

The Beatitudes

[6th Edition – January 2010]

		Page
Lesson 1	Poor in spirit	1
Lesson 2	Mourning	4
Lesson 3	Meekness	8
Lesson 4	Hunger and thirst	12
Lesson 5	Merciful	15
Lesson 6	Pure in heart	18
Lesson 7	Peacemakers	21
Lesson 8	Persecuted	24

Author:

Ivor Lewis

SBCI, P.O. Box 324, Hillcrest 3650, South Africa
E-mail: sbcI@absamail.co.za Tel. 031-7660284 Fax. 031-7660449

Poor in spirit

Lesson 1

A. Introduction

Read Matthew 5:1-12

This portion of Christ's Sermon on the Mount has become known as the Beatitudes.

Before Christ teaches about the new life style that we are to live in His kingdom, He teaches about the new heart attitudes we need in His kingdom. What is in our heart will affect how we live. Luke 6:45.

B. A blessing promised

The promise is that the person who develops each of these heart attitudes will be blessed. The Greek word translated here as *blessed* means: **fortunate, happy, highly favoured of God.**

Notice that all of these attitudes are opposite to what the world considers as being fortunate and highly favoured.

For this reason it is important for us to meditate on these attitudes so that we develop the Lord's standard and not that of the world. Romans 12:2.

C. The first heart attitude

Read Matthew 5:3

1. The first attitude that is mentioned is **to be poor in spirit**. Christ is not talking about an outward poverty but an **inward attitude of the heart**.
2. We must be poor in spirit to be born into the kingdom of God. To be born again, we have to admit that we have a need.
3. But notice that this verse does not stop at salvation. It does not say, "blessed are those who *were* poor in spirit". The verse says, "blessed *are* the poor in spirit", because this is an ongoing attitude of the heart.

This is the attitude of heart that recognizes its complete dependence upon God. Self can do nothing for God.

This is the heart that is not self-sufficient; being emptied of self-confidence and self-importance.

D. Some examples

1. **Jesus Christ.**

Read Philippians 2:5-7

Verse five says that we should have the same attitude as Christ.

Verse six: Christ had every reason to put confidence in Himself; He was the Son of God.

Verse seven: He "emptied Himself". Jesus walked on the earth as a man, showing us how we should walk. He surrendered Himself to the Father, walking in complete dependence on God's power to work through Him. John 5:19.

2. **An African evangelist.**

An African evangelist went to South America. At his first crusade meeting he called the sick forward to pray for them. None of the people he prayed for were healed. The evangelist began to cry and ask God why He brought him all this way to make a fool of him. God spoke to the evangelist and said, "Now that you have finished working, watch Me work. Pray for the people again". As the evangelist prayed for the people again, they were all healed. God showed him that as long as he was full of what he himself could do, he would hinder what God wanted to do through him.

3. **From the Old Testament.**

Read Isaiah 66:2

God is not looking for people who are crawling around like worms, saying that they are nothing. We are called to walk with our heads held high; confident of whom we are in Christ.

However, that confidence comes from an inner attitude of being poor in spirit. We need to surrender ourselves to the Holy Spirit, so that He can work in us a heart attitude of complete dependence on God.

E. The promise

Read Matthew 5:3

The blessing promised for those who are poor in spirit is the kingdom of God.

We know that there are three kingdoms at work in this world:

- a) The visible kingdoms of this earth.
- b) The invisible kingdom of darkness.
- c) The invisible kingdom of God.

Jesus told us to pray, "Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven". Matthew 6:10.

Not only are we to pray for His kingdom to come on earth, but we are to be channels of His kingdom coming to the earth. Matthew 10:7-8. God wants us to reach into the invisible kingdom of God and apply its blessings to the visible kingdom of this world, exercising authority over the kingdom of darkness.

We need to empty ourselves, be poor in spirit, and allow God's kingdom to be expressed

through us. All that God's kingdom offers will be released through our lives.

Memory Verse

Matthew 5:3, *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven".*

Teacher's Notes

1. The Sermon on the Mount.

Read Matthew chapters 5, 6 and 7

- a) This is the first and longest recorded teaching of Jesus.
- b) It is one of the most important passages of scripture.
It is the Christian manifesto – principles for kingdom living.

2. Christ's plan to touch the world.

Read Matthew 5:1-2

- a) Jesus saw the large crowd of people, but He taught His disciples. This may have seemed selfish, but Jesus knew that to effectively meet the needs of the large crowd, He needed to train others to do the work.
- b) In the ministry we need to have the same plan. Besides ministering to the needs of the people, we need to be training others to do the same work.

3. Christ's goal.

Read Matthew 5:13-16

- a) This is the reason Jesus taught the Sermon on the Mount.
- b) Jesus is looking for disciples who will reach out and touch the world for Christ. First Jesus had to teach them about the right heart attitudes.
- c) We will only touch the world effectively for Christ when we have the right attitudes. We need to keep this as our goal in teaching. Otherwise the church becomes only a nice social organization. Our goal must always be to bring people to maturity in Christ, so that they can reach out effectively and bring others to Christ.

Mourning

Lesson 2

A. Introduction

Read Matthew 5:4

1. Those who are without Christ might question how it is possible for people who mourn to be blessed. But the ways of God's kingdom are not the ways of the world. And those who do not know Christ will never know what real blessing is.
2. Those who are in Christ will allow these heart attitudes to be worked into them. Jesus promised it would bring God's blessing.

God wants hearts that mourn over sin.

B. Mourning that brings salvation

1. A woman receives life.

Read Luke 7:36-48

Here is a picture of the mourning that brings salvation. The woman saw Jesus and realised her own sinful state. Verse 37. Her heart was so touched that she even began to weep. Verse 38. She did not care what people thought or how much it cost; she just wanted to love Jesus. Verse 38. Her repentance brought the forgiveness of her sins. Verse 48.

2. It has to come from the heart.

Read Luke 18:9-14

- a) A man thought that his good life would gain him salvation. Verses 11-12. But he did not realize that his good deeds were like filthy rags in the sight of God. Isaiah 64:6.

The second man recognized his sinful state and cried from his heart in repentance before God. Verse 13. Jesus said that the second man received salvation but the first did not. Verse 14.

- b) It is not good works that will save us. It is faith in Jesus Christ by grace alone. Ephesians 2:8-9.
- c) It is not enough that we accept our sinful state and receive Christ with our minds. It has to come from our hearts. Romans 10:9-10. For this reason, the person who never mourns over his sin in real repentance from the heart will have a very shallow Christian walk. The hardness of his heart robs him of God's blessing. Hebrews 3:13-14.

We need to ask God to open our hearts and show us what we really are; sinners in need of His grace.

C. Mourning that keeps God's blessings

1. Ongoing grief over sin.

Read James 4:8-10

Notice that Matthew 5:4 says, "blessed are those who mourn", not "blessed are those who *have* mourned". God is looking for the ongoing mourning of a heart that is uncomfortable with sin.

James is speaking to Christians in chapter four. When sin has not been dealt with in repentance, it is not time to rejoice. James 4:9. It is time to "grieve, mourn and wail".

If we realized how destructive sin was, we would not play with it but run from it. James 1:14-15.

2. Godly Sorrow.

Read 2 Corinthians 7:8-10

- a) Without Christ there is no real happiness, only bondage to sin and emptiness of heart.

This "worldly sorrow" and grief over sin is not the mourning that God desires in us. Verse 10.

- b) There is a "godly sorrow" over sin that brings a Christian to repentance. We need to ask God to work such a sorrow in us. A heart that is sensitive to our relationship with Him.

God wants to make us quick to mourn over sin that grieves His heart and deal with it in repentance. Ephesians 4:30.

The closer we get to God, the more we will mourn over all that dishonours Him. Isaiah 6:1-5. As we co-operate with the Holy Spirit, He will work in us a heart that grieves at the slightest hint of sin.

3. Example of a Christian leader.

Keith Green was a Christian leader who had been greatly used by God in different parts of the world to inspire many people to follow Christ. One night God opened Keith's eyes to see the sin that Keith had allowed to harden his heart. Keith mourned for his sin through the night with much weeping. He confessed each sin before God, such as pride, jealousy and a lack of consideration for others that had crept into his life through becoming a famous Christian leader.

In the morning he was beaming with the joy of the Lord as he announced to his wife and fellow workers that he had been born again. Of course Keith had been a Christian leader for many years but to him this was such a dramatic experience that it was like being reborn. From that time on he determined to keep his repentance up to date.

As we serve the Lord many different attitudes can creep into our hearts that are not pleasing to God. We need a heart that grieves over anything displeasing to God and quickly repents, receiving God's cleansing. 1 John 1:9.

D. Mourning for others

Read Romans 8:26-27

As we co-operate with the Holy Spirit in prayer, there will be times when we will groan and weep in intercession. God will share His concern with us regarding the sin of:

1. Individuals, 1 Samuel 15:35.
2. The church, Ezekiel 9:4.
3. The world, 2 Chronicles 7:14.

As we pray we will see others set free from sin's bondage.

E. They will be comforted

This promise of comfort is found for each of the three stages of mourning we looked at.

1. Mourning that brings salvation.

Read Isaiah 61:1-3

- a) 61:1, "freedom for the captives". Tremendous promises of deliverance from the bondage of sin are found in verse one.
- b) 61:2, "to comfort all who mourn". Comfort for those who will repent.
- c) 61:3, "the oil of gladness instead of mourning". This joy is found only in Christ.
- d) 61:7, "everlasting joy will be theirs". Those who mourn in repentance now will have the comfort of His presence for eternity.

2. Ongoing mourning.

Read 2 Corinthians 6:10

- a) "Sorrowful, yet always rejoicing". Those who do not know Christ might wonder how this is possible.
- b) Sorrow over our sin is the very key to real joy. There is no real peace or comfort for us as Christians if we are playing with sin, because sin separates us from God's comfort. Only as we mourn for our sin in repentance of heart, will we find God's comfort.

3. Mourning for others.

Read John 16:24

We will find great comfort as we co-operate with the Holy Spirit in intercession and pray what is on God's heart for the world.

As His burden lifts off us, a great joy will be released and we will be comforted as we see God's will done and receive the answers to our prayers, the harvest of many souls. Psalm 126:5.

Real comfort in Christ is found as we live for others and not for ourselves. Proverbs 11:25. His love expressed through us in prayer for others releases God's blessing in us.

There is often more joy in seeing our prayers for others answered, than having our own prayers answered.

Memory Verse

Matthew 5:4, "*Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted*".

Teacher's Notes

Three types of mourning are found in the Bible:

Natural sorrow:

1. Mark 16:9-10.

The disciples were grieving for the loss of Jesus. This is a natural process people need to go through at the loss of a loved one.

2. John 11:22-38.

Even Jesus wept at the loss of His friend.

3. Romans 12:15.

There are times when it is not appropriate to rejoice. When there has been a death, it is sometimes necessary to cry with those who are grieving. However, this is not to encourage the wailing and lamenting that can carry on far too long at worldly funerals. When we have grieved, we who are in Christ can go on in Him.

Godly sorrow:

2 Corinthians 7:8-11. This is the mourning that I believe Jesus was teaching about in Matthew 5:4. This mourning was also seen in David who had a heart pleasing to God. Psalm 51:10-11.

Worldly sorrow:

2 Corinthians 7:10. This sorrow does not bring life but brings death instead. The Bible has many examples of those who, on the surface, appeared to repent but it was not a repentance of the heart.

1. Pharaoh: Exodus 9:27; 10:16. His sorrow was for the inconvenience that was caused.

2. Judas: Matthew 27:3-4. His mourning was not for the sin but because of the effect of it.

3. Esau: Hebrews 12:16-17. His mourning was for the lost blessing.

4. The last days: Revelation 18:11. Many will mourn for their loss of gain.

Meekness

Lesson 3

A. Introduction

Read Matthew 5:5

The heart attitudes of Matthew 5 seem to build upon each other. Recognizing our complete poverty of spirit and grieving over sin softens our heart for meekness to develop.

Without the foundation of the first attitude it is difficult to have the second attitude. Without the first and second attitudes it is difficult to have the third.

The Bible does not clearly define what meekness is. However, as we consider some scriptures where this word is used, we can see the fruits of meekness and what inspires a meek heart.

B. What is meekness?

Read 1 Peter 3:4

1. Meekness is seen in quietness and gentleness.

This is not just a word for women but also for men. Meekness is not weakness, but strength.

Different versions of the Bible interchange the word **meekness** with **quietness** and **gentleness**.

Meekness is a quiet heart that is free from striving within. A heart of meekness produces an outward gentleness and quietness.

Real beauty is found in a meek heart. Outward beauty fades, but we can grow in the inward beauty of meekness day by day.

2. Meekness is seen in humility.

Read Ephesians 4:1-2

Another outward result of a meek heart is humility. A meek heart will not exalt itself before God or man.

We are challenged to be completely humble, which can only come from a quiet heart of meekness within.

3. Meekness is seen in surrender to God.

Read 1 Peter 5:5-6

It is important to have this heart that produces humility, because God resists the proud.

Notice the next verse calling us to surrender ourselves to God. That is because meekness is a result of a life that is totally submitted to God. The person is no longer lord of his own life, but has died to himself and is submitted to the lordship of Christ.

- a) Why do we react when others inconvenience us or taunt us? It is because we still hold on to our rights. We have not died to ourselves but are still seated on the throne of our hearts.
- b) Why do we react when God requires difficult things of us? It is because we still hold on to our rights; we have not surrendered all to Him.
- c) Why do we get puffed up with pride and why do we not walk in humility before others? It is because we still hold on to our rights; we have not died yet.

How we react to what God or others require of us shows us whether our hearts are meek or not.

Being poor in spirit is death to self-sufficiency. Mourning is death to the sin of self, but meekness is death to self-will.

C. Christ is our source

1. He frees us from striving.

Read Matthew 11:28-29

Many people are weary and burdened because they are striving inside themselves. They are not quiet within. They have taken on tasks that God never called them to do and are burdened with a heavy yoke that God never called them to bear.

Jesus said that the answer was first to come to Him – Then to learn from Him.

He is an example of being surrendered to the Father. We need to surrender to His lordship and ask Him what He wants us to do.

We are to take His yoke upon us. With Jesus lifting the other side of the yoke, it is easy and our burden is light. Verse 29, "I am meek and lowly in heart". The result will be a meek heart.

We do not see Jesus reacting or being impatient. When He was insulted He did not retaliate.

2. He fills us with Himself.

Read Hebrews 12:2

In the race that God has given us to run on this earth, we are called to "fix our eyes on Jesus".

As we are challenged to lose our "self" and gain those heart attitudes pleasing to God, we might be tempted to focus too much on ourselves. But that will not work. You cannot lose something by focussing your eyes on it. You lose something by being focussed on something else.

We will lose our "self" by being preoccupied with Christ. Let us fix our eyes on Him. When we focus our attention on Christ, we will find His heart being released in us.

At the same time we need to understand what God's will is and co-operate with Him. 1 Timothy 6:11.

D. Meekness is not weakness

Read Numbers 12:3

1. The world does not think that meekness is something to pursue. Many consider a meek person to be someone who lacks strong conviction or who is easily taken advantage of.
2. We are told that Moses was a great example of meekness. Yet when we look at Moses' life we do not see a weak man.

Jesus is our perfect example of meekness, but He was not a weakling in any way. Matthew 21:12-13.

3. Meekness is strength under control.

Illustration: The strongest weight lifter in the world can bend over gently to tenderly put his baby to bed. No one would say that this man is a weakling because he displays such gentleness. Everyone recognizes that the man's strength is under control.

When we have surrendered totally to Christ we can display tremendous strength of character in gentleness, quietness and humility.

E. They will inherit the earth

1. **They have God's provision.**

Read Matthew 6:33

God promises to supply all the needs of those who will surrender their lives completely to His lordship.

In this way the meek inherit the earth. God provides everything that they need.

2. **They enjoy God's provision.**

Read Ecclesiastes 5:10

Those living self-centred lives are unable to enjoy their possessions. Therefore, what good is it if you have everything this earth offers, but cannot enjoy it?

Those who have surrendered their lives to His lordship are able to enjoy what God gives them, whether it is little or much.

3. **Promise for eternity.**

Read Revelation 20:6

Those who have surrendered their lives to Christ will inherit the earth and shall live with Him for eternity in a new heaven and earth. Revelation 21:1.

Memory Verse

Matthew 5:5, "*Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth*".

Hunger and thirst

Lesson 4

A. Introduction

Read Matthew 5:6

God is pleased with those who will not entertain sin but mourn over it in repentance. Matthew 5:4.

But He does not just leave us like that. With the revulsion for sin, God puts a longing into our hearts for more of His ways to be worked into our lives.

B. Righteousness

1. Given to us in Christ.

Read Romans 4:2-8

Before talking about hunger and thirst for righteousness, we need to understand that we have been declared righteous in Christ.

- a) Verse 5. Righteousness is not according to the good things that we do, but rather by faith in the work of Jesus Christ on the cross. Verses 7-8. By faith in the blood of Jesus Christ our transgressions are forgiven, our sins covered, and the Lord does not count our sin against us.
- b) Verse 4. In longing for His righteousness, we must not fall into the trap of thinking that now we have to work to earn acceptance in God's eyes.

We are called to a place of rest and confidence in the righteousness that has already been declared ours in Christ. Romans 5:1. From that place of confidence we can walk as the holy people that He has called us to be. Hebrews 10:14.

Illustration: A famous Christian leader of the past, Martin Luther, found that the harder he tried to please God the more desperate he became. He tried to say more prayers, fast more strictly and do more good works, but none of it brought him peace. Finally in 1508 while reading scriptures like Romans 1:17, he realized that God's favour is not a reward to be earned, but a gift to be accepted. All of Luther's striving ceased as he received the righteousness that was his by faith.

This confidence can only be received as a gift by faith. From that place of confidence we walk in the righteousness that is ours in Christ.

2. Worked in us.

Read 2 Timothy 2:19-22

- a) God wants us to walk in the righteousness that He declares over us. 2 Corinthians 7:1.

Verse 19. The solid foundation of who we are in Him enables us to not only turn away from wickedness, but to actively pursue righteousness. Verse 22.

- b) Verse 21. Only as we grow in the righteousness that has been declared over us, will we be effective in the work of God's kingdom. 2 Peter 1:8.

We need to be reaching out constantly for more of Christ's righteousness to become a reality in our lives.

C. Hunger and thirst

1. A longing in Christ.

Read 2 Corinthians 5:1-5

Although there is rest in Christ, there is also dissatisfaction. Many who come to feel that dissatisfaction wonder if they are out of God's favour. But that dissatisfaction is actually of God. The Spirit of God puts a longing in our spirit for more of God's righteousness.

None of the good things that God has for us will be received if we are just casual bystanders. We have to zealously pursue the things of God to receive them. Jeremiah 29:13.

Verse 2. He will stir us up by His Spirit, even to the place where we groan for the things of God. Verse 4. There is a hunger and thirst; a longing to be like Christ.

2. He is our source.

Read Psalm 84:1-2

Without God's power it is impossible to live the life of righteousness He has called us to. 1 Corinthians 1:30-31.

God allows dissatisfaction into our hearts, because that longing draws us closer to Him. Psalm 42:1-2. He has called us to a life of complete dependence upon Himself.

In our longing, let us not draw away in discouragement or try and find satisfaction in some other pursuit. God is the only one who can fill the longing of our hearts. Psalm 73:25. We need to draw near to Him.

3. Let us press on.

Read Philippians 3:8-9, 12-13

Paul never lost that hunger and thirst for more of God's righteousness.

Christ did not say, "Blessed are the perfect". He said, "Blessed are those who

hunger and thirst for righteousness". This is not a once-off hunger – it is an ongoing thing.

There is no place in the kingdom for those who are standing still or think that they have “arrived”. Complacency will cause us to fall far short of God's desire for our lives.

Verse 12. We need to be always, "pressing on towards the goal" and growing in righteousness.

Let us surrender to God's Spirit and allow Him to work into us a heart that is always reaching out for more of God.

D. Will be filled

1. Satisfied now.

Read Psalm 107:9

It would be cruel of God to put a hunger and thirst in us and not satisfy that longing. As we sense that longing in our hearts we have to reach out to God and trust Him to work His righteousness in us. He will satisfy our longing by enabling us to walk in His righteousness.

All of God's promises to us are true and we can trust them. 2 Peter 1:4.

There is tremendous satisfaction in doing His will. Isaiah 3:10.

2. Satisfied one day.

Read Revelation 7:16

We know that when Christ comes again, we shall be changed to be like Him. 1 John 3:2.

For eternity we shall walk in His complete righteousness. Now we long for that righteousness, but then there will be longing no more. Our hunger and thirst will be completely satisfied in His presence.

Memory Verse

Matthew 5:6, *"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled".*

Merciful

Lesson 5

A. Introduction

Read Matthew 5:7

The first four heart attitudes have dealt a blow to “self”. When we are no longer self-sufficient, self-satisfied, self-willed and self-righteous, the fifth attitude can grow in our hearts: mercy.

As long as we lift ourselves up, it is difficult to have a merciful heart that puts others first. But when we allow the Holy Spirit to put God's heart attitudes into our heart and we stop being self-centred, the result will be a merciful heart with God's mercy flowing through us.

B. He is a merciful God

Read Ephesians 2:4

1. Throughout the Bible we see the mercy of God. Jeremiah 3:12.

If mercy is showing undeserved kindness, then surely God is "rich in mercy". Over and over Israel turned its back on God and deserved to be cut off from God's favour. But God continually reached out in mercy and drew Israel to Himself again. Hosea 11:4.

2. God continues to show that heart of mercy today. To those who deserve death, He reaches out with the undeserved gift of salvation. Romans 6:23.
3. God wants us to be like Him. Luke 6:36. He wants to express His mercy through His children.

C. He has shown us His will

Read Micah 6:8

1. Many people are seeking to do God's will but they neglect to seek after God's heart.

God says that we can do a lot of wonderful things, but if they are not done from a heart of love it is worthless. 1 Corinthians 13:1-3.

2. God has shown us in His Word what His primary goal for us is – "to love mercy". Matthew 9:13.

Without God's love as the driving force of our hearts we are likely to miss God's will and make wrong decisions.

Illustration: Jim and Elizabeth Elliot and a number of other Christians believed

that God wanted them to preach Christ to a tribe of dangerous head-hunters in South America who had never heard the gospel before. These people killed anyone outside their own tribe who tried to approach them. Driven by God's heart of mercy, Jim and the other men landed a small plane in the area of this tribe. The men decided that if attacked they would not defend themselves, because it might hinder this tribe from receiving the gospel in the future. Jim and all of the men were killed.

Many people believed that Jim and his team must have missed God's will in going to this tribe. However, Elizabeth Elliot and the other wives, rather than desiring revenge, went together with God's compassion to this same tribe and were able to meet the very men who had killed their husbands. When the men heard that Jim and the others had had guns and could have easily killed their attackers who came at them only with spears, and when they saw the love and forgiveness of these wives, the head-hunters were touched deeply and received Christ.

This is an extreme example of the cost of having God's heart of mercy, but it does show how God's will can be accomplished when we have His heart.

D. Mercy is seen in forgiveness

Read Matthew 18:21-35

Jesus told this parable to show the tremendous debt that we owe and could not possibly pay.

Verse 27. God, out of His merciful heart, forgave us our debt. Verse 33. How can we then hold back mercy and not forgive a small wrong done towards us? Verses 34-35. Jesus said, if we do not forgive others, Satan will bind us.

It is far better to allow God's merciful heart to be worked in us and forgive those that mistreat us. Verses 21-22. In the light of His mercy towards us, we can keep on forgiving again and again.

Joseph chose to forgive his brothers who sold him into slavery, and so both Joseph and God's people experienced God's blessing. Genesis 45:4-11.

Too many in the church are losing God's blessings because of unforgiveness. We need to shake off the shackles of the enemy and forgive from a heart of mercy.

E. Mercy is seen in compassion

Read 1 John 3:17

One of the Greek words used in the New Testament for "mercy" means compassion. This comes from "to travail", "to cry and to lament (with someone else)" – used to explain a woman giving birth.

We are to feel the hurts of others. We are not to have a cold and indifferent heart but instead a heart of concern.

The self-centred heart is concerned only for itself, but the merciful heart is generous towards the needs of others. Psalm 37:21.

God wants to work this merciful heart of compassion in us. Romans 12:10. We need to be sure that we do not close our heart and resist what God wants to do. We must cooperate with the Holy Spirit.

F. The merciful will be shown mercy

Read Luke 6:37-38

Jesus said that whatever we give, we will receive back in the same measure, and more besides.

If we hold back God's mercy and condemn others, then we receive the same back in our own lives. A spiritual principle comes into action and we receive condemnation back, according to the measure we have condemned with and more besides.

But if we open our hearts, forgive and bless others, we receive the same back in our own lives and more besides. Proverbs 11:17.

It is worth being generous with God's mercy because Jesus said the same will be multiplied back to us by others.

Memory Verse

Matthew 5:7, "*Blessed are the merciful for they will be shown mercy*".

Pure in heart

Lesson 6

A. Introduction

Read Matthew 5:8

We know from Scripture that no man can look at God in all His glory and live. 1 Timothy 6:16. And yet Jesus promised that we will see God.

Let us consider what this promise means and look at the requirement for seeing God – to be pure in heart.

B. God is looking at the heart

Read 1 Samuel 16:7

1. Man is very concerned with his outward appearance and actions, but God is more concerned with our inner appearance; our heart condition and motivation. Luke 16:15.

God's Word says that He is actually weighing and testing our hearts. Proverbs 21:2.

2. Our heart condition will either enhance or hinder our effectiveness for God. Proverbs 4:23. For this reason the Bible challenges us to guard our hearts.
3. As a young boy David did not have any outward appearance of his ability to lead Israel. But God looked at the inner man and saw a heart dedicated to Him, which is a far greater qualification for service in God's eyes, than any outward abilities.

C. The heart God looks for

Read 2 Chronicles 16:9

1. The heart God is looking for is a heart that is completely dedicated to Him. That is the purity of heart that Jesus is talking about in Matthew 5:8.
2. Jesus said that the greatest commandment was, "love the Lord your God with all your heart ..." Mark 12:28-31; Deuteronomy 6:5.

Everything else that God wants to do in us and through us will come from this undivided devotion to God. That is one of the reasons that this is the greatest commandment.

3. None of the heart attitudes that are considered in Matthew 5 can be produced by our own efforts. They are only found in Christ and are developed as we set our hearts on Him. John 15:4-5.

D. God's people can be distracted

Read 2 Kings 17:41

1. Over and over again in the Old Testament we read the sad story of God's people worshipping idols.

It is hard to imagine how God's people could be so deceived. 1 Kings 11:4. What an abomination that they could be worshipping idols at the same time as they were worshipping God.

2. In the New Testament we see how God's people can be deceived and commit idolatry without actually bowing down to physical idols.

Read Colossians 3:5

God's Word says that greed for the things of the world is idolatry in His sight because it takes our hearts away from total devotion to Him. Ephesians 5:5. God says that we cannot serve Him and the things of the world at the same time. Matthew 6:19-24.

God knows our natural needs and said that we must be diligent in working. 2 Thessalonians 3:12. But if our hearts become too caught up in the pursuit of things, we get distracted from our devotion to God.

For this reason God challenges us to seek Him first and He promises to meet all of our needs as well. Matthew 6:33. He must be the only one who captivates our heart. If we allow any other pursuit to become the major motivation of our heart we are slipping into idolatry.

E. The testimony of a heart restored

Read Psalm 73

1. Verse 1. The writer of this psalm saw the goodness of God to those who are pure in heart. Verse 2-3. But his heart was distracted by the prosperity of others. Verses 4-14. And so he was deceived into thinking that it might be better not to serve God.
2. Verses 15-16. With divided devotion his heart became completely confused.
3. Verse 17. In desperation he turned again to God in worship. Verses 17-24. And so his eyes were opened to see the deception he had fallen into.

Verses 25-26. Complete devotion to God was restored and God became the desire of his heart again. Verses 27-28. And so he enjoyed the goodness of God once more.

F. They will see God

Read Jeremiah 29:13-14a

God promises to reveal Himself to those who seek Him with their whole heart.

This does not mean that God comes and stands before us in person. But God reveals Himself to us for who He is and begins to open His truths to our heart.

One small revelation of God is worth far more than all the riches this world can offer. Proverbs 3:13-15. We really are deceived when we run after the things of this world rather than run after God.

Like the person in Psalm 73, we can see God's goodness in our lives when our hearts are completely devoted to Him. And one day we shall see the object of our devotion face to face and enjoy His goodness forever. Revelation 22:4.

Let us ask God to work in us a pure heart totally devoted to Him.

Memory Verse

Matthew 5:8, *"Blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God".*

Peacemakers

Lesson 7

A. Introduction

Read Matthew 5:9

As we said, the heart attitudes in Matthew 5 build on one another. From verse 9 the focus turns from the inward man to outward interaction with others.

Only the person who has died to self and has a pure heart of complete devotion to God can find peace. Being a peacemaker can only come from a heart at peace.

B. He is our peace

Read Ephesians 2:13-18

1. Man is striving because he is not at peace with his Maker, although he does not recognize it. The guilt in his heart due to sin robs him of peace.
2. Verse 13. When we repent of our sin, the blood of Jesus cleanses us and brings us into relationship with the Father. The guilt of sin is removed and we experience peace from the One who is peace itself. Hebrews 13:20.

Verse 16. We can only have peace when we become reconciled to God. Verse 14. Christ alone is our peace. No one can truly be a peacemaker until he has the Prince of Peace in his heart.

C. He is the only source of peace

Read John 14:27

1. The world promises peace in many different things and pursuits such as money, alcohol, sex, education, career, etc. But all these things will only offer temporary relief. They all end in emptiness eventually, and then one has to run after something else.
2. The peace that God gives us is completely different. Christ says, "My peace I give you".

God's answer to the striving for fulfilment of man's heart is Christ Himself. He is the only source of peace. Colossians 1:19-20

D. We need to stay in His peace

Read Romans 8:6

Having given our heart to Christ and come into His peace, we need to walk in His peace. We are told to "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts". Colossians 3:15.

We can only walk in that peace as we walk in Christ. If we do not walk the way Christ wants us to, we walk away from close fellowship with Him and so walk out of His peace.

Illustration: Bilquis Sheikh was a muslim lady of noble birth in Pakistan. She tried to find peace in the things of the world that were available to her as the wife of a high ranking government official. In her book, "I Dared to call Him Father", she relates how the incredible peace of God's presence flooded her life when she finally bowed her heart and asked Christ into her life. Without other Christians around to instruct her, she found God guiding her with His peace. If she did something that God did not want her to do, uneasiness would enter into her heart and the peace of God would go. She would quickly repent and get back into God's peace again.

God has not called us to have fear, anxiety and emptiness. He has called us to have life and peace. If we will walk in the Spirit, in step with Him, we will stay in His peace.

E. Our first call as peacemakers

Read 2 Corinthians 5:18-21

We have already seen in Ephesians 2:13-18 that peace comes to our heart when we are reconciled to God.

God has given every Christian this message of reconciliation. It is the primary way in which we are to be peacemakers. Verse 20. We are to tell people about Christ and lead them to the One who can bring them peace.

There is no higher calling or greater pursuit than to be ambassadors of His gospel of peace.

F. Our second call as peacemakers

Read 1 Peter 3:8-12

The other way in which we are to be peacemakers is in our interaction with people.

1. When we follow Christ it can irritate those who are not following Him. Light and darkness are opposed to each other.
2. Many times, however, conflicts arise because of poor conduct on our part. Insulting when we are insulted, holding resentment and unforgiveness, are a few examples of reactions on our part that do not create peace.

Fighting with our neighbours will drive them away from the gospel, and disharmony pulls the body of Christ down. It is peace that builds the body up. James 3:17-18. A few kind words go a long way towards peaceful harmony.

3. Verse 9. God has called us to bless those who mistreat us. In every conflict we are called to do everything on our part that brings harmony, as long as it does not compromise God's Word. Romans 12:18.

Verse 11. God has called us to make every effort to live at peace with others, both the saved and the unsaved. Romans 14:17-19.

G. They will be called sons of God

Read John 1:12

Everyone who has the Prince of Peace in his heart is a son of God.

He may be rejected and persecuted for bringing the gospel of peace and ridiculed and put down for blessing those who curse him, but God blesses us like no other father can bless his children, when we walk as His peacemakers. Galatians 4:7.

God says, "Are you not my sons?" and so reminds us again not to be afraid to walk in His ways.

Memory Verse

Matthew 5:9, "*Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called sons of God*".

Teacher's Notes

We can be distracted from our call

Read Matthew 10:34-39

1. Verse 34. Jesus said that He did not come to bring peace to the world.
2. There will never be peace in the world until Christ comes again.
3. Many well-meaning people run after peace movements. But peace movements replace one system with another system and the hearts of people are still left the same.
4. The Antichrist will bring peace to the world, but it will be a false peace.
5. Until Christ comes again, there are two kingdoms at war in this world. To accept Christ brings division and conflict.
6. Our call is to bring the gospel of peace that changes people's hearts. We need to be careful that we do not allow other pursuits to distract us from this work.

Persecuted

Lesson 8

Read Matthew 5:10-11

A. Blessed are those ...

Read Romans 5:3-5

We might think that allowing all of these heart attitudes to be developed in us would give us some recognition in the eyes of the world. However, the opposite is the case. If we walk with the heart of Christ in us we will be persecuted.

The devil means it for evil but God uses persecution to work a great blessing in His servants.

B. Who are persecuted because of righteousness

Read 1 Peter 4:12-19

We should not be surprised if we are persecuted when we follow Christ. We should expect it. 2 Timothy 3:12.

Two kingdoms are at war. To follow Christ is to enter into that warfare. The kingdom of darkness will do everything to try and knock you off the path of righteousness.

Verse 15. There is no blessing in being persecuted because of unrighteousness.

C. Theirs is the kingdom of heaven

Read 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

Notice that the promise of the kingdom of heaven is given for both the first and the last Beatitude. This is because persecution can help to get “self” out of the way and puts us in a place of complete reliance upon God, which, as we said, is being poor in spirit.

Verse 9. Paul delighted in persecution because in his weakness the power of God's kingdom was released.

The glory of God's kingdom is revealed in those who experience the suffering of persecution. Romans 8:17.

D. When people insult you and falsely accuse you

Read 1 Thessalonians 2:2, 14 and 3:3-4

1. Sin cannot stand the presence of righteousness. Those that walk uprightly will suffer insults from those who do not. Just as Christ and the disciples were falsely accused, so we can expect to suffer in the same way. Acts 6:12-14.

2. But in Christ we do not react to those insults or false accusations. God is our judge.

Verse 3:3-4. We should not doubt God's love or give in to discouragement, but continue to serve the Lord boldly and encourage each other that this is part of our Christian life.

E. Because of Christ

Read John 15:18-21

1. Verse 19. We are misfits in the world because we do not belong to the world any longer. We are pilgrims on this earth who belong to another world. 1 Peter 2:11-12.
2. Verse 21. We are being persecuted because Christ is in us and we are in Christ. Verse 20. Jesus said that we should remember that He told us we would be persecuted because of Him. Then we will not take it personally but realize that it is Christ who is being rejected.
3. We also need to remember that Christ is in control and there is nothing that the devil can do to us outside of God's will. Psalm 91:1-2.

Though circumstances may say otherwise, God can work everything that happens to us for His glory. Romans 8:28.

F. Rejoice and be glad

Read Acts 16:22-34

1. Here is the heart attitude that Jesus is looking for: We do not become bitter, discouraged or doubt God's love, but realize that God's call may at times include persecution and can work everything to His glory and so we rejoice in Him.
2. Jesus even said that we should leap for joy when persecuted. Luke 6:23. What a triumph over the enemy who wants to bring defeat, because he cannot gain any advantage over those who have learned to rejoice and praise God in every circumstance.

We see in Acts how God was able to turn an apparent defeat into victory as God's servants set their hearts on Him.

Illustration: In his book *"The Church in China"* Carl Lawrence tells of the persecution suffered by God's servants in communist China. He tells a story of a group of young teenagers who were arrested for preaching in the street. They were bound and forced to kneel on the ground for three days without food or water. They were beaten till their faces were covered with blood and their hands black and raw from the ropes that held them. The group continued to sing and praise the Lord and testify to God's goodness. The people watching were amazed to see the glow of God's glory on this group and many gave their hearts to the Lord. Christians in the

area were convicted by the boldness of these young believers and they also began to share the gospel more boldly and soon a revival swept through that area.

3. We should not run around looking for persecution but rejoice when it does come and know that God will use it for good.

G. Great is your reward in heaven

Read Romans 8:18

What is the suffering in this world in comparison to the glory of heaven that awaits us! Our time here is only a brief little moment compared to eternity.

The little bit of heaven that we are now experiencing in Christ is nothing compared to what we will experience for eternity with Him.

We should not retreat from what God has called us to because of the persecution we may suffer. Let us be faithful in His service. There is a glorious reward that awaits us.

H. In the same way they persecuted the prophets before you

Read Hebrews 11:35 - 12:1

1. They were all commended for their faith. Though they could not see Him face to face they were willing to obey Him whatever the cost.
2. What is the little persecution that we may have to face compared to that suffered by some of those who have gone before us?

Verse 12:1. The testimony of their lives should motivate us to cast off every restraint in God's service. As God met them with grace He can meet us as we walk in obedience to Him.

Memory Verse

Matthew 5:10, "Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven".