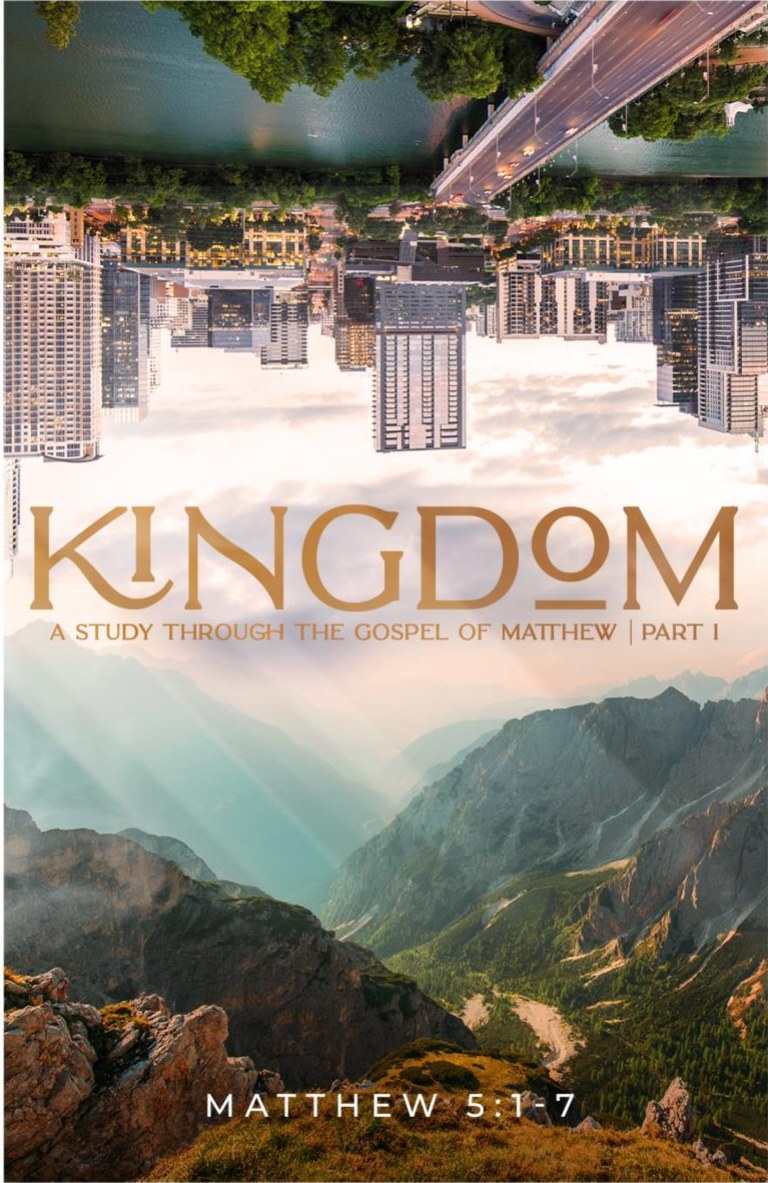




WORD TO LIFE

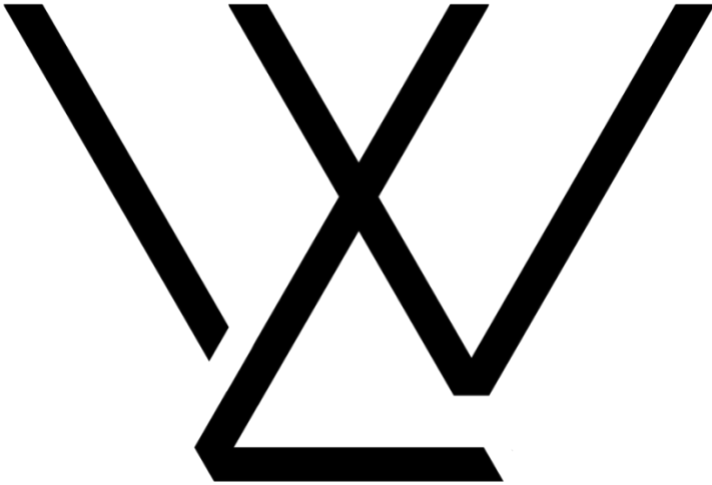
WEEKS 11-15



KINGDOM

A STUDY THROUGH THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW | PART I

MATTHEW 5:1-7



Word to Life's are sermon-aligned study guides, created to help the church dive even deeper into the passages we study together on Sundays.

Each week there will be five studies to help you prepare for the upcoming weekend sermon. This will also be a great discussion tool at your next LifeGroup meeting.

We hope you enjoy and grow deeper in your faith!

Contributors

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Week 11: Matthew 5:1-3

Day 1: A Day to Explore

READ: Matthew 5-7

EXPLORE:

Instructions: Please read the whole Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7 today and write your notes below. We will slow down to look at different sections, but it is helpful to get a broad overview first.

Personal Notes:

Personal Notes Continued:

Week 11: Matthew 5:1-3

Day 2: Learning from the Master

READ: Matthew 5:1-3

EXPLORE:

You will notice in the coming weeks and months that our pace of study and teaching through Matthew will slow down drastically. Collectively, we are entering into the greatest sermon ever recorded. Our change of pace correlates with the depth of Jesus' teaching in what is infamously titled "The Sermon on the Mount." Before we study the opening of Jesus' teaching which is often called the Beatitudes, there are a few important features we need to notice.

First, what we read in Matthew 5-7 is almost assuredly an abbreviated version of a multi-hour teaching by Jesus. As with other speeches recorded in the book called Acts for example, Matthew's Gospel Account of Jesus' teaching ought to be viewed as a Holy Spirit inspired distillation of a larger teaching.

Second, we need to recognize the significance of the phrase describing how Jesus "*opened His mouth*" to teach. This phrase which depicts the opening of one's mouth is used in the Old and New Testaments to describe the manner in which a faithful messenger clearly communicates a message from God. Philip "*opened his mouth*" to clearly explain the gospel.¹ In response to the good news about Jesus being received by those outside of the Jewish heritage, Peter "*opened his mouth*" to declare that surely God shows no partiality.² In unsurprising fashion, Matthew 5:2 uses identical verbiage to preview a faithful message through the mouth of a sinless man!

¹ See Acts 8:35 for reference.

² See Acts 10:34 for reference.

Third, the brief narrative description that sets up the teaching ought to challenge us today. When Jesus sat down to teach and the crowds surrounded Him, the disciples drew near for the sole and expressed purpose of learning. The disciples don't always or even often "get it right" with Jesus, but their willingness to humbly learn under the greatest teaching ever recorded ought to challenge us today. Are we willing to learn humbly and consistently from the Lord? Are we attentive listeners to His Word, eagerly responding in obedience? Have we prioritized and guarded time within which the One for whom and by whom we were made can transform us?

Finally, the setting of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount gives us a chance to consider how Christ handled crowds. Certainly, a great deal of His ministry was lived in a balance between public visibility and more private community. As such, He often encountered crowds. In each of the Gospel Accounts, Jesus is not overly consumed with drawing crowds, but He is concerned with serving, training, and challenging them while they are there. In His ministry, Jesus demonstrates the vast difference between serving crowds and simply seeking crowds. This is a subtle feature of Matthew 5:1, but it is no less instructive for us today.

BIG IDEA: The historical setting and literary context of the Sermon on the Mount is subtle, but important.

APPLY:

- **Question:** Which of the four features discussed in today's study was most thought-provoking to you and why?
- **Question:** Do you have regular patterns of attentively learning from God? If so, how have you learned to prioritize those times?

Week 11: Matthew 5:1-3

Day 4: Blessed

READ: Matthew 5:1-12

EXPLORE:

Blessed. We see it on clothing, bumper stickers, and on social media. Some people say, “Have a blessed day” instead of “Have a nice day.” In today’s passage, known as the “Beatitudes,” Jesus describes a life that is truly blessed. The present-tense “*theirs is the kingdom of heaven*” occurs in verses 3 and 10, bracketing the future-tense “*for they shall*” blessings of the intervening verses. Thus, the Beatitudes portray our present experience and future hope as Christians.³

Our present experience begins with poverty of spirit. We come to Jesus empty-handed, with nothing to offer but our own filthy rags. We mourn over sin: Adam’s, ours, and the sin of others. We mourn over the consequences of sin: brokenness, guilt, shame, and death. In our mourning and poverty, we become meek, yearning for a righteousness we could never achieve on our own. As we experience forgiveness for our own failings, our gratitude overflows in mercy toward others. God delivers us from the hypocrisy of mere outward religion, purifying our hearts day by day. As we follow our Prince of Peace, we become peacemakers, ministers of reconciliation. God develops in us a willingness to be hated, slandered, and persecuted, if only we may be found faithful to Christ and his righteousness.

Our future hope is anchored in the fact that the kingdom of heaven already belongs to us. It belongs to us who have nothing of our own to offer God, but who have been granted such a profound righteousness in Christ that we might be persecuted for

³ Mark Dever, “Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit,” Capitol Hill Baptist Church, Washington, DC, March 26, 2017.

it. While our present reality involves failure, mourning, yearning, and persecution, our future hope is secure. We shall be comforted, as God will wipe every tear from our eyes. We willingly suffer loss now, knowing we shall inherit the earth. The righteousness and mercy we now crave will be fully realized when we dwell with God. Although no man can see God and live,⁴ we whose hearts have been purified by God will see God face-to-face and live eternally.

A great inversion of the worldly order is coming. In this present age, the arrogant and grabby get all they want, and warmakers seem to live as gods among men. But when Christ returns, the wicked will be cast down from their thrones. The meek will inherit the earth and the peacemakers will be revealed as God's children. Amidst our present hardships, this calls for great rejoicing as we press on towards great reward in heaven. And what is our greatest reward? The king who gives us himself, our Lord Jesus Christ... Are you blessed?

BIG IDEA: The Beatitudes portray the present experience and future hope of Christians, and point forward to a great inversion.

APPLY:

- **Question:** Do you think the Beatitudes were surprising to Jesus's original audience? Why or why not?
- **Question:** How specifically do the Beatitudes challenge your concept of the blessed life?
- **Activity:** As you re-read the Beatitudes, explore your own reaction to them: Relief? Guilt? Fear? Comfort? Hope? Clarity? Confusion? Sorrow? Try to explain your reaction.

⁴ See Exodus 33:20 for reference.

Week 11: Matthew 5:1-3

Day 4: Blessed are the Poor in Spirit

READ: Matthew 5:3

EXPLORE:

Having the approval of God, and living within His will, is what all Christ-followers should long for, and Jesus opened this sermon with a list of what we now refer to as the beatitudes, or beautiful attitudes, as I (Cean) like to refer to them. These are not attributes required to be saved, for that is by grace alone. Rather, these are the marks and evidences of the work of grace within us. They build on one another to reveal the progression of sanctification.

The Greek word for poor comes from the root that means, “to crouch,” painting the picture of someone on their knees begging for his needs to be supplied by someone else. This is not related to finances, although being destitute, oppressed and underprivileged often lead people to seek God more often than financially well-off individuals.⁵ The one who is poor in spirit recognizes there is a void in their soul, an emptiness they cannot fill, hurts they cannot heal, and wrongs they cannot right. They are spiritually bankrupt, and they are completely dependent on God.

Most people in our world would claim to be a good person; however, every human being is spiritually destitute in God’s sight. Our good works are like filthy rags to Him.⁶ The first step toward God is acknowledging this. Knowing that without Jesus Christ to redeem us, to cleanse us, to heal and restore us, there is nothing we can do that would warrant God’s forgiveness and blessing over our lives. It is said that pride is the root of all sins. Therefore, God

⁵ See Matthew 19:24 for reference.

⁶ See Isaiah 64:6 for reference.

wants to create a character of humility within each of us. Pride puffs up and makes us less sensitive to God's presence and His will. God opposes the proud and gives grace to the humble. Our lives as believers should be about walking in a manner worthy of the calling we have received, in other words, let us be consistent in word and deed. If we genuinely recognize our need for daily grace, the fruit of humility will naturally manifest.⁷ There is no other way to come into the kingdom of God other than by poverty of spirit that comes by emptying yourself of pride and self-righteousness.

We see the term, "*kingdom of heaven*" or "*kingdom of God*" used throughout Scripture, but what does it mean? In a nutshell, it is where Jesus reigns. This phrase is an 'already but not-yet' theological concept, also called inaugurated eschatology. Here it refers to Jesus' reign within the heart of a believer, the body of Christ that includes all believers on earth, and the kingdom prepared for believers after death.⁸ The kingdom has already come into our world but remains to be consummated. As believers, we recognized our need for a savior, and in doing so, we have been blessed and can experience the King of kings here and for all eternity.

BIG IDEA: Jesus is teaching us that a life of spiritual humility is a mark of true faith.

APPLY:

- **Question:** Where do you struggle with self-sufficiency?
- **Challenge:** Recognize that it is God who gives you the gifts and talents to be competent in what you do.

⁷ See James 4:6 and Ephesians 4:1 for reference to these concepts.

⁸ See Matthew 6:33, Luke 11:2, and Matthew 16:19 for reference.

Week 11: Matthew 5:1-3

Day 5: Poor in Spirit

READ TOGETHER: John 1:17-18, Isaiah 2:2-3, Matthew 13:44

***Instructions:** We believe that biblical study and spiritual growth are meant to be shared. This Word to Life has that exact focus in mind. For some, Day 5 might be a good opportunity to lead your family in a devotional. For others, this study might serve as a simple reminder to tactfully communicate your faith with those around you. Regardless, this study is designed to help you grow in your faith by sharing it with others.*

EXPLORE TOGETHER:

Perhaps some of you have seen the movie “Mean Girls.” I am not suggesting that you do, nor have I (Sabino) seen it myself. However, it seems clear from the previews what the movie is about. The “mean girls” are high and mighty. They dress well, look good, and are an exclusive club. They look down upon the lesser mortals and treat people unfairly. They are superficial and high maintenance. In other words, they are the exact opposite of poor in spirit.

The poor in spirit are those who are empty of themselves so that they might be filled with Christ. The poor in spirit are humble, not thinking more highly of themselves than they ought to think. One can be poor and proud so this is not simply talking about those who have few possessions although that can sometimes help. However, the poor in spirit do not hold too tightly to material wealth. They are generous and instead of despising those who are beneath them financially, they are happy to help lift them up.

The poor in spirit recognize their poverty of spiritual graces. They do not consider that they have arrived but are deeply aware of their depravity and need for good. The poor in spirit see themselves as little children constantly in need of their heavenly

Father's provisions. They are teachable. They ask God for wisdom constantly because they believe they lack it, and they believe God is faithful to give it.

To the poor in spirit belongs the kingdom of heaven. They are the only fit members of the kingdom of heaven. The proud and detestable will not inherit the kingdom of God. The poor in spirit is the first among the Christian graces that our Lord teaches us about in the Sermon on the Mount. If we are not humble, how can we grow in any grace or spiritual blessing? If we are poor in spirit, we will not be easily offended. We will not be high maintenance. We will not despair when tragedy strikes. We will be tempered by knowing that we brought nothing into this world and we will not take anything out.

BIG IDEA: The poor in spirit are humble children of God.

APPLY TOGETHER:

- **Activity:** Make a list of how someone poor in spirit thinks concerning God and others.

- **Activity:** Name an important saint in the Bible and describe how they were poor in spirit.

Week 12: Matthew 5:4

Day 1: A Day to Explore

READ: Matthew 5:4

EXPLORE:

Instructions: Spend time reading Matthew 5:1-12 and complete the activities and questions below.

- **Activity**: While reading, include some observations in the space below.

- **Question**: Do you think mourning is more of a good thing or a bad thing? Explain your answer below.

- **Activity**: Using an online or physical concordance, list other examples of God’s comfort that are referenced in Scripture. List specific examples below.

- **Question:** When have you felt deeply comforted in your life? What happened and how were you specifically comforted?

- **Activity:** Read 2 Corinthians 1:1-7 and answer the questions below.
 - What is the relationship between God's comfort and our ability to be comforters?

 - What is the relationship between comfort and suffering according to 2 Corinthians 1:1-7

- **Question:** Is all mourning God-honoring and therefore comforted by God? Explain your answer briefly below.

- **Question:** When Jesus says that the mourners "*will be comforted*" do you think it means that they will be comforted immediately or at some future point in time?

Week 12: Matthew 5:4

Day 2: Blessed are those who Mourn

READ: Matthew 5:4

EXPLORE:

I (Cean) just attended two funerals in the last two weeks. Both were believers and therefore the time was bitter-sweet. The loss of their earthly presence was felt heavy and hard, yet the knowledge of their eternal life with God was joyful and comforting.

When we think of mourning, we think of tragedy and loss and sorrow. Jesus tells us, "*Blessed are those who mourn,*" but He is not referring to individuals that have solely lost a loved one, but rather the individuals who realize the tragedy and loss and sorrow over their sin and the subsequent evil that results. Mentally recognizing that we are spiritually destitute leads us to an emotional mourning. This mourning indicates a sensitivity and deep consciousness of sin. Do you see how this beatitude builds on the prior one? A person must be poor in spirit, to recognize their total depravity and in doing so, they will inevitably mourn over the sin that clings so easily to them.

A humbling practice that I suggest everyone try is reflecting on some of the sins from yesterday. Did you use your words to build up? Did you make eye contact when talking to your child? Was your mind wandering while your friend was talking to you? Were you short with your spouse? Did you call the drivers on the road idiots again? Did someone say something that hurt you? The list can go on and on. The goal of this is not to invoke the need for self-flagellation, but rather self-reflection. To truly mourn our sins and the sins of others, we have to see them. When our eyes begin to see like Jesus sees, sorrow will result. However, our grief from sin should not stem from negative consequences, but rather the sin itself. I struggle most with thinking of the disappointment that

my Father in heaven must be feeling and this helps me in decision-making because although He loves me, He does not necessarily love what I do and say. This saddens me.

The Lord tells us that those who mourn will be comforted. This word can mean encouraged, strengthened, and consoled.⁹ Even in the midst of our sorrow for sin, the Holy Spirit, the *paraclete* who comes along side of us, will comfort and strengthen us. We may stumble and even fall flat on our faces sometimes, but He will not let us stay there. How encouraging it is to know that even though sin abounds, His grace abounds more.¹⁰

BIG IDEA: Sin should make us sad.

APPLY:

- **Question:** Are you calloused to some sin? Ask God for sensitivity toward all things that would displease Him.

- **Question:** Do you find it is easier to see sin in other people as opposed to yourself?

- **Activity:** Find comfort that your sins have been forgiven Christian!

⁹ See John 16:7-11 and James 4:9 for reference.

¹⁰ See Romans 5:20 for reference.

Week 12: Matthew 5:4

Day 3: Confess, Restore, Comfort

READ: Matthew 5:4

EXPLORE:

In Matthew 5:4 we see this idea that those who grieve will be comforted. But is Christ speaking to all grief here? Will he comfort every person who grieves for everything they grieve over? No, this passage speaks to a godly grief which differs from a worldly grief. 2 Corinthians 7:9-10 gives us a distinction between the two, saying, *“As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting. For you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us. For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.”* Here it is evident that a godly grief is characterized by repentance.

It is to mourn due to remorse over having lost God’s approval and to strive to gain it back through the grace of God. Worldly grief refers to remorse over losing the world’s approval or pleasures and striving to gain it back through self. Grieving over what the world can offer leads to destruction and death but grieving over our sins and the sins of others leads to repentance, sanctification, and eternal life. So, not only should the emotional, mental, and spiritual loss resulting from sin lead us to mourning and longing for God’s forgiveness and healing but, also, the grief we inflict on God when we sin. Isaiah 63:10 says, *“But they rebelled And grieved His Holy Spirit; Therefore He turned Himself to become their enemy, He fought against them.”* To grieve God’s heart is a serious offense and we must repent and turn from our sin to seek His forgiveness and reconciliation.

Thankfully, when we grieve over what breaks God’s heart, we will be comforted by the Holy Spirit Himself. 2 Corinthians 1:3-5 says, *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father*

of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too."

When the consequences of our sins or the sins of others hurt us, God is grieved over it, and He longs to come and provide peace and restoration. It is when we confess our sins that He brings His comfort, and we can then minister to others who encounter similar struggles and difficulties from their own sins or the sins of others.

BIG IDEA: Our hearts ought to break for what breaks God's heart and when we do, God comforts and heals us.

APPLY:

- **Question:** What areas in your life are grieving God's heart that are not grieving yours? Why are they not aligned with God's heart?

- **Activity:** Take time to make a list of idols (anything that you are putting before or in front of God) in your life that ought to be grieved over. Spend time in prayer confessing these idols, surrendering them to God, and asking for His forgiveness. (This ought to be done every day).

Week 12: Matthew 5:4

Day 4: A Near and Present Comforter

READ: Matthew 5:4

EXPLORE:

Many scientific studies have been designed and executed to study the impact of a parent's response to a child's pain. From the quickness of parental response to the nature of their care, many have researched how the reaction of a parent to pain impacts the child being considered. On some occasions, a parent's response to their child's pain is a means of deepening attachment and comfort. The research also indicates, however, that a parent who is either overly protective or holistically dismissive of the pain may inhibit their child's ability to perceive pain rightly.

The Scriptures remind us that God is perfectly responsive to the pain we experience and to the heartache we communicate. He does not coddle us anymore than He holistically dismisses our legitimate pains in a world beset with sin. He does not always respond how we might expect, but He always reacts rightly!

We have been studying and meditating upon a biblical text this week that reads, "*Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.*" This portion of the sermon on the mount is good news for those who look at the world around them and the struggle that persists within them and wonder through tears of mourning, "When is the comfort coming?"

We have already studied this week about how God is a comforter, but we have not stopped to ask when that consolation is going to experience. Is the comfort of God for right now? Is His comfort only a future reality which will one day be experienced? We could ask the same question like this: Is the promise of comfort an earthly or an eschatological promise? Let's take a closer look.

In Jesus' teaching, the promise of comfort is positioned in the future tense. For those who are mourning, we are reminded that they *will/shall* be comforted. We don't know in Jesus' words whether this is an immediate comfort or a distant comfort which is already on the way. When I (Stephen) read this biblical text, I am reminded of Revelation 7:17. It reads, "*For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.*"¹¹

In Revelation as in Jesus' sermon, there is a distinctly future-facing dimension of the comfort which is received for those who mourn. There is a significant distinction we need to see. These future assurances of God's comfort do not negate His real and present comfort within our painful experience of "now." In fact, the eschatological assurance of the God who comforts ought to be a firm grounding upon which we can be comforted here and now. In response to the question about whether this promise is earthly or eschatological, the answer is, "Yes." God's goal is not for us to avoid pain or sidestep sorrow. The Scriptures are actually quite descriptive about how distress and disappointment are leveraged for God's glory and for our good. God does not coddle us, and He is not dismissive of our pain. He desires to renew us through it and to comfort us in it.

BIG IDEA: The reality of God's future comfort ought to bolster our confidence in the comfort which He currently gives to those who mourn.

APPLY:

- **Question:** How have you personally experienced God's comfort through mourning?

¹¹ See Revelation 7:17 for reference.

Week 12: Matthew 5:4

Day 5: The Mourners

READ TOGETHER: Luke 18:9-14, 2 Corinthians 7:10, Zechariah 12:10

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EXPLORE TOGETHER:

God, be merciful to me, a sinner! These are famous words of the tax collector in the parable of our Lord in Luke 18. The Pharisee in this parable prayed and thanked God that he was not like other men. He told God of all the good things that he did, and he was proud that he was not like other men. Whereas the tax collector was unable to even lift his head toward heaven when he prayed. The tax collector was a proper mourner and our Lord calls him blessed.

Happy are those who mourn. Sad are those who mourn sounds more reasonable at first glance, but the master teacher has much to instruct us in. Those who mourn, first mourn over their own sin. This makes sense if they also display poverty in spirit. They are first sorrowful over their own sin and secondly over the sins of the world. We live in a world filled with sin and this does not please the godly or blessed. Those who mourn properly lament their fallen nature and their actual transgressions. Those who mourn longingly await for their glorified bodies so that sin will not come from them any longer. Those who mourn also sympathize with the affliction of others and weep with those who weep.

Our Lord says stunningly and profoundly that these mourners are blessed and comforted. They are blessed with serious joy. Sorrow may last for the night, but joy comes in the morning. Spiritual mourners are also comforted by God. Think of how Lazarus is comforted in Abraham's bosom in Luke 16. A mourner is free from the sin of mockery. A mourner does not lord over people compassionately sees the needy and gives assistance. It is to the mourner that God says, He will wipe away every tear. A mountain of joy (heaven) is prepared for those who have traveled through a valley of tears.

BIG IDEA: Mourning is a surprising virtue

APPLY TOGETHER:

- **Question:** How does Jesus surprise or reorientate your view of mourning?

- **Question:** Not all mourning is virtuous. What are a couple examples of negative mourning in the Bible and why was this so?

Week 13: Matthew 5:5

Day 1: A Day to Explore

READ: Matthew 5:5

EXPLORE:

Instructions: Spend time reading and meditating upon Matthew 5:5 and complete the activities and questions below.

- **Activity**: After reading, include some initial observations in the space below.

- **Activity**: Look up the definition of “meek” in a dictionary and write it below. Rewrite the definition using your own words.

- **Question**: After completing the activity above, do you think you would be described as meek? Why or why not?

- **Question**: Why do you think it is the meek who are paired with inheriting the earth?

- **Question:** What do you think it means “*to inherit the earth?*”

- **Activity:** The Greek word for meekness used by Jesus in Matthew 5:5 is also used in two other biblical texts listed below. Read them and write down what you notice.
 - 1 Peter 3:3-4 ³*Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear—* ⁴*but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious.*

 - Matthew 21:5 “*Say to the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.’*”

Week 13: Matthew 5:5

Day 2: Meekness ≠ Weakness

READ: Matthew 5:5

EXPLORE:

Have you ever heard something so shocking and counterintuitive that it took some time to wrap your mind around it? This week's passage contains a simple but profound truth that is often overlooked or misunderstood. A diverse crowd had gathered at this moment in Jesus' ministry. Perhaps what united most of them was a low societal status due to poverty or illness. Power and control were the currency of the day, and Jesus' message of meekness would have been countercultural, to say the least.

What comes to mind when you hear the word "meek?" Often, meekness is seen as being feeble, frail, a pushover. This idea is far from the biblical definition. The original language carries with it the idea of a wild animal that has been tamed. The animal retains its strength but now yields control of that strength to its master.

Picture a fire hose. It has immense power of up to 500 gallons per minute, coming out at a pressure of 250 psi. It is an incredibly useful item that can save lives by extinguishing flames. But should the fireman let go, this helpful tool becomes a dangerous and unpredictable projectile capable of causing injury and even death. The difference is made in who is controlling it.

Jesus' call to meekness is not a call to be passive or weak-willed. His call is an invitation to yield your life, effort, and energy to the control of the Master, knowing that He will use it for greater things than we could imagine. Blessed are those who place their

strength under God's control. They will inherit more from their Heavenly Father than they could ever get by grasping for power on their own.

BIG IDEA: Biblical meekness is not weakness; it is strength under God's control.

APPLY:

- **Activity:** Psalm 37:11 carries the same idea as Jesus' words in Matthew 5:5. In addition to verse 11, four other verses in Psalm 37 mention inheriting the land. Take some time to find the other references as you read Psalm 37. Prayerfully consider the actions and attitudes linked to inheriting the land.

Week 13: Matthew 5:5

Day 3: Co-inheritors with Christ and God's own Possession

READ: Matthew 5:5, Ephesians 1:11-14, and Titus 3:4-7

EXPLORE:

Meekness towards God is referring to the way in which we accept without resistance the discipline of the Lord, considering it to be for our good. Meekness also is displayed towards an evildoer, knowing that God would only allow them to inflict us to purify us. We can remain meek in the face of any type of adversity because we know our God will deliver us in His good time. Gentleness and patience are the fruit of the Holy Spirit, enabling us to be slow to anger and give ourselves over to the complete control and sovereignty of God.

Only the meek will inherit the earth and none other! An heir is one who is the beneficiary of a lot or a portion of something. This word for "inheritance" is *kleronomos* and applies primarily to the realm of spiritual inheritance and legacy. To the Jews, an inheritance was reserved for one's offspring. The legal term *kleronomos* in its context referred to a son, who after becoming the representative of his father, is entitled to take possession of the father's estate. This inheritance is received not by chance, but by virtue of birthright or by a special gift.

As the legal heir of God, as His only begotten Son, Jesus became possessor of all things. According to Hebrews 1:2, God predestined from eternity, the Son to be heir and sovereign over all. Equality with God was His birthright, but through His incarnation, death and resurrection, triumphing over sin and death, He identified with us as a brother. He made us co-heirs by grace through faith.

Just as Abraham was appointed an "heir of the world" through the vehicle of the "righteousness of faith", we have also become

an heir of God through faith in Christ.¹² As Titus says, this precious inheritance is received when we experience the washing of rebirth and the renewal of the Holy Spirit.

The Believer's heirship is both an "*already obtained*" reality through partaking in the gospel, and it is a future promise of inheriting eternal life and being glorified with Him at the return of our Lord and Savior.¹³ Not only does God have an inheritance laid up for us, but God took possession of us as His inheritance, as He predestined and purposed through our response of faith. Oh, what an honor that God would want to take possession of us!

God desires us for Himself, as sons and daughters, and we are truly His treasured possession.¹⁴

BIG IDEA: We, as God's inheritance, are a people who hope in Christ. We are His children, recreated that we might bring Him glory in obedience.

APPLY:

- **Activity:** Read Titus 3:4-7 and spend time considering our inheritance in Christ.

¹² See Romans 12:13 and Galatians 4:7 for reference.

¹³ See Titus 3:7 and Romans 8:17 for reference.

¹⁴ See I Peter 2:9 for reference.

Week 13: Matthew 5:5

Day 4: The Promised Land

READ: Matthew 5:5, Romans 4:13-17, Romans 8:16-25

EXPLORE:

In the first century, Jewish expectations concerning the Messiah often included the misguided vision of a triumphant king coming to overthrow the Romans, ousting them from Palestine and forcefully re-establishing the nation of Israel. Although Jesus' disciples don't yet know of His coming execution at the hands of these very same Romans, Jesus is already teaching them in Matthew 5:5 that he is a very different Messiah, ushering in a very different future.

It is the meek that shall inherit the earth, not the strongest or most aggressive, and certainly not the ruler with the largest army. This upside-down nature of God's kingdom is on display throughout the Beatitudes and Jesus' teaching in Matthew 5:5 calls us to meekness, gentleness, and most importantly, a heart posture of humble submission before God.¹⁵ What does *"inherit the earth"* mean? We know from practical experience in our lives, that it very often is the strongest, or the loudest, or the people most adept at self-promotion that end up on top. So, this beatitude hardly serves as a roadmap for gaining earthly wealth, or for realizing the earthly kingdom first century Jews longed for.

Throughout the early books of the Bible, the word *"inherit"* is often related to entrance into the promised land.¹⁶ And this inheritance, of course, stems from God's original promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:7 that *"to your offspring I will give this land."* Interestingly, when we turn to Romans 4:13 we see that the scope of this promise is larger than first expected. Paul suggests to us that *"the promise to Abraham and his offspring"* is not to be understood as confined to a "land" but rather it is *"that he [Abraham with his offspring] would be*

¹⁵ Note in the parallel language of Psalm 37:9 how those who *"inherit the land"* are described as *"those who wait for [i.e. trust in] the Lord"*.

¹⁶ See, for example, Lev 20:24, Deut 1:38, Deut 12:10, and Joshua 1:6

heir of the world."¹⁷ And Paul also gives us a clear description of who these offspring, these heirs, are who will be inheriting the whole world. They are those *"who share the faith of Abraham."*¹⁸ This is the New Testament Church, believing Jews and Gentiles alike, or in our vocabulary today, Christians. Paul continues to unpack this theme in Romans 8, highlighting the children of God as heirs in 8:17 before describing the world as broken in 8:20-22, with all of creation *"subjected to futility", in "bondage to corruption", and "groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now."*

This brokenness is hardly a gift worth receiving. But hope permeates Romans 8:18-25. There is freedom and redemption coming, both for us and for all of creation. So perhaps there is some significance to the fact that the Greek word for "earth" (our inheritance in Matthew 5:5) is the same as the Greek word for "land" (promised to Abraham in Genesis 12:7). Earthly entrance into the Old Testament promised land ultimately serves as a pointer toward entrance into a promised land yet to come, *"the new heavens and the new earth"* (again the same Greek word).¹⁹ This is God's promise, and it's what we look forward to, a radical re-creation and a gracious inheritance. As children of God, we are called to be meek. And as children of God, we will inherit the earth, the promised land, the redeemed and perfected new heavens and new earth.

BIG IDEA: With a heart of humble submission before God we can rest certain in the promise of an inheritance far more perfect and more complete than anything our current world can offer.

APPLY:

- **Question:** How does the promise of a perfected new earth change our expectations, our view of disappointments, and ultimately our attitude toward God in this current life?

¹⁷ See Romans 4:13 for reference.

¹⁸ See Romans 4:16 for reference.

¹⁹ See both Isaiah 66:22 and Revelation 21:1 for reference.

Week 13: Matthew 5:5

Day 5: The Meek

READ TOGETHER: Matthew 27:1-2, 11-26, Proverbs 3:5-6, Psalm 37:11

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EXPLORE TOGETHER:

Jesus standing before Pilate must be one of the most moving scenes in all of world history. There our Lord stands before a Roman governor bloodied, beaten, and with a crown of thorns on his head. However, it is our Lord who is composed and Pilate who is set on his heels. The power our Lord demonstrated in that final hour is one of meekness. Jesus had resigned Himself to the Father's will and for this He was in perfect peace.

The meek are those who quietly submit themselves to God. They are gentle, patient, longsuffering. During his day, Moses was identified as the meekest man on earth. Moses lived a quiet, peaceable life in Midian, but he was willing to forsake this and lead a public life in obedience to God's command. Moses journeyed through the difficult wilderness like every other Israelite but did not complain and endured their criticisms and complaints often without reviling in return. Moses even interceded on behalf of the wicked Israelites after God suggested that He would start over with Moses alone after the golden calf episode.

The meek are happy because they are not easily bothered or offended. When you think of meekness think of a missionary in the jungles of the Amazon. Think of Esther in the palace of King Ahasuerus. The meek are happy in any situation. They know how to be brought low and they know how to abound.

The meek shall inherit the earth. Think of Abraham. He meekly allowed Lot to choose the land to dwell in, but it was only Abraham who securely dwelt in the land. The meek shall also inherit the promise land (heaven). The saints will reign with Christ as co-heirs over the new heavens and new earth. All that is Christ will be ours. I want to close with a great quote on meekness by Charles Spurgeon. He says, "Brother, if any man thinks ill of you, do not be angry with him; for you are worse than he thinks you to be. If you have your moral portrait painted, and it is ugly, be satisfied; for it only needs a few blacker touches, and it would be still nearer the truth."

BIG IDEA: The meek are what the world might called composed in any circumstance.

APPLY TOGETHER:

- **Activity:** Make a list of verses that come to mind when you think of meekness.

- **Question:** Why do you think Spurgeon gets it right in his description of meekness?

Week 14: Matthew 5:6

Day 1: A Day to Explore

READ: Matthew 5:6

EXPLORE:

Instructions: Read and meditate upon Matthew 5:6 and complete the activities and questions below.

- **Activity:** While reading, write some observations in the space below.

- **Activity:** Themes of “hunger” and “thirst” are found throughout Scripture. Spend some time researching these biblical examples, writing them below, and thinking about what you notice.

- **Question:** Would you describe yourself as hungering and thirsting for righteousness?

- **Question:** When you think of hungering and thirsting for righteousness, who or what comes to mind?

- **Question:** Using a dictionary or lexicon, look up the definition of "*righteousness*" and write it below.

- **Question:** How do you imagine your life would be different if you were fully satisfied in God?

- **Question:** What are some things you can do to deepen your sense of hunger and thirst for righteousness?

- **Optional Activity:** Memorize Matthew 5:3-6 and recite it daily until we finish the study of the Beatitudes.

Week 14: Matthew 5:6

Day 2: Are you hungry?

READ: Matthew 5:6 and Psalm 42

EXPLORE:

When was the last time you were hungry? You might be able to instantly recall a moment in time not too long ago or it might be more of a challenge. For most of us in contemporary Western culture, the truth is that we don't experience hunger like many around the world do now. We don't experience hunger like many who've gone before us in history. Jesus knew that the crowd of people listening as He preached the Sermon on the Mount were well-acquainted with hunger in a way that most of us are not. There was a reason He said, "*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.*"²⁰

The uncomfortable reality for our overly comfortable society is that we need help to understand what it means to truly and deeply hunger and thirst for righteousness. When the Psalmist was looking for a way to describe how he longed for God, he described a thirsty, weary deer who searched desperately for water.²¹ Mental images of a majestic doe prancing effortlessly through the wilderness completely miss the mark of what Psalm 42:1 is describing. Through the Psalmist, and again in the Sermon on the Mount, God is giving us a vivid picture of what it looks like to desperately, dependently yearn for His righteousness.

If you were asked to describe what you most earnestly desire in life, what would you say? If you were asked to talk about what occupies your thoughts, captures your heart, and stirs your affection, what would come to mind? What is it that you hunger and thirst for? Jesus' challenge in Matthew 5:6 is a sober

²⁰ See Matthew 5:6 for reference.

²¹ See Psalm 42:1 for reference.

reminder that if the answer to those questions does not include the righteousness of God coming to bear in every aspect of your life, then you need to spend some time with God reviewing the priorities of your life. The logic of Jesus' words in Matthew 5:6 reminds us that our disproportionate hunger and thirst for the lesser things offered by the world is fueled by a false belief that satisfaction and fulfillment lie in something other than God.

The promise attached to this beatitude is that the one who seeks God's righteousness will experience a deeply profound satisfaction with God's grace. It is no small thing that God invites the reader of the Psalms to "*taste and see that the Lord is good.*"²² Our good deeds do not earn us salvation, but they are a right, fitting, and expected response in the life which has been redeemed by God's grace. A heart and life which has trusted in the Lord and has been changed because of His completed work on the cross and His triumph over the grave will hunger and thirst for righteousness. In this world, we might be tempted to believe that the "blessed" life is one which focuses on material prosperity, protected status, or perceived comfort. Jesus is clear: the believer who actively longs for and desperately pursues what is right, just, holy, and virtuous is functioning in accordance with God's perfect design.

BIG IDEA: We are functioning properly and will be satisfied when we hunger and thirst for righteousness.

APPLY:

- **Activity:** Answer the questions posed in paragraph 3 above as honestly as you can.

²² See Psalm 34:8 for reference.

Week 14: Matthew 5:6

Day 3: Bread of Life and Living Water

READ: John 6:22-59, John 7, and Matthew 5:6

EXPLORE:

Today's study will be intentionally shortened so that you can see the force of Jesus' words in Matthew 5:6 against the backdrop of two incredible statements recorded in John's Gospel.

If you have not done so already, please spend some time reading the biblical texts indicated above and below before continuing. Write down your thoughts and/or observations about how these Scriptures relate to our focus Scripture for this week. Remember that time studying God's Word for His glory is never wasted!

- John 6:22-59 (Especially focus on v. 35)

- John 7 (Especially focus on vv. 37-39)

Hopefully, you've had the chance to read and reflect on the two passages from John's Gospel. In the first section, Jesus spoke about how He is the bread of life. In the second section, Jesus spoke about how those who were thirsty could come to Him and experience a living water which would satisfy them completely. It's fair to conclude that the magnitude of Matthew 5:6 cannot be fully appreciated without Jesus' words being brought into focus.

The biblical text reminds us that Christ is our source of righteousness, and He is the only means by which we can live righteously. We are empty of righteousness on our own and we would be left hopeless if the One who was and still is the bread of life and source of living water had not drawn near and extended Himself to those in need.

With the context of Jesus' words in John's Gospel account in view, we ought to be able to draw a clear distinction between God-honoring pursuits of justice and the self-righteous pursuit of external behavior modification. The fact that the bread of life and the giver of living water has come changes everything.

BIG IDEA: Jesus is the bread of life and the source of living water.

APPLY:

- **Instructions:** In the space that was created by having an intentionally abbreviated study today, spend some extra time in meditation on God's Word and in prayer.
 - a. **Activity:** Pray that God would work in your heart and life in such a way that you would be fully satisfied in Him!

Week 14: Matthew 5:6

Day 4: True Satisfaction

READ: Matthew 5:6

EXPLORE:

This Scripture, these words from the mouth of Jesus, are baffling and true all at once. When we think of satisfaction, we think of those things that allow us to make that “ahhh” sound. This may, for some, be a spa day after a hard week’s work. For others, it’s getting away to the fresh air of the mountains. Maybe it’s from finally paying off that loan, house, or car. Maybe it’s a weekend away from the kids.

My (Sarah) guess is that hunger pains and parched lips would never cross your mind to be in tandem with satisfaction. We need to reorient our definition and our search for satisfaction based on God’s Word. It is clear, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness are satisfied. This is the ultimate fulfillment.

Have you ever played the game Bean Boozled? It’s a fun game, until it’s not. It is a bunch of brightly colored jellybeans that lead you to believe they are either blueberry, lemon, strawberry, etc. Sometimes, the color they are is exactly the flavor you were hoping for. Other times, it’s the opposite. The appeal of a pink jellybean turns into the disgust of dead fish. Yuck! The same is true for the platter of material things or experiences that the world promises will satisfy you. Sometimes, they seem to fulfill your desires. Oftentimes, they do not. Ultimately, 100% of the time the end result is the equivalent of dead fish. Every earthly given source of satisfaction is unsatisfactory.

How, then, can we be satisfied? God actually desires us to have satisfaction. We do not have to deny ourselves every little thing that we seek to give us joy. God as well does not keep us guessing on how to live this fullness of life so that we continue to get Bean

Boozled. The answer is in God's presence, the fear of the Lord, and salvation.²³

I'll leave you with this question: Do you believe in God? Not just trusting that He's real, but is He real to you? Have you embraced Christ as the bread of your life, your living water in such a way that you should never hunger or thirst again? This is all that matters. If you are constantly trying to fill your life with joy and pleasure, but ultimately end up hungry and thirsty, tired of ending up with dead fish, you may be the one who is dead. The good news is that you don't have to do that a single second more. If you are ready to stop your chasing after the wind and desire true rest and satisfaction that leads to life, you can, today.²⁴ Reach out to someone you know who is saved and ask them to pray with you.

BIG IDEA: The only way to have satisfaction is through the one true God who can satisfy your hunger and thirst.

APPLY:

- **Question:** What are things you have turned to in the hopes that it would provide satisfaction or joy, that have ultimately disappointed you or provided the opposite?

- **Activity:** Write down the ways you have seen Christ satisfy your needs or supplied fullness of joy that the world ultimately could not.

²³ See Psalm 16:11, Proverbs 19:23, and John 6:35 for reference.

²⁴ See Ecclesiastes 1:14 and Matthew 11:28-30 for reference.

Week 14: Matthew 5:6

Day 5: Mealtime

READ TOGETHER: Daniel 1:8-21, Psalm 103:6, Psalm 42:1-4

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EXPLORE TOGETHER:

How often do you get hungry and thirsty each day? The answer for all of us is daily. This is how it should be in our spiritual life as well. We should be spiritually hungry and thirsty all day every day. However, this appetite must be cultivated. Our soul will be hungering and thirsting after something no matter what. It is imperative for the Christian that it be directed to pursue righteousness.

Happy are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. Some observe this as a further instance of outward poverty. The blessed desire what is just and equal, but it's denied them by the hands of wicked men. John the Baptist desired what was just when he was in prison, but instead, he lost his life by the hand of Herod. Ultimately, those who are persecuted are satisfied by their just reward in heaven.

One great Old Testament example of hungering and thirsting for righteousness is Daniel. Daniel had an appetite for the things of God that exceeded his appetite for the king's delicacies. He desired spiritual blessing over any earthly blessing. Solomon says of wisdom that nothing you desire compares with her (lady wisdom). Jesus said to his disciples, *"My food is to do the will of*

Him who sent me and to accomplish His work.”²⁵ The Christian ought to be hungry and thirsty for God’s gifts, God’s will, and God’s work.

God satisfies those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. As a good Father, He does not leave His children hungry or thirsty. God provided manna from heaven daily for the people of Israel. This physical provision for the Hebrews symbolizes God’s spiritual provision for us. The Lord’s prayer teaches us to ask God daily for spiritual sustenance and God is faithful to give us anything we ask in Jesus’ name. “If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!” Finally, our Lord teaches us that man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

BIG IDEA: Our daily hunger and thirst should be spiritual, as well as physical.

APPLY TOGETHER:

- **Question:** How do we cultivate a hunger and thirst for spiritual things?

- **Activity:** Make a list of practical examples of what it means to hunger and thirst for righteousness in everyday life.

²⁵ See John 4:34 for reference to the concept.

Week 15: Matthew 5:7

Day 1: A Day to Explore

READ: Matthew 5:7

EXPLORE:

Instructions: Spend time meditating on Matthew 5:7 and complete the activities and questions below.

- **Activity**: While contemplating, include some observations in the space below.

- **Question**: Describe when you have experienced someone being merciful to you.

- **Question**: Is there a difference between grace and mercy? If so, what is it?

- **Question**: What does Hosea 6:6 tell us about how God feels concerning mercy?

- **Activity:** Spend time reading Micah 6:8 today. Break the text down into different sections as you prayerfully meditate upon God's Word. Ask the Lord to help you embrace the command given in this biblical text.
 - *He has told you, O man, what is good;
and what does the LORD require of you*

 - *but to do justice,*

 - *and to love mercy,*

 - *and to walk humbly with your God? -Micah 6:8*

Week 3: Matthew 5:7

Day 2: Reaping What We Sow

READ: Matthew 5:7

EXPLORE:

In Matthew 5:3-6, the first four beatitudes focus on an attitude or mindset centered on God. In Matthew 5:7-9, the focus of the beatitudes shifts from attitudes to actions. The beatitude we will contemplate this week is Matthew 5:7, *“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.”*

The concept of reaping what you sow is established in both the Old and New Testaments. Leviticus 19:9-10 describes how one should conduct the harvest of the fields and vineyards. Here the people of Israel are instructed not to reap the fields right up to the edge, or gather the leftover remnants of the harvest, or the fallen grapes of the vineyards. These are to be left for the poor and for the sojourner. Here God commands Israel to be merciful in their harvest and leave some remnants for the poor and the foreign travelers among them.

In Leviticus 19:18 Israel is commanded, *“You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.”* This is another powerful call to mercy over vengeance, and a common theme of many of Jesus’ teachings. The call to love your neighbor as yourself is a powerful teaching that is also a call for mercy. When it is in our power to punish, we should respond with compassion and forgiveness. For that is what we are called to do: respond with compassion and forgiveness. Jesus will expound upon this idea later in Matthew 5:38-42, when He describes how we should retaliate against people who we perceive to have wronged us.

In the beatitude of Matthew 5:7, we are told that the merciful are blessed. The reward for being merciful is receiving mercy from God. James 2:13 says, *“For judgement is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgement.”* This indicates that the inverse idea of Matthew 5:7 is also true: those who deny mercy to others will be denied mercy by God.

The call to mercy can be difficult at times. It is easy to let our pride get in the way when we feel we are wronged by others. It is important to note that an inflated view of ourselves is often accompanied by a deflated view of God. When we as imperfect image bearers’ sin against each other, it is important to be merciful. The gospel message is that we were forgiven while we were still sinners. This is the mercy shown to us by God and the spirit that we should try to emulate in our daily lives.

BIG IDEA: Be merciful in your dealings with others.

APPLY:

- **Question:** Give an example of a time that you have displayed mercy. Was it easy for you to act in this manner?

- **Question:** Are there any people in your life that exemplify showing mercy to you or others? How can you incorporate their attitudes and behaviors into your own interactions?

Week 15: Matthew 5:7

Day 3: Mercy and Grace

READ: Matthew 5:7

EXPLORE:

What is one of the most incredible achievements in human history that you can think of, and what were the means used to accomplish it? If we are thinking about the same kinds of projects—the Panama Canal or the US Space Program, for instance—we can say with reasonable confidence that the means include manpower, technology, and money. Now, what was the motivation for these projects? Why do kings, countries, companies, or whoever, decide to execute these massive undertakings? The answer is most likely power or prestige; perhaps even economic, military, or political advantage. Something like that. When people set out to accomplish something, our motivations and means are generally similar, and not terribly difficult to discern.

That is the way of mankind, but God has also set out to accomplish major undertakings since creation, perhaps the most significant of which for us is the reconciliation of man with Himself after the Fall. And God, in His Word, has made both the motivation and means of His salvation clear: He was motivated by mercy, and He saved us by means of grace. One example from Scripture that communicates this is Ephesians 2:4-5, which states:

⁴But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved.

Since these two characteristics of God—mercy and grace—are central to a Christian’s renewed relationship with God, and his or her salvation, it makes sense for us to try to understand what exactly the Bible means by “mercy” and “grace.”

“Mercy,” also translated “compassion,” is a kind of love characterized by mindfulness of the pitiable or helpless state of an object that motivates some response to relieve its suffering. Today’s verse, Matthew 5:7, teaches that those who are motivated by this mindfulness and love toward the suffering of others will themselves receive mercy.

“Grace” is used in two major ways in the New Testament. It is sometimes used in the sense of “the quality of God that enables right living.” This definition is employed in 2 Corinthians 9:8, for example:

⁸And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.

But Ephesians 2:4-5 utilizes the second meaning of grace: unmerited favor. It is the quality of God that leads Him to treat us better than we deserve, specifically by forgiving our sins, reestablishing a relationship with us, and allowing us to become His children.

There is an old adage often used to relate mercy (with respect to justice and punishment), and the second meaning of grace. “Grace is to give that which you don’t deserve, mercy is to withhold that which you do deserve.” It’s worth remembering!

BIG IDEA: Mercy and grace are both incorporated in our experience of salvation.

APPLY:

- **Activity:** Considering the gravity of Matthew 5:7, identify a few areas in your life where you could “be merciful.”

Week 15: Matthew 5:7

Day 4: Receiving and Giving Mercy

READ: Matthew 5:7

EXPLORE:

I (Stephen) love having a well-stocked supply of snacks. I know what you are thinking. You think I love having snacks so that I can constantly have access to treats throughout the day. While that is not holistically true, the real reason is quite different. Since beginning vocational ministry a decade ago, I have always found value in having a snack or a drink to offer someone with whom I was meeting. It is always good to be able to extend a drink or a treat.

When my supply of treats is large, I give freely. When my supply of treats nears its end, however, I have noticed it is much harder to give them away. When I perceive a sense of scarcity, I often withhold what I would have previously given generously. This dynamic is not only true with our food, but also of our souls as well. Let me explain.

When we are immersed in the generosity of God's mercy which has been extended to us, we are able to freely extend mercy to others. When the brilliant realities of His graciousness toward us grow dull, however, we far too often become stingy. Jesus knew this reality and He spoke to the semi-reciprocal nature of extending mercy in the text which we have been studying this week. Jesus said, "*Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.*"²⁶ On more than one occasion, Jesus will tell stories that reveal how our ability to extend mercy to others is correlated with our understanding of God's mercy toward us. Certainly, the grace which has been extended to us in the person and work of Christ

²⁶ See Matthew 5:7 for reference.

always eclipses our own ability to give mercy to others. That is actually the point.

An awareness of God's abundant mercy toward those who would repent and believe must fundamentally empower that same repentant believer's ability to extend mercy toward others. Could it be that your inability to extend mercy toward others is directly linked to your emaciated understanding of God's mercy toward you in Christ? A merciful God desires humanity which was made in His image to be merciful to one another.

One example of merciful living is the life of King David. The Bible is clear; he sinned terribly. The Bible is also clear that he extended mercy liberally. Whether it was toward powerful King Saul or toward his powerless grandson, Mephibosheth²⁷, David seems to exemplify what it looks like to be merciful. This mercy was pleasing to God. David's ability to give mercy seems to be readily linked to understanding of how merciful God had been toward him. In this way, we ought to emulate his humble response to God.

BIG IDEA: We are meant to receive mercy and respond mercifully toward others.

APPLY:

- **Question:** When is it most challenging for you to act mercifully toward others?

- **Question:** Does this text/the Bible teach that God will not extend mercy to you unless you are merciful first? Why or why not?

²⁷ See 2 Samuel 9 for reference.

Week 15: Matthew 5:7

Day 5: Good Samaritans

READ TOGETHER: Colossians 3:12-14, Isaiah 58:7, 10; Luke 10:29-37

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EXPLORE TOGETHER:

One of the most famous illustrations of mercy in the Bible is the story of the Good Samaritan. A Samaritan comes across a man that had been robbed, beaten, and left for dead. The Samaritan had compassion for him and took care of him holistically. This was a work of mercy. The Samaritan did for the man what he could not do for himself.

Happy are the merciful. Once again, this is a paradox. Happy are those who go out of their way to serve others and spend their own money on them. Happy are those who forgive others their debts towards them. As we are told in *The Mandalorian*, “This is the way.” One of the most descriptive verses on mercy is 1 Thessalonians 5:14 which says, *And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.* We are to give to each person what they have need of, and each person’s need is different. We can see in this verse how fully orbed mercy is, covering not just physical need, but also specific spiritual need. It reminds me of being able to speak a word in season to the listener.²⁸

²⁸ Proverbs 15:23

One hopefully encouraging reality is that the ministry of mercy can be practiced in the home. A spouse or child is constantly in need. By God's grace we can help them do things that they cannot do on their own. Each time we share a kind word, change a dirty diaper, or pick up things around the house, we are enacting the ministry of mercy.

May the Lord turn us all into good Samaritans, for the merciful shall receive mercy. The merciful shall receive mercy from other men. Merciful people soften the hearts of others, which makes them more inclined to be merciful in return. Most importantly, the merciful receive mercy from God. Jesus says, *"For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."*²⁹

BIG IDEA: The merciful meet the needs in front of them.

APPLY TOGETHER:

- **Question:** What are some practical ways you can be merciful around the house?

- **Question:** What are some needs in the lives of fellow believers where you can be merciful?

²⁹ See Matthew 6:14-15 for reference.



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