

Bible Study on the Beatitudes *5* *lessons on Matthew 5*

The Beatitudes open the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus' longest teaching in the Gospels. In eight short blessings He describes the people who belong to the kingdom of heaven, and they are not the people the world would call blessed. This Bible study on the Beatitudes takes Matthew 5:1-16 in five lessons, two or three blessings at a time, ending with Jesus' words that His people are the salt of the earth and the light of the world.

The Beatitudes are not a ladder to climb to earn God's favor. They describe what God's grace makes His people like, and they point first to Jesus, who lived every one of them. Each lesson prints the passage from the Berean Standard Bible, then the big idea, notes for the leader, questions to observe, understand and apply, a memory verse and a prayer.

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

— Matthew 5:3 (BSB)

LESSON 1 OF 5

The poor in spirit and those who mourn

Read Matthew 5:1-4

The big idea: The kingdom of heaven belongs to people who know they have nothing to bring to God, and comfort is promised to those who mourn.

Read

¹ When Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain and sat down. His disciples came to Him, ² and He began to teach them, saying: ³ “Blessed are the poor

in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

– Matthew 5:1-4 (BSB)

Notes

Jesus sat down on the mountain to teach His disciples, with the crowds listening (see 7:28). He begins with blessing. “Blessed” describes people who have God’s favor, whatever their circumstances look like. The first blessing turns everything upside down: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

To be poor in spirit is to know we have nothing to offer God and need Him completely, like the tax collector who prayed, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner!’ (Luke 18:13). Those who mourn grieve over their own sin and over the brokenness of the world. Jesus does not tell them to cheer up; He promises, “they will be comforted.”

Questions

OBSERVE What does the passage say?

1. Where was Jesus, and whom was He teaching (vv. 1–2)?
2. What is promised to the poor in spirit, and to those who mourn (vv. 3–4)?
3. Which other beatitude ends with the same promise as verse 3 (v. 10)?

UNDERSTAND What does it mean?

1. What do you think it means to be ‘poor in spirit’? How is that different from low self-esteem?
2. Why would Jesus start with poverty of spirit rather than strength?
3. What kinds of mourning might Jesus have in mind?

APPLY What will I do with it?

1. Where are you trying to bring God your strengths instead of your need?
2. What grief, over sin or loss, could you bring honestly to God this week?
3. Who do you know who is mourning? How could you be part of God's comfort to them?

Memory verse

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

— Matthew 5:3 (BSB)

Pray

Lord Jesus, I come to You poor in spirit. I have nothing to bring but my need. Thank You that the kingdom of heaven belongs to people like me. I bring You my sin and my sorrows; comfort me, as You have promised, and make me a comfort to others. Amen.

LESSON 2 OF 5

The meek and the hungry

Read Matthew 5:5-6

The big idea: The meek, who trust God instead of grasping, will inherit the earth; those who hunger and thirst for righteousness will be filled.

Read

⁵ Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. ⁶ Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

— Matthew 5:5-6 (BSB)

Notes

Meekness is not weakness. It is strength under God's control: refusing to grab, push or take revenge, because we trust God to set things right. Jesus is echoing Psalm 37:11, "But the meek will inherit the land,"

and He describes Himself the same way: “I am gentle and humble in heart” (Matthew 11:29).

The fourth blessing uses the strongest desires we know, hunger and thirst. Blessed are those who want righteousness that much: to be right with God and to see right done in their own lives and in the world. Jesus promises they “will be filled.” Spiritual hunger is not a sign that something is wrong; it is a sign of life.

Questions

OBSERVE What does the passage say?

1. What will the meek inherit (v. 5)?
2. What do the people in verse 6 hunger and thirst for?
3. What is the promise to them?

UNDERSTAND What does it mean?

1. How is meekness different from weakness? How does Jesus show it?
2. Why do you think the meek, not the powerful, inherit the earth?
3. What does it look like to hunger and thirst for righteousness?

APPLY What will I do with it?

1. In what situation are you tempted to grab, push or get even? What would meekness look like there?
2. What are you most hungry for right now? Is righteousness on the list?
3. What could you cut back this week to make room to feed on God’s word?

Memory verse

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

– Matthew 5:6 (BSB)

Pray

Lord Jesus, You are gentle and humble in heart. Make me meek, trusting You instead of grasping for my own way. Give me a hunger and thirst for righteousness, in my heart, my home and my world, and fill me as You have promised. Amen.

LESSON 3 OF 5

The merciful, the pure and the peacemakers

Read Matthew 5:7-9

The big idea: Jesus blesses those who show mercy, those whose hearts are pure, and those who make peace: they will receive mercy, see God and be called His sons.

Read

⁷ Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. ⁸ Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. ⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.

– Matthew 5:7-9 (BSB)

Notes

These three blessings turn outward. The merciful show the same kindness they have received from God, and they “will be shown mercy.” Jesus later says plainly, “if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you” (6:14). The pure in heart are undivided and sincere, not only clean on the outside (compare Psalm 24:3-4). They will see God.

Peacemakers do more than keep quiet; they make peace, often at a cost. They “will be called sons of God” because they act like their Father, who made peace with us through the blood of Christ’s cross (Colossians 1:20). In the Bible’s language sons share their father’s likeness, and the promise is for every believer, men and women alike.

Questions

OBSERVE What does the passage say?

1. List the three kinds of people and the three promises in verses 7–9.
2. Which promise is the same as the quality being blessed?
3. What will peacemakers be called?

UNDERSTAND What does it mean?

1. How does receiving God's mercy make us merciful?
2. What do you think it means to be 'pure in heart'?
3. What is the difference between a peacekeeper and a peacemaker?

APPLY What will I do with it?

1. Who needs mercy from you this week rather than what they deserve?
2. Is there something in your heart that divides your loyalty to God? Bring it to Him.
3. Where is there conflict near you that you could help make peace in? Take one step.

Memory verse

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

– Matthew 5:8 (BSB)

Pray

Father, You have shown me mercy; make me merciful. Give me a pure heart that wants You more than anything else. Make me a peacemaker at home, at church and at work, so that people see I belong to You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

The persecuted

Read Matthew 5:10-12

The big idea: Those persecuted for righteousness and for Jesus' sake are blessed: the kingdom is theirs, their reward in heaven is great, and they stand with the prophets.

Read

¹⁰ Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹ Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets before you.

– Matthew 5:10-12 (BSB)

Notes

The last beatitude ends where the first began: “theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Jesus is honest that following Him will bring opposition. Then He speaks directly to His disciples: “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me.”

Notice the two conditions: because of righteousness and because of Me. This is not about suffering for being unkind or foolish. And Jesus gives a surprising command: “Rejoice and be glad,” because the reward in heaven is great and the prophets were treated the same way. Paul later wrote that all who desire to live godly lives in Christ Jesus will be persecuted (2 Timothy 3:12). Today many believers around the world face prison and worse for Jesus; this blessing is theirs.

Questions

OBSERVE What does the passage say?

1. For what two reasons are the people in verses 10–11 persecuted?
2. List the three things people do to them in verse 11.
3. What two reasons does Jesus give for rejoicing (v. 12)?

UNDERSTAND What does it mean?

1. Why does it matter that the persecution is ‘because of righteousness’?
2. How can anyone rejoice when they are insulted or persecuted?
3. Why does Jesus mention the prophets?

APPLY What will I do with it?

1. Have you faced mockery or loss for following Jesus? How did you respond?
2. Is there anything in your life that draws criticism because of you, not because of Jesus?
3. Pray this week for believers in a country where following Jesus is dangerous.

Memory verse

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

– Matthew 5:10 (BSB)

Pray

Lord Jesus, You were insulted and persecuted for my sake. Give me courage to follow You when it costs me something, and keep me from suffering for my own foolishness. Strengthen my brothers and sisters who are persecuted for You today, and let them know the kingdom of heaven is theirs. Amen.

LESSON 5 OF 5

Salt and light

Read Matthew 5:13-16

The big idea: Jesus tells the people of the Beatitudes that they are the salt of the earth and the light of the world, shining so that others glorify the Father.

Read

¹³ You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its savor, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. ¹⁴ You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a basket. Instead, they set it on a stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

— Matthew 5:13-16 (BSB)

Notes

Right after the Beatitudes, Jesus says, “You are the salt of the earth” and “You are the light of the world.” He does not say try to become salt and light; He says you are. The people He has just described, poor in spirit, meek, merciful, are exactly the people God uses to change the world.

Salt in the ancient world preserved food and gave it flavor; salt that loses its savor is useless. Light is meant to be seen, like a city on a hill or a lamp on a stand. The goal is clear: “let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.” Our good deeds are meant to point to God, not to ourselves.

Questions

OBSERVE What does the passage say?

1. What two things does Jesus say His followers are (vv. 13–14)?
2. What happens to salt that loses its savor (v. 13)?
3. Why should we let our light shine (v. 16)?

UNDERSTAND What does it mean?

1. Why does Jesus say ‘you are’ rather than ‘you should be’?
2. How might a Christian lose their ‘savor’?
3. What is the difference between showing off good deeds and letting your light shine (compare 6:1)?

APPLY What will I do with it?

1. Where is God placing you as salt this week: at work, at school, in your neighborhood?
2. Are you hiding your light anywhere? What is one way you could let it shine?
3. Which beatitude from this study do you most want God to grow in you? Pray for it daily.

Memory verse

In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

— Matthew 5:16 (BSB)

Pray

Father, thank You that You make me salt and light by Your grace. Keep me from losing my savor or hiding my light. Let my good deeds point to You, so that the people around me may see them and glorify You, my Father in heaven. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Tips for leading this study

Read the whole passage every week. Begin each lesson by reading Matthew 5:1-16 aloud, so the group sees how the blessings fit together.

Point to Jesus. Ask each week how Jesus lived the beatitude you are studying. He is the perfect example of each one.

Grace, not a checklist. If people feel crushed by how far short they fall, remind them the first blessing is for the poor in spirit.

Memorize together. Learn each lesson's beatitudes together as a group. By the end you will know Matthew 5:3-10.

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