

The Beatitudes

Matthew 5:3-12



Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, For they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. ~Matthew 5:3-12 NKJV

Introduction: The Sermon on the Mount covers three chapters, Matthew 5, 6 & 7. Matthew 5:1 tells us that Jesus went up on a mountain, and there He taught the people. Verses 3-12 of Matthew 5 are commonly called “The Beatitudes.” Sometimes they are referred to as the “Be Attitudes” or in other words, ways that we should try to be. This 8-lesson study includes memory work, discussion questions, and application assignments. For each lesson, discuss the meaning of the beatitude and background information. Go over the discussion questions together, work on the memory verses(s), and assign the application activity. Encourage one another in developing these attitudes within. Pray for one another to grow in each of these areas. For younger children, it may help to have a visual aid of this study – draw a large beehive on light brown construction paper and place it somewhere it will be seen throughout the day or as you sit to do this study together. Draw and cut out 8 yellow bees, labeling each one with a beatitude, then add each bee to “buzz” around the hive as it is studied. The hive can also be labeled “The Beatitudes” and/or with the text.

Lesson #1 – POOR IN SPIRIT

Background: Read Matthew 5:3. To be poor in spirit means to realize that because of sin, we have nothing of worth to offer God. It is having an attitude of humility that focuses on Jesus and what he offers us rather than being full of pride and focusing on self. One who is poor in spirit sees himself through God's eyes as a sinner who needs salvation. He then wants to empty himself so he can be filled by God. The reward of those who are poor in spirit is the kingdom of heaven. First, a person must recognize himself as a sinner and realize he can do nothing to save himself. Then he must be willing to obey in faith to receive the gift of salvation that God offers. (Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3-4) “Blessed” or happy indeed is the one who is poor in spirit and is a part of God's kingdom!

Discussion Questions:

1. What does it mean to be “poor in spirit”?
2. What does Romans 3:23 tell us?
3. After reading Luke 18:10-14, which man would you say was poor in spirit and why?

Memory Work: Matthew 5:3

Application: Practice being poor in spirit before the Lord. Humbly ask for forgiveness of your sins in your prayers. Be thankful to Him for the gift of salvation offered to us through Jesus Christ.

Lesson #2 – MOURNFUL

Background: Read Matthew 5:4. To mourn is to weep or be sad, but in this verse, Jesus is referring to something specific that we should be mournful about. This would be sorrow and broken-heartedness over sin. David is a good example of this attitude as he writes about his sorrow over his sin with Bathsheba in Psalm 32 and Psalm 51. Listen to some of the ways David describes his feelings about his sin: “Have mercy upon me, O God!” (Psalm 51:1) “Against You, You only have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight.” (Psalm 51:4) “Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.” (Psalm 51:11) “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.” (Psalm 51:10) The good news is that those who mourn over their sin will be comforted. Notice what else David says in these psalms: “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.” (Psalm 32:1) “Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, you righteous; and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!” (Psalm 32:11)

Discussion Questions:

1. What are “those who mourn” mourning over?
2. What does II Corinthians 7:10 tell us?
3. Compare the lives of Judas and Peter. Which one was comforted?

Memory Work: Matthew 5:4

Application: Work on truly feeling sorry for the wrong things you do. Remember that we can ask God for forgiveness.

Lesson #3 – MEEK

Background: Read Matthew 5:5. Meekness is often thought of or described as weakness, but that is not what it is at all! Meekness is strength kept under control. It is gentleness instead of harshness. Meekness goes in two directions: First, we need to show meekness toward God in accepting His will in all things. Second, we need to show meekness to others through our words and actions. Controlling our tongue, being forgiving, and acting kindly and gently with others are all ways to practice meekness. Jesus said that the meek will inherit the earth. Psalm 37:11 says the same thing and adds, “*and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.*” Being meek helps life to be more calm, peaceful, and pleasant.

Discussion Questions:

1. What does the word “meek” mean?
2. Read Isaiah 53:7. Who was a perfect example of meekness?
3. Look up the following scriptures that show meekness in action: Proverbs 15:1; Matthew 5:39-41. Would you find it easy or difficult to practice meekness in these situations?

Memory Work: Matthew 5:5

Application: Practice being meek. Have patience, submit quietly. Speak softly to those who anger you or who are angry at you. Remember the meekness of Jesus, and work hard to imitate Him.

Lesson #4 – HUNGRY & THIRSTY FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS

Background: Read Matthew 5:6. Have you ever been hungry? I mean really, really, really hungry? Doesn't it feel good to eat something and feel satisfied and full after being so hungry? Jesus wants us to hunger and thirst for righteousness. Righteousness is purity of life, virtue, integrity. Appetite is a sign of physical health. When we lose our appetite, it usually means we are sick or something is wrong. In the first few beatitudes, Jesus talked about needing to empty oneself. Now, He says that one is happy or blessed when they have a strong appetite to be filled with goodness and righteousness. They will be satisfied! All one has to do to feast on such things is to go to the source of righteousness – the word of God. God's Word has been called “*pure milk*”(1 Peter 2:2), “*living bread*”(John 6:51), and “*strong meat*”(Hebrews 5:14). How is your spiritual appetite?

Discussion Questions:

1. What does “righteousness” mean?
2. What does Romans 10:17 tell us?
What are some ways we “hear” the word of God?
3. Who is the “I” in John 6:48, and how is he the bread of life? (See also John 1:1-2)

Memory Work: Matthew 5:6

Application: Work on developing a hunger and thirst for God's Word. Make it a point each day to “feed” on the words of the Bible. Create a Bible reading plan as well as a time and quiet place to have your spiritual meal.

Lesson #5 – MERCIFUL

Background: Read Matthew 5:7. Mercy is compassion, pity and kindness shown to one in need. In order for us to be merciful, we have to be aware of opportunities to show mercy and have a tender heart that desires to help others. In the parable of the unforgiving servant in Matthew 18:21-35, a servant who owed the king more than he could ever repay was shown great mercy by having his debt forgiven. This same servant turned around and went out in anger, threatening a fellow servant who owed him just a little and then having him imprisoned for non-payment. This one who was shown such compassion and mercy by the king had a hard heart that would not show mercy to another in need. As a result, the king had him arrested and sent to be severely punished because he had shown no mercy. Jesus tells us that it is a good thing to be merciful to others because then we, too, will receive mercy from God.

Discussion Questions:

1. What does “mercy” mean?
2. Read the account of the good Samaritan in Luke 10:30-37. How many people had an opportunity to show mercy? How many did, and how did they do it?
3. Read Luke 6:36 and James 2:13. Is it very important to show mercy? Why or why not?

Memory Work: Matthew 5:7

Application: Practice being merciful to others. Look for opportunities to put mercy into action. When you see someone in need, think of what Jesus might have done to help that person and what you are able to do.

Lesson #6 – PURE IN HEART

Background: Read Matthew 5:8. Have you ever heard of something being described as pure such as “sparkling pure water”, “pure white”, or “pure gold”? If something is pure, it means there is no spot, stain, contamination, or uncleanness of any kind in it. Something that is pure is not mixed with anything else that would contaminate or spoil it. Jesus wants us to have a pure heart. This means our hearts must be clean, with no ugly spots or stains that would contaminate them. We can't have pure hearts if we are putting other things in our hearts that are not pure and clean. The reward for having a pure heart is that we can see God. Psalm 24:3-4 tells us that the only ones who are able to stand in the presence of the Lord are those who have clean hands and a pure heart.

Discussion Questions:

1. What does “pure” mean?
2. What does Psalm 51:10 say?
3. According to James 1:27, how can we have a pure religion?

Memory Work: Matthew 5:8

Application: Practice being pure in heart. Let your heart be clean with no marks on it! Think of ways you can practice keeping your heart pure before God. Make a list and read them every day to remind you.

Lesson #7 – PEACEMAKER

Background: Read Matthew 5:9. Peace can be defined as calmness, rest, and tranquility. Things such as strife, quarreling, and anxiety would be the opposite of peace. In Genesis 26:17-25, we read about Isaac being a peacemaker. He was settled in the Valley of Gerar, but the herdsmen of that region claimed the well of water for their own which Isaac's herdsmen had dug. Instead of Isaac making a fuss or asserting his claim over his own well, he simply moved on and had another well dug. Again, the herdsmen of Gerar claimed this well, so Isaac moved on yet again and had a third well dug. This time, the Gerar herdsmen left the well alone, and Isaac was able to settle his people and flocks and herds there. Romans 12:18 tells us, *“If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.”* Isaac didn't whine about what was fair or start fighting to keep what was his. He realized that peace depended on him, and he did what was necessary to keep it. Do you practice being a peacemaker?

Discussion Questions:

1. What does the word “peace” mean?
2. What are we to pursue in Romans 14:19? According to James 1:19, what are some ways we can pursue peace?
3. What is the opposite of peace?

Memory Work: Matthew 5:9

Application: Practice being a peacemaker and pursuing the things that make peace. Follow the advice of James 1:19 by being slow to become angry. Follow the example of Jesus by being patient and kind to others.

Lesson #8 – PERSECUTED

Background: Read Matthew 5:10-12. We don't like to be made fun of or to be treated meanly or unfairly, but Jesus was, and He gave us an example to follow of how we should act when this happens. To be persecuted means to be mistreated, oppressed, abused or harassed unfairly. Have you ever been made fun of for believing in God or going to church? Jesus said that if we are persecuted for being righteous, we will have a great reward in heaven. We also belong to a club of other people who were treated that way. Jesus said that the prophets who lived long ago faced persecution too. As hard as it is to be persecuted, it can be even harder to react in the way Jesus wants us to. He tells us to rejoice and be exceedingly glad. Why? Not because it is so much fun to be persecuted (it's not!), but because being faithful to God and standing up for Him will result in a reward that is out of this world!

Discussion Questions:

1. What does the word "persecute" mean?
2. Read Matthew 27:29-31. What kind of persecution did Jesus endure?
3. Why should we be glad when we suffer persecution?

Memory Work: Matthew 5:10-12

Application: Practice being patient when being persecuted for doing good. Think of what Jesus suffered, and ask for His help and strength when you are dealing with persecution. Think about the great reward for those who will stay strong in the Lord and stand up for what is right.