BRENTWOOD BAPTIST CHURCH

BUT I SAY: HOW JESUS TAUGHT US TO LIVE—WEEK 1 BLESSED TO GLORIFY (MATTHEW 5:1-16) JANUARY 20, 2013



PREPARATION

- > SPEND THE WEEK STUDYING MATTHEW 5:1-16. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools (such as a concordance or Bible dictionary) to enhance your preparation.
- > **DETERMINE** which discussion points and questions will work best with your group.
- > PRAY for our pastors and the "But I Say" series, the upcoming group meeting, your teaching, your group members, and their receptivity to the lesson.

HIGHLIGHTS

- > BIBLICAL EMPHASIS: As Moses brought the 10 Commandments to the Israelites as they approached the promised land, so Jesus brings us the expectations of the kingdom citizen in Matthew 5–7. "Because you are My children," Jesus seems to be saying, "this is how you are to live." To begin His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus described the characteristics and blessings of those who follow Him. He focused on both inner attitude and outward relationships. He then used two word pictures—salt and light—to describe the impact His followers will have on the world. These characteristics are "blessed," empowered by God. When lived out, each characteristic brings glory to God.
- > LIFE APPLICATION: As a result of today's study, you will learn how to:
 - 1. Bring glory to God in your inner attitude (5:1-6).
 - 2. Bring glory to God in your outward relationships (5:7-12).
 - 3. Bring glory to God in your worldwide influence (5:13-16).

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

How would you define "blessed"? How would most people in the city of Brentwood define it? How would Jesus define it?

What was one specific day when you felt particularly blessed?

Being a Christ-follower isn't just a matter of thinking and doing the right things and avoiding the wrong things. Foundational to being a Christian is a personal relationship with Jesus that empowers you to live for God. That relationship is the result of God's blessing in your life, and it changes you from the inside out. God's power at work in you enables you to reflect kingdom characteristics in the way you live.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

When we imagine the scene of the Sermon on the Mount, we typically picture Jesus perched on the side of a large hill speaking out to a crowd of people. But that's not

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what we read in Matthew 5:1. Matthew reported that Jesus saw the crowds, went up on a mountain, and sat down with His disciples. Instead of a grand speech, we see an intimate conversation with His small group of disciples. By the end of the sermon (Matthew 7:28), it becomes evident that the crowds could hear what Jesus was telling the men.	
> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 5:1-6.	
Matthew 5:3-10 is often referred to as the Beatitudes. They're a set of blessings set up in Hebrew poetical form. The first statement, "The poor in spirit are blessed, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs" (v. 3), bears the same reward as the last, "Those who are persecuted for righteousness are blessed, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs" (v. 10). In Hebrew poetry, the repeated theme means that everything in the middle (vv. 4-9) share a common theme. In this case, it's the attitudes by which we can recognize people who are a part of the kingdom of God.	
What do you think the word "blessed" means in the context of the Beatitudes?	
The Greek word for "blessed" doesn't just carry the meaning of "happy" that is often associated with it. It carries the connotation of approval or favor. We might paraphrase the first Beatitude as <i>God approves of the poor in spirit</i> . Jesus declared people who exhibit particular characteristics to be divinely blessed. Those characteristics identify people who, by God's grace, are citizens of the kingdom of heaven. This designation does not imply they are perfect, fully mature believers. It does indicate they have begun to follow the Lord. The Beatitudes do not describe eight separate and distinct groups of people, but eight characteristics or qualities that define kingdom people.	
How do the Beatitudes in verses 3-6 relate to the promises that follow them? How would you describe the opposite of each quality?	
What kind of mourning do you feel Jesus is talking about in verse 4? What causes you to mourn?	
When you think of someone who is a good example of meekness (v. 5), what is that person like? What do you admire? How do they model humility?	
The clear theme in verses 3-6 is that God approves of people who know they're broken, who know they're nothing without His blessing. We don't earn the kingdom of heaven by being poor in spirit. We're poor in spirit because we know that we could never earn a place in God's kingdom, but through His grace He provides a way to let us in.	
> HAVE ANOTHER VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 5:7-12.	
In the second section of the Beatitudes, we continue to see the thread of kingdom attitudes, but the focus shifts away from our spirits and toward our relationships with others.	

How is the focus different from the previous section? What do the four attitudes in verses 7-12 (merciful, pure in heart, peacemaker, righteousness) have in common?	
How do the Beatitudes in these verses relate to the promises that follow them? How would you describe the opposite of each quality?	
These verses highlight the attitudes God's people should display externally. How we treat others flows out of the personal characteristics listed in the first set of verses. Think of it like this: People who know they need mercy will, in turn, show mercy. People who mourn their sins before God will be covered in His righteousness and made pure in their hearts. People who have spirits of gentleness won't fight for their best interests but will seek to make peace with others. And people who "hunger and thirst for righteousness" will face persecution because becoming like Christ includes joining Him in His suffering.	
While grace is the act of giving a gift that is not deserved, mercy is the withholding or preventing of a negative consequence rightly deserved. What are some opportunities you have to show mercy on a weekly basis?	
How is peace keeping different than peace making?	
Do the blessings described in these verses line up with an "ideal" life by cultural standards? Why or why not? If not, what are some of the noticeable differences?	
Through these statements, Jesus both encouraged and warned His disciples that as they pursued God, they would meet persecution. Although persecution is not something anyone wants to endure, it's a definite marker of a faithful life.	
What are some ways you hear of people in Middle Tennessee being persecuted for their faith? People around the world?	
Have you ever been persecuted in some way because of your faith in Christ? How did you respond?	
Verses 11-12 transition out of the Beatitudes and into the rest of Jesus' sermon. To encourage the disciples in the face of future persecutions, Jesus compared them to the prophets who came before Him. The Old Testament prophets faithfully followed God and shared His message with the world, regardless of the world's response. By comparing Christ-followers to Old Testament prophets, Jesus encouraged His disciples to remain faithful because their reward in heaven would be great—just as it was for the prophets.	
Consider the prophets in the Old Testament. Would you consider their lives and ministries successful? What was persecution like for them?	
What does this idea communicate about the kingdom of God?	

Have someone read James 1:2-4. Why should we rejoice about endurance? List some figures in Scripture who model this endurance.	
Jesus understood that persecution would be a part of the lives of His people because of Him and His message. They would be reviled "on his account." He wanted them to rejoice in suffering because it was evidence that they would receive an award far greater than anything the world offered.	
> HAVE A FINAL VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 5:13-16.	
In verses 13-16, Jesus explained the impact a kingdom attitude can have on the world. He did so with two word pictures—salt and light. Jesus calls His followers "the salt of the earth." Salt's primary function in Jesus' day was to help preserve food (especially meat), an act that was particularly important in the Middle East due to hot temperatures and arid climate.	
What is the church's role in serving and preserving culture? What part do you play in that picture?	
How is the command to be salt and light related to the Beatitudes in verses 3-10?	
As believers, we act as a preservative in the culture around us by maintaining high moral and spiritual standards that counteract the sin and decay of the world. Salt also serves to add flavor, which is the way we use it today. Salt is distinctly different from the things with which it's mixed. Jesus' disciples likewise are to be different from the world.	
How does the message of God's kingdom add flavor to your life? to the world?	
Why must God's people be distinctly different from people who don't know Him?	
By referring to salt, Jesus was making a statement about what it really means to be part of the kingdom of God. People who understand their need for God and have realized His mercy toward them, who seek righteousness even amidst persecution, must not lose their saltiness. Those who follow Him can't keep that hidden, which sets up verse 14 nicely. If we're part of God's kingdom, the world can't help but notice we're different.	
How have you noticed a specific change in another person's life because of his/her relationship with God? How has He made a difference in your life?	
In addition to salvation, what other positive effects can God's kingdom have on the world?	
The result of living out the kingdom attitudes described in Scripture is that Christ's light will shine from within us and pierce the darkness in the world. When Peter and John are told by the Jewish leaders to stop preaching, their response in Acts 4:19-20 shows the impact of legus' teaching: "Whether it's right in the sight of God for us	

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to listen to you rather than to God, you decide; for we are unable to stop speaking about what we have seen and heard" (HCSB). The message of the kingdom begins with the attitude that it's better to be hated by men and loved by God than loved by men and an enemy of God.	
APPLICATION	
Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.	
When you're part of the kingdom of God, your life looks different. The characteristics described in the beginning of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount are the foundation on which those differences are built. When our attitudes are transformed, so are our actions. Unfortunately, because we're sinners who must rely on God's grace, the right disposition isn't always present. But when our attitudes and actions focus on God's glory and spreading His light, we can't help but impact the world.	
Of the eight Beatitudes, which two do you most desire in your life right now? Which of these qualities are you most tempted to avoid?	
What causes us to forget about the kingdom of God and our need for Him?	
How can we remind ourselves daily that we're first and foremost citizens of God's kingdom?	
What fears come with being salt and light in the world?	
Think of those fears in light of verses 10-12. What does this mean for Christians when it comes to defining "success." How do you define success as a citizen of God's kingdom, and how does that compare with the culture's definition?	
In what areas of your life do you seek to blend into the culture rather than stand out for God's kingdom? How can you actively fight against that tendency this week?	
PRAY	
Today's Scripture passage forces us to honestly evaluate whether our attitudes and actions are in line with Jesus' expectations and whether our lives display God's mercy and love to the world. Close today's group session with a silent time of reflective prayer. Encourage group members to confess to God the things they've been convicted about this week and this morning. Then close the prayer by reading aloud Psalm 8	

FOLLOW UP	
Midway through this week, send a follow-up e-mail to your group with some or all of the following information:	
☐ Questions to consider as they continue to reflect on what they learned this week:	
This past week, did you feel more blessed or stressed? What can you do to be more focused on God's blessings in your life?	
How does your attitude compare with those of the Beatitudes? Ask your spouse, your small group, or a close friend to help you evaluate.	
☐ A note of encouragement, following up on any specific prayer requests mentioned during your group gathering.	
☐ The challenge to memorize Matthew 5:14-16.	
☐ The text for next week's sermon, so group members can read it in anticipation of next weekend: Matthew 5:17-30.	
weekend. Matthew 3.17-30.	

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COMMENTARY

MATTHEW 5:1-12 5:1-2. Matthew 4:23-25 sets the stage for Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. People from all over Galilee and surrounding areas flocked to see and hear Him as well as to seek healing. On a particular day, when He saw the crowds, He went up to a place on a nearby mountain. Teachers of that day customarily spoke from a seated position, so He sat down with His disciples gathered around Him. Then He began to teach them (v. 2). Although His disciples and the crowd could hear Jesus (7:28), His message seems targeted mainly to those He had singled out to follow Him. Still, His words certainly reveal to all His hearers the real meaning of following Him. 5:3. Jesus declared people who exhibit particular characteristics to be divinely blessed. He was not saying that people should strive to attain those characteristics so they could earn the right to tap into God's blessings. Rather, those characteristics identify people who by God's grace are citizens of the kingdom of heaven. This designation does not imply they are perfect, fully mature believers. It does indicate they have begun to follow the Lord. The first four Beatitudes (vv. 3-6) reflect inner attitudes, the first of which is poor in spirit. This is opposite the attitude of being arrogant and self-sufficient, a trait prized and admired by the world. No one can earn God's blessing. People who think they can please God on their own are blind to their sins and ignorant of God's high standards. Poverty of spirit is the prelude to the riches of salvation. Jesus pronounced the poor in spirit to be blessed because, as followers of Jesus, the kingdom of heaven is theirs ("kingdom of heaven" and "kingdom of God" are used interchangeably in the Gospels). While this citizenship is a present possession of believers, the full benefit of kingdom citizenship awaits Christ's return. 5:4. Those who mourn are blessed, for they will be comforted. Jesus did not specify what sort of mourning He had in mind, so it could include all mourning. In the context of the other Beatitudes, mourning over our sins of commission and omission probably should receive emphasis. When we honestly repent of our lapses into sin, we are comforted anew with the assurance our sins all have been atoned in Christ. Mourning over sin also can include the sinful attitudes and actions in cultures throughout the world and around us. We mourn sins' destructive effects on multitudes. Part of God's comfort in that arena lies in the assurance that in the end, His scales of justice will be balanced. 5:5. The next attitude is gentleness. The word translated gentle conveys the notion of being meek, humble, sensitive, considerate, and courteous. Gentleness puts the focus on

5:6. The fourth attitude is a hunger and thirst for righteousness. This righteousness is not the righteousness of Christ through which God views us believers (justification). Rather this is the inner desire to make right choices, say right words, and do right actions, which is part of God's work to make us more like Christ. We who seek to follow Christ know we don't measure up to His standards, but we want to do so. As

in ownership but in serving Him (in ways not yet revealed).

others rather than self. Being gentle does not mean being a pushover. This inner attitude stems from a spiritually educated awareness of our own spiritual poverty. Scripture indicates Jesus' followers will reign with Him (2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 5:10). That promise will be fulfilled when He establishes His kingdom in the new heavens and earth. Ruling with Him implies our attitudes will parallel His. The blessing Jesus pronounced won't be centered

COMMENTARY	
we walk faithfully with Him over time, He instills in us more and more the purpose and the power to please Him (Phil. 2:13). Admittedly, though we grow in right living, in this life we will never be absolutely righteous. So we are called blessed as we long for righteousness in the sense that we have the sure hope that we will be filled with righteousness (Matt. 5:6). The process has begun, and our limited progress brings encouragement. That process won't be completed, however, until Christ's second coming (1 John 3:2).	
5:7. While the first four Beatitudes focus on inward attitudes, the last four concern outward relationships. Being merciful involves forgiving, but it also includes a loving response to the miserable and helpless. As God's children we have received mercy, and this equips us to extend mercy to others. The merciful will be shown mercy. Showing mercy to others demonstrates we have received God's mercy.	
5:8. Jesus then described as blessed those who are pure in heart. The Pharisees were scrupulous about performing washing rituals that made them ceremonially clean. Jesus stripped away their pretense, saying that they were as beautiful tombs on the outside but filled with impurities within (23:27). Heart indicates the core of our being—our thoughts, our feelings, our intentions, our values, our longings. The word pure includes sexual purity but much more. It describes those whose hearts are cleansed by Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Such hearts lead us away from acting with any kind of deceit, meanness, or selfish motives.	
Will see God is future. We will see the Lord when He returns (1 John 3:2). This hope motivates us to act with pure hearts until then (v. 3). Now, however, we see Him with eyes of faith. When our hearts are clean, we see Him more and more clearly (meaning we better understand Him, His ways, His purposes).	
5:9. Peacemakers are blessed, for they will be called sons of God. Sons of God is a way of saying "like father, like son." God is the supreme Peacemaker, making peace between sinners and Himself through Christ. He also leads redeemed sinners to help others be reconciled to God as well as to one another.	
5:10-12. The final Beatitude seems paradoxical. Mixing persecution and blessing seems akin to mixing oil and water. Perhaps this is the reason Jesus added comments in verses 11-12. He shifted to the second person, you, apparently addressing His chosen disciples in particular. Notice first that the persecution is for righteousness, and in verse 11 Jesus defined that as because of Me . People who willfully reject Christ are prone to reject those who live for Christ. This can include insults, false accusations, slanderous gossip, and, in extreme cases, death.	
In what sense are the persecuted Christians blessed? They are citizens of His kingdom. Jesus never encouraged His followers to hide their faith in Him when facing persecution, but rather to be glad and rejoice. He added that their heavenly reward would be great. He placed persecuted believers in the same category as God's persecuted prophets. Jesus wasn't giving us a list of qualities to strive for in order to be blessed. We are blessed because these qualities demonstrate that we are His followers.	
MATTHEW 5:13-16	

5:13. Jesus stressed believers' influence in the world by declaring, "You are the salt of the earth." Salt has several uses, but the most prominent are to preserve and to flavor.

COMMENTARY	
Believers are to act as checks on the world's corruption. For salt to preserve meat it has to be rubbed into it. For salt to flavor food, it has to be added to it. We cannot impact worldly people by avoiding them. We need to be the most upright, friendly, available, thoughtful, considerate, and helpful people on the block, on the job, or on the team. Our saltiness can help check bad behavior and also can make others thirsty for Christ.	
5:14-15. Since Jesus truly is "the light of the world" (John 9:5), our being the light of the world is true in the sense we reflect His life imparted to us by the indwelling Holy Spirit. Cities are built on high places to be seen not hidden. Lamps are placed on elevated stands so they will dispel the most darkness. Likewise, we believers are to be open and obvious Christians in all ordinary activities, shining the light of God's truth in a spiritually darkened world.	
5:16. The word for good in good works means both good and attractive (v. 16). Such deeds are carried out in ways that are admirable, and reflect the quality of our character. They are not intended to draw the spotlight to us but to God. Jesus doesn't want us to be spiritual show-offs. He wants us to live and serve in ways through which God can show Himself.	