



Blessed
the beatitudes

2025 TERM 2 LIFE GROUP MATERIAL

Bracken Ridge
BAPTIST CHURCH



The Beatitudes

What does it mean to be blessed? And, more importantly, how do we become someone who is blessed? The kind of life God is calling us to may not look the way we imagined, but it will be better than we could have hoped.

In this eight-session series, pastor Matt Chandler takes us through the Beatitudes and shows us what it means to live in the kingdom of God. Through Jesus's teaching, learn what the blessed life really looks like.

ACCESSING THE MATERIAL

On the following pages you will find all of the information needed to go through the Life Group Material. There are corresponding videos that can be accessed through our "RightNow Media" account with the church. If you don't have an account, go to rightnowmedia.org/Account/Invite/BrackenRidgeBaptistChurch. After creating an account search the title of the series to access the videos.

If you are unable for some reason to access the material through these different means, please simply email office@brbc.org.au or call 07 3261 5045.

SESSION 1: MATTHEW 5:3

SESSION GOALS

Every session has a point—what each participant should walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.

Main Idea: God draws near to us, the poor in spirit, and forms us into the image of Jesus.

Head Change: To know the Beatitudes are not traits that God is expecting us to create, but what he is accomplishing in us.

Heart Change: To feel welcomed into the presence of God not despite being poor in spirit, but precisely because we're poor in spirit.

Life Change: To carry our burdens to God in prayer and believe he gives the kingdom of heaven to the likes of us.

OPEN

What comes to mind when you hear the word “blessed”?

We may assume that to be blessed is merely to be happy or to enjoy good fortune. But, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus casts a different vision of what it means to be blessed: to be commended by God. In this session, Matt Chandler, pastor at The Village Church in the Flower Mound, TX, introduces us to the idea that the blessings of the Beatitudes are not a formula for happiness, but a declaration from God about us, often despite our circumstances.

READ

Read Matthew 4:23–5:12.

WATCH

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Matt Chandler's teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how he answers the following questions.

On what foundation does Jesus build the Beatitudes?

Is blessedness a subjective feeling or an objective reality? Why is that an important distinction?

Show Session 1: *Matthew 5:3* (11 minutes).

DISCUSS

Before preaching the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus had begun widening the reach of his ministry. Crowds were gathering from every corner of the region to come and follow Jesus, which sets the stage for our passage. Read Matthew 4:23–5:1.

*[Note: For further study on the geography mentioned in these passages and its connection to the kingdom of God, see **Go Deeper Section 1** at the end of this session.]*

Imagine the scene as Jesus ascends the mountain to teach. **What stands out to you as you consider the crowds of people who have come to see and hear Jesus?**

One of the key themes that undergirds the Beatitudes—a theme that Matt said is the foundation these Beatitudes are built on—is the kingdom of God. In fact, our study begins near the end of Matthew 4 because, as Matt asserted, Jesus's initial preaching of the kingdom of God is a prerequisite to understanding what's going on in the Beatitudes.

In your own words, how would you define the kingdom of God?

The kingdom of God can simply be defined as the reign and rule of God over all peoples in heaven and on earth. Though the kingdom of God has always existed, part of Jesus's work was to proclaim the good news that "the kingdom of [God] had come near" (Matt 4:17). Large crowds from every corner of the region (all peoples, not just Jews) were coming and following Jesus. **How can our local churches reflect the reality of God's kingdom on earth? In what ways is the nearness of the kingdom of God good news for you?**

Matt highlighted that Jesus frames the Beatitudes with this statement: "theirs is the kingdom." **Having read through the Beatitudes, what does it say about God's kingdom that it belongs to people such as those he describes? What does it say about God himself that he gives the kingdom to the poor in spirit, those who mourn, and the meek, for instance?**

Jesus repeatedly uses the word "blessed" in the Beatitudes. It shows up at least nine times in these verses as a declaration of God's approval. **In what ways does our modern conception of being blessed run contrary to Jesus's use of the word?**

At some point, we all face the conditions described in these Beatitudes: poverty of spirit, mourning, emptiness, etc. **Knowing that these conditions are somewhat common to the human experience, how does Jesus's teaching in the Beatitudes encourage you?**

After giving his overview of the Beatitudes, Matt zoomed in on the first one, which says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Matt said God pronounces blessing on you "when you're at the end of yourself, when you come to God with empty hands." **Have you ever come to the end of yourself? What that was like for you?**

During that season, while you were at the end of yourself, how did you experience God's blessing? In what ways did you find it difficult to recognize God's blessing during that time?

For those who are poor in spirit—those at the end of themselves—Jesus promises that “the kingdom of heaven is theirs.” **In what ways do you draw encouragement from Jesus’s promise in this passage?**

Matt made a connection between the first Beatitude and Psalm 51, which states in verse 17, “a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.” **What does it mean to have a broken and contrite heart? What are the similarities between this passage and the first Beatitude?**

Matt described the first Beatitude as an invitation “into the presence of Jesus . . . to confess your weakness, to confess your need and receive the kingdom.” All that’s required of us is to simply come to Jesus. **In what ways are you weary? Frustrated by an ongoing struggle with sin? How do you imagine God would respond if, instead of avoiding or running *from* him, you ran *to* him? What, if anything, is preventing you from doing that?**

LAST WORD

The Beatitudes are not a set of virtues or behaviors that we are called to manufacture on our own. Instead, Jesus is working the Beatitudes into us. They’re a way of being that, over time, Jesus accomplishes in us. In the Beatitudes, we find the ethic of the kingdom of God.

We learn in the first Beatitude that God pronounces blessing on those who know their need for him and who accept Jesus’s invitation to come to him. All that’s expected of us is to come, weary and weak as we are, “for the kingdom of heaven is [ours].”

Take a few quiet moments to bring your weariness, your frustrations, and any ongoing struggle with sin into the presence of Jesus, and confess your need for him, either alone or in the company of others. Assure yourself of the truth of this passage by reciting it aloud.

SESSION 2: MATTHEW 5:4

SESSION GOALS

Every session has a point—what each participant should walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.

Main Idea: God draws near to comfort us when we mourn and enables us to comfort others in their times of need.

Head Change: To know that God will meet our mourning with kindness and comfort.

Heart Change: To feel free to grieve our sin and the brokenness of the world without shame.

Life Change: To take our grief directly to God so that we can be comforted by him.

OPEN

What do you typically do when you are feeling down? What helps you get through a tough day?

There's nothing wrong with taking a nap or watching TV when we feel overwhelmed, but our simple coping strategies can become lifestyles of avoidance. We live in a culture that doesn't like the idea of sadness. We often seek to avoid the pain of mourning by suppressing our grief or distracting ourselves from our feelings. The idea of embracing our sadness is unusual, even unwanted.

In this session, we'll see that mourning is not something to avoid, but a pathway to blessing. And when we mourn, we can be sure that will be comforted by God himself.

READ

Read Matthew 5:1–12.

Note: Because you'll be reading this passage weekly for the remainder of this series, consider making your study of the Beatitudes an occasion to memorize these verses of Scripture.

WATCH

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Matt Chandler's teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how he answers the following questions.

Why is it important to know the Beatitudes highlight eight characteristics of the same person?

What are the three reasons mourning is a sign of the kingdom?

How does mourning help us develop compassion?

Show Session 2: *Matthew 5:4* (13 minutes).

DISCUSS

Matt opened this session saying that Jesus didn't just show up looking for the "blessed" people. Instead, Jesus shapes us ordinary people into these sorts of people. How is the idea that Jesus is looking for "blessed" people different from the idea that he shapes us into "blessed" people? Why is it good news that Jesus shapes us into the kinds of people described in the Beatitudes?

Why do you think the second Beatitude is so significant for us today?

We all regularly encounter pain and heartbreak because we live in a world fractured by sin. To protect ourselves from pain, grief, and sadness we develop coping mechanisms. But coping can prevent us from dealing with reality and distract us from our emotions.

What are some of the coping mechanisms you have used to protect yourself? In what ways have your coping mechanisms been ineffective long-term solutions?

One of the dangers of running to our coping mechanisms instead of grieving is that we end up having nowhere to take our disappointments. So, instead of mourning, we “drink a little bit too much or watch a little bit too much Netflix,” and never deal with our sadness. **When we consistently try to avoid feelings of pain instead of properly mourning, what two emotions did Matt say most often emerge?**

In a culture that often pursues happiness at all costs, Matt’s claim that “mourning is a sign of the kingdom” may seem backward. But he listed three reasons ways mourning reveals God is at work: our mourning of personal sin, our mourning over the brokenness of the world, and our growth in compassion in response to both. **Which of these three “kingdom qualities” do you tend to avoid or suppress? What things can you do to practice these kingdom qualities?**

As we grow closer to Jesus, we become more aware of our sin. As we grow more aware of our sin, we grow more prone to lamenting our sin, or to mourning. **Has personal sin ever caused you to feel grief? In that situation, how did you respond to that feeling? Did your conviction of sin cause you to run to Christ or did it lead to shame?**

The common understanding of conviction is that it is a negative experience, meant to heap guilt or shame on ourselves. But Matt described conviction as “an invitation to a better life.” God uses mourning to turn us from sin to his grace and comfort. **In the future, how could you remind yourself that conviction, though uncomfortable, is an invitation to draw near to God?**

The world is full of brokenness. Our typical reaction to the injustice, moral failure, and corruption around us is unrighteous anger. **Where in our culture do you see unrighteous anger toward the world’s brokenness? Where, and**

in what ways, does anger over the world's brokenness present itself in your own life?

Instead of anger, how does the second Beatitude cause us to respond to the brokenness of the world?

Kingdom mourning has an outward movement to it. We first mourn our sin, then mourn the sin and brokenness around us. As God comforts us through our sadness, he develops compassion in us so that we can go out and be a comfort to others. **Have you ever considered that godly mourning creates compassion? In what way does mourning with others fulfill Jesus's promise that those who mourn "will be comforted"?**

To what extent do you prioritize comforting others as a response to the brokenness of the world?

It is not good to grieve in isolation. We must be willing to be comforted by the people God puts in our lives to not only participate in the act of comforting others but to be a recipient of that comfort ourselves. **What steps can you take today to welcome others into the sadness, lament, and mourning that you have experienced so that you can be comforted by them?**

LAST WORD

In our culture, mourning is not seen as something to embrace. Instead, it is viewed as something to distance ourselves from or avoid altogether. But when we mourn, by Jesus's own assurance, we can be certain that we will be comforted.

God often takes us *through* mourning, not around it. You don't have to grieve alone. God himself wants you to come to him so that he can comfort you. He has given you a community to support and mourn with you. And, through mourning, we grow in compassion. As he said, "Blessed are those who mourn," for in our mourning there is comfort.

SESSION 3: MATTHEW 5:5

SESSION GOALS

Every session has a point—what each participant should walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.

Main Idea: With Jesus as our example, we can see that meekness is not a weakness, but a controlled strength rooted in our trust and delight in God.

Head Change: To know that meekness is not passive, but actively waiting on God and trusting in his strength.

Heart Change: To feel confident that we can practice meekness because God is trustworthy.

Life Change: To mimic the meekness of Jesus by never returning evil for evil or violence for violence.

OPEN

When you think of the word “meekness,” what comes to mind? What people, past or present, exemplify what it means to be meek?

The virtue of meekness has fallen on hard times. Not only is it widely misunderstood, but even when rightly defined our culture doesn't see meekness as something worth practicing. We prefer flamboyant displays of power and bravado to humility and quiet strength.

But, in the Beatitudes, Jesus shows us how our logic is upside-down, the inverse of his kingdom. In this session, Matt will explore how meekness is an essential quality for Christians and at the heart of what it means to be a faithful disciple of Jesus.

READ

Read Matthew 5:1–12. Keep working to memorize this passage with your small group.

WATCH

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Matt's teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how he answers the following questions.

What phrase does Matt use to define meekness?

What four things does Matt list that help us understand meekness?

How does the exercise of meekness break the cycle of evil and violence?

Show Session 3: *Matthew 5:5* (10 minutes).

DISCUSS

Matthew 5:5 is an iconic passage, but the word “meek” can be a source of confusion for us. Does it mean passive? Risk-averse? To us, it may sound like Jesus is calling us to be pushovers. **Would you want to be described as meek? Why, or why not?**

Moses and Jesus are both described as being meek, but neither was weak or passive. They were powerful leaders who were serious about justice and righteousness. In some moments, they were even “fierce,” as Matt suggested. **Why do we sometimes consider meekness to be incompatible with leadership?**

Do you think it would be beneficial for our church, business, and political leaders to be meek? In what ways would meek leadership be different from the kind of leadership we often see today?

When Jesus was being arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane, Peter attacked one of the High Priest's servants. In this scene, Peter is portrayed as the antithesis of Jesus and his meekness. Read John 18:1–11. **What would you do in this situation? Would you behave more like Peter or Jesus?**

How do Peter's actions show the absence of meekness (strength under control)? How do Jesus's actions show us meekness in action?

In the video, Matt pointed us to Psalm 37, identifying four things that will help us understand and practice meekness.

Read Psalm 37:1–11.

To exercise meekness, we must first “trust God and do good” (v. 3). Of course, trusting God isn't always easy and it often is easier to choose our own path instead of God's. **Why do you think it can be so difficult to trust God when we are under pressure? What would it look like for you to trust God with your current struggles?**

When we trust God, we will often be required to wait on his timing. Even when everything in us wants to react, waiting on God will require us to be patient and, sometimes, inactive. **How good are you at waiting on God before trying to fix your problems? Before making a consequential decision? What can make it difficult for you to wait?**

Again, meekness is not a character defect, a weakness, or extreme passivity. Meekness is, as Matt defined it, “strength under control.” Being meek often involves waiting but requires us to be ready and willing to act when God calls. **What's an example of a time when you failed to wait on God before acting or making a significant decision?**

When have you waited on God's timing, acting only after God called on you to do so? How was the outcome different than if you had acted when you wanted?

Matt called meekness the most powerful response to evil and injustice. Meekness breaks the cycle of evil and violence by refusing to participate in it. This doesn't only apply to egregious examples of violence and injustice but to our office arguments, trouble in our relationships, social media interactions—any time we are in conflict with someone else. **How could meekness diffuse an argument? What are some specific examples and opportunities (at work, in a church small group, with a friend) where you can practice meekness?**

LAST WORD

Meekness is not weakness. Rather, it is strength under control—the practice of holy restraint. Jesus is our perfect example of meekness, using his strength to serve others and restraining his power according to the will of the Father. Now, “all authority in heaven and earth” belongs to Jesus. In other words, Jesus is living proof that the meek will inherit the earth.

So, as you go about your normal, day-to-day life, strive to imitate the meekness of Jesus, whose strength was displayed most vividly in the act of laying his life down for his friends.

SESSION 4: MATTHEW 5:6

SESSION GOALS

Every session has a point—what each participant should walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.

Main Idea: When we hunger and thirst for righteousness, God will satisfy us himself and establish order in our relationships.

Head Change: To know God wants us to be righteous, rightly related to him.

Heart Change: To feel the desire to live in a right relationship with God.

Life Change: To live in a right relationship with God and, as a result, grow into a right relationship with ourselves, with others, and with the earth.

OPEN

How do you act when you are hungry or thirsty? How does it change the way you treat others?

We all know what it's like to be hungry and thirsty. Our body's need—its inherent dissatisfaction—alerts us to the thing it needs to be satisfied with, whether food or drink. And that desire can change the way we act, for better or worse.

Just like our bodies hunger for food, Christians should hunger for righteousness, or to be rightly related to God. Jesus makes clear in Matthew 5:6, that our hunger and thirst will change us, but not for the worse. When he satisfies our longing, all our relationships will be made right.

READ

Read Matthew 5:1–12. Continue your work to commit this passage to memory.

WATCH

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Matt's teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how he answers the following questions.

How are the Beatitudes “achieved”?

What are the four relationships the cross heals in our lives?

According to Matt, what is the pathway to satisfaction?

Show Session 4: *Matthew 5:6* (10 minutes).

DISCUSS

In the fourth Beatitude, Jesus uses the imagery of hunger and thirst to describe our yearnings for righteousness. Read Matthew 5:6. **What have you understood Jesus to be speaking about here? How have you heard this passage taught in the past?**

Matt mentioned that being hungry and thirsty for righteousness isn't a feeling we can muster up. Self-motivation comes and goes quickly, and beating ourselves up for not having a feeling won't lead us to satisfaction. **What have been the results, personally, as you've tried to manufacture a hunger and thirst for righteousness in the past?**

Matt identified the four major relationships we experience in life, each of which is affected by righteousness. If any of our relationships are going to flourish, we have to first figure out our relationship with God. This Beatitude encourages us to recognize the break in our relationship with God and to long for him to mend it. **Do you feel that you have to fix your relationship with God?**

Based on what you know about the Bible and what Matt said in the video, what has God done to mend your relationship with him? Do you feel that Jesus's sacrifice is enough to forgive you, or do you think you have to also add some of your own good works to be right with God? Why?

We tend to understand righteousness as only right behavior, but, as Matt said, moral conformity is a by-product of "right relatedness" to God. **What are some ways we get that backward, thinking right behavior produces a right relationship? In what ways do you think relating to God rightly will lead to right moral behavior?**

God also made us social creatures—we were made to relate to one another. But our social relationships are not perfect. Even our closest relationships can be unhealthy. **Why do you think even the best relationships can fall apart? In what ways do you need God's help mending relationships in your sphere of influence?**

When we are rightly related to God, we realize that we are sinful and we are forgiven. We bring our brokenness into every relationship we are a part of and should be quick to mend relationships when our sin affects other people. We should also be quick to forgive, knowing that the person we are in conflict with is loved by God. **What makes it difficult to be quick to seek and give forgiveness? In what ways do you need God's help to be rightly related to others?**

The third relationship, our relationship with ourselves, is often the most difficult to figure out. We don't think of ourselves as overly critical or lacking self-control; our behavior, broken as it is, feels normal. **How would you describe your relationship with yourself? What can you do to relate to yourself rightly? How can pursuing a deeper relationship with God help you relate to yourself in a healthier way?**

The fourth and final relationship is our relationship to the earth. This relationship can feel abstract, but Matt described it as our relationship to creation and culture. When you are rightly related to God, others, and yourself, it will change the way you relate to your workplace, your neighborhood, and society at large. Wherever God has placed us, we should seek to create a world where people flourish. **What would it look like for your small group to make your community a better place?**

Matt closed this session saying, "dissatisfaction is the pathway to satisfaction." **To what extent are you currently experiencing dissatisfaction in your relationships? How could that dissatisfaction, that yearning, be a hunger or thirst for righteousness?**

What one thing can you begin doing to put yourself on the pathway toward satisfaction in God?

LAST WORD

There exists in each of us a deep restlessness—a hunger, as Jesus says—that won't be calmed or satisfied until our relationship with God is made right. And as long as we try to skirt around our dissatisfaction, suppress it, or fill it with other things, our hunger and thirst will remain.

Therefore, as Matt argued, the pathway to satisfaction runs right through dissatisfaction. Only those who, by God's grace, come awake to our need to have our relationship with God restored—those who hunger and thirst for righteousness—will be filled. Whenever you are dissatisfied, seek God and his presence. Because there, and there alone, will you be satisfied.

SESSION 5: MATTHEW 5:7

SESSION GOALS

Every session has a point—what each participant should walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.

Main Idea: God meets us with mercy, not condemnation, and transforms us into people who extend mercy to others.

Head Change: To know that God lavishes mercy upon us, even though we are undeserving of such kindness.

Heart Change: To feel drawn to people on the fringes of our society to show them the mercy of God.

Life Change: To mimic Jesus's ministry of mercy to draw people into the kingdom of God.

OPEN

How do you feel when a character in a movie, TV show, or book doesn't get what they deserve?

It's sometimes difficult for us to reckon with the concept of mercy, the act of withholding punishment or consequences from someone who's done wrong. In a culture that is increasingly angry and anxious, mercy is seen as weakness or an excusing of bad behavior. But mercy is one of the most powerful ways we can love people.

Just as God was merciful to us when we didn't deserve it, we also can love people who have not earned our love. And, as we will see in this session, mercy reaches out to people who are forgotten by our society to show them the dignity and life-changing love of our savior.

READ

Read Matthew 5:1–12. Continue your effort to memorize the Beatitudes.

WATCH

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Matt's teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how he answers the following questions.

According to Matt, what activity was Jesus's ministry built around?

How does Matt define the word "mercy"?

What is our natural response to having received mercy from God?

Show Session 5: *Matthew 5:7* (9 minutes).

DISCUSS

"Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy."

For the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the humble, and those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, there may be no sweeter words than these. Followers of Jesus are keenly aware of our need for mercy. But what is

mercy, who receives it, and what do we do with it once we've received it? **How would you define mercy?**

Matt defined mercy as "the giving of undeserved acceptance and blessing." Think about the word "undeserved." **When have you been an undeserving recipient of kindness or mercy? What was your reaction to that kindness or mercy?**

Matt talked about "the fringes"—the edge of society filled with people who are "farthest from God imaginable." **What does it look like for people to be "on the fringes" where you live?**

Read John 8:2–11.

In this passage, a group of "scribes and Pharisees" paraded a woman who was caught in the act of adultery in front of Jesus and a group of people he was teaching. They wanted to bring the full force of the law down upon this woman, but Jesus chose to be gentle and merciful. **If you're honest, do you most often side with the scribes and Pharisees, condemning those who wrong you, or with Jesus, showing mercy?**

Why do you think we can often behave as the scribes and Pharisees did in John 8?

Matt also referenced the story of Zacchaeus and the woman at the well in the video. Take a moment to read those stories in Luke 19:1–10 and John 4:1–30. **How did the onlookers respond to Jesus's interaction with Zacchaeus? How did Jesus's own disciples respond upon seeing him interact with the woman at the well?**

What do the woman caught in adultery, Zacchaeus, and the woman at the well all have in common?

How do Zacchaeus and the woman at the well respond to the mercy that Jesus extends to them?

Some onlookers opposed Jesus's mercy, others were amazed, while those who receive his mercy, like Zacchaeus and the woman at the well, were quick to go and share the mercy they had received with others. **How do stories like these confront us with the kindness of God and invite us into the blessed life that Jesus outlines in the Beatitudes?**

The fifth Beatitude forces us to reckon with the mercy of God. Have we received it, and if so, do we extend it to others? **How would you answer those questions? In what ways do you actively seek to extend the mercy of God to those whom you encounter in your day-to-day life?**

If the mercy of God is his "giving of undeserved acceptance and blessing," then God's mercy is an unspeakable kindness. And if "God's kindness is intended to lead [people] to repentance" (Rom 2:4), then we would be wise to ask ourselves: **To what degree do our life and ministry imitate the kindness of God? What priority do you place on kindness in your interactions with strangers? With the "sinners and tax collectors" of our day? With those on the fringes?**

More than any other thus far, the fifth Beatitude is an occasion for self-reflection. Our instincts, or lack thereof, toward mercy provide us with a clear picture of whether we truly understand the great kindness God has shown in extending us mercy. When we, by the Spirit, properly comprehend the mercy of God, we will be quick to give it away to those we encounter—there's plenty to go around.

In what ways can you practice extending the mercy of God to others today? To whom can you share God's mercy today?

LAST WORD

The Bible pulls no punches. Before receiving the mercy of God, we were his enemies. We were all on the fringes! "But God, being *rich in mercy*, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ" (Eph 2:4–5, emphasis added).

We have been pulled from the fringes of our rebellion against God, the one who is “rich in mercy” and who will “show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:4, 7). Blessed are those who have received this mercy and who extend this mercy, for they will get more of it.

SESSION 6: MATTHEW 5:8

SESSION GOALS

Every session has a point—what each participant should walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.

Main Idea: Being pure in heart is not about being perfect but being honest and transparent before God and others.

Head Change: To know that the pure in heart don’t hide from God when in distress but run to him.

Heart Change: To feel confident that God welcomes us with grace when we turn to him.

Life Change: To run to God, practicing ongoing confession and repentance before him and others.

OPEN

What’s your favourite social media platform? Do you think people or accounts you follow give a real depiction of their lives? Why, or why not?

Honesty is difficult. We don’t want people to see our flaws or even that we may not be as exciting, stylish, or happy as the people around us. So, instead of being honest, it can be much easier to tell people we are “doing fine.”

When it comes to our relationship with God, we may think that honesty is the last thing he wants from us. He wants us to obey him, be righteous, and live like Jesus. We fail so often that we assume honesty will only hurt our relationship with him. But when Jesus commands us to be “pure in heart,” he is not after perfection. He wants honesty—an undivided heart rather than a high-powered resume. In this session, we’ll learn that being pure in heart is an invitation to come into the presence of God just as we are.

READ

Read Matthew 5:1–12. Keep working to memorize the Beatitudes.

WATCH

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Matt’s teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how he answers the following questions.

Why does this Beatitude tend to trip us up?

According to Matt, what is one of the clearest ways to know whether you understand the gospel?

What is the primary mark of the pure in heart?

Show Session 6: *Matthew 5:8* (7 minutes).

DISCUSS

The Beatitudes we have encountered in this study seem relatively achievable. Some of these things, like being poor in spirit or mourning, are sometimes thrust upon us by the circumstances of life—they just come naturally because we live in a world broken by sin. But this Beatitude feels different. For those of us who know ourselves well, and who are honest enough to admit it, being pure in heart feels impossible.

Have you ever tried to achieve pureness of heart? What actions or discipline have you tried to get rid of your struggles, doubts, or fears? Were those attempts successful?

Matt suggested that Jesus isn't telling us to purify our own hearts. When we try to fix ourselves, we enter what Matt called the "cycle of shame"—vowing to stop practicing sin, falling into that sin, hiding that sin, and then resolving to do better, only to repeat the cycle. **Have you ever found yourself in a similar cycle of shame? What was that like? How long did that season last?**

The cycle of shame is marked by running from God, not to him. We think God will be angry or disappointed in us, so we hide from him. But when we hide from God, we also hide from his mercy. **What do you think God sees when he looks at you? How might your perception of God be keeping you from running to him?**

Many of us carry a fear of being found out. We're aware of our struggles and sins but are afraid about making them known. But God sees us. He is already aware of our struggles, and he is inviting us to come to him—to abide in him—hold nothing back, and receive his mercy. **What will it take for you to let down your guard and offer your whole life to God? How might remembering that God abides in you, and you in him, help you let your guard down?**

Jesus is trying to call us out of the cycle of shame and into honesty and transparency before God. **What do you think it looks like to be transparent with God? Are there people in your life who model being transparent with God well? Who are they?**

When you think about being completely honest with God, what emotions does it stir in you? In what ways do you find yourself reluctant to be honest and transparent with God?

In what ways could honesty and transparency build your relationship with God and give you freedom from your sin?

One of the critical pieces to being pure in heart is not only being honest and transparent with God but embracing and practicing the same honesty and transparency with other Christians as well. **What is your experience with Christian community and accountability? Who are some of the people in your life with whom you can be honest and transparent about your struggles, doubts, and fears?**

What steps could this small group take to become more accountable and transparent with one another? What could help you continue to grow as a community that gives mercy to one another?

LAST WORD

The pure in heart are not perfect people. The pure in heart are those who exercise honesty and transparency before God, knowing that to hide from God is to hide the very thing we need most—his mercy. So, we run to him, especially in our distress. And as we do so, God welcomes us into his presence with love and grace.

SESSION 7: MATTHEW 5:9

SESSION GOALS

Every session has a point—what each participant should walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.

Main Idea: God has placed us in specific places and around specific people so that we can bring peace into our broken world.

Head Change: To know that every Christian is called to be a peacemaker in the domains God has placed us.

Heart Change: To feel a deep desire to bring peace wherever we see the brokenness of sin.

Life Change: To proactively look for ways to establish God's peace in the areas where he has placed us.

OPEN

Have you ever felt a deep sense of peace? What was that like?

We tend to think of peace as a quiet afternoon, a calm feeling, or an absence of conflict. But Jesus's idea of peace is much deeper than we might think. It is not just the absence of violence and conflict, but a deep harmony throughout all creation. In this session, Matt will show us the Bible's view of peace and our call to create flourishing in the world around us.

READ

Read Matthew 5:1–12. Continue to memorize the Beatitudes with your group.

WATCH

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Matt's teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how he answers the following questions.

What words did Matt use to help us understand biblical peace?

Why does peacemaking feel too big for us?

What is the most peacemaking activity we can do?

Show Session 7: *Matthew 5:9* (10 minutes).

DISCUSS

We live in an angry, anxious, and disoriented world where peace seems not just elusive, but downright unattainable. But it is precisely to this world, and God's people, that Jesus speaks these words: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God." **To what extent does peace seem far-off or impossible to you? Why does it feel so unattainable?**

The Beatitudes show how God designed humanity to function and flourish. And the idea of flourishing is central to the concept of peace or *shalom*. Matt used words like harmony, wholeness, and rhythm to describe God's vision of peace, comparing it to a well-tuned orchestra. **In what ways is this idea of *shalom*, of harmony and flourishing, different from our ideas of peace?**

What might harmony and flourishing look like in our world today?

Peace is not just a seemingly impossible task—it's hard work that requires long-term commitment and wisdom. But it is the work God calls us, his sons and daughters, to apply ourselves to. **What things tend to keep us from working to create peace? What are some of the barriers that you personally encounter when trying to make peace at work? With your family? With your neighbors? How could you overcome those barriers?**

Since the task of peacemaking seems so big, we might feel overwhelmed by it. But we don't have to figure out all the strife in the world; we just need to faithfully use our gifts in our spheres of influence. A key thing to remember is that God has made you with unique gifts for the work of peacemaking. **In what ways has God uniquely wired you? How could you use your gifts and abilities to make peace?**

Who could you partner with to hold you accountable for the work of peacemaking?

God has also placed you where you live, at the time in which you live for a specific purpose. Read Acts 17:26–27.

In this passage, Paul says that God determined the “appointed times and boundaries” of where people live so that those around us might “seek and find God.” **Who are the people around you who don't yet know God? What opportunities do you have to get to know and serve them?**

How could building a relationship with your neighbors create a better neighborhood for your family and theirs?

Your gifts and personality were planned by God so that you could bring peace and flourishing into the world. What specific opportunities do you have in your neighborhood, at your job, and in your extracurricular activities to make peace? What is the next step you need to take to serve God with that opportunity?

Take a moment to dream big. What would it look like if your city was rooted in the peace of God—flourishing and in harmony? In what small way can you contribute to that big dream? Who could you partner with to make peace where you live?

LAST WORD

In a world filled with disorder and division, the *shalom* of God feels impossible, far out of reach. But you have been uniquely wired and uniquely placed to bring peace into the world. God is simply calling you to live faithfully right where you are. You can't solve world peace, but you can start to create it on your block.

So, get to know your neighbors and serve them when opportunities arise. Seek forgiveness and to restore broken relationships in your family. Be kind and encouraging to the people you encounter every day. Pray for your enemies. Carry the *shalom* of God with you everywhere you go.

SESSION 8: MATTHEW 5:10–12

SESSION GOALS

Every session has a point—what each participant should walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.

Main Idea: We can expect persecution for our relationship with God, but we can rest in the hope of God's coming kingdom and our heavenly reward.

Head Change: To know that when we are in a right relationship with God, we will encounter hostility from people who do not know him.

Heart Change: To feel confident in the face of persecution, knowing that ours is the kingdom and there is a reward waiting for us in heaven.

Life Change: To embrace a right relationship with God even at the risk of persecution because a great reward awaits us in heaven when we endure.

OPEN

"Blessed are those who are _____, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs."

How do you think most people would fill in the blank above? How would you fill in that blank?

Many of us might complete that statement with a word like "rewarded" or "happy," but Jesus declares something altogether different: "Blessed are those who are *persecuted* because of righteousness." It seems backward to us, but one of the ways we encounter God's blessing is through persecution.

While none of us wants to be persecuted, it is very likely that we will be. But it isn't something to be afraid of. In the last session of our study on the Beatitudes, Matt will show us the kind of persecution that brings God's blessing and the fuel that helps us endure those difficult times.

READ

Read Matthew 5:1–12. Whether you have memorized all eight Beatitudes or are reading them for the first time, think of ways to remind yourself of these kingdom qualities beyond this study.

WATCH

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Matt's teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how he answers the following questions.

Why does the world see Christians as a barrier to progress?

What are the three reasons we will experience persecution?

Why can the final Beatitude be considered a double Beatitude?

Show Session 8: *Matthew 5:10–12* (13 minutes).

DISCUSS

Matt mentioned that over the last three to five years, he has noticed a change in tone toward Christianity in the United States. He described it as a move from “indifference” to “slight hostility.” **In what ways have you seen the change in tone in your community? In what ways has it affected you?**

There is a popular assumption today that society should always be moving toward a more progressive, better future. But many view Christianity and its values as a “barrier to progress.” **What are some Christian beliefs that our culture considers barriers to progress?**

In a society and culture whose values are changing so rapidly, and in such contrast with Christian values, the prospect of being persecuted for your Christian faith is becoming more of a reality. **How would you define the word persecution? Have you ever personally experienced persecution? What was that like?**

It is easy to assume that every form of resistance we encounter is a type of persecution that Jesus blesses. But in Matthew 5:10, Jesus only blesses those who are persecuted for being in right relationship with him. **What behaviors might we engage in that earn ill-treatment from others, but wouldn't be considered "persecution"? What can we do to ensure that any mistreatment we receive is because of righteousness and on account of Jesus?**

Matt listed three reasons why we will be persecuted. First is that our presence exposes sin and darkness. **Has your presence ever been interpreted as hostility? How did you respond to that situation?**

The second reason we can expect persecution is because our righteousness will cost those who seek to gain money, power, or influence in sinful ways. **What are some examples of how people profit from unrighteousness? In what ways could your relationship with Jesus threaten someone's ability to gain from his or her unrighteousness?**

The third and final reason why we can expect hostility is because we "speak righteousness." **In what ways do you talk about being in a right relationship with God? Why do you think that threatens people?**

When we talk about and practice what we believe, we may be seen as fools and possibly, at worst, extremists. **Why do you think we might be seen as fools or extremists? What are some examples where these labels are already being applied to Christians in our culture?**

What is an appropriate, God-honoring, way to respond to people calling us foolish, hateful, or even extremists?

Matt pointed out three truths in the Beatitudes that help us endure and respond appropriately to persecution. The first is the truth that the kingdom of God belongs to us. There is no persecution that can take away the future Jesus has for us. In other words, every tribulation is temporary, and the best

is yet to come. **What could we do to remind ourselves of the future God has for us when we encounter persecution?**

The second truth that encourages us in persecution is that we are not alone. Countless prophets and saints have endured insults and aggression for their faith. Their steadfast examples let us know that we can endure and that perseverance, no matter how difficult, is worth the struggle. **What comfort does it bring to you knowing that other people have endured the same kind of persecution you are experiencing?**

The final encouragement is that we have a great reward waiting for us in heaven. God knows what we are going through and will reward us when we endure. All we have to do is remain faithful. **In what ways does a heavenly reward change your view of your present persecution? Do you think it is worth enduring? Why, or why not?**

Persecutions will come; Jesus promised us we would. Persecution is a reality that Christians have endured since the birth of the church. But take heart, you were made for this moment. As we endure in our faith, God will work all the Beatitudes into our lives, making us more like his Son and blessing us as citizens of his kingdom. **In what ways has your understanding of the Beatitudes changed over the last eight sessions?**

What could it look like for you to practice the characteristics of the Beatitudes in your everyday life after this series?

LAST WORD

The Beatitudes give us a glimpse of what it looks like to live in God's kingdom. What at first seems like an upside-down way of living is actually right-side up. The Beatitudes are the way to "the blessed life," to the life of flourishing, to life as God intended it.

So, embrace the way of the kingdom—the poorness of spirit, the mourning, the meekness, the hungering and thirsting for righteousness, the mercy, the purity of heart, the peacemaking, and, yes, the persecution—for the kingdom of heaven is yours.





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