

## 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 favorite 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?**

*[Note: For further study on our response to shame, see **Go Deeper Section 1** at the end of this session.]*

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?**

*[Note: For a reflection on the concept of abiding in God, see **Go Deeper Section 2** at the end of this session.]*

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.

## GO DEEPER

The Go Deeper section has two potential functions. It can supplement your small group discussion by providing extra discussion material. We've highlighted a place where the following segment could fit in the Discuss section of the study guide.

But you can also use this section as a short devotional to carry you through the week until your next group meeting. Consider reading this section to deepen your study of the Beatitudes.

### 1. *Shame: Covering and Hiding*

The first time we witness the occurrence of shame in the biblical narrative is in Genesis 3, right after Adam and Eve chose to disobey God's command. Prior to their fateful bite of fruit, they existed in a world free of shame. But now, after their bellies were filled with forbidden fruit, shame became their reality.

Read Genesis 3:6–10.

Immediately after eating the fruit from the forbidden tree, Adam and Eve were ashamed, hiding themselves from God and their bodies from one another. **How does our shame cause us to cover ourselves and hide from God?**

Shame is a common response to sin, but it can fracture relationships and create habits of deception. **To what extent has shame controlled your behavior? In what ways do you try and hide yourself and your shame from God and others?**

The New Testament helps us learn how to deal with our shame. In his letter to the Colossians, the apostle Paul tells readers that we don't have to try and cover our shame or hide away from God because our "life is hidden with Christ in God."

Read Colossians 3:1–4.

Instead of hiding from God, our lives are hidden in Christ. God looks at us the same way he looks at his Son. **If our life is hidden with Christ in God, why do we still try and hide ourselves from him at times?**

**What do you think God feels when he looks at you?**  
**How does this passage change your perception of God?**

If you find yourself still battling shame, unsure how to shake it, take a few moments now to acknowledge you want to hide from God and others. Remind yourself that, because you are hidden in God, you don't have to run from him or try and cover the shame he already knows you're dealing with. **What would it look like to be honest—pure in heart—and go to God with your shame?**

## **2. Reflect on Abiding in Christ**

Being pure in heart is not an idea only in the Beatitudes. In the Gospel of John, Jesus shows us what it means to be pure and how his forgiveness has changed our relationship with him. Read John 15:1–8.

In verse 3, Jesus declares that his followers are “already clean” (the same Greek word, *katharos*, translated in Matthew 5:8 as “pure”) because of the word he had spoken to them. **Do you feel like purity is something you have to earn or something given? In what ways do you feel like God is waiting for you to be pure?**

Read John 15:1–8 again, this time more slowly, stopping verse by verse to contemplate the passage word by word.

Jesus repeatedly commands us to abide in him. **What do you think it looks like to abide in Christ as you go through your daily routine?**

In this analogy, we need Jesus as much as a branch needs to be connected to a vine. **What happens to a branch when it is cut off? What does it look like when we aren't abiding in Jesus, cut off from him in our everyday lives?**

Read John 15:1–8 once more, this time prayerfully, asking that God would apply his Word to your heart.

In order to flourish, we have to be connected to Jesus all day. Reading and memorizing Scripture, regular prayer, and considering his view when making decisions are great ways to abide in him. **What specific habits and practices can you adopt to abide more in Christ?**

