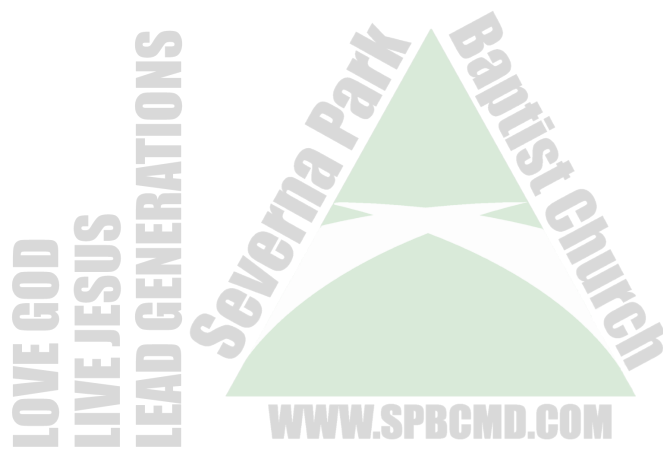


ROGUE LIVING

A STUDY ON THE BEATITUDES IN MATTHEW 5

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Severna Park Baptist Church
www.spbcmd.com

A Study Guide
Created by Pastor Dave Brown

This booklet contains a Bible study on the Beatitudes. There are also spaces for taking notes during the sermons in this message series.

Name



BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT, **FOR THEIRS IS** THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

THOSE WHO MOURN, FOR THEY SHALL BE COMFORTED.
THE MEEK, FOR THEY SHALL INHERIT THE EARTH.

.....
THOSE WHO HUNGER AND THIRST FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS, FOR THEY SHALL BE SATISFIED.

.....
THE MERCIFUL, FOR THEY SHALL RECEIVE MERCY.
THE PURE IN HEART, **FOR THEY SHALL SEE GOD.**

.....
THE PEACEMAKERS, FOR THEY SHALL BE CALLED SONS OF GOD.
.....
THOSE WHO ARE PERSECUTED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS SAKE,

.....
FOR THEIRS IS
.....
THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

MATTHEW 5:3-10
.....

MATTHEW 5:1-12

(English Standard Version)

¹ Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him.

² And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:

³ “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁴ “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

⁵ “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

⁶ “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

⁷ “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

⁸ “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

⁹ “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

¹⁰ “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹ “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Background Resources

The following are resources I have found helpful in study and teaching preparation for creating this booklet and preaching.

- ◇ Crucifying Morality: The Gospel of the Beatitudes by R.W. Glenn
- ◇ The Sermon on the Mount by Dale C. Allison
- ◇ New American Commentary: Matthew by Craig Blomberg
- ◇ Pillar Commentary: Matthew by Leon Morris
- ◇ Expositors Bible Commentary: Matthew by Donald Carson
- ◇ Word Biblical Commentary: Matthew by Donald Hagner
- ◇ MacArthur Commentary: Matthew by John MacArthur

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Rogue Jesus
Matthew 5:1-12
(June 25)





ROGUE LIVING

Poor In Spirit, Rich in God
Matthew 5:3
(July 2)

- ◇ **What difference does it make that the beatitudes are not commands but characteristics of a Christian? What is wrong with reducing the beatitudes to an aspired list of morals and virtues?**

- ◇ **Now that you have studied each blessing and promise of the beatitudes, which one most stands out to you? Why? Which do you avoid?**

- ◇ **Take time in prayer to worship Jesus as the perfect blessing and beatitude. Ask the Holy Spirit for empowering grace to turn away from sin and selfish pride, and turn toward the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:16-26).**

- ◇ **Take time in reflection for how the beatitudes should influence our life, our church, and our community involvement.**

Jesus was merciful to the sick, the suffering, and sinners alike. His entire ministry was full of mercy (Matthew 9:12-13, 35-36).

Jesus made peace with His words of truth and with His ways in serving and sacrificing. Sometimes Jesus made peace by being firm (Matthew 21:12-13), and other times by extending unfathomable grace (Matthew 18:10-35).

Jesus was persecuted for righteousness. Through faith in Jesus' death we can exchange our penalty for sin for His grace of righteousness (Romans 5:17-21; 2Corinthians 5:21).

In all, the beatitudes are not a list of do's and don'ts. Instead, Jesus teaches us that His grace works in and through us with power to live differently. The beatitudes become a profile of a person who is living truth by grace. Any measure of reflecting the image of God and beatitude lifestyle is evidenced by one's dependence upon Christ and His Spirit. As Christians, our blessing is not material but personal in Jesus Christ; He is the blessing.

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Good Mourning
Matthew 5:4
(July 9)





ROGUE LIVING

Meek Is Not Weak

Matthew 5:5

(July 16)

always the temptation to view the Bible as a rule book. The mindset is, if we could just do good and be better, then God will accept and love us. Religion and morality become a checklist by which we measure our spirituality.

But the beatitudes show us that we are only blessed when we grasp how irreligious and immoral we are apart from Jesus. Jesus is not saying, “Do this and live” but rather, “I have done this, so you live.” Apart from grace, the beatitudes set an impossible standard. Yet, the good news of the gospel is that in spite of the fact that we could never live out the beatitudes, Jesus is the beatitude.

Jesus is poor in spirit as He submitted to God and relied on His Heavenly Father (Philippians 2:6-11).

Jesus mourned not for His sin but for the consequences of sin in the world. He gave hope for our grief by dying on the cross and promising us a far better future (1Thessalonians 4:13-18).

Jesus struck the perfect balance of grace and truth, exhibiting meekness in every circumstance (John 1:14).

Jesus exuded righteousness and purity of heart. Even evil Pilate and his wife recognized Jesus’ integrity was impeccable (Matthew 27:19-23).

SESSION 11

Matthew 5:1-16; 7:21-29

Hayden Planetarium in NY City ran an advertisement in NY newspapers inviting those who would like to make the first journey to another planet to submit an application. Within a matter of days, over 18,000 people applied. These applications were then given to a panel of psychologists, who upon reviewing them concluded that the vast majority of those who had applied wanted to start a new life on another planet because they were so discouraged by life on this one.

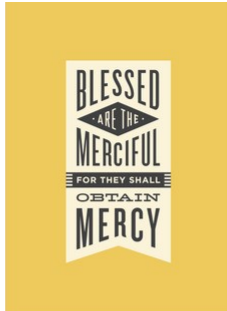
Why does life in the here and now never seem to produce what we hope? You see, no matter who you are, where you live, how old you are, the reality is that we all are longing for a perfect world. Everyone is looking for happiness but they can hardly find it. The people in the previous story would rather move to another world to find happiness. The truth is finding happiness does not mean moving to another world but living for another world. God's kingdom is not a far removed place, irrelevant to the here and now. When we review Jesus' teachings, especially the beatitudes, we can see life from a greater perspective.

Before we close this study, we must remember the beatitudes are not commands but characteristic profiles of those who are already living out Jesus' commands. When observing Jesus and Christianity, there is

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Hungry and Thirsty
Matthew 5:6
(July 23)





ROGUE LIVING

Mercy Full
Matthew 5:7
(July 30)

- ◇ **List some other persons in the Bible who were persecuted for their faith in God. How do their lives inspire conviction and courage for your faith? Take some moments to pray for conviction and courage (Acts 4:31).**

- ◇ **When we hear stories of the persecuted church, we can be tempted to fret and fear. Based on this beatitude and other Scriptures, how does Jesus want us respond? Take some moments to pray for your Christian brothers and sisters around the world who are persecuted for their faith (Hebrews 13:3).**

◇

saying these attitudes and actions are the profile of those who listen and love His commands. And since that is the case, the feature of being persecuted is not something we seek but is simply part of the reality of living out our Christian faith. The more we love Jesus, the greater the world will hate us.

Therefore, it seems the church should view current events as an opportunity to shine and not whine (Philippians 2:14-15). Christians are strangers and exiles on earth (Hebrews 11:13), with a testimony that differentiates us not based on politics or mere morality, but as recipients of grace. In other words, we don't take pride in ourselves but we point people to the Savior, Jesus Christ, who is full of grace and truth.

- ◇ **As a Christian today, where are you tempted to whine and not shine?**

- ◇ **Why is being persecuted for faith an important profile of a Christian? Can you recall an experience where you were persecuted for being bold in faith and another time when you were perhaps belligerent as a moralist (cf. 1Peter 4:12-19)? How can we be bold without belligerent witnesses for truth and the gospel?**

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Pure In Heart
Matthew 5:8
(August 6)





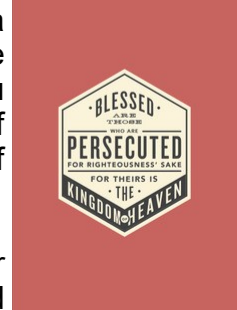
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Peacemaker
Matthew 5:9
(August 13)

SESSION 10

Matthew 5:10-12

If it were a crime to be a Christian, would there be enough evidence to put you on trial and convict you of being guilty as a follower of Jesus?



Jesus' final blessing is for those who believe and behave as Jesus is Lord.

You see, being a Christian is costly. Living like Jesus will get you similar results to how He was treated (John 15:18; 1Peter 4:12-13; 1John 3:13). We must expect to be debated and often disliked. We will be hated because our light is exposing darkness, our goodness is salty enough to differentiate from evil, our truth contrasts false narratives, and our life's integrity has a certain conviction and hope that contrasts the world.

The blessing of being persecuted is with whom you identify. Persecuted Christians may not enjoy the applause of crowds, but they are in good company with Jesus and God-called prophets. God has an eternal reward far greater than earthly treasure for those who live with such faith (Hebrews 11:40).

Also, it is important to realize all the beatitudes are not commands but characteristic of a Christ-follower. Jesus isn't commanding us to do these things, but is

- ◇ **Can you think of an Old Testament example where peacemaking is prominent? How about in Jesus' life? And, how about in the NT early church examples?**

- ◇ **Read Matthew 10. How does being a witness to Jesus both create conflict and peacemaking? How should we resolve the tension?**

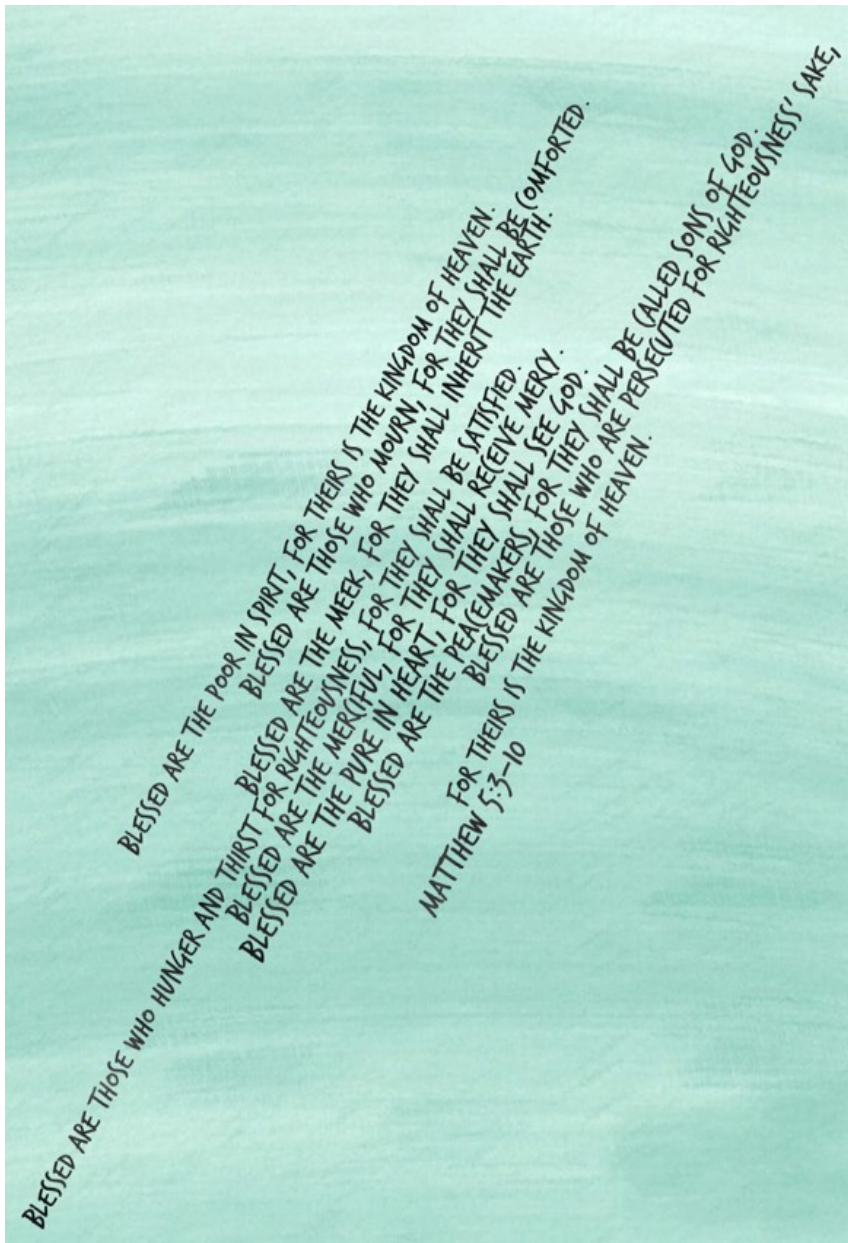
- ◇ **Since sharing the gospel to reconcile others to God is a fundamental act of peacemaking, who are 2-5 people you will commit to invest relationally, invite to your church, intercede in prayer for them, and incarnate the gospel in word and deed?**

- ◇ **Who do you know that should be nominated for something like the Nobel Peace Prize? Consider contacting them to thank them for helping you to grow to be more like Jesus as a peacemaker.**

ROGUE LIVING

Live Out Loud
Matthew 5:10-16
(August 20)





- ◇ **Why is our relationship as a son/daughter to God integral to being a peacemaker? When you forget your adoption as a child of God, how do you tend to relate to others?**

- ◇ **What hinders you from having peace with God, with others, and with your circumstances? For further reflection, consider reading Psalm 37; Matthew 6:19-34; Romans 12:18; Philippians 4:4-8; James 4:1-17.**

- ◇ **Right now, what does it mean to be a peacemaker with your family (spouse, children), school/work, neighborhood, church?**

- ◇ **How can you be a preventative peacemaker? What are some various ways you can solve problems without having conflict? What biblical principles can help you be a better peacemaker? For reflection, consider reading Matthew 5:21-26; 5:38-47; 6:14-15; 18:15-35.**

Christians are called to be one of the hardest roles in the world. Peacemaking is not for the faint of heart. It doesn't avoid conflict but faces it head on.

Peacemakers embody the previous beatitudes. They are not proud but poor in spirit. They value solutions that are not self-serving for any side. They are aware of how attitudes and actions can grieve others, and therefore encourage humility, meekness, righteousness, and integrity. Peacemakers emphasize mercy and forgiveness and pursue reconciliation through communication.

One observation is that peace occurs through proximity. God made peace by incarnating His Son into the world. And Jesus sends His followers to make peace inside a violent, divided, hurtful and hateful world. Christians must learn how to be face to face with people who disbelieve and disagree with them. We must be mindful that peace is not the absence of conflict but bringing presence of Christ into all circumstances.

- ◇ **How did the Jews expect their Messiah to bring about the peace of Israel? How did Jesus' disciples expect to bring about peace (cf. Matthew 16:21-23; 26:51-56; Luke 9:51-55)? Explain the contrast for how Jesus sought to establish and encourage peacemaking.**

DISCUSSION GROUPS

Reading the Bible can be *life-changing*. The reason is because the Bible is more than just print on a page but words that breathe life into our souls. We encounter the living Word when we read the written word of God.

If you are reading this, you are joining many in our church to explore the **"Beatitudes"**. Our church will take multiple weeks to study and teach from through these. There is an accompanying study guide for devotional use and perhaps group discussion. In all, this booklet is meant to encourage and enhance your spiritual growth.

Spiritual growth best happens in **community** with others. We encourage you to find a few friends to participate in this experience with you. Maybe a group meets weekly for fellowship with food included, prayer, sharing insights and encouragement. You will be surprised how much growth and strength you will draw from this over time. Even more, this would be a great opportunity to invite a non-believer to explore the life of Jesus in a non-threatening way to have spiritual conversations.

SESSION 1

When a couple brings home a newborn, their entire life changes: fix bedroom for child, extra toys around house, invasion of privacy and comfort and priorities. The arrival of a child in the home requires big changes of time demands and priority of resources. One positive change that takes place involves a new affection and love that develops in a parent's heart. All the adjustments and sacrifices are worth the effort because of the joy and purpose of raising a child – a new life.

What are some other events in life that can create a change in priorities?

Faith in Jesus Christ is a turning point that alters change and awakens new priorities. Jesus identifies transforming characteristics of His followers in the Sermon on the Mount.

Read Matthew 5:1-12 from traditional translation then from The Message, then from paraphrase produced of the Anti-Beatitudes

Matthew 5:1-9 from The Message paraphrase

5:1 When Jesus saw his ministry drawing huge crowds, he climbed a hillside.

Those who were apprenticed to him, the committed, climbed with him. Arriving at a quiet place, he sat down

5:2 and taught his climbing companions. This is what he said:

5:3 "You're blessed when you're at the end of your rope. With less of you there is more of God and his rule.

5:4 "You're blessed when you feel you've lost what is most dear to you. Only then can you be embraced by the One most dear to you.

5:5 "You're blessed when you're content with just who you are - no more, no less. That's the moment you find yourselves proud owners of everything that

SESSION 9

Matthew 5:9

It's what all beauty queens want: world peace. Yet, we live in a world of terrorism, insurgencies and uprisings, national conflict and war, and that's just on the global scale. Relational differences and drama exist in the world of entertainment with reality television and daytime television shows. Athletic conflict appears entertaining until we realize players of our fan team get hurt and injured. Consider hockey players punching each other, baseball pitchers beaming opposing team players with fastballs, not to mention the world of MMA.



Jesus was a different type of leader. He led a revolution army that would conquer with spiritual impact and not physical power; conversion by force never results in true faith or faithfulness. Further, Jesus faced His enemies with weapons that were stripes on His back, scars in His hands, and love on His face. In all, the gospel provides us peace with God in that we are reconciled through Jesus bearing the full and final punishment of sin on the cross (Romans 5; Colossians 1:20).

And Jesus intends for His followers to be peacemakers. Interestingly, Jesus doesn't just ask us to be peace-talkers or even peace-lovers, but peace-makers. In other words,

- ◇ **Perhaps the most frequent complaint against Christians is the hypocrisy of being pure of heart. How does understanding this beatitude re-frame such a conversation?**

- ◇ **What would it mean, not just for you, but also for your church to have purity of heart? What would need emphasized? What would need changed?**

- ◇ **Today, purity of heart has a lot to do with how we treat others and how we utilize technology. Reflect on these areas of your life for actions God may lead you to take.**

- ◇ **Read Daniel 9:1-19. Pray to see God, confessing specific sin in your life and on behalf of others.**

can't be bought.

5:6 "You're blessed when you've worked up a good appetite for God. He's food and drink in the best meal you'll ever eat.

5:7 "You're blessed when you care. At the moment of being 'careful,' you find yourselves cared for.

5:8 "You're blessed when you get your inside world - your mind and heart - put right. Then you can see God in the outside world.

5:9 "You're blessed when you can show people how to cooperate instead of compete or fight. That's when you discover who you really are, and your place in God's family.

5:10-12 " You're blessed when your commitment to God provokes persecution. The persecution drives you even deeper into God's kingdom. Not only that - count yourselves blessed every time people put you down or throw you out or speak lies about you to discredit me. What it means is that the truth is too close for comfort and they are uncomfortable. You can be glad when that happens - give a cheer, even - for though they don't like it, I do. And all heaven applauds. And know that you are in good company. My prophets and witnesses have always gotten into this kind of trouble."

Anti-Beatitudes

Sad are the arrogant for theirs is this world only.

Sad are the revelers and rioters, for they will lack peace.

Sad are the pushy and forceful, for they will go bankrupt.

Sad are the depraved and immoral, for their lusts will never satisfy.

Sad are the criticizers and condemners, for they will be judged without mercy.

Sad are the hypocrites and frauds, for they will miss God and His blessings.

Sad are the angry and troublemakers, for they are abandoned from their family.

Sad are those who compromise their faith, for they will lose their hopeful reward.

- ◇ **What stands out in your various readings of the Beatitudes? What commonalities do you notice? What biblical narratives display these different beatitudes in action?**

- ◇ **What do these Beatitudes reveal about Jesus?**

- ◇ **How do the rewards inspire each of the Beatitudes? How does each blessing motivate your desire to apply the beatitudes?**

to sight in His coming kingdom.

Even more, by faith we see God through Jesus in the texts of Scripture (Hebrews 1:1-3), and we see God's Spirit at work through His church (John 14:7-15).

In al, purity of heart is not about human perfection. We become pure through integrity of heart to acknowledge and confess sin before God, and accept His grace to forgive and empower us toward righteousness (Titus 2:11-14).

- ◇ **If others knew everything inside your heart would they be happy or angry? God knows everything and still offers you forgiveness through confession and repentance of sin (1 John 1:9; cf. Prov 4:23). What hinders you from taking this step of faith?**

- ◇ **How is purity of heart different from human perfection? Since perfection is impossible, why and how should we strive for purity? Read Titus 2:11-14.**

SESSION 8

Matthew 5:8



Imagine being in heaven and watching people worship Jesus. As you are watching them you realize you cannot hear anything. You cannot hear the melody of singing, the words to the prayers, or the declarations of praise made by anyone. You ask Jesus why the sound is muted and He tells you that the reason the sound is mute is because that is what all heaven hears when a person's worship is improper. Jesus only hears and accepts the worship that is pure of heart.

God seeks purity of heart (Psalm 24:4; Matthew 5:8). In Matthew's Gospel especially, Jesus portrays purity not merely as outward actions but a matter of the heart. The remaining SOM will show Jesus teaching on God's commandments that go beyond eternal to internal. Evaluating Jesus' standard for purity of heart, we see that all of us - including good and nice people - need new hearts and not just a little cleanliness from religion.

The blessing or reward for the pure in heart is to see God. Seeing God is unfathomable, for no one can see God and live (cf. Exodus 33:20; Hebrews 12:14; 1John 4:12). Yet, through the gospel of Jesus Christ we can become purified and will grow from faith

- ◇ What do these Beatitudes reveal about humanity and how are they characteristic or contrast to the way of the world?
- ◇ Which Beatitude most appeals to you? Which most challenges you?
- ◇ Pray asking God to help you grow in faith through studying His truth.

SESSION 2 **Matthew 5:1-2**

Jesus attracted crowds but instructed disciples. Much of Jesus' ministry was spent teaching. This teaching is a significant instruction to Jesus' followers. Matthew 5-7 is known as the Sermon On The Mount (SOM). More specifically, 5:1-12 are The Beatitudes.

What is a beatitude, or the word "blessed" mean?

Beatitudes or Blessedness

- Happiness or confidence in God's purposes and promises. supremely blessed, fortunate, well-off, happy (Strong's Concordance)
- One congratulated, envied, truly happy (Martin Lloyd Jones, Studies in the Sermon On The Mount, 1984; p.24)
- One having God's approval (D.A. Carson, Jesus' Sermon on the Mount and His Confrontation with the World – Exposition of Matthew 5-10, 1987, p.16-17)
- Blissful, not a superficial feeling of well being based on circumstance but a deep supernatural experience of contentedness based on that fact that one's life is right with God. (John MacArthur, NTC Matthew 1-7, 1985, p.142)
- Honored... "How honorable are..." (Ed Welch, Shame Interrupted: How God Lifts The Pain of Worthlessness and Rejection, 2012, p.141)
- "Lucky" or "holy luck" (Philip Yancey in The

◇ **Can you think of a Scriptural example where mercy goes beyond pity (spiritual forgiveness and physical benevolence)? How about a modern example in your life or in your church?**

◇ **Who in your world (neighborhood, job, church, etc.) needs mercy?**

◇ **What can you do to be more merciful to others?**

If we are honest, mercy is almost demanded from God but seldom desired to give to others. Practicing mercy will cost us in like fashion that it cost Jesus His life. But the beatitudes teach us what life is like for those who are gripped by the overwhelming measure of grace from God. When our hands and hearts are full of God's blessings then we haven't any opportunity to hold on to bitterness against others. The merciful receive mercy. Don't we want that?

- ◇ **How has God been merciful to you? If you have trouble thinking what God has given to you, consider what He hasn't given to you.**

- ◇ **How does extending mercy to others relate to our receiving mercy from God (cf Matt 6:14-15; 18:23-35)?**

Jesus I Never Knew, 2002, p.113 /or Eugene Peterson in poem series "Holy Luck" published in Theology Today 44, April 1987, pp.95-102)

- Bizarro Beatitudes because they seem illogical and antithetical to our contemporary mindset (R.W. Glen, Crucifying Morality: The Gospel of the Beatitudes, 2013, p.14)

Another way to describe the Christian lifestyle is "Rogue Living". Going rogue is a description of a person who has left the status quo to live uniquely counter-cultural. The rogue Christian lives not for earthly goals or governments, but for the kingdom values of God.

Kingdom values. Jesus' teachings are meant to give us pause. He intends for His words and Holy Spirit to probe our heart priorities. The SOM is filled with profound gospel truth. The more we read it, the greater we come away convicted, challenged, and compelled to a life of greater purpose. Ultimately, the Beatitudes and entire SOM confronts us not just with the message but the messenger – Jesus. Jesus' teachings are unique because His identity is unique. He is the Son of God, the King of Heaven, and the Resurrected Savior and Lord. We cannot live the sermon without His grace. We cannot turn Jesus' teachings into moralistic virtues that become the end we seek. Instead, we are to seek Jesus because He is the Beatitudes. Christianity isn't about following a system for achievement and

acceptance, but rather trusting in a Person who has already achieved and accepts us through faith. Therefore, the SOM is an invitation to God-inspired, grace-infused, Spirit-empowered, kingdom purpose that transforms our understanding for human flourishing in this life and the one to come.

- ◇ **In light of how religious leaders viewed the OT, what inspired Jesus to teach this sermon?**

- ◇ **What is the significance of Jesus teaching on the mountain (cf. Exodus 19:20)?**

- ◇ **What is the value of a great Bible teacher? What is the value of being a consistent participant in a Bible Group community? How is group discussion different from personal learning?**

SESSION 7

Matthew 5:7

Mercy is mighty. The people of Jesus' day did not want their Messiah to bring mercy but might. Israel had seen their babies killed, their businesses ruined, and their blessings vanishing. The Romans came and conquered the land without mercy. Israel's expectations and Jesus' teachings for God's kingdom appeared to be conflict.



Mercy belongs to God (Exodus 33:19; Psalm 103:8). In fact, mercy appears to be God's primary trait for billions of people throughout the history of earth who offend Him faithfully and frequently.

God granted mercy and forgiveness of sin through the sacrificial system. And Jesus embodies God's mercy through His ministry and life mission (Matthew 9:13, 27-30; 12:7; 15:21-28; 17:14-18; 18:23-25; 20:29-34; 23:23).

The merciful are those compassionate towards those who are aware of and have accepted God's mercy, and therefore extend it to others. Jesus gave mercy to those who didn't always deserve it. His mercy included both spiritual forgiveness and physical benevolence. Jesus' ultimate display and declaration of mercy comes through the cross.

◇ **What do most people hunger & thirst for in their life? What is the junk food that people (or yourself) eat today?**

◇ **What questions can we ask ourselves to determine if we are getting righteousness from our good works or Christ's fulfillment of God's law?**

◇ **Read Isaiah 55:2. How can we explain to those unaware of Christianity the difference between religious righteousness and righteousness by grace through faith in Jesus Christ?**

◇ **In your own words, how would you define the word "blessed" (makarios)?**

◇ **How are the beatitudes compared to a rogue lifestyle compared to current cultural values?**

◇ **Spend some time praying asking God to confront you with ways you are living for current culture rather than kingdom values.**

SESSION 3 Matthew 5:3

Is poverty a blessing or a curse? According to Jesus, poverty of spirit is the entry door to the kingdom of heaven. The first beatitude is foundational for all the others to communicate the Christian faith and what it means to follow Jesus. To enter God's kingdom is to turn away from sin and selfishness, and turn toward the Savior. Jesus uses a word for poor meaning "begging poor" (ptochoi), and not just poor with few resources (penichros). So, Jesus is not showing preference for a social status or poverty itself, but one's spiritual status of humility before a holy and great God.



Further, we might be tempted to think poverty of spirit describes a person who is simply shy, insecure with feelings of inadequacy. Yet, being poor in spirit is more positive and profound. Poor in spirit describes a person dependent on God's resources. Jesus is blessing those who recognize they need God.

The blessing to the poor in spirit is the kingdom of heaven. The Bible describes God's kingdom is the place where all His promises and power are on display. Our kingdom of earth is broken by sin and burdened with its effects. Life outside of Eden has been poisoned with defects, disease, darkness, destruction, and death. Creation no longer exists as it was intended. Our humanity is hardened by its rejection of God. Yet, for those who are willing to have eyes to see, ears to hear, and hearts to

and ways. In Matthew's Gospel, righteousness is a rare quality and in stark contrast to status-quo religion (cf. Matthew 1:19; 5:20; 6:1; 6:33; 21:32). The dilemma quickly realized is that righteousness cannot be earned through human effort, but is obtained by grace through faith in Jesus (cf. Matthew 5:17; 9:12-13; 26:28; 2Corinthians 5:21).

Hungering and thirsting represent the daily necessities of life. People of faith are called to pursue Christ daily through the gospel and repentance, prayer, Scripture intake, and obedience. The measure of our spiritual hunger and thirst will be the result of our spiritual growth.

- ◇ **What would Jesus' original audience have understood about hungering and thirsting for righteousness? In Jesus' teachings, how did He seek to re-shape their thinking?**

- ◇ **Based on reading the verses in Matthew listed previously, what can we observe about how righteousness is obtained?**

SESSION 6 **Matthew 5:6**

Are you satisfied? It's a simple question but mostly leaves us to daydream without a full response. Is satisfaction even possible? Don't ask Jagger. But really, is what makes us *feel* satisfied, truly satisfying? A person's attention, a purchase, pleasure from some entertainment?

These objects of satisfaction are all incomplete. There has to be something more.

Jesus offers a fourth beatitude, which flows perfectly from the previous three, with the blessing as fullness. The word Jesus uses was indicative of animals eating enough until they wanted nothing more. It's like us pushing away from the table and loosening our belt buckle after an all-you-can-eat, scrumptious buffet.

Fulfillment comes to those who desire to draw from God's righteousness and resources. Our role is to seek and God's role is to satisfy. When we understand ourselves rightly in terms of spiritual poverty, mourning over our immorality and worldly injustice, then we are beginning to see God rightly. Only God can help us; He is our sole hope.

Hungering and thirsting for God's righteousness implies living according to God's wisdom



trust through being poor in spirit, they can be reconciled as a new creation (2Corinthians 5:17).

God's new kingdom in Jesus brings healing to defect and disease (Matthew 4:23; 11:4-5). In Jesus, demons and darkness are dispelled (Matthew 12:27-28). Jesus provides peace, light, and hope in the midst of life's darkest days (John 8:12; 9:5). And only in Jesus is there a solution for death (John 11:25-26). Through faith in Jesus Christ, the kingdom of heaven becomes a present reality that can instill our life with confidence in any circumstance.

- ◇ **Have you ever seen a truly poor person? How does this person respond to gifts and to compassion from others? How does material poverty relate to spiritual poverty?**
- ◇ **How does the kingdom of heaven fill the void of earthly poverty?**
- ◇ **What are the areas you are tempted toward pride, self-sufficiency, and self-reliance? How can you grow more like Jesus to be poor in spirit in these areas?**

- ◇ Read the following verses and describe the value for living poor in spirit: Psalm 138:6; Proverbs 3:34; Proverbs 29:23; Isaiah 57:15; Isaiah 66:2; Matthew 23:12; Luke 1:52; James 4:6; 1Peter 5:5.

- ◇ How can poverty of spirit change the dynamics in your family, workplace, church, community (be specific in each)?

- ◇ Pray asking God to reveal to you the depth of your need for Him in salvation and in your spiritual vitality.

- ◇ **Why do you think most people consider meekness or humility as being weak or undesirable?**

- ◇ **Can you think of a Scriptural example of a person who models meekness? How about a modern example?**

- ◇ **How did Jesus model meekness during His life? How about during His dying on the cross?**

SESSION 5 **Matthew 5:5**

Meek is not weak. Another beatitude that describes the character of Jesus' followers as humble. While the previous two beatitudes could be viewed as passive, this third beatitude is active. Whereas poverty of spirit is humble because of our sin, meekness is humble because of God's holiness. Being meek reflects the character of God as gentle and kind.



Meekness can also be described as strength under control. Sometimes the word would be used to describe wind or in the taming of an animal.

Jesus embodies meekness (Matthew 11:29; 21:5-7). He exhibited humility by not flaunting His position or power. He was tender with those who were weak. Yet, Jesus' meekness exhibited strength to confront hypocrisy (Matthew 21:12-13; 23:1-39). Meekness is not fearfulness but firmness of identity based upon knowing God.

The blessing to the meek is inheriting the earth. Throughout the Bible, God promises a home and a place of abundance to those who trust in Him (Psalm 37:11). Through the gospel, followers of Jesus recover all that was lost in Eden.

SESSION 4 **Matthew 5:4**

Sometimes movies present memorable truths.



One of the greatest movies of all time, *The Princess Bride*, the character Westley tells a reality of life. He speaks, "Life is pain, Highness. Anyone who says differently is selling something." How true!

Pain, disappointment, and grief are realities of this world. Jesus acknowledges our fallen world reminding His followers "In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). And here in the beatitudes, Jesus promises comfort to those who mourn. In fact, it seems that in order to receive God's comfort we must endure mourning.

Jesus' followers mourn because the kingdom of heaven has not fully come. We mourn the fact that sin still exists in our own life as much as those around us. Independence from God and injustice from sinful attitudes and actions, all cause heartache to God and in us. "Mourning is the only sane, reasonable response to seeing ourselves and the world as we really are." (R.W. Glenn) Yet, in our grief the gospel becomes most real. The good news of Jesus is that "For God's anger is but for a moment, and his favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy

comes with the morning” (Psalm 30:5).

Jesus promises those who experience sadness and sorrow in this world that comfort is available now and things will be made right in the future. We can be reconciled and renewed to God. Wrongs can be made right. The broken will be fixed. Heartaches will be healed. Cries of sadness will turn to tears of joy. In the gospel of Jesus Christ, mourning is a good and gracious gift from God because it means He has not left us without hope.

- ◇ **Why do people avoid talking about grief and mourning?**

- ◇ **Do you think Jesus is only speaking about sad circumstances or is grief over injustice and immorality in view? What injustices and immorality grieve you? How should Christ’s church grieve these issues with biblical hope and practical helps to take action?**

- ◇ **What additional sorts of loss do people mourn?**

- ◇ **How does thoughts of heaven help a grieving heart? What thoughts of heaven do you most anticipate? What Scriptures help orient your affections toward heaven?**

What can you do when someone is hurting over something tragic that has happened in their life? How can we help people mourn without misery?