

## #BLESSED

### Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) CG Leaders' Notes

We begin a 10-week study of the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12) this Sunday. You'll find Jesus' words - properly understood and embraced - life-changing. Like other Scriptures that we know well (think of Psalm 23), we can skim the surface because of our familiarity when God intends for us to drink deeply of His truth. This certainly qualifies as one of those Scriptures!

So drink deeply for the next 10 weeks along with your Community Group. You can do that by:

- *Reading and interacting with these Leaders' Notes.* As always, feel free to give them to people in your group.
- *Memorizing the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12).* We've created Beatitude "wallpaper" for your computer, phone, or pads. Point your group to [www.hopevale.org/blessed](http://www.hopevale.org/blessed) for the files and simple instructions on how to download a wallpaper to your device. This is a great tool for memorizing the Beatitudes over the next 10 weeks!
- *Reading and re-reading Matthew 5-7, the whole sermon.* Soaking up Jesus' entire sermon will shed light on what the Beatitudes mean and how Jesus intends us to live them out.
- *Digging deeper in a resource on the Beatitudes.* We're using Colin Smith's *Momentum*, Jerry Bridge's *The Blessing of Humility*, and D.A. Carson's *Expositor's Bible Commentary* on Matthew (volume 1) as our key resources for the this study. We highly recommend them to you.

Ready to dive in? Here we go!

#### What would He say?

***If Jesus were physically here right now, what would He want to say to us?*** Think about it. Our worship service begins next Sunday. You carefully set your coffee under the chair in front of you so you don't knock it over. You stand to sing. The worship team leads one of your favorite songs, and God fills your heart with joy and gratitude to Him. Tears fill your eyes.

Then it's time for the message. Instead of Pastor Dan, *Jesus* walks to the center of the stage. You're floored. Jesus, really?! Yes, it's Him. He greets us and begins to teach . . . What would He say? What would He want to tell us?

Chances are, He would teach the Sermon on the Mount. This sermon in Matthew 5-7 is not only a *sample* sermon but also Jesus' *standard* sermon. This is what Jesus taught as He traveled from town to town to town. This is what He wanted people to know. This is what He wants *us* to know.

## **Kingdom 101**

The location of the sermon in Matthew's Gospel shows that he viewed it as Jesus' foundational teaching, Kingdom 101. Matthew 1-2 tell about the family history and birth of Jesus. Matthew 3-4 describe the beginning of Jesus' three-year ministry - his baptism, temptation, initial preaching, and calling of the 12 disciples. Then we get the Sermon on the Mount beginning in chapter 5. Right off the bat, Jesus lays out clearly what the Kingdom of God (and He as its king) is all about. Right away, He cuts to the heart of the matter: a real relationship with God and genuine love for others. This sermon sets the tone for the rest of Jesus' time on earth, and He repeated its themes again and again as He traveled from town to town.

Here's another way to look at the key role of this sermon during Jesus' time on earth - and now. Matthew "built" his account of Jesus' life around *five* teachings of Jesus (NT scholars call them "discourses").

1. Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5-7)
2. Mission and suffering (Matt 10:5-11:1)
3. Parables of the kingdom (Matt 13)
4. Life under God's authority (Matt 18:1-19:2)
5. The end of the age (Matt 24-25)

Jesus' sermon on the mount is the first of these teachings (discourses). It provides the foundation for all the others. Without genuine relationship with God and commitment to love others, living and suffering for Jesus' mission makes no sense. God's authority is side-stepped, and we're too distracted to care about the unfolding of God's Kingdom through time.

## **Not how we view it**

That gives you an idea of the importance of this sermon of Jesus. But that may not be how many of us were taught to think about it. *What's the first thing that comes to your mind when you think about the Sermon on the Mount?*

I asked several people this question over the past few weeks. One person thought poetry - beautiful words with deeper meaning. Another person thought of the Sermon on the Mount as the New Testament's "Ten Commandments," rules that we should live by. Another commented that she thought Beatitudes meant "let this be your attitude." (More on that in a moment!)

What comes to your mind? If you grew up in church, you certainly read the Beattitudes, maybe even memorized them. You may have them hanging on the wall in your living room. But did you understand them? Did you realize how personal and practical they are? That's what we want to accomplish in this series: We want to show how personal and how practical these familiar words of Jesus really are? They're inviting, challenging, life-giving, and convicting for everyone who understands what Jesus intended to convey.

## **Intro to the sermon**

What we call "The Beatitudes" are found in Matthew 5:3-12. They form Jesus intriguing introduction to a teaching that runs through 7:27. No doubt, these "blessed" statements got people's attention! They also lay the groundwork for everything else Jesus says in this sermon. That is, Matthew 5:13-7:27 explain, prove, illustrate or apply the Beatitudes.

## **Blessed**

So what does "beatitude" mean anyway? Does it have to do with our attitude and what it should be? No. Some years ago, a pastor wrote a book called *The 'Be Happy' Attitudes*. Is that what the Beatitudes are all about. Not really. "*Beatitude*" comes from the Latin word "*beatus*," which means "happy and blessed." The word is repeated eight times in the Latin translation of the Bible so church leaders gave the title Beatitudes to this part of Jesus' sermon.

The original NT word is *makarios*, which means "happy because God has blessed you." The New Living Translation (NLT) tries to capture this connection in its translation of the Beatitudes:

God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for Him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs. God blesses those who mourn, for they will be comforted. . . . (Matt 5:3-4 NLT)

I've seen other attempts to capture the impact of Jesus' words:

How blessed are the poor in spirit! The Kingdom of Heaven belongs to them!

Good for you who are poor in spirit! The Kingdom of Heaven belongs to you!

Do you see how Jesus' words fly in the face of what people then and now consider "blessed"? People today might say something like:

How blessed are the rich! They can buy whatever they need and want!

How blessed are those who are happy! Better to be happy than have anything else!

You see clearly how Jesus turns our thinking on its head in verses 11-12:

Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad [the word means “leap for joy”] because great is your reward in Heaven . . .

Insults, harassment, slander - a sure recipe for joy. To us, *not!* To Jesus, *yes!* Does Jesus have your attention now?

### **Overview - What do you see?**

Read through the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12) a few times and note what you see. Just look for the obvious. Here are a few of my observations:

- Jesus makes nine statements that begin with “Blessed are. . .”
- The last two “blessed” statements seem to go together (5:11-12). They both talk about persecution as a Christ-follower.
- Jesus is stating facts about certain kinds of people (the poor in spirit, those who mourn, etc.). He’s not making commands or asking promises.
- In 5:11, he switches to “you” (*blessed are you . . .*). Judging from 5:1-2, Jesus intends his disciples to be the kind of people he describes as blessed in 5:3-10.
- Each blessed statement is followed by a *reason* that kind of person s blessed - “for” means “because.”
- The reasons are expressed in the present (“theirs **is** the Kingdom of Heaven” (5:3, 10, 12)), but more often in the future (“they will . . .” (5:4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9))
- Some of the blessed statements point to our relationship with God, while others point to our relationship with other people.

What are your observations of what Jesus is saying here?

### **God and others**

Yes, some of the blessed statements point to our relationship with God. Others relate to our relationships with people. As we study the Beatitudes, see what you think. Just for a teaser, it seems that three of the Beatitudes speak to our relationships with other people. Can you identify them? What do they mean?

### **Present and future**

The reasons for blessing are expressed in present time and future time. For example, Jesus says in 5:3, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs **is** the Kingdom of Heaven." "Right here, right now," Jesus saying, "those who realize how much they need God possess all the fullness of God's Kingdom."

Yet in His next breath, He says, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they **will** be comforted." When will they be comforted? Sometime in this life? When they get to Heaven?

By interchanging the present and the future, Jesus points to the "now and not yet" of God's Kingdom. He *does* comfort us in this life, yet we will be fully and perfectly comforted in Heaven. We'll experience our perfect and permanent reward in Heaven, yet that's not to say that God doesn't bless us actually and tangibly now.

This is one truth I *love* about what Jesus teaches in the Beatitudes - this "already but not yet" character of God's Kingdom. Think about verse 8: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God." As you and I grow in purity of thoughts and motives, we will see God. See Him? When? In Heaven? Certainly! Before we get to Heaven? I think so - maybe in this life we will not physically see God but could we experience the reality of His presence and work in us and through us? Yes! That's inviting!

## **Salt and Light**

What does Jesus say right after He makes these intriguing "blessed" statements? He says that we're salt and light:

You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:13-16)

More familiar verses! How often have you prayed for yourself, other Christians, or our church to be "salt and light." But let's put these verse in context. Jesus finishes His blessed statements and immediately says to His followers:

1. You are like salt for everyone on earth!
2. You are light for the whole world!

Two essentials to life (especially in the first century) - salt and light. In the days before refrigerators, salt preserved food as well as flavored it. Light of course guides everyone through darkness. Essentials necessary for life! That's how Jesus views us, His followers. We are

essential to the lives of *everyone* on earth. Really? That's what He's saying here. So He warns us in two ways:

1. Don't lose your saltiness or you lose your Kingdom purpose.
2. Don't hide your light or it does noone any good.

What is He talking about? What saltiness? What light? Verse 16 sheds a little more light on what Jesus is telling us:

Let your light shine before men that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

In some way this salt and light that Jesus is talking about shows up in our *good deeds* for those around us. What good deeds does He have in mind? He has just spelled out three in the blessed statements:

- *Being gentle* (meekness) (5:5) - Not being harsh with other people, not yelling at them.
- *Mercy* (5:7) - Feeling and acting with compassion toward people in need.
- *Peacemaking* (5:9) - Saying and doing what it takes to promote peace between people rather than misunderstanding and conflict.

These thing seem small but when you think about it they're rare and powerful in causing people to realize that God is at work within you. When people interact with a Christ-follower who consistently lives this way, they will praise our Father in heaven!