain delivery and payment therefore would be measured with the same instrument.” John Nolland, *Luke 1:1–9:20*, WBC, vol. 35A (Dallas: Word Incorporated, 1989), 301.

vocatives, and the last is a predicate adjective. These negative terms of address are especially notable since the only other time the disciples are directly identified is in the positive metaphors “salt” and “light” (5:13–16). Each of these negative words occurs at the end of the rhetorical questions within the passage. In 6:30, the last of the five rhetorical questions in the pericope ends with the vocative *ὀλιγόπιστοι*, which is used of the disciples elsewhere in the Gospel (cf. 8:26, 14:31, 16:8).

The two rhetorical questions in 7:1–5 are immediately followed by the vocative *ὑποκριτά*. This is a striking and subversive usage of *ὑποκριτής* since this term has previously been used to describe the scribes and Pharisees (6:2, 5, 16). Of thirteen uses of the term in Matthew’s Gospel, this is the only instance in which it does not refer to the Pharisees (one usage is ambiguous in 24:51, but it does not refer to disciples).

Finally, in 7:10, two more rhetorical questions are followed by a negative description of the disciples. Jesus uses the predicate adjective *πονηροί* to characterize his hearers. This term is even more striking than *ὑποκριτής* since the previous occurrence of *πονηρός* in the Sermon likely refers to Satan (6:13, see also 13:19; 13:38). The three pericopes of 6:25–7:11 each possess a series of rhetorical questions which are subsequently followed by negative “name calling” which increase in their intensity. This creates cohesion between these pericopes while also giving them prominence within the Sermon.

Other cohesive features. Some other lexical connections create cohesion throughout the three pericopes of 6:25–7:11. Two features are unique to 6:25–34 and 7:1–5. First, the adverb *πρῶτον* occurs in 6:33 and 7:4 in conjunction with the positive imperatives of each pericope. The term is used to describe the spiritual priority of the

disciple as it relates to seeking and judging; “seek *first* the kingdom” and “*first* take the log out of your own eye.”¹⁰

Second, both 6:25–34 and 7:1–5 contain reported speech. In 6:31, Jesus prohibits hypothetical questions of concern by the anxious disciple, “‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’” This reported speech immediately follows the vocative *ὀλιγόπιστοι*. In 7:4, reported speech occurs within the second rhetorical question, “Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when there is the log in your own eye?” This portion of reported speech immediately precedes the vocative *ὑποκριτά*.

Rhetorical patterning of cohesive features. The preceding survey of cohesive features in the three pericopes of 6:25–7:11 have demonstrated some formal unity and common thematic emphasis. The fact that many of these features are unique to these three pericopes enhances their cohesive force. One additional observation deals not with the presence of these features but the pattern in which they occur. The three pericopes of 6:25–7:11 not only contain the same features but share the same basic pattern: rhetorical questions lead to a term of negative address, immediately followed by the climactic saying of the pericope (see table 20).

In 6:25–34, there is a strikingly concentrated series of five rhetorical questions (6:25–28, 30), the last of which culminates in the vocative *ὀλιγόπιστοι*. The inferential *οὖν* introduces the climactic saying in 6:31–33, which commences with reported speech and concludes with the positive imperative combined with the adverb *πρῶτον*.

Matthew 7:1–5 contains two rhetorical questions (7:3–4). These are immediately followed by the vocative *ὑποκριτά*, which opens the climactic positive imperative “take the log out of your own eye.” Like the command in 6:33, this command

¹⁰ Emphasis mine.

is combined with the adverb *πρῶτον* and like 6:31, this pericope also contains reported speech (7:4).

Matthew 7:6–11 also contains two rhetorical questions (7:9–10). These are followed by an inferential *οὖν*, which introduces a predicate adjective construction in which the disciples are called *πονηροί*. This negative address is followed by the climactic “how much more” saying, which reveals the Father’s desire to “give good things to those who ask him.” This pericope does not contain reported speech or the adverb *πρῶτον* but still follows the same pattern.

Table 20. Pattern of discourse features in 6:25–7:11

	6:25–34	7:1–5	7:6–11
Rhetorical questions	6:25 6:26 6:27 6:28 6:30a	7:3 7:4	7:9 7:10
Negative address	<i>ὀλιγόπιστοι</i> (6:30b)	<i>ὑποκριτά</i> (7:5a)	<i>πονηροί</i> (7:11a)
Climactic saying	6:31–33 Pos. imp. + <i>πρῶτον</i>	7:5b Pos. imp. + <i>πρῶτον</i>	7:11b

Cohesion Between 6:25–34 and 7:6–11

In addition to the cohesive features already considered, 6:25–34 and 7:6–11 have an even tighter cohesive relationship (see table 21).¹¹ The most obvious connection between the two pericopes in the use of *ζητέω* in 6:33 and 7:7–8. *Ζητέω* is only used three

¹¹ Allison notes several parallels which link 6:25–34 and 7:7–11. Dale C. Allison Jr., *Studies in Matthew: Interpretation Past and Present* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 190–91.

times in the Sermon on the Mount, and all three occurrences are in these two pericopes (6:33; 7:7, 8). In 6:33, the disciple is commanded to seek the kingdom and righteousness; in 7:7–8, the disciple is promised to find what is sought. Both pericopes ground their positive imperatives in the heavenly Father’s care by using an argument from the lesser to the greater with the phrase “how much more.” Both pericopes utilize rhetorical questions introduced by the phrase “who among you.” Both pericopes use animals as illustrations. Birds, along with flowers, demonstrate reliance upon the Father’s provision, while dogs and pigs illustrate a lack of desire for higher things. I argue below that a link exists between the Gentiles of 6:32 and the dogs and pigs of 7:6. Both pericopes illustrate their principles with the basic necessity of food. The anxious disciples are concerned with food and drink (6:25, 31), the dogs and pigs presumably are seeking food (7:6), and the Father’s care is demonstrated by earthly fathers who feed their children (7:9–11). The reference to food recalls the fourth petition of the Lord’s Prayer (6:11).

Given the numerous connections between 6:25–34 and 7:6–11, they should be read cohesively and in continuity with one another. The passages mutually inform one another and reveal what the disciple should seek and the assurance of the Father’s willingness to provide the object of their seeking. One may object that 7:1–5 separates these two pericopes, thus ruling out a close reading. This objection ignores the fact that the Sermon has already established a pattern of interrupting cohesive units with other content. The three sayings on private piety in 6:1–6 and 6:16–18 are three formulaic sayings that are thematically and structurally cohesive, yet these are interrupted by the inclusion of the Lord’s Prayer. The Lord’s Prayer is topically related to the preceding saying on prayer but is a divergence from the emphasis on private piety and does not possess the formulaic structure of the surrounding pericopes.

Table 21. Cohesive features present in 6:25–34 and 7:6–11

	6:25–34	7:6–11
Mή-negation	μή μεριμνᾶτε (6:25,31, 34)	Μὴ δῶτε. . . μηδὲ βάλητε (7:6)
Plural imperatives	six (6:25, 26, 28, 31,33,34)	five (7:6–7)
Animal imagery	birds (6:26)	pigs (7:6) dogs (7:6) fish (7:10) snake (7:10)
Divine passives	προστεθήσεται ὑμῖν (6:33)	δοθήσεται ὑμῖν (7:7) ἀνοιγήσεται ὑμῖν (7:7) ἀνοιγήσεται (7:8)
Rhetorical questions	6:25 6:26 6:27 6:28 6:30	7:9 7:10
Thematic address	ὀλιγόπιστοι (6:30)	πονηροὶ (7:11)
Seeking	6:33	7:7, 8
Gentiles	ἔθνος (6:32)	κυσίν. . . χοίρων (7:6)
How much more?	6:30	7:11
Who among you?	6:27	7:9
Father	ὁ πατὴρ ὑμῶν ὁ οὐράνιος (6:32)	ὁ πατὴρ ὑμῶν ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς (7:11)
Food	τί φάγητε (6:25) Τί φάγωμεν (6:31)	ἄρτον (7:9) ἰχθύν (7:10)

Todd Scacewater notes a similar pattern in Colossians 3:18–4:6. He argues that 4:2–6 is the most prominent pericope in Colossians,¹² yet it has more semantic cohesion with 3:12–17 than with the household code in 3:18–4:1. He writes, “Some have noticed that, if the code were extracted, one could read coherently from 3:17 to 4:2 without any problem.”¹³ Despite what appears to be an interruption of the discourse cohesion by the household code in 3:18–4:1, Scacewater identifies three cohesive ties which create unity across the three pericopes. This construction is nearly identical to Matthew 6:25–7:11, where cohesive features bind the entire section together, but the two outer pericopes of 6:25–34 and 7:6–11 share unique semantic cohesion.

The Role of Matthew 7:1–5

The formal cohesive ties between 7:1–5 and the surrounding pericopes have already been noted, but 7:1–5 may function to connect 6:19–7:11 to the rest of the Sermon in significant ways. Matthew 7:1–5 plays an important role in the cohesion of 6:19–7:11 within the Sermon on the Mount. The impact of human relationships on one’s relationship to God is a central, recurring theme in the Sermon and is present in every section of the Sermon (5:9, 23–24; 6:14–15; 7:1–2, 12).

The eye problems mentioned here form a connection with 6:22–23. Both are parables that deal with obscured sight. These are not the only pericopes that mention eyes in connection with the spiritual life of the disciple. The removal of the beam from one’s eye is reminiscent of the spiritual surgery of 5:29, in which the scandalizing eye prevents one from entering the kingdom. In 5:29, the eye itself is plucked out (*ἐξαιρέω*) and cast away (*βάλλω*); in 7:1–5, only the obstructing beam is cast away (*ἐκβάλλω*).

The use of *ὑποκριτής* provides another important cohesive element with the

¹² Todd A. Scacewater, “Colossians,” in *Discourse Analysis of the New Testament Writings*, ed. Todd A. Scacewater (Dallas: Fontes Press, 2020), 391.

¹³ Scacewater, “Colossians,” 408.

preceding section. The term ὑποκριτής only occurs elsewhere in the Sermon on the Mount in the section on private devotion in 6:1–18. It occurs three times, once in each of the pericopes concerning alms (6:2), prayer (6:5), and fasting (6:16). The significance is that the hypocrites in 6:1–18 are concerned with being judged positively by others, and Jesus here uses the same term to refer to those who wish to judge others negatively. Also striking is that in 6:1–18, the hypocrites are presented as a negative example for the hearers to reject. Here, “hypocrite” is used as an address, appearing in the vocative case ὑποκριτά and is addressed directly to the hearers. Jesus is employing this word here to caution his hearers against following the behavior of the hypocrites.

While 7:1–5 may seem to interrupt the cohesion of 6:19–7:11, it contributes to the overall cohesion of the Sermon. Without this pericope, the central spiritual principle concerning horizontal and vertical relationships would be absent from the third section of the body of the Sermon. The Lord’s Prayer contains an affirmation of the Father’s care for the disciple, yet is balanced by the warning that unforgiveness hinders prayer. Likewise, 6:25–34 and 7:6–11 contain affirmations of the Father’s care and are balanced by the warning against self-righteous judgment (7:1–5). Just as the disciple must reconcile before offering sacrifices and forgive before praying the Lord’s Prayer, he must deal with his sin and judge his brother rightly before asking, seeking, and knocking.

Peak Construction in 6:31–33 and 7:6–11

The many cohesive connections between 6:25–34 and 7:6–11 support a close reading of these two texts and a further examination of their relationship. The features of prominence build to a crescendo in 6:25–34, resulting in a peak construction involving 6:31–33 and 7:6–11. These two pericopes (6:25–34 and 7:6–11) contain the greatest concentration of prominence-giving features of any pericope in the Sermon.

While 6:25–34 demonstrates features of prominence throughout the pericope, below, I will argue that the prominence features build to an internal climax in 6:31–33.

The textual evidence supports reading 6:31–33 as a subunit within 6:25–34. These verses are the telos of the passage and the peak of the Sermon. Matthew 7:6–11 serves as the denouement which supports and elaborates on 6:31–33. The identification of 6:31–33 and 7:6–11 as a peak construction is consistent with the conclusions of other discourse analysts. Longacre and Hwang elaborate on the possibility of a double peak profile:

The surface and notional slots may correlate with each other with the climax surfacing as the peak episode, or may be skewed to have the climax as the prepeak episode and the denouement as the peak. It is possible for a text to display peak-like features in two separate episodes. Then a profile with two peaks results, either a double peak profile with two action peak episodes or one with a main peak and a final, thematic, peak.¹⁴

Longacre and Hwang’s definition of denouement fits with the function of 6:31–33 and 7:6–11, where the denouement is a “notional slot of narrative discourse after climax where a crucial event happens, making possible a resolution or a way out of a difficulty.”¹⁵ The promises of 7:6–11 assure success for the disciple who seeks to obey the call to “seek first the kingdom” in 6:33.

While the peroratio formally concludes the Sermon (7:13–27), the peaks of 6:31–33 and 7:6–11 are more prominent and function as the cumulative exhortation. Scacewater makes this same conclusion between the peak and peroratio in Colossians 4:2–6 and 4:7–17: “Since both units have a concluding function, they stand together in Division 4, but the former is more semantically prominent since it closes the body, while 4:7–17 closes the entire epistle as a formulaic epistolary unit.”¹⁶

The Pre-Peak Episode (6:25–30)

Immediately, 6:25–34 is marked by the connective *διὰ τοῦτο*. This closely

¹⁴ Robert E. Longacre and Shin Ja Joo Hwang, *Holistic Discourse Analysis* (Dallas: SIL International, 2012), 55.

¹⁵ Longacre and Hwang, *Holistic Discourse Analysis*, 214.

¹⁶ Scacewater, “Colossians,” 391.

connects this pericope with 6:19–24 inferentially but also marks it as prominent since the section and pericope boundaries of the Sermon are mostly asyndetic and feature few connectives. *Διὰ τοῦτο* stands out as a marked use of a connective, and this is the only occurrence of the phrase in the Sermon.

The connecting *διὰ τοῦτο* is immediately followed by the metacomment *λέγω ὑμῖν*. This metacomment combined with *διὰ τοῦτο* intensifies the prominence of this pericope. The metacomment is even more significant since most occurrences in the Sermon are highly formulaic. Other than the double metacomment in the Law and Prophets saying (5:18, 20), Matthew has previously used metacomments systematically in each pericope in the antitheses and the sayings on private righteousness (5:22, 26, 28, 32, 34, 39, 44; 6:2, 5, 16). Matthew 6:19–7:11 does not follow the established pattern. This pericope contains the only metacomments in the section (6:25, 29). This selective usage, combined with the atypical presence of the connective *διὰ τοῦτο*, adds prominence to this pericope.

Matthew 6:25–34 contains a threefold repetition of the negated imperative *μὴ μεριμνᾶτε* (6:25, 31, 34). The threefold repetition of the negated imperative is unique to this pericope. Each of the eight pericopes in 6:1–7:11 contains a negated command coupled with a positive command. Matthew 6:25–34 is the only pericope of the eight to repeat the prohibition (6:25, 31, 34). This constitutes a change in structural pattern and contributes to the change of pace, which serves as a marker of peak.¹⁷

Matthew 6:25–34 demonstrates a drastic change of pace. This pericope has 188 words in the UBS text, making it the longest pericope in the Sermon on the Mount. This change of pace is facilitated by the change in style and the inclusion of seemingly superfluous rhetorical features. This pericope contains five rhetorical questions, more

¹⁷ Robert E. Longacre, *The Grammar of Discourse*, 2nd ed., Topics in Language and Linguistics (New York: Plenum Press, 1996), 43.

than any other pericope in the Sermon. Matthew uses these rhetorical questions to slow the pace, engage the hearer, and build toward the climactic verse of 6:33.

This is consistent with Matthew's use of rhetorical questions elsewhere in the Sermon. Of six pericopes that contain rhetorical questions, four use rhetorical questions to build to the positive imperative or a summary statement.¹⁸ In this pericope, the fifth and final rhetorical question is immediately followed by the positive imperative in 6:33, which functions as the climactic verse. This "pile-up" of rhetorical questions also appears in 5:43–48, the climactic antithesis, which contains a sequence of four rhetorical questions. These two pericopes also share references to Gentiles and a shift to second-person plural command forms.

The repetition of the disciples' earthly concerns also affects the pace. In 6:25, the need for food, drink, and clothing are mentioned as potential sources of anxiety. In 6:31, these needs are repeated in the form of reported speech. The superfluous repetition of several elements in this passage slows the pace and lengthens this passage.

Another indicator of peak is heightened vividness.¹⁹ Matthew 6:25–34 contains vivid language which arrests the hearers' attention. The vocative *ὀλιγόπιστοι* (cf. 8:26; 14:31; 16:8) in 6:30 represents the first in a series of negative monikers given to the hearers in this section (6:30; 7:4, 10). Matthew 6:19–20 introduces creature imagery with the mention of moths, and this imagery persists throughout the rest of the Sermon. Matthew 6:25–34 is even more vivid with its elaboration on the care of birds and flowers. Even the hyperbolic observation that birds do not "sow nor reap nor gather into barns" and that flowers do not "toil nor spin" is vivid in its absurdity. Also noteworthy is the mention of Solomon, which is the only use of a proper name in the Sermon on the Mount

¹⁸ Especially notable is Matthew 5:43–48 which functions as the climactic pericope for 5:17–48. Here, Matthew uses four rhetorical questions to build to the summary statement in 5:48.

¹⁹ Longacre, *The Grammar of Discourse*, 40.

(6:30).²⁰

These features are not mere points to be plotted or counted but are arranged in such a way to build to the climactic saying in 6:31–33. In the previous section on cohesion in 6:25–7:11, I demonstrated the pattern which exists in all three passages: a series of rhetorical questions (6:25–30) leads to a negative thematic address (ὀλιγόπιστοι, 6:30) and is immediately followed by a climactic saying (6:31–33). The fact that an inferential οὖν introduces 6:31–33 reinforces this pattern.

The Peak of the Discourse (6:31–33)

Textual features exist that provide a ground for reading 6:31–33 as a subunit with 6:25–34. The use of conjunctions in these verses supports this grouping. The subunit is introduced with an οὖν, which marks 6:31–33 as an inference from the preceding argument in 6:25–30. In addition to the use of οὖν, 6:32 contains two explanatory clauses, both introduced with γάρ which connects them to 6:31. The climactic positive imperative in 6:33 is introduced with δέ to create a point-counterpoint set with the negative command “do not be anxious” in 6:31.

Another feature that separates 6:31–33 from the preceding material is the repetition of the prohibition from 6:25, μὴ οὖν μεριμνήσητε.²¹ This repetition returns to the topic at hand after a lengthy digression but also marks 6:31–33 as a climactic imperative. As a unit, 6:31–33 conforms to the typical template established in the previous pericopes in which a positive command follows a single negated imperative. The material in 6:25–30 is a lengthy preamble, or pre-peak, to build up to this climactic subunit. I have previously argued that in a negative-positive command construction, the positive command is more salient than the negative, which serves as a foil. This is true

²⁰ The mention of Solomon may serve to ground this section in the wisdom tradition.

²¹ There is a shift in tense and mood. The verb μεριμνήσητε in 6:31 is an aorist subjunctive whereas μεριμνᾶτε in 6:25 is a present imperative.

for 6:31–33, and therefore, the central command of this saying is not “do not be anxious,” but “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.”

The two explanatory sayings introduced by *γάρ* in 6:32 function to ground the prohibitory subjunctive of 6:31 *μὴ οὖν μεριμνήσητε*. Both introduce important concepts which occur elsewhere in the Sermon. The first explanatory phrase depicts Gentiles as the negative foil to the command to seek the kingdom. The use of *ἔθνος* as the negative foil provides prominence. In 6:32, the disciples who have already been strikingly designated as *ὀλιγόπιστοι* are warned against acting like Gentiles who only seek for earthly things and “heap up empty phrases” to be heard (6:7). The mention of Gentiles in 6:32 is made even more prominent with the complete disappearance of the scribes and Pharisees or any reference to the Jewish cult in 6:19–7:11.

Jesus has referenced Gentiles twice before in the most prominent pericopes of each section of the Sermon (5:46–47; 6:7). In both cases, the mention of Gentiles is shocking and unexpected. The reader is meant to understand Gentiles as a more severe negative foil than the scribes and Pharisees. This is established by the first mention of Gentiles, using ascensive *καί*, “even the Gentiles.”²² In addition to adding shocking prominence, the mention of Gentiles in each section introduces a climactic saying. In 5:46–47, the introduction of the term *ἔθνη* immediately precedes the climactic call to be *τέλειος*, which is a summary conclusion to the section (5:48). The usage of *ἔθνη* in 6:7 introduces the Lord’s Prayer. Like the previous references to Gentiles, their mention here introduces a climactic saying, “seek first the kingdom.”

The second explanatory phrase is a reassurance of the Father’s care for his children. The disciple is not to be anxious for two reasons: because that is how Gentiles

²² In the climactic antithesis (5:43–48), both tax-collectors and Gentiles are introduced to emphasize the low ethic of loving only the lovable (5:46–47). This is a curious reference since the scribes and Pharisees have already been introduced as the negative foil (5:20). This reference is immediately followed by the climactic call to be *τέλειος* (5:48). Gentiles are again introduced in the context of the Lord’s Prayer where the term replaces the expected *ὑποκριτής* which refers to the scribes and Pharisees.

live and because disciples can trust the Father’s care. These two affirmations are also joined in the Lord’s Prayer (see table 22). There, the disciples are told not to be like Gentiles who “heap up empty phrases” in order to be heard. The grounding statement there is introduced by γάρ and is nearly identical in its description of the Father’s care.

Table 22. Parallel structure of Matthew 6:7–8 and 6:31–32

Matthew 6:7–8	Matthew 6:31–32
And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases. . .	Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’
as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them	For the Gentiles seek after all these things
for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.	and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.

The climactic positive imperative of 6:33 is marked by the mention of “kingdom” βασιλεία and “righteousness” δικαιοσύνη, and is the only place the terms are both used in 6:19–7:11. Jonathan Pennington remarks that the parallel mention of “kingdom” and “righteousness” make this verse “a thermographic hot spot in the Sermon” and that the terms are not “two separate items to be sought but one.”²³ These terms are keywords that occur prominently throughout the Sermon but also provide high-level discourse cohesion.²⁴ Of significance is proximity and close relationship of the

²³ Jonathan T. Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing: A Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), 249.

²⁴ Davies and Allison regard καὶ τὴν δικαιοσύνην αὐτοῦ as a “redactional addition which helps settle 6:25–34 firmly into the sermon on the mount.” W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., *Matthew 1–7*, vol 1. of *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, ICC (London: T & T Clark, 1988), 661.

terms “kingdom” and “righteousness” in this verse.²⁵ This is also the only time in the Sermon that the two terms are explicitly linked: here via a connective *καί*.²⁶ While *βασιλεία* will occur again in 7:21; this is the last time *δικαιοσύνη* appears in the Sermon.

The mention of the kingdom is even more prominent given that Matthew chooses “kingdom of God.”²⁷ This is striking language since Matthew prefers “kingdom of heaven,” and this has been the phrasing of choice in the Sermon on the Mount except for the reference “your kingdom” in the Lord’s Prayer (6:10). Matthew returns to the usage of “kingdom of heaven” in 7:21. Matthew only uses the phrase “kingdom of God” five times in his Gospel (Matt 6:33; 12:28; 19:24; 21:31, 43).

The mention of kingdom and righteousness recalls the climactic beatitude (5:10) and, more significantly, the heading for the body of the Sermon, which demands “greater righteousness” (5:17–20).²⁸ The command to “seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness” is the imperative that answers the demand for greater righteousness in 5:20, 48.²⁹ Craig Blomberg writes, “Seeking first the righteousness of the kingdom implies obedience to all of Jesus’ commands and shows that the thesis of 5:20 continues

²⁵ The terms are used in the same macarism in 5:10 where those who are persecuted for righteousness receive the kingdom. In Matt 5:20, greater righteousness is required for entrance into the kingdom. Yet only in 6:33 are the terms so closely connected.

²⁶ Hagner takes the phrase *καί τὴν δικαιοσύνην αὐτοῦ* as “practically exegetical of the preceding phrase.” Donald Alfred Hagner, *Matthew. 1-13*, WBC, vol. 33A (Dallas: Word Books, 1993), 166.

²⁷ The UBS and Nestle-Aland texts include *τοῦ θεοῦ* in brackets. However, it would be uncharacteristic of Matthew to use *βασιλεία* without a modifier. The word is only used without a modifier seven times in Matthew, six of which are in the genitive and therefore modifies other nouns (4:23; 8:12; 9:35; 13:19; 13:38; 24:14), and one refers to earthly kingdoms (“kingdom against kingdom” in 24:7). Furthermore the genitive *αὐτοῦ* most likely has *τοῦ θεοῦ* as an antecedent. Bruce Manning Metzger, Deutsche Bibliographische Gesellschaft, and United Bible Societies. *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Biblegesellschaft, 2002), 15–16; Davies and Allison Jr., *Matthew 1-7*, 660n25; Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 161; John. Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids : W. B. Eerdmans, 2005), 314; For a case against the originality of *τοῦ θεοῦ*, see Wesley G. Olmstead, *Matthew 1-14: A Handbook on the Greek Text* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2019), 138.

²⁸ Kingsbury identifies the greater righteousness of 5:20 as the theme of the Sermon. Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 112.

²⁹ D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, In *EBC*, vol. 9, *Matthew, Mark, Luke*. ed. by Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 182.

to be advanced.”³⁰ This supports viewing 6:31–33 as the peak of the Sermon and the command of 6:33 as the central summary imperative of the Sermon.

The command to seek the kingdom is followed by another assurance of the Father’s care. The divine passive *προστεθήσεται* begins the pattern of the use of divine passives, which occurs here and in the subsequent pericopes of this section. Divine passives function as prominence markers in the Sermon on the Mount. This is supported by Matthew’s selective use and distribution of them. Of twelve divine passives in the Sermon, six appear in the exordium and Law and Prophets saying (5:3–20), and six occur in 6:19–7:11. This occurrence is the first in this series (6:33; 7:2, 7, 8). The divine passives which occur in the peak construction (6:33; 7:7–8), like those in the Beatitudes (5:4, 6, 7, 9), emphasize the gracious promises of the Father.

Matthew 6:34 is introduced with another inferential *οὖν* and is best understood as an inference from the immediately preceding material, particularly 6:33b.³¹ Just as the lengthy argument for the Father’s care in 6:25–30 culminated in the repetition of the command “do not be anxious” (6:31), in the same manner, the affirmation of the Father’s care in 6:33b results in a third repetition of the prohibition against anxiety. This repetition at the end of the pericope forms an *inclusio* with the initial command in 6:25. The mention of “tomorrow” *αὔριον* may recall the fourth petition of the Lord’s Prayer, which asks for today’s bread (6:11).

The Denouement (7:6–11)

Matthew 7:6–11 possesses natural prominence because of its penultimate position in the body of the Sermon before the Law and Prophets *inclusio* (7:12). Ernst Baasland states, “Matt 7,9–11 illuminates *the rhetorical strategy in the SM*. This parable

³⁰ Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, NAC, vol. 22 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 126.

³¹ Olmstead, *Matthew 1-14*, 139.

is the last, decisive saying in the *argumentatio*. . .”³² For this reason, it deserves special attention within the third section and the Sermon as a whole.

Like Matthew 6:25–34, this pericope shows a change of pace. Instead of slowing down the pace as in the former passage, it increases the pace using short, aphoristic sayings. A shift to short phrases and sentences can occur in discourse peaks. Robert Longacre writes, “Thus we may find at the peak of a story a shift to short, fragmentary, crisp sentences, which emphasize the change of pace.”³³ In the short verse in 7:7, three parallel imperatives are followed by three corresponding promises.

Matthew 7:6–11 displays other established features of prominence, namely, the use of rhetorical questions, divine passives, plural imperative verb forms, and pejorative terminology directed at the hearer. These discourse phenomena continue patterns established in the previous two pericopes. The reference to dogs and pigs recalls the mention of Gentiles in 6:32. In chapter five, I argued that 7:6–11 is a cohesive and intentional unit comprised of two subunits; 7:6–8 and 7:9–11. Both subunits begin with two foolish examples of giving followed by an assurance of the Father’s gracious giving. In this way, 7:6–11 is a double reinforcement of the principle of God’s gracious care for his children, which is prominent in 6:25–34.

The first subunit: exhortations and promises (7:6–8). I have argued that 7:6 should be grouped with 7:7–8 to form a point-counterpoint set with negative and positive commands. This structure is consistent with the rest of the Sermon on the Mount, particularly the eight structurally parallel pericopes in 6:1–18. The negative imperative “Don’t *give*” is answered with the positive “Ask and it will be *given*.” The positive imperative is triadic in form; the disciple is called to “ask,” “seek,” and “knock.”

³² Baasland, *Parables and Rhetoric in the Sermon on the Mount*, 475.

³³ Longacre, *The Grammar of Discourse*, 43.

Notably, *αἰτέω* is used in the introductory formula to the Lord's Prayer (6:8). Together with *δίδωμι*, the repetition of *αἰτέω* creates cohesion within 7:6–11. The verb, *δίδωμι*, occurs seven times in the Sermon on the Mount. Four of the seven occur in 7:6–11 (5:31, 42; 6:11; 7:6, 7, 11). Similarly, the verb *αἰτέω* is used seven times in the Sermon on the Mount, and five of the occurrences are in this passage (5:42; 6:8; 7:7–11). These two words bind the passage together and create a cohesive theme.

The verb *ζητέω* is a lexical cohesive tie with 6:33 as the word is used in the Sermon only in these two instances. This connection, as well as the many other cohesive ties between 6:25–34 and 7:6–11, provide interpretive constraint for the command and promise in 7:7–8. Nolland writes, “‘Seek’ repeats the verb of 6:33, which, with v. 32, provides focus and boundaries for the present seeking. Given the link with 6:33, Matthew will be glad to have this image in the prominent central position.”³⁴

The third command, *κρούετε* “knock,” has no other parallel in the Sermon but should be understood in continuity with the first two verbs. Some have seen a connection with the command to “knock” and entrance to the narrow gate in 7:13. Craig Keener says, “The door to be opened is the gate of salvation.”³⁵ While this is not a strong argument, the participle *εὐρίσκοντες* “ones who find” corresponds to *εὐρίσκει* in verse 8, “the one who seeks finds.” Like *ζητέω* in 6:33, *εὐρίσκω* is only found here in the Sermon on the Mount outside of 7:6–11.

The parallelism of the imperatives imply that they ought to be read as three metaphors emphasizing the same action.³⁶ The present tense of the imperatives means that they are continuous actions.³⁷ The three commands are grounded by three promises

³⁴ Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 325.

³⁵ Craig S. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1999), 245.

³⁶ Baasland, *Parables and Rhetoric in the Sermon on the Mount*, 468.

³⁷ Olmstead, *Matthew 1-14*, 145.

introduced by γάρ in 7:8. The promises are inclusive in their scope with πάντες; “all” who ask will receive, “all” who seek will find, and “all” who knock will have it opened. The divine passives δοθήσεται and ἀνοιγήσεται (7:7–8) continue the pattern established in 6:32 and 7:2 and emphasize the gracious working of the Father on behalf of his children.

Considering the cohesive nature of 6:25–34 and 7:6–11, a compelling parallel can be drawn between the earthly-minded Gentiles of 6:32 and the ravenous dogs and pigs of 7:6. The Gentiles have no appetite for the kingdom and righteousness, and the dogs have no appreciation for holy things, nor do the pigs have a desire for pearls. This understanding of the passage is reinforced by Matthew’s consistent usage of the terms “dogs” and “pigs” in a Gentile context (8:28–34; 15:21–28).

As I have previously argued, the term “Gentile” has been retooled in Matthew and often refers to outsiders to the believing community and not necessarily to ethnic Gentiles. Jesus redefines the concept of “Gentiles” to refer to outsiders (6:7, 32; 18:17). The immediate context seems to use Gentile to refer to “worldlings” or earthly-minded people (6:32). This is the case in 7:6, where dogs and pigs refer to those with no appetite for the kingdom and righteousness. Pennington agrees and says that “here, the normal terms of derision for gentiles (‘dogs’ and ‘swine’) are used to refer to unbelieving Jews (or anyone else) opposed to Jesus and his disciples.”³⁸ Robert Gundry argues that “pigs” and “dogs” refer to “nondisciples, including falsely professing disciples.”³⁹ The imagery of 7:6 serves to reinforce the characterization of Gentiles in 6:32 as those unconcerned with the kingdom but anxious about earthly concerns. The disdain the dogs and pigs have toward holy things and pearls is parabolic of those who have no desire for heavenly treasure but seek only the things of earth (cf. 6:19–20, 32).

³⁸ Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing*, 262.

³⁹ Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church under Persecution*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1994), 123.

The second subunit: the good gifts of the Father (7:9–11). The negative and positive commands of 7:6–11 appear only in the first subunit. The second subunit elaborates on the teaching of the first with two additional examples of giving (cf. 7:6), which introduce the climactic saying about the Father’s care for his children in 7:11. Whereas the first examples were presented as a negative imperative, these are presented in the form of rhetorical questions. Both rhetorical questions are introduced with the disjunctive ἢ, which is a typical function of the particle.⁴⁰ The rhetorical questions are introduced with the phrase “which one of you. . .” τίς ἐστὶν ἐξ ὑμῶν ἄνθρωπος, which is nearly identical to the introductory phrase of the third rhetorical question in 6:25–34, τίς δὲ ἐξ ὑμῶν (6:27).

Following the pattern of the previous two pericopes, the rhetorical questions lead to a climactic saying in 7:11, which is introduced with an inferential οὖν in the same way as the climactic saying in 6:31–33. The generosity of “evil” fathers is contrasted with the generosity of the heavenly Father. The οὖν introduces a first-class conditional sentence which combined with the phrase “how much more” forms an argument *a minori ad maius*, or from lesser to greater, much like the final rhetorical question in 6:25–34 “will he not much more clothe you” (6:30). John Nolland notes the significance, “Two examples and a ‘how much more’ structure to the argument repeat the pattern of 6:26–30 and point to the fundamental similarity between the two sections.”⁴¹

The protasis of 7:11 includes a predicate adjective construction in which the hearers are called πονηροί “evil.” This is the third in a progression of increasingly negative addresses of the hearers in this section (ὀλιγόπιστοι 6:30; ὑποκριτά 7:5), each occurring at the culmination of a series of rhetorical questions. The emphatic subject

⁴⁰ Frederick W. Danker, Walter Bauer, and William F. Arndt, *BDAG*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 432.

⁴¹ Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 327.

ὁμοῖς is fronted for emphasis as a topical frame.⁴² The apodosis assures the hearer of the Father’s willingness to give “good things” to those who ask. God is “much more” willing and generous in granting the petitions of those who ask him. Like 6:25–34, the care and generosity of the Father is the grounding truth of the pericope.⁴³

Desiring the Kingdom: An Interpretation of 6:19–7:11

The previous arguments have demonstrated the cohesiveness of the section 6:19–7:11 and the relationships between the pericopes. While this work has demonstrated the prominence of specific themes, an overall interpretation of the section in light of these observations is in order. Throughout this section, the matter of seeing, evaluating, and seeking is raised numerous times. With varying degrees of emphasis, the pericopes which comprise 6:19–7:11 address seeing properly, discerning between higher and lower things, and seeking the highest good. For these reasons, I have summarized this section of the Sermon on the Mount with the phrase, “desiring the kingdom.”

Seeing and Evaluating the Kingdom (6:19–24)

In 6:19–24, the disciple is called to value heavenly treasures above earthly treasures. A parable of the eye is included to highlight the importance of seeing rightly regarding wealth. This pericope presents the sort of value judgments the disciple must make. The disciple must value heavenly things over earthly things (6:19–20a), set his heart on the true treasures (6:20b), have a “whole” eye rather than an “evil” eye (6:22–23), and love the truly good and worthy Master (6:24). Baasland writes, “The expression ‘gather heavenly treasures’ takes the saying to a metaphorical level. It is an exhortation to

⁴² Davies and Allison entertain the idea that the emphatic ὁμοῖς distances Jesus from his hearers who are πονηροί in order to show his sinlessness. Davies and Allison, *Matthew 1-7*, 683–84.

⁴³ Allison Jr., “The Structure of the Sermon on the Mount,” 435.

think more than to act. It is rather difficult literally to gather treasures in heaven.”⁴⁴

The explanatory γάρ provides a ground for the command to store up heavenly rather than earthly treasures: “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” A fundamental reason for correctly evaluating earthly and heavenly treasure is that one’s inner being attaches to what is deemed valuable “because people’s treasures capture their allegiance.”⁴⁵ Pennington writes that this saying reinforces the idea that “true righteousness is a matter of the inner person. . . what one values is who one really is as a person.”⁴⁶ The call to esteem heavenly things of higher value is really a call to reorient one’s affections and cultivate desire for the higher things of heaven—which will be further specified as the “kingdom” and “righteousness” (6:33).

The parable about the eye raises the issue of clear sight, which has been prevalent in the Sermon (5:29; 7:3–5).⁴⁷ The disciple must have a “single” eye that sees things as they are and not an evil eye that fills the soul with darkness.⁴⁸ Then, he will be able to evaluate heavenly treasure properly and realign his affections and desires. David Turner writes, “An evil and covetous eye will hoard earthly possessions only to see them decay. A good and generous eye will store up treasures in heaven that will never decay.”⁴⁹ The “evil eye” reappears in Matthew 20:15 with identical phrasing (ὁ ὀφθαλμός σου πονηρός) and with reference to the desire for money.⁵⁰

⁴⁴ Baasland, *Parables and Rhetoric in the Sermon on the Mount*, 324.

⁴⁵ Olmstead, *Matthew 1-14*, 128.

⁴⁶ Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing*, 232–33.

⁴⁷ Perhaps the beatitude which says that the “pure in heart. . . shall see God” is relevant here (5:8). If one is to see the truly beautiful, one’s heart must be pure.

⁴⁸ The word “single” is used to refer to generosity elsewhere (Rom 12:8; 2 Cor 8:2; 9:11, 13; Jas 1:5). David E. Garland, *Reading Matthew: A Literary and Theological Commentary*, Reading the New Testament Series (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2001), 81.

⁴⁹ David L. Turner, *The Gospel of Matthew*. In *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary*, vol. 11, *Matthew and Mark*, ed. by Philip Comfort, 1-389 (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2005), 106.

⁵⁰ There are several Jewish sayings about the “evil eye” (Deut 15:9; Prov 23:6; 28:22; Tob 4:7; Sir 14:8; 26:11) Davies and Allison, *Matthew 1-7*, 640.

The theme of affections and desire appears again in the final saying in which the disciple must exclusively “love” and “be devoted” to one of two masters. The disciple’s heart will follow what he deems valuable, and his devotion will “enslave” him to that which his heart is attached. The logic of this passage is simple; to value heavenly things is to love God, and vice versa.

The images of 6:19–24 set the framework in which the following sections are to be interpreted. To seek the higher things (6:33), one must have a radical reorientation of desire rooted in a clear vision and evaluation of earthly and heavenly priorities. Aristotle taught a similar philosophy of desire, “Choice will be a deliberate desire of things in our power; for we first deliberate, then select, and finally fix our desire according to the result of our deliberation.”⁵¹ Pennington comments on the ethical teaching of Aristotle to demonstrate the critical role of desire in discipleship:

Aristotle taught that a virtuous person is the one who exhibits harmonious psychological functioning—that is, both the *desiring* and *judging* parts of the soul must be in harmony. It is less virtuous to know and do the right thing if we don’t also desire it than to both desire and do the right thing. . . virtue comes from deliberating and learning what is good and then both desiring and acting upon it.⁵²

Pennington continues, “We cannot be virtuous accidentally or in part. A virtuous action includes all of who we are as humans—reasoning, affections, and embodied actions—our whole person.”⁵³ Augustine likewise acknowledged the need for right desires in obeying the Sermon on the Mount: “Concerning those hungering and thirsting after righteousness, he says, “Fortitude corresponds to those who hunger and thirst, for they labor in a desire for the joy that comes from what is truly good and in an effort to stem their love for the earthly and corruptible.”⁵⁴ Matthew 6:19–24 reinforces this truth, that the disciple must

⁵¹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. H. Rackham, Loeb Classical Library 73 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926), 140–41.

⁵² Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing*, 33.

⁵³ Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing*, 33.

⁵⁴ Augustine, *The Lord’s Sermon on the Mount*, ed. Johannes Quasten and Joseph C. Plumpe,

have right judgment and evaluate in a way that reorients desire around what is truly good—the kingdom and righteousness (6:33).

Seeking the Kingdom (6:25–34)

The connective διὰ τοῦτο explicitly connects this passage with the preceding one, and the thematic connections are obvious. Earthly treasures become daily necessities, and Jesus specifies what “laying up treasure in heaven” should look like: “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.” As I have previously argued, the pericopes of the Sermon should be understood primarily by their positive exhortations, not the negative alternative. Therefore, this pericope is not primarily about “how to stop worrying and start living” but about the clear call to “seek the kingdom.” Anxiety should be understood as the competing concern which seeks to “choke” and thwart our pursuit of the kingdom (cf. Matt 13:22).⁵⁵

The earthly value system introduced in 6:19–24, which stores up earthly treasures, is identified with a specific group: Gentiles, or outsiders to the believing community (6:32). The *Letter of Aristeas* makes a strikingly similar claim about Gentiles:

[T]he leading priests among the Egyptians. . . gave us the title “men of God,” which is ascribed exclusively to those who worship the true God, and not to *those who are concerned with meat and drink and clothes*, their whole attitude (to life) being concentrated on these concerns. Such concerns are of no account among the people of our race, but throughout the whole of their lives their main objective is concerned with the sovereignty of God.⁵⁶

Being consumed with earthly needs is the modus operandi of outsiders, not children of the kingdom. The shift from “storing up treasures on earth” to discussing basic human

trans. John J. Jepson, *Ancient Christian Writers*, vol. 5 (New York: Paulist Press, 1948), 18-19.

⁵⁵ Osborne argues that *μεριμνάω* can mean “work hard, strive after” and could be understood as having an active sense like the seeking of the Gentiles 6:32. Osborne, *Matthew*, 249–50.

⁵⁶ Emphasis mine. R. J. H. Shutt, trans. “The Letter of Aristeas,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 2, *Expansions of the “Old Testament” and Legends, Wisdom, and Philosophical Literature, Prayers, Psalms and Odes, Fragments of Lost Judeo-Hellenistic Works*, ed. by James. H. Charlesworth, 7-34 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 22.

needs shows that serving “mammon” does not necessarily mean amassing great wealth but can refer to being consumed by anxiety over earthly needs.

Matthew 6:31–33 is the climactic saying and the main idea of this section. It will receive elaboration and confirmation in 7:6–11, the penultimate pericope in the body of the Sermon. Its positive command in 6:33 is the central imperative, “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.” This command can only be obeyed by those who reject the value system of the Gentiles and have evaluated heavenly treasure to be of greater worth than things of earth.

Since kingdom and righteousness are connected as the single telos of the disciples’ seeking, they should mutually inform one another’s meaning.⁵⁷ To pursue the kingdom is to pursue the righteousness Jesus demands (5:20). The genitive pronoun αὐτοῦ makes clear that not only is the kingdom God’s kingdom, but the righteousness is God’s righteousness.⁵⁸ Righteousness can be simply defined as “doing the will of God,” which is revealed in the teaching of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount (cf. 7:21, 24, 26).⁵⁹ Pennington defines righteousness as “whole–person behavior that accords with God’s nature, will, and coming kingdom.”⁶⁰

The divine passive προστεθήσεται affirms that the disciple’s basic human needs are essential and will be provided by God. Even this promise undergirds the logic of this section. While the Gentiles make earthly needs and treasure their pursuit, the disciple is to seek the kingdom and righteousness and trust God to graciously provide his needs. Nolland writes, “The challenge is to find one’s way forward in life with a clear focus on

⁵⁷ Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing*, 249.

⁵⁸ Nolland observes, “Several translations (including the NRSV alternative) understand the sense as ‘its [the kingdom’s] righteousness’, which would be very attractive if it were grammatically possible, but the masc./neut. form can hardly refer back to the fem. noun for ‘kingdom’. Failing that, the antecedent must be God as referred to in v. 32 (‘your heavenly Father’).” Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 314.

⁵⁹ Carson, *Matthew*, 182.

⁶⁰ Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing*, 91.

the kingdom of God and a deep trust that, as one looks to him, God will open the way ahead.”⁶¹

Seeing and Evaluating Others (7:1–5)

In 7:1–5, the message shifts from earthly and heavenly concerns to the disciple’s personal relationships. At first glance, this pericope appears to be a non sequitur or an excursus between 6:25–34 and 7:6–11. However, as I have previously argued, several formal features create cohesion with 7:1–5 and the surrounding pericopes. After the climactic command to “seek the kingdom,” 7:1–5 functions as a warning which contrasts with the assurances and promises of 6:25–34.

Like the surrounding pericopes, 7:1–5 contains divine passives (7:2). However, in 6:33 and 7:7–8, the divine passives are blessings, but the actions are presented as warnings here. The disciple who judges harshly is in danger of being “judged” *κριθήσεσθε* by God, and the same measure he uses will be “measured” *μετρηθήσεται* back to him.⁶² The change of tone is explicit. Combined with the warnings of 7:2, the use of the negative address *ὑποκριτὰ* is shocking since this term was previously used of the scribes and Pharisees (6:2, 5, 16).

The theme of sight recalls the “evil eye” of 6:22–23. Here, the disciple’s sight is obscured by a log in his eye. Like 6:19–24, which called the disciple to see clearly and evaluate heavenly things, this passage calls the disciple to see his brother clearly in order to evaluate him rightly. The disciples’ eyes cannot evaluate the kingdom rightly if they do not clearly see and evaluate their fellow believers.⁶³ This passage does not prohibit

⁶¹ Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 325.

⁶² While used in the context of a warning in 7:2, *μετρέω* is a neutral word and can have a positive sense (cf. Luke 6:38). The saying comes from grain contracts which “specified that grain delivery and payment therefore would be measured with the same instrument.” Nolland, *Luke 1:1–9:20*, 301.

⁶³ Perhaps Jesus expects the temptation to pride given the recent emphasis on the Father’s care for the disciples against the Gentile outsiders who do not seek the kingdom.

addressing the sin of others, but the main command, “first take the log out of your own eye,” prepares the disciple to “take the speck out of your brother’s eye.” In Matthew 18:15, the disciple who successfully corrects his sinning brother is said to “gain” his brother. Jesus intends for his disciples to see the value of both the kingdom and their fellow disciples.

Matthew 7:1–5 recalls the theme of horizontal and vertical relationships in the Sermon. Our relationship with God cannot be divorced from our relationship with others (5:9, 23–24; 6:14–15; 7:12). Just as the disciple must reconcile before offering sacrifices (5:23–24) and forgive before praying the Lord’s Prayer (6:14–15); he must deal with his sin and judge his brother rightly before asking, seeking, and knocking. This passage serves as a warning to restore relationships with others in order to possess a confident expectation of answered requests (cf. 7:7–8). One cannot seek the righteousness which comes from God while clinging to a self-righteous attitude that ignores one’s own sin and judges the sins of others.

Seeking and Finding the Kingdom (7:6–11)

As the final saying in the third section of the body of the Sermon, 7:6–11 resumes the theme of 6:25–34 to elaborate on the command to seek the kingdom. The theme of “seeking” explicitly raised in 6:33 is resumed in this passage by the invitation to seek in order to find. The preceding sections have prepared the hearer for the exhortations and promises of 7:6–11. To ask rightly, one must have the value system presented in 6:19–24, must have the kingdom as his desire (6:33), and must have a right view of his brother (7:1–5). W. D. Davies and Dale Allison write,

In our estimation, the passage’s function within the sermon on the mount as a whole holds the key. Like 6.25-34, Mt 7.7-11 serves to offer the disciple assurance in the face of the difficult commands of Mt 5-7. This implies that the ‘good things’ are precisely all that is required to live the life of faithful discipleship as this is set forth

in the great sermon.⁶⁴

I have previously addressed the cohesive relationship between 6:25–34 and 7:6–11, so I will not review those features in detail here. The proverb in 7:6 reminds the hearer that some recipients are unworthy of kingdom gifts, for they do not have the value system necessary to desire it (cf. eyes to see, Matt 13:13). This recalls the Gentiles of 6:32 who have no desire for the pearls of the kingdom, and instead seek only for earthly things. The two rhetorical questions in 7:9–10 provide two examples that parallel the dogs and pigs of 7:6. To give valuable gifts to one who does not desire them is wasteful, and to withhold good gifts from one who asks for them is cruel.

Matthew 7:6–11 is the culminating exhortation of this section and essentially repeats the peak verse in 6:33 with added promises. Jesus exhorted his disciples to “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness” in 6:33, but there was no guarantee of success. The exhortations and promises of 7:7–8 not only reiterate the command of 6:33 but assure the disciple of success. The one who asks receives. The one who seeks finds. The one who knocks will have the door opened. Manson says, “God wills that the kingdom of heaven and its righteousness be given to men, and he accomplishes this purpose.”⁶⁵

The promises in 7:7–8 recall the fourth beatitude in which those who “hunger and thirst for righteousness” are *χορτασθήσονται* “satisfied.” Pennington observes that the fourth beatitude is “basically synonymous” with the call to seek the kingdom in 6:33.⁶⁶ Louw and Nida classify the verbs *διψάω* and *πεινάω* in a related semantic subdomain with *ζητέω* as verbs of desire.⁶⁷ This underscores the centrality of right desires to the theme of

⁶⁴ Davies and Allison, *Matthew 1-7*, 685.

⁶⁵ William Manson, *Jesus the Messiah: The Synoptic Tradition of the Revelation of God in Christ: With Special Reference to Form Criticism* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1943), 80.

⁶⁶ Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing*, 249.

⁶⁷ Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 287.

seeking the kingdom.

The term “ask” leads some to conclude that this is a teaching on prayer. However, “ask” is one of three parallel metaphors. The parallelism of the imperatives suggests that they be read as three metaphors emphasizing the same action.⁶⁸ The present tense of the imperatives implies that they are continuous actions.⁶⁹ Like the present imperative “seek” in 6:33, these metaphors emphasize desiring and striving for the kingdom. This certainly does not exclude prayer as a means of “seeking,” but to relegate the teaching of 7:6–11 as simple prayer misses the cohesiveness of the passage with 6:33 and obscures the point of the passage. Baasland writes, “The theological impact should not be found in themes at which the parable is only hinting, e.g., the doctrine of prayer or to the theme of human corruption. The core message in the text is the doctrine of grace or the theocentric perspective on trust in God.”⁷⁰

The climactic saying in 7:11 is presented as an inference from the two rhetorical questions. Here, Jesus supports the claim that everyone who asks receives by appealing to the goodness of the heavenly Father, which is far greater than the goodness of earthly fathers. Jesus says that even evil or earthly fathers give their children good gifts when they ask. If this is the case, then the heavenly Father will “much more” give good things to those who ask. N. T. Wright acknowledges the significance of this saying for the Sermon and suggests that a title for the whole Sermon could be, “What it means to call God ‘father.’”⁷¹ The comparison of the “evil” earthly fathers and the heavenly Father may suggest a difference in the gifts. Ulrich Luz agrees, saying,

The reference to human evil is a rhetorical means of strengthening the certainty of

⁶⁸ Baasland, *Parables and Rhetoric in the Sermon on the Mount*, 468.

⁶⁹ Olmstead, *Matthew 1-14*, 145.

⁷⁰ Baasland, *Parables and Rhetoric in the Sermon on the Mount*, 485.

⁷¹ N. T. Wright, *Matthew for Everyone*, 2nd ed, New Testament for Everyone (London: SPCK, 2004), 59.

faith. Its purpose is not to develop an anthropological pessimism but to clarify the “how much more” by pointing out that earthly fathers are comparable to the heavenly Father only in a very limited sense. It also makes possible the powerful contrast between evil people and good gifts: How good will the gifts be of the heavenly Father who is really good?⁷²

Carson likewise maintains that the good things the Father gives are kingdom gifts: “The blessings promised as a result of these prayers are not the blessings of common grace (cf. 5:45) but of the kingdom.”⁷³ Keener writes, “Contextually, the supreme object of ‘seeking’ is the kingdom; though disciples ask God to supply their material needs (6:11), they do not ‘seek’ them zealously (6:32–33; cf. 1 Tim. 6:5–11).”⁷⁴

As the final pericope in 6:19–7:11, Matthew 7:6–11 draws upon its immediate context and from the larger context of the Sermon on the Mount to provide a gracious invitation to seek the kingdom and righteousness from God. Considered with the promise of God to satisfy those who “hunger and thirst for righteousness,” righteousness should be considered within the context of the Sermon on the Mount as both a requirement and a gift (5:20; 5:6). Donald Hagner writes,

Participation in the kingdom, as Matthew has already informed us (see 5:20), necessitates righteousness of a qualitatively new kind. The gift of the kingdom and the demand of this new righteousness are inseparable. Thus gift, and not merely demand, is implied in this text.⁷⁵

The gift of the kingdom and righteousness is probably not a reference to Pauline justification by faith but the divine aid necessary for obedience to Jesus’s teaching.⁷⁶ D.

⁷² Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, trans. James E. Crouch, ed. Helmut Koester. Rev ed. Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 359.

⁷³ Carson, *Matthew*, 187.

⁷⁴ Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, 244-45.

⁷⁵ Hagner, *Matthew. 1-13*, 166.

⁷⁶ Although Paul likely knew much of the Sermon on the Mount. Dale C. Allison, “The Pauline Epistles and the Synoptic Gospels: The Pattern of the Parallels,” *NTS* 28, no. 1 (January 1982); Craig L. Blomberg, “Quotations, Allusions, and Echoes of Jesus in Paul,” *Studies in the Pauline Epistles: Essays in Honor of Douglas J. Moo*, 2014; David L. Dungan, *The Sayings of Jesus in the Churches of Paul: the Use of the Synoptic Tradition in the Regulation of Early Church Life* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971); Seyoon Kim, “Sayings of Jesus,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, by Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid, The IVP Bible Dictionary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993); Michael. Thompson, *Clothed with Christ: The Example and Teaching of Jesus in Romans*

A. Carson agrees, saying,

[T]he Sermon on the mount lays down the righteousness, sincerity, humility, purity, and love expected of Jesus' followers; and now it assures them such gifts are theirs if sought through prayer. . . Jesus assures his followers that, far from demanding the impossible, he is providing the means for the otherwise impossible.⁷⁷

This understanding provides the basis for a pneumatological reading of the Sermon on the Mount, which is precisely how Luke interprets the saying in his Gospel when he substitutes “the Holy Spirit” for the good gifts of the Father (Luke 11:9–13). The believer should desire to fulfill the requirements of discipleship but should also depend on God to empower and sustain him to do so.

Supporting Texts from Matthew

The previous interpretation has identified the theme of 6:19–7:11 as “Desiring the Kingdom” and argued for a specific interpretation of 7:6–11 in which the goal of “asking, seeking, and knocking” are the twin gifts of the kingdom and righteousness. This interpretation builds off the grouping I argued for in chapter five, in which 7:6–11 is an intentional unit. While this interpretation has support from within the Sermon itself, two key texts from elsewhere in the Gospel of Matthew support both the grouping and interpretation I have proposed. The parable of the pearl of great price in Matthew 13:45–46 and Jesus’s encounter with the Canaanite woman in Matthew 15:24–27 support the interpretation of this chapter.

Matthew 13:45–46

The parable of the pearl of great price (Matt 13:45–46) contains lexical and thematic parallels with 7:6–8, the first subunit of 7:6–11. These parallels support the demarcation of these verses as a subunit as well as the interpretation of the pericope

12.1-15.13, JSNTSup 59 (Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1991); David Wenham, *Paul: Follower of Jesus or Founder of Christianity?* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1995).

⁷⁷ Carson, *Matthew*, 186.

proposed in this dissertation.⁷⁸

“Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your *pearls* [μαργαρίτας] before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you. ⁷ “Ask, and it will be given to you; *seek, and you will find* [ζητείτε καὶ εὐρήσετε]; knock, and it will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks receives, and *the one who seeks finds* [ὁ ζητῶν εὐρίσκει], and to the one who knocks it will be opened (Matthew 7:6–8).

⁴⁵ “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant *in search of* [ζητοῦντι] fine *pearls* [μαργαρίτας], ⁴⁶ who, on *finding* [εὐρών] one *pearl* [μαργαρίτην] of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it (Matthew 13:45–46).⁷⁹

Matthew 13:44–46 is related to 7:6–8 lexically and thematically. The terms “pearl,” “seek,” and “find” are present in both pericopes. The term μαργαρίτης “pearl” is only used three times in Matthew and appears only in these two pericopes.⁸⁰ The terms ζητέω and εὐρίσκω appear together only four times in Matthew. Matthew 7:6–8 and 13:44–46 are the only instances where they appear in reference to discipleship.⁸¹ Significantly, the lexical similarities with 13:44–46 occur within the first subunit of 7:6–8, underscoring the validity of seeing 7:6–8 as a subunit of 7:6–11. Thematically, the passages are similar in that both call the disciple to seek and find. The treasure hunter is the opposite of the pig. The pig has no appetite for pearls, but the treasure hunter is seeking them.⁸²

If the parallels between 7:6–8 and 13:45–46 are accepted as linking the pericopes, this reinforces the interpretation of 7:6–8 as seeking to obtain the kingdom and

⁷⁸ Other commentators notice the lexical connections: Scot McKnight, *Sermon on the Mount*, Story of God Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 238; John P. Meier, *Matthew* (Wilmington, DE: M. Glazier, 1980), 69; W. F. Albright and C. S. Mann, *Matthew*, 1st edition, AB (New York: Doubleday, 1971), 84.

⁷⁹ Emphasis mine.

⁸⁰ Μαργαρίτης occurs nowhere else in the Gospels. It only appears 9 times in the NT: Matt 7:6; 13:45; 13:46; 1 Tim 2:9; Rev. 17:4; 18:12; 18:16; 21:21.

⁸¹ Matthew 12:43–44 mentions the unclean spirit “seeking” rest and “finding” none; in 18:12–13, the good shepherd “seeks” and “finds” the lost sheep.

⁸² If one widens the comparison, more lexical parallels can be traced between Matthew 13:44–46 with the entire section of 6:19–7:11. The terms “kingdom of heaven,” “treasure,” “field,” “seek,” “find,” and “pearls” are found in both sections.

righteousness. This is the explicit meaning of the parable, which states that “the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls.” The association of these two pericopes supports reading the “holy things” and “pearls” of 7:6 as kingdom blessings and reading the promises of 7:7–8 as kingdom promises. Both sections are followed by eschatological judgment sayings (7:13–27; 13:47–50). If these similarities are meant to link these passages, then the treasure hunters and disciples of chapter 13 may be demonstrations of the principle in 7:6–11.

Matthew 15:24–27

Another key text which contains lexical and thematic similarities to 7:6–11 is the account of the Canaanite woman who asks for healing for her daughter in Matthew 15:21–28 (see table 23). During the dialogue between the woman and Jesus, several lexical correspondences with 7:6–11 exist. Several commentators have noted the connection between 7:6 and 15:26–27 in the use of the term “dog.”⁸³ Many dismiss the connection due to the use of the diminutive *κυνάριον* instead of *κύων*. However, if the Gentile interpretation of 7:6 is accepted, then the words are, in fact, linked since they are both used to stress the otherness of Gentiles. I have argued that a traditional saying provides the basis for 7:6, but the saying in 15:26–27 could also reflect a common proverb.⁸⁴

When comparing the story to the broader pericope of 7:6–11, more similarities emerge. Both pericopes utilize animal imagery in contrasting ways. The most apparent connection is the usage of the term dog: *κυνάριον* in 15:26–27 and *κύων* in 7:6. The two

⁸³ The use of *κυνάριον* in 15:26–27 refers to small house dogs rather than wild dogs. Otto Michel, “Κύων, Κυνάριον,” in *TDNT*, vol. 3, eds. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey William Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich 1101–04 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 1104.

⁸⁴ Davies and Allison suggest that a traditional saying underlies Jesus’ words in 15:26–27. It is likely that 7:6 comes from a common proverb as well, as I have argued. W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., *Matthew 8–20*, vol 2. of *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, ICC (London: T & T Clark, 2004), 554.

passages also contrast two types of animal husbandry. The phrase “lost sheep” characterizes the Israelites to whom Jesus is sent (cf. 10:5–6). This contrasts with the pigs who are fed in 7:6 (see 8:33 for pig herdsman). Jesus is sent to sheep, not dogs or pigs.

In both passages, the children’s bread is mentioned. The first rhetorical question in 7:9 reveals that earthly fathers give bread to their children when they ask. However, Jesus tells the Canaanite woman, “It is not right to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.” Also, both passages use βάλλω to refer to throwing something to animals. One should not throw pearls before pigs (βάλητε), and one should not throw the children’s bread to dogs (βαλεῖν).

In addition to the lexical similarities, the general theme of exclusion and unworthiness is present. The Canaanite woman finds herself an example of the pigs and dogs of 7:6 when she comes to Jesus. However, by “asking, seeking, knocking,” she becomes a living example of 7:7–11. In any case, the narrative of 15:24–27 supports the redefining of Gentiles as a non-ethnic classification since this woman’s faith was ultimately rewarded. The words ζητέω (7:7–8) and θέλω (15:17) are classified in the same semantic subdomain in Louw-Nida, “Desire, Want, Wish (25.1–25.11).”⁸⁵

⁸⁵ J. P. Louw, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*. New York: United Bible Societies, 1996, 287.

Table 23. Comparison of Matthew 7:6–11 and 15:24–27

Matthew 7:6–11	Matthew 15:24–27
animal husbandry: pigs	animal husbandry: lost sheep
κύων	κυνάριον
throwing pearls βάλητε (AAS2P βάλλω)	throwing bread βαλεῖν (PAN βάλλω)
children’s bread ἄρτον. . . τοῖς τέκνοις ὑμῶν	children’s bread τὸν ἄρτον τῶν τέκνων
“Ask and it will be given”	No lexical parallel, but a narrative parallel.
ζητέω (Louw and Nida 25.9)	θέλω (Louw and Nida 25.1)

Conclusion

The third section of the Sermon on the Mount is bound by several cohesive features and forms an intentional unit comprised of four pericopes. Each of these pericopes carries the thesis of the section forward by presenting the value system required of disciples (6:19–24), the climactic call to seek the kingdom and righteousness (6:25–34), a warning against presumptuous self-righteousness (7:1–5), and a final exhortation to ask, seek, and knock grounded in the assurance of the Father’s grace (7:6–11).

Understanding the climactic saying in 6:31–33 as the peak of the Sermon and 7:6–11 as the denouement gives interpretive clarity and provides a ground for reading the Sermon in the context of grace.

CHAPTER 7

THE HOMILETIC VALUE OF DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

The previous chapters have shown that, rightly applied, discourse analysis principles can strengthen existing interpretive methods and, in some cases, further illuminate the meaning of difficult passages. Discourse analysis can provide new solutions to interpretive problems. Since the area of homiletics is directly affected by hermeneutical methods, there are homiletical implications of utilizing discourse analysis. This chapter proposes homiletical benefits of discourse analysis and implications for preaching the Sermon on the Mount. First, four benefits of discourse analysis for preaching will be considered. Discourse analysis defines pericope boundaries, discerns the function of the text, determines the shape of the sermon, and directs consecutive expository preaching.

Discourse Analysis Defines Pericope Boundaries

Before he can preach a biblical text, the homiletician must select a demarcated text, or “preachable unit.” Hershael York identifies a preachable unit as “a passage that recognizes the natural divisions of the author yet acknowledges time constraints that a preacher must respect.”¹ Choosing where to identify boundaries between pericopes is not always straightforward. York also speaks of preaching through different “lenses” for different types of passages.² Some passages will require a closer look while others require a wider “lens.” Most biblical paragraphs contain the appropriate amount of content and

¹ Hershael W. York and Bert. Decker, *Preaching with Bold Assurance: A Solid and Enduring Approach to Engaging Exposition* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 36.

² Hershael York, “Preaching Points: Choosing the Right Lens,” *Preaching.com*. Accessed July 5, 2021. <https://www.preaching.com/articles/preaching-points-choosing-the-right-lens/>

have sufficient structure from which to draw a single sermon. However, a sermon may be built off a single verse or sentence. Some discourses extend over multiple paragraphs yet contain one unified account that should not be broken into multiple sermons. This is common in narrative accounts.

The preacher can utilize some freedom in determining preaching units. Benjamin Walton identifies a preaching unit as a “complete unit of thought” or “CUT.”³ A faithful sermon, for example, could preach several pericopes together and focus on a macro-theme that binds the section together. Abraham Kuruvilla defines a pericope as “a portion of text from which one can preach a sermon that is distinct in theological thrust/force and application from sermons preached from adjacent pericopes” and states that the “slicing” of pericopes will vary from preacher to preacher.⁴ However, biblical texts have definite pericope boundaries at the micro and macro levels, and the preacher must be aware of them. York says, “Natural divisions must never be ignored, but they sometimes must be further divided or, on the other hand, combined.”⁵ Regardless of the preaching strategy or “slicing” method employed, the homiletician must be aware of the discourse features which demarcate the boundaries between units of text.

The homiletician need not reinvent the wheel with every text. Paragraph divisions in modern Bibles, whether translations or critical texts, combined with a multitude of homiletical outlines in commentaries and various other sources, provide the preacher with reliable resources to delineate preaching units. However, not all textual boundaries are easily identified, and many scholarly resources divide texts differently. Harold Bryson writes, “No expositor can depend altogether on what others have done in

³ Benjamin H. Walton, *Preaching Old Testament Narratives*, (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2016), 46.

⁴ Abraham Kuruvilla, *A Manual for Preaching: The Journey from Text to Sermon* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019), 5.

⁵ York and Decker, *Preaching with Bold Assurance*, 36.

translations and commentaries for paragraph designations. These resources help greatly, but expositors also need to learn to identify paragraphs and to learn their makeup.”⁶ Chapter five of this dissertation provides an example of a problematic textual boundary in 7:6–11 and proposes a definite grouping based on discourse features. Discourse analysis offers additional tools to help demarcate preaching units.

Discourse analysis is not only helpful in noting textual boundaries but in noting cohesive relationships across pericopes. This can provide a basis for preaching a larger portion of text, comprised of two or more pericopes, to better elucidate the discourse meaning of the text. Bryson notes the difference between narrative paragraphs and discourse paragraphs, where discourse paragraphs usually form a distinct “preachable” unit and narrative paragraphs can be one of several paragraphs in a single episode.⁷ Within the Sermon on the Mount, some pericopes that are commonly separated can be combined and preached together. The second and third antitheses may be preached as one unit, and the three sayings on private righteousness may be combined into one sermon (6:1–6; 16–18). At the end of this chapter, I will address these examples in further detail.

Another example from the Gospel of Matthew can be seen in Matthew 8:18–27, which contains two paragraphs usually separated from one another. The UBS text provides the following paragraph headings: “The Would-be Followers of Jesus” (8:18–22) and “The Calming of a Storm” (8:23–27).⁸ These two paragraphs can be preached as one episode detailing the nature of discipleship.

One could treat these as two distinct sermons; the first dealing with the cost of

⁶ Harold T. Bryson, *Expository Preaching: The Art of Preaching through a Book of the Bible* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 293.

⁷ Bryson, *Expository Preaching*, 294.

⁸ Kurt Aland, Barbara Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carla M. Martini, and Bruce M. Metzger, eds. *The Greek New Testament*, 5th ed. edition (Stuttgart: German Bible Society, 2014), 27.

following Jesus, and the second on the divine power of the Son of God.⁹ However, discourse and rhetorical clues indicate that these pericopes are a cohesive story which depicts the nature of true discipleship. Verses 18 and 23 show that both paragraphs occur in relation to Jesus's mission to Gadara (8:28–34). Jesus gives orders to cross the Sea of Galilee in 8:18, and after the dialogue with the “would-be disciples,” the journey resumes. In 8:23, the critical phrase “his disciples followed him” occurs, in which the disciples provide the positive answer to the negative example of the two would-be disciples. As such, the boat represents a watershed moment for Jesus's disciples. Also, Jesus's warning to the first seeker that “The Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head” foreshadows Jesus sleeping in the boat (vs. 20, 24). The storm on the sea further demonstrates the cost of discipleship.¹⁰ While the two paragraphs could indeed form standalone sermons, preaching these texts together allows the preacher to draw an even greater contrast between those who hesitated and those who entered the boat. This contrast is rooted in the text's discourse features and the author's rhetorical intention.

Discourse Analysis Discerns the Meaning and Function of the Text

The goal of any exegetical method is to determine with precision the author's purpose in writing a given text of Scripture. Walter Kaiser describes the exegetical process thusly, “exegesis will seek to identify the single truth-intention of individual phrases, clauses, and sentences as they make up the thought of paragraphs, sections, and, ultimately, entire books.”¹¹ This is what Haddon Robinson calls “the big idea.” He

⁹ Notice that while the disciples ask, “What sort of man is this that even winds and sea obey him?”, it is in the next pericope when this question is answered by the demons speaking to Jesus, “What have you to do with us, O Son of God?” (8:27, 29).

¹⁰ Bornkamm provides a helpful analysis of this passage. Günther Bornkamm, *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963), 53–57.

¹¹ Walter C. Kaiser Jr, *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998), 47.

elaborates on this concept, saying, “Ideally each sermon is the explanation, interpretation, or application of a single dominant idea supported by other ideas, all drawn from one passage or several passages of Scripture”¹² The examination of the selected text should isolate the particular purpose of the pericope within the context of the book. Bryan Chapell writes that an expository sermon is “a message whose structure and thought are developed from a biblical text, covering its scope.”¹³ York defines expository preaching as “any kind of preaching that shows people the meaning of a biblical text and leads them to apply it to their lives.”¹⁴ Other similar definitions could be provided which underscore that expository preaching is concerned with the meaning of a biblical text.

However, Kuruvilla takes the heart of the sermon beyond the simple idea of meaning and deals with the text’s function. Kuruvilla emphasizes discerning the “author’s doing,” or what he calls “pericopal theology,” in order to find the purpose of the text:

The discerning of the *doing* of the author (i.e. the pragmatics of the text), as opposed to determining the saying of the author (i.e. the semantics of the text), ought to be the goal of preachers if they want to arrive at valid application and have the text experienced in its fullness by their listeners.¹⁵

Kuruvilla illustrates this through the example of saying to someone, “Hey, you’re standing on my foot!” where the pragmatic meaning is that the other person should move their foot.¹⁶ Jonathan Pennington addresses the role of testimony in the Gospels specifically, “Testimony moves us beyond the mere referentiality of events to a claim of authority and the author’s purpose in writing.”¹⁷

¹² Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980), 33.

¹³ Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018), 9.

¹⁴ York and Decker, *Preaching with Bold Assurance*, 33.

¹⁵ Kuruvilla, *A Manual for Preaching*, 29.

¹⁵ Kuruvilla, *A Manual for Preaching*, 30-31.

¹⁶ Jonathan T. Pennington, *Reading the Gospels Wisely: A Narrative and Theological Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 151.

The purpose of the text should not merely be propositional but should include the intended effect in the recipient's life. Kuruvilla says, "Without privileging the text, without discerning what the author is doing, without arriving at the theology of the pericope, valid application is impossible."¹⁸ Kuruvilla lists three essential characteristics of application. It should be specific, striking, and singular—that is, a sermon should have a single application: "You've heard it said, 'One Lord, one faith, one baptism,' but I say unto you, 'One text, one sermon, one application.'"¹⁹ The authors of *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* instruct the reader to "Determine the original application(s)" by asking, "Is there a command to obey, an example to follow or to avoid, a promise to claim, a warning to heed, a teaching to act on, or a truth to believe?"²⁰ The application for the sermon should be a logical response to the proposition and shape the sermon's trajectory. Chapell says, "A true expository message, however, uses all its resources to move application."²¹ Formulating both the proposition and the application of the sermon from the beginning will guide the preparation process to unify and focus the sermon.

Discourse analysis aids the interpreter in discovering the function of the text. The principles of discourse analysis can help determine the purpose of the passage with greater precision. In chapter six, I argued that the main imperative of the extended passage in Matthew 6:25–34 occurs in 6:33, "seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness." Therefore, the lengthy material that discusses worry is not the passage's main point but instead prepares the reader for the climactic imperative of 6:33. Discourse analysis helps determine the rhetorical strategy of the biblical author and thereby discovers the meaning and function of a biblical text.

¹⁸ Kuruvilla, *A Manual for Preaching*, 7.

¹⁹ Kuruvilla, *A Manual for Preaching*, 75.

²⁰ William W. Klein et al., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, Rev. ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004), 611.

²¹ Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 69.

Discourse Analysis Determines the Shape of the Sermon

In addition to the boundaries of the pericope and the meaning/function of the text, discourse analysis helps to determine the shape or structure of the sermon. Sermonic structure is an integral part of homiletical method and is usually given thorough consideration in most homiletic textbooks. The methodology prescribed in these textbooks often overlaps with discourse analysis principles in several areas. However, discourse analysis provides specific methods that determine the textual structure and identifies features of prominence and cohesion that affect sermonic structure.

In crafting expository sermons, the preacher must be sensitive to the features of the text yet discerning in which features will be selected and emphasized in the sermon. Conscientious expositors may feel constrained to replicate the structure of the text in the homiletic outline of the sermon. Grant Osborne argues that the textual outline “must provide a control” on crafting the sermon and that its main points should be contextualized to “speak dynamically to the congregation.”²² While an expository sermon should be faithful to the text from which it is preached; the sermon is not a replica of the text. Rather, it is a separate work with its own features and characteristics. Kuruvilla says that the relationship of the sermon to the text may be compared to the relationship of an exhibit label in a museum that accompanies and describes a work of art. He uses the analogy of the preacher as a “curator guiding visitors in an art museum through a series of paintings” where the “sermon is thus more a *demonstration* of the thrust of the text than an argument validating a Big Idea.”²³ The sermon, in like manner, should be free to fulfill its purpose without slavishly imitating the form of the text. Dennis Cahill writes, “The sermon reshapes the written form of the text into the oral form of the sermon. Thus, the form of the sermon will not necessarily be the same as the form of the text. The

²² Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, Rev. ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007), 457.

²³ Kuruvilla, *A Manual for Preaching*, 88.

preacher will redesign a given text to fulfill the purpose of the sermon and communicate its idea.”²⁴ When shaping a sermon, the homiletician must consider the form and function of the text, as well as the weight and sequence of ideas.

Within the various genres of the Bible, numerous textual forms communicate truth in diverse ways. Whether the text appears as an aphorism, a parable, or narrative will affect the rhetorical function the text serves.²⁵ The particular form of the text may not be a suitable model for a homiletic outline. For instance, many parables contain lengthy descriptions of scenarios and images which serve to demonstrate a singular point. Creating an outline based on the structure of the text alone would be counterintuitive.

The expositor must consider whether replicating the structure of the text is the optimal way to faithfully represent the purpose or function of the text. If the function of the text, or the “author’s doing,”²⁶ is the point of the sermon, then the structure of the sermon should be concerned with communicating this point efficiently, not with merely replicating the structure of the text.

When structuring a sermon, the expositor should consider the sequence of ideas (or events) present in the text and determine if a unique sermonic outline is in order. For example, the biblical author may begin with an assertion and then follow with a grounding statement, but the contemporary audience would best be served if the ground for the assertion were explained, and the implications of the assertion provided after.

Not only must the sequence of ideas be evaluated, but their weight must be considered. In a series of ideas, the author may intend for the final mention to be the climax or the point to which the rest builds. In this case, the expositor would be wise to devote more time in the sermon to the one central idea. This “weighting” of ideas will

²⁴ Dennis M. Cahill, *The Shape of Preaching: Theory and Practice in Sermon Design* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007), 105.

²⁵ Cahill, *The Shape of Preaching*, 60.

²⁶ Kuruvilla, *A Manual for Preaching*, 29.

naturally affect the homiletic outline, with perhaps several verses being addressed in one sermon point and another devoted to one or a half verse.

I have argued that the shape of the sermon should be more than merely a replication of the structure of the text. Instead, a structure that effectively conveys the meaning and function of the text cohesively and coherently is to be preferred. Discourse analysis provides criteria for determining a text's climactic or most prominent portion. This can help the homiletician determine which parts of the text should be "weighted" more heavily in the sermon outline. Martyn Lloyd-Jones writes about the importance of a preacher "talking to his texts":

This procedure leads you to the thrust of the message of this particular statement. In order to arrive at this you will have to learn how to ask questions of your text. Nothing is more important than this. Ask questions such as, Why did he say that? Why did he say it in this particular way? What is he getting at? What was his object and purpose? One of the first things a preacher has to learn is to talk to his texts.²⁷

Lloyd-Jones emphasized the need to not only understand what is said but to understand why it was said in a particular way. This is one of the chief concerns of discourse analysis, and by asking these questions and applying discourse analysis principles to the text, the preacher may more faithfully discern the meaning of the text and the most faithful shape for the sermon.

Discourse Analysis Directs Consecutive Expository Preaching

Stephen Rummage writes, "Consistent, high-quality preaching requires good planning."²⁸ In his book, *Planning Your Preaching*, he provides several options for planning a preaching calendar. One such method is consecutive expository preaching. Consecutive expository preaching is a method whereby the preacher selects a large

²⁷ David Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 214–15.

²⁸ Stephen Nelson Rummage, *Planning Your Preaching: A Step-by-Step Guide for Developing a One-Year Preaching Calendar* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2002), 12.

portion of Scripture or an entire book of Scripture and divides it into a series of several consecutive sermons which are preached sequentially. Consecutive expository preaching requires work upfront. The preacher must be familiar with the book through which he is preaching and must outline the book into appropriate preaching units.

Discourse analysis is especially helpful for preachers who engage in *lectio continua* preaching or consecutive preaching through portions of Scripture. Such preaching seeks to exposit the meaning of the constituent parts of a complete discourse. A discourse may be an entire book of the Bible or an embedded discourse with a book such as the Sermon on the Mount. By analyzing whole discourses, the homiletician can determine the author's rhetorical strategy and more faithfully preach the parts in light of the whole. This is the task of discourse analysis, according to George Guthrie, who writes that the goal of discourse analysis is "better understanding both the parts and the whole of that discourse."²⁹ Discourse analysis truly shows its quality when applied beyond the level of the pericope to an entire discourse. Later in this chapter, I will propose an outline of sermons for preaching through the Sermon on the Mount.

Preaching the Sermon on the Mount

I have argued for specific interpretive procedures and conclusions as a result of applying discourse analysis to the Sermon on the Mount. These have important homiletical implications. As a result of this study, I have identified three key preaching implications specific to the Sermon on the Mount: preach the positive imperatives, preach within the context of grace, and preach as a practical pattern of discipleship.

Preach the Positive Imperatives

I have argued that the positive imperatives take precedence over the negative

²⁹ George Guthrie, "Discourse Analysis," in *Interpreting the New Testament: Essays on Methods and Issues*, ed. David Alan Black and David S. Dockery (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 255.

imperatives which precede them. The Sermon on the Mount should be preached not in light of its prohibitions but in light of its commands. This avoids a moralistic interpretation and grounds the Sermon in the kingdom. This is particularly true in the third section of the body, where the pericopes are often interpreted by their prohibitions. When the positive imperatives are subordinated to the negative, the pericopes become warnings against materialism (6:19–24), worry (6:25–34), and judging (7:1–6) with an additional saying on prayer (7:7–11). As a result, there is little harmony between the pericopes in this section and next to none with the surrounding portions of the Sermon. This leads to an atomistic approach to preaching the Sermon. However, when the positive imperatives are prioritized, the cohesive theme of the section is revealed, and the true priorities of Jesus’s disciples are seen. These four pericopes are all concerned with “desiring the kingdom.” The following headings are drawn from the positive imperatives and demonstrate greater cohesion.

1. Desiring the Kingdom (6:19–7:11)
 - a. Treasure the Kingdom (6:19–24)
 - b. Seek the Kingdom (6:25–34)
 - c. See Others Clearly (7:1–5)
 - d. Finding What You Seek (7:6–11)

Preach Within the Context of Grace

This dissertation has argued that the grace of the Father is a central theme in the Sermon on the Mount. This theme is established in the Beatitudes with their promises and divine passives (5:3–12).³⁰ Grace is present in the Lord’s Prayer with the accompanying assurance that the Father knows and cares for his children (6:8). Grace is

³⁰ W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., *Matthew 1-7*, vol. 1 of *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, ICC (London: T & T Clark, 2004), 466.

also the theme of the climactic portion of the Sermon, which calls disciples to seek the kingdom and trust the care of the Father (6:19–34). The closing exhortations to ask, seek, and knock and the subsequent promises that the seeker will be rewarded further reinforce this theme (7:7–8). Ernst Baasland writes, “The core message in the text is the doctrine of grace or the theocentric perspective on trust in God.”³¹ These promises culminate in the “how much more” saying in 7:11, “how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!” Martin Luther argued that the Sermon was “about the works and fruit that no one can do unless he is already a Christian and in a state of grace.”³²

John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, is an early example of preaching the Sermon on the Mount in the context of grace. The ninety sermons which comprise Chrysostom’s *Homilies on Matthew* preserve the earliest complete exposition of Matthew’s Gospel and the Sermon on the Mount.³³ Chrysostom interpreted the Sermon on the Mount in the context of the grace of God. Speaking of the eternal reward promised to those who follow the teachings of Christ in the Sermon, he writes, “which God grant that we may all attain, by the grace and love towards man of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be glory and power for ever and ever. Amen.”³⁴ He further writes, “Seest thou how He hath taught us also to be modest, by making it clear that virtue is not of our endeavors only, but also of the grace from above?”³⁵ Charles Quarles remarks that “Chrysostom saw

³¹ Ernst Baasland, *Parables and Rhetoric in the Sermon on the Mount: New Approaches to a Classical Text*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen Zum Neuen Testament 351 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 485.

³² Martin Luther, *Sermon on the Mount*, in vol. 5 of *Luther’s Works*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia, 1956), 291.

³³ Warren S. Kissinger, *The Sermon on the Mount: A History of Interpretation and Bibliography* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1975), 10.

³⁴ John Chrysostom, *Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on the Gospel of Saint Matthew in A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, vol. 10, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. George Prevost and M. B. Riddle (New York: Christian Literature, 1888), 534.

³⁵ Chrysostom, *Homilies*, 10:135.

no tension between the SM and the Pauline Epistles. The refrains ‘so also Paul’ (kai ho Paulos) is a hallmark of Chrysostom’s treatment of Matthew 5–7 that appears 50 times in the course of his exposition of the SM.”³⁶

The Sermon on the Mount promises the grace necessary to live out its commands. The hope of forgiveness and divine aid is built into the logic of the Sermon, especially in the Lord’s Prayer (6:12–13). In his essay, “Preaching the Sermon on the Mount,” David Wenham says that Jesus’s disciples “are to pray, because they need God’s grace helping them to live kingdom lives and to do the will of God, but also forgiving them when they fail.”³⁷ Even while preaching the demanding imperatives of the Sermon, the preacher must bear in mind the context of grace that pervades the Sermon. God promises to provide what we need to obey and to forgive us when we fall short.

Preach as a Practical Paradigm

The Sermon on the Mount must be preached not as an impossible ideal but as a pattern of genuine discipleship. The Sermon’s imperatives are genuine commands that are possible through the divine help available to disciples. The command to be “perfect” τέλειοι (5:48) is not a call to sinlessness or perfect obedience but to be like the Father. The disciples must be “whole-hearted” and “single-eyed” and not hypocrites.³⁸

Jesus’s harsh saying concerning lust is sometimes cited as an impossible ideal.³⁹ However, this misses the role of the positive imperatives in the Sermon. Jesus does not say “you must not lust at all,” for this would present a very difficult, if not

³⁶ Charles L. Quarles, *Sermon on the Mount: Restoring Christ’s Message to the Modern Church*, NAC Studies in Bible & Theology (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2011), 5.

³⁷ David Wenham, “Preaching the Sermon on the Mount,” in *Preaching the New Testament*, ed. Ian Paul and David Wenham (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 79.

³⁸ Jonathan T. Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing: A Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), 69–85.

³⁹ Wenham, “Preaching the Sermon on the Mount,” 75.

impossible, ideal. The command Jesus gives, while presented in hyperbolic language, offers a very possible goal: remove causes of temptation (cf. 18:7–9). Jesus does not call his disciples to a lust-free existence; instead, he calls them to a practice of eliminating opportunities of temptation. This guidance presupposes that the disciple has experienced lust to know the factors which have caused it. The Sermon on the Mount teaches the disciple how to deal with indwelling sin.

The implications of emphasizing the positive commands and the context of grace lead to an important conclusion: the Sermon on the Mount is a message for sinners. Wenham remarks, “Jesus presumes that his disciples will need to be forgiven.”⁴⁰ When Jesus commands his disciples to pray these words, “forgive us our debts,” he is speaking to those whom he expects will need to pray such a prayer daily. The call to reconcile with a wronged brother is a command which can only be obeyed by one who has sinned against his brother. The call to seek righteousness can only be issued to those who need righteousness (6:33). The Sermon is not, therefore, a message about the sinner’s inability but of the sinner’s possibility of living in obedience to God by the divine grace of God.

A Homiletical Outline for Preaching the Sermon on the Mount

The following outline is a proposal for planning a consecutive series of sermons from the Sermon on the Mount. I have constructed this preaching schedule using specific insights from the discourse analysis conducted in previous chapters. The result is a series of twenty sermons that treat the pericopes in context with the discourse. To present the Sermon on the Mount as a cohesive discourse with focus on the larger context, larger pericope groupings were preferred. This is to avoid an atomistic approach that could focus too minutely and obscure the more prominent theme of the Sermon. I will address the rationale behind some of these groupings below.

⁴⁰ Wenham, “Preaching the Sermon on the Mount,” 78.

Additionally, the sermon titles are phrased imperatively and positively to prioritize the main commands of the Sermon. This also helps orient the audience to the positive commands of the Sermon, whereas the negative commands have often been the focus. For example, instead of “Avoiding Lust,” the second antithesis (5:27–32) is titled positively “Kill Sin at the Source,” and 7:1–5 is titled “See Others Clearly” rather than “Don’t Judge.” Phrasing the sermon titles imperatively presents the Sermon on the Mount as practical instruction rather than merely theological information. The following titles are merely suggestions meant to guide the reader in the homiletic process. The preacher’s creativity and his own exegetical insights should direct the phrasing of sermon titles and the main points.

1. Living the Good Life (5:3–12)
2. Take the Good Life Public (5:13–16)
3. Receive the Law of Christ (5:17–20)
4. Reconcile Quickly (5:21–26)
5. Kill Sin at the Source (5:27–32)
6. Keep the Covenant of Marriage (5:31–32)
7. Tell the Truth (5:33–37)
8. Suffer Well (5:38–42)
9. Love Perfectly (5:43–48)
10. Practice Secret Worship (6:1–6, 16–18)
11. Praying as Jesus Taught Us (6:7–15)
12. Treasure the Kingdom (6:19–24)
13. Seek the Kingdom (6:25–34)
14. See Others Clearly (7:1–5)
15. Finding What You Seek (7:6–11)
16. You Know What to Do, So Do It (7:12)

17. Enter the Narrow Gate (7:13–14)
18. Beware of Bad Fruit (7:15–20)
19. Prepare for Christ the Judge (7:21–23)
20. Build on the Words of Christ (7:24–28)

The series outline follows standard groupings for the most part, but some clarifying comments will help address the homiletic rationale behind my arrangement. I have grouped the Beatitudes together into one sermon. Admittedly, preaching the Beatitudes together in one sermon will result in an abbreviated treatment of each saying. However, discourse analysis reveals the merit of treating them together. The first and eighth beatitude form an *inclusio* with the mention of the kingdom of heaven in the *apodosis*. The ninth beatitude then expands on the eighth beatitude. The intentional unity created by the structure of the Beatitudes gives warrant to preaching one sermon which addresses the comprehensive vision of the good life. A sermon that focused on the Beatitudes as a unit could have an outline such as this:

Sermon Title: “Living the Good Life” (Matthew 5:3–12)

1. The good life of discipleship is counter-cultural (5:3–11)
2. The good life of discipleship is rewarded by God (5:3–11)
3. Those who live the good life should rejoice (5:12)
 - a. Rejoice because of the heavenly reward
 - b. Rejoice because you share in the legacy of the prophets

However, one should not feel compelled to preach the Beatitudes as one unit. Each beatitude is a sufficient unit of text from which to craft a sermon. Not only are the Beatitudes a self-contained unit of thought, but they each possess substantial theological weight in their descriptions and promises. However, to preach the Sermon on the Mount as a series without losing sight of the greater context, one may decide to treat the Beatitudes as a whole. A more beneficial approach might be to revisit the Beatitudes later to devote an eight-week sermon series to them, which would treat each saying with

greater detail.

The same logic could be applied to the Lord's Prayer. The Lord's Prayer contains six petitions in addition to an introductory formula. A six or seven-part series could easily be crafted from the Lord's Prayer. Like the Beatitudes, each petition of the Lord's Prayer could easily provide sufficient substance for a standalone sermon. Like the Beatitudes, it might be beneficial to dedicate a separate study or series to the petitions of the Lord's Prayer. However, these are homiletical decisions that each preacher must consider as they preach the Sermon on the Mount. The twenty-week series suggested above could easily exceed thirty weeks if one decided to treat the Beatitudes and petitions of the Lord's Prayer individually. A sermon that addressed the whole text of the Lord's Prayer could look like this:

Sermon Title: "Praying as Jesus Taught Us" (Matthew 6:7–15)

1. Pray with confidence in the Father's care (6:7–8)
2. Pray with submission to the will and rule of the Father (6:9–10)
 - a. May Your name be hallowed
 - b. May Your kingdom come
 - c. May Your will be done
3. Ask the Father to grant physical and spiritual needs (6:11–15)
 - a. Give us our daily bread
 - b. Forgive our sins
 - c. Do not lead us into temptation

Another sermonic consideration highlighted by discourse analysis concerns the second and third antitheses (5:27–32). The saying on lust and the saying on divorce are not only thematically related but are explicitly linked in the text. The third antithesis (5:31–32) omits *ἠκούσατε* and includes *δέ*, joining it to the preceding saying (5:27–30). The saying on divorce also lacks an imperative verb and contains a repetition of the word *μοιχάω* "adultery." There is textual merit for combining the pericopes into one sermon that deals with matters of sexuality. However, these decisions are never merely exegetical but must also be pastoral. While combining these two passages has textual validity, the

particular concerns addressed in both pericopes may warrant two separate sermons: one on mortifying lust and another on the covenant of marriage. If preaching a series on the entire Gospel of Matthew, one should be aware that each of these sayings receives expanded treatment in Matthew 18:8–9 and 19:1–12.

The second section of the body of the Sermon on the Mount (6:1–18) contains structural issues which must be addressed when preaching it. The Lord’s Prayer is inserted after the saying on prayer but before the saying on fasting. One could address the Lord’s Prayer in sequence, yet this would break the continuity of the three sayings on secret righteousness. Another consideration is the formulaic similarity of the three sayings on secret piety. Except for the specific practice addressed (alms, prayer, and fasting), the content of the sayings is nearly identical. This is a case where the sequence and weight of ideas must be considered when making homiletic decisions.

I recommend dealing with the three sayings on secret righteousness as one sermon, then treating the Lord’s Prayer separately. As I argued in chapter three, the three sayings (6:2–4, 5–6, 16–18) simply expand on the first principle in 6:1. The inferential οὐν (6:2) plus the temporal clause (“Ὅταν οὐν ποιῆς ἐλεημοσύνην”) forms a “point of departure” from 6:1.⁴¹ The commands of each saying concern secrecy, and the specific acts mentioned only provides the context for the secrecy. Treating each saying individually could result in three overly repetitive sermons. Treating them as one allows the expositor to establish the main principle of secret righteousness and use the three acts of righteousness as various illustrations of the main principle. Also, treating the three pericopes in one sermon allows the preacher to highlight the progressively heightened measures recommended in each saying; drawing no attention (6:3), secret observance (6:6), and active concealment after the fact (6:17).

⁴¹ Levinsohn, *Discourse Features of New Testament Greek*, 9.

Sermon Title: “Practice Secret Worship” (Matthew 6:1–18)

1. Don’t forfeit the favor of God for the approval of men (6:1)
2. Give in secret to avoid publicizing generosity (6:2–4)
3. Pray in secret to avoid ostentatious prayer (6:5–6)
4. Fast in secret to avoid a dramatic spectacle (6:16–18)
5. Desire the favor of the heavenly Father in your devotion

This proposal for preaching the Sermon on the Mount as a consecutive series is a homiletic starting point based on the discourse analysis of this dissertation. This arrangement is offered only as a suggestion, not as the definitive way to order a homiletic series on the Sermon on the Mount. The reader should receive this model and the accompanying textual observations as an encouragement to trace the discourse structure of the Sermon and utilize these findings for preaching.

Homiletic Insights Applied to Matthew 6:25–34

In order to more clearly demonstrate the homiletic principles identified in this chapter, I will apply these principles to Matthew 6:25–34. The climactic pericope of the Sermon on the Mount is a prime example of a text whose structure should not drive the shape of the sermon.⁴² First, the parabolic and sapiential sayings which lead to the climactic saying in 6:31–33 should receive abbreviated treatment. Repetition, multiple parabolic sayings, and the pile-up of five rhetorical questions are all in service of one primary prohibition: “do not be anxious.” This is made clear by the repetition of the prohibition in 6:31 introduced by οὐν. Matthew seems to be returning to the main prohibition in 6:25 after a lengthy, illustrative digression.

The climactic positive imperative “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness” is the main point of the passage and should receive extended treatment. Not only is this saying the climactic positive imperative, but it is weighted with the important terms “kingdom” and “righteousness.” The fact that the two words are joined

⁴² Cahill, *The Shape of Preaching*, 105.

with *καί* makes their appearance even more salient. Calling the hearers to a life seeking the kingdom is the “author’s doing” in this text and should constitute the main emphasis of the sermon.⁴³

This pericope concludes with the third and final iteration of the prohibition, “do not be anxious” (6:34). This creates an *inclusio* with the first mention of the prohibition in 6:25. This third appearance of the prohibition has an exegetical role yet adds little meaning to the passage save for the grounding clause “for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.” For this reason, I recommend addressing this phrase which introduces another reason to avoid anxiety with the previous sayings on anxiety to allow the climactic imperative “seek the kingdom” to stand as the last point of the sermon. This is a logical grouping of ideas that honors the text’s content while presenting the thrust of the passage in a clearer, more systematic way.

The following homiletic outline is an option for preaching 6:25–34 in light of the discourse analysis I have provided. The sermon is titled “Seek the Kingdom” in order to focus on the positive imperative rather than the negative. This focuses the sermon on the main idea of the passage and places the kingdom at the fore. Also, the phrase “seek the kingdom” appears in each of the sermon’s main points to keep the focus on the main imperative.

Sermon Title: “Seek the Kingdom” (Matthew 6:25–34)

1. Don’t let earthly concerns keep you from seeking the kingdom (6:25–30, 34)
 - a. There is more to life than our needs
 - b. God cares for lesser creatures
 - c. Worry about the future takes your attention from today
2. Seek God’s kingdom and his righteousness as your first priority (6:31–33a)
 - a. We are to live like God’s children, not godless pagans
 - b. We have a greater pursuit—the kingdom and righteousness
3. Trust the Father with your concerns while you seek the kingdom (6:33b)
 - a. God knows that we have physical needs
 - b. God will grant the needs of those who seek the kingdom

⁴³ Kuruvilla, *A Manual for Preaching*, 29.

A historical example that accords with my proposed model is Charles Spurgeon's treatment of Matthew 6:25–34, in which he recognizes 6:33 as the central command of the passage. Spurgeon preached a sermon at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, on September 5th, 1875, on Matthew 6:31–33, titled "Thought Condemned, Yet Commanded."⁴⁴ In this sermon, he contrasted the prohibition against worry with the positive command in 6:33. In a later sermon on Matthew 6:33 titled "Something Worth Seeking," Spurgeon emphasizes the kingdom as the Christian's "*proper sphere of care*."⁴⁵ In both sermons, Spurgeon used the prohibition of earthly care to highlight the command to care for the kingdom. Spurgeon says,

But the Saviour must have meant more than that. When he said, "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink," he meant, *as compared with the service of God, and the honour and glory of his name, which should be the great object of your life, do not give any consideration to these other things*.⁴⁶

In Spurgeon's interpretation, the prohibition against worry was not the dominant command but served as the negative corollary to the command to "seek the kingdom." The prohibition and command represented two types of care: one condemned, the other commanded. This interpretation is consistent with the words of Paul, who, when listing the various trials he had faced, mentioned "the daily pressure [μέριμνα] on me of my anxiety for all the churches" (2 Cor. 11:28). Paul's concerns had shifted from matters of earth to matters of heaven.

⁴⁴ C. H. Spurgeon, "Thought Condemned, Yet Commanded," in vol. 2 of *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1906), 61.

⁴⁵ C. H. Spurgeon, "Something Worth Seeking," in vol. 43 of *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1897), 206.

⁴⁶ Spurgeon, "Thought Condemned, Yet Commanded," 64.

Conclusion

The homiletician must make use of every tool which will help to discern the meaning and application of a biblical text. Discourse analysis should be integrated into the preacher's toolkit as a means of understanding a passage of scripture and the larger discourse in which it is located. I have shown that the integration of discourse analysis and homiletics yields significant results when applied to the Sermon on the Mount. Discourse analysis illuminates the exegetical process and contributes to the task of planning consecutive sermon series.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has endeavored to fill a research gap that affects the fields of New Testament and homiletics by applying discourse analysis to the text of the Sermon on the Mount. While the entire discourse of the Sermon on the Mount has been treated, particular focus has been given to the problematic third section of the body (6:19–7:11). The preceding chapters have sought to prove my thesis that Matthew 6:19–7:11 is a cohesive unit of text consisting of four definable pericopes, which results in a peak construction with Matthew 6:31–33 functioning as the climax of the Sermon and 7:6–11 as a corresponding denouement. This section has a cohesive theme which can be summarized as “Desiring the Kingdom.” What follows is a summary of the conclusions of this study.

Cohesive Theme and Structure for 6:19–7:11

The Sermon on the Mount is a unified discourse with cohesive features and themes. The section I have designated as “Desiring the Kingdom” (6:19–7:11) does not exhibit the obvious structural and thematic connections which are present elsewhere in the Sermon; however, it should not be seen as a loosely connected “rag bag of sayings.”¹ The four pericopes which comprise this section conform to a basic point-counterpoint template.² Other features such as rhetorical questions, thematic address, divine passives,

¹ Graham Stanton, *A Gospel for a New People: Studies in Matthew* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), 298.

² Ernst Baasland, *Parables and Rhetoric in the Sermon on the Mount: New Approaches to a Classical Text*, *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen Zum Neuen Testament* 351 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 319.

and repetition serve to connect these pericopes.

Additionally, a close reading of 6:19–7:11 exhibits thematic cohesion. The broad ideas of seeing, evaluating, and seeking are present throughout the section and depict the inner desires necessary for obeying the Sermon; one must desire and seek the kingdom and righteousness. The thematic parallels in this section are not novel observations; instead, many of these themes have been identified by other commentators. I have gathered these insights and combined them with my own to show a comprehensive view of the connecting themes and structures which bind together 6:19–7:11.

Matthew 6:31–33 and 7:6–11 as the Climatic Peaks of the Sermon

These themes are summarized and expressed in the climactic command, “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness” (6:33). The prominence and significance of this imperative within the Sermon have been noted widely by commentators. Building on these previous observations, I have identified 6:31–33 as the peak of the Sermon on the Mount. This command is the culminating imperative of the Sermon, which answers the demand of greater righteousness in 5:20 and generalizes the thrust of every command in the Sermon. To seek the kingdom is to obey all the Sermon commands. Matthew 7:6–11 returns to the theme of seeking and shares several cohesive elements with 6:25–34. For these reasons, I have identified it as a confirmatory denouement that answers the command of 6:33 with promises and assurances.

Emphasis on Interior Righteousness

This understanding of 6:19–7:11 highlights the importance of this section for the Sermon on the Mount. Throughout the Sermon, Jesus has indicated that the righteousness God requires is inner righteousness, one which not only governs actions but motives and desires. The Beatitudes emphasize internal characteristics rather than behaviors (5:3–12). The antitheses drive the matter of ethics inwardly with such

revelations as the equivocation of lust with adultery (5:28). The sayings on private righteousness reveal that disciples are rewarded by their secret devotion rather than public appearance. The emphasis on inner motives, values, and desires in 6:19–7:11 brings the matter of the interior person to the fore.

In his exposition, *De sermone Domini in monte*, Augustine emphasized the need for inner righteousness as central to the message of the Sermon on the Mount. For Augustine, “our works are clean and pleasing in the sight of God if they are done with a single heart, that is, with that supernal intention whose end is love” and “Therefore not what one does, but with what intention he does it, is the thing to consider.”³ This emphasis on the interior person and one’s desires shares similarities with the sentiments of Greek philosophers. Aristotle spoke of the role of desire in ethics, “Choice will be a deliberate desire of things in our power; for we first deliberate, then select, and finally fix our desire according to the result of our deliberation.”⁴ The kingdom and righteousness is the Christian disciple’s corollary to the “supreme good” of Greek philosophy.⁵ To be genuinely righteous is to possess righteous desires.

The Value of Discourse Analysis for Hermeneutics and Homiletics

In addition to proposing a cohesive and satisfying reading of 6:19–7:11, this dissertation has sought to highlight the value of discourse analysis for biblical interpretation and preaching. I have attempted to show that discourse analysis is not a radically new methodology that attempts to forward novel conclusions, but a method of examining texts which is consistent with traditional biblical exegesis. Many of the

³ Augustine, *The Lord’s Sermon on the Mount*, ed. Johannes Quasten and Joseph C. Plumpe, trans. John J. Jepsen, *Ancient Christian Writers*, vol. 5 (New York: Paulist Press, 1948), 132-133.

⁴ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. H. Rackham, Loeb Classical Library 73 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926), 140–41.

⁵ John R. W. Stott, *Christian Counter-Culture: The Message of the Sermon on the Mount*, *The Bible Speaks Today* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1978), 160.

principles of discourse analysis are employed in conventional exegesis, though without the specificity and systematic analysis that discourse analysis provides.

Discourse analysis methods are in harmony with traditional analysis, and the conclusions are often not radically dissimilar. Discourse analysis brings new insights and greater specificity but often reinforces established findings. For instance, this dissertation has identified areas of prominence in the Sermon using criteria I have identified as prominence-giving features. The pericopes identified as prominent by these criteria are also noted by traditional exegetes as significant, climactic, or emphatic. I identified the climactic antithesis (5:43–48), the Lord’s Prayer (6:7–15), and the command to seek the kingdom (6:31–33) as the most prominent passages within their respective sections utilizing discourse analysis categories. These pericopes are also those most widely acknowledged by exegetes using traditional analysis as prominent or climactic in their immediate context.

Discourse analysis carries excellent promise for the discipline and practice of biblical exegesis, hermeneutics, and homiletics. Discourse analysis clarifies and strengthens existing methods by providing specific categories for analyzing biblical texts where observations are often made intuitively. Discourse analysis provides specificity and clarity with regards to exegetical methods as well as new categories of analysis.

Suggestions for Future Study

Discourse analysis has made significant inroads into biblical scholarship yet is a relatively new development compared to established exegetical methods. However, its full potential for hermeneutics and homiletics has yet to be realized. While this dissertation has provided some homiletical benefits of discourse analysis, there is a need for more scholarship devoted to connecting these disciplines.

For discourse analysis to be widely accepted and utilized by pastors and preachers, some standardization and clarification of the discipline must occur. As I

addressed in chapter two, discourse analysis has a high barrier to entry due to the broadness of its scope. It can be difficult for new students to discern how to conduct discourse analysis when so many options are available, many of which intersect with other fields. Terminology alone presents a frustrating quagmire with conflicting terminologies and the unnecessary redefining of established exegetical terms.⁶

More treatments of discourse analysis with specific application to biblical texts would help bridge the gap. The works of Steve Runge and Stephen Levinsohn have been helpful, as well as the recent collection of essays in *Discourse Analysis and the New Testament Writings*. However, works that include a collection of essays often provide competing methodologies and lack standard use of terms. More work needs to be done to simplify discourse analysis methodology and integrate its methods with established biblical exegetical methods.

Other than the aforementioned essay on Matthew in the *Discourse Analysis and the New Testament Writings*, no notable discourse analysis has been conducted on the Sermon on the Mount prior to this dissertation.⁷ Considering the Sermon's popularity and extensive treatment from other disciplines, a discourse analysis of the Sermon is overdue. I hope this work has yielded significant results and will be helpful to further analysts. However, this dissertation is narrow in scope and has only briefly dealt with the microstructures outside of 6:19–7:11. There is great potential for further discourse analysis work in the Sermon.

There is potential work to be done in examining the theological implications of the Sermon's emphasis on grace, particularly in the area of pneumatology. My treatment

⁶ "Terminological consistency and collaboration in the midst of creative thinking, nonetheless, are needed if discourse analysis is to have a significant impact on NT hermeneutics." J. T. Reed, "Discourse Analysis as New Testament Hermeneutic: A Retrospective and Prospective Appraisal," *JETS* 39, no. 2 (1996): 224.

⁷ Todd A. Scacewater and David J. Clark, "Matthew," in *Discourse Analysis of the New Testament Writings*, ed. Todd A. Scacewater (Dallas: Fontes Press, 2020).

of the Sermon on the Mount has argued for specific interpretive shifts in light of the cohesive theme of 6:19–7:11. I have argued that the promises of 7:6–11 should be read as a promise of divine aid for those seeking the kingdom and righteousness. This opens the door to a pneumatological reading of the Sermon in light of the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit receives only a few specific mentions in Matthew’s Gospel (Matt 1:18–20; 3:16; 4:1; 10:19–20; 12:28–32; 22:43; 28:19); however, the mention of the Holy Spirit in Matthew 1:18 and 28:19 forms “a parenthesis for the entire narrative.”⁸ Furthermore, Jesus teaches that the Holy Spirit will be active in the life of his disciples (cf. 10:19–20; 28:19). The theological context of Matthew merits a pneumatological reading of the Sermon.

Augustine is an early example of reading the Sermon pneumatologically. Augustine perceived a direct correlation between the Beatitudes and the seven gifts of the Spirit in Isaiah 11:2. For Augustine, the realities of the Beatitudes are realized by the coming of the Holy Spirit.⁹ Furthermore, Augustine saw the Beatitudes understood in the context of Isaiah 11:2 as the structural and interpretive key to the entire Sermon.¹⁰

Significantly, Luke identifies the “good gifts” explicitly as the Holy Spirit (cf. Luke 11:13).¹¹ The sixth petition of the Lord’s Prayer provides further ground for this reading since the disciple must ask for divine aid against temptation and deliverance from

⁸ M. Wenk, “Holy Spirit,” in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green, Jeannine K. Brown, and Nicholas Perrin, 2nd ed. 387-94 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2013), 391.

⁹ St. Augustine, *The Lord’s Sermon on the Mount*, 21.

¹⁰ Augustine did not insist that his structure was the only correct order of the sermon, “Here it was this number seven which suggested to me that these precepts also hark back to those seven maxims which He put at the head of this sermon when He spoke the Beatitudes, and to those seven operations of the Holy Spirit of which the Prophet Isaias makes mention. But whether the order here given should be observed or some other, we must do what we have heard from the Lord if we wish to build upon a rock.” Augustine, *The Lord’s Sermon on the Mount*, 174.

¹¹ Baasland argues that Matthew’s text is more original, and Luke “interprets the more general word ἀγαθὰ with one of his favourite theological concepts.” Baasland, *Parables and Rhetoric in the Sermon on the Mount*, 474.

the Evil One. This leading away from temptation suggests the activity of the Spirit in the believer's life. A theological study on the role of pneumatology in the Sermon could further explore the basis for such a reading.

In writing this dissertation, my aim has been to discern the logic and meaning of the most contested and challenging portion of the Sermon on the Mount. This analysis was motivated from a deep reverence for the Sermon and a commitment to its divine inspiration as Holy Scripture as well as its literary art. I have drawn attention to the need for further exegetical work in Matthew 6:19–7:11 as well as the need for more application of discourse analysis to texts such as the Sermon on the Mount. I hope that the analysis provided will stimulate further discourse analysis of biblical texts and demonstrate the homiletic value of the discipline.

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ABSTRACT

THE COHESIVE RHETORIC OF JESUS: THE ROLE OF MATTHEW 6:19–7:11 IN THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

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For centuries, the Sermon on the Mount has received particular attention as a discrete unit of Christ's teaching, yet disagreement reigns among its interpreters. A central concern among the Sermon's interpreters is the question of structure. While general agreement exists concerning the overall macrostructure of the Sermon, various proposals exist with differing understandings for the relationships and boundaries of certain pericopes. The most troublesome section is the third major section of the body in Matthew 6:19–7:11. While most scholars recognize the boundaries of this section as a legitimate division, no cohesive structure or theme is widely agreed upon.

This dissertation seeks to solve the structural and thematic difficulties surrounding this section of the body of the Sermon on the Mount by applying discourse analysis to the Sermon, specifically the categories of structure, cohesion, prominence, and peak. I will argue that Matthew 6:19–7:11 is a cohesive unit of text consisting of four definable pericopes, which results in a peak construction with Matthew 6:31–33 functioning as the climax of the Sermon and 7:6–11 as a corresponding denouement. The theme of this section is best described as "Desiring the Kingdom" and functions within the Sermon to reveal the inner value system necessary for obedience to the Sermon.

Chapter one provides a summary of research and introduces the thesis. Chapter two explores the challenges and benefits of discourse analysis and specifies the

methodology employed in this dissertation. Chapter three surveys the macrostructure of the Sermon on the Mount and provides a textual outline for the Sermon. Chapter four analyzes the microstructures of the Sermon in greater detail to demonstrate patterns of prominence and cohesion. Chapter five is an argument for the unity of Matthew 7:6–11. Chapter six provides a detailed analysis of Matthew 6:19–7:11 with particular focus on Matthew 6:31–33 and 7:6–11 which are identified as the peaks of the Sermon. Chapter seven explores the homiletic implications and benefits of discourse analysis as well as the homiletic implications of the preceding analysis of the Sermon. Chapter eight summarizes the research and provides suggestions for future research.

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