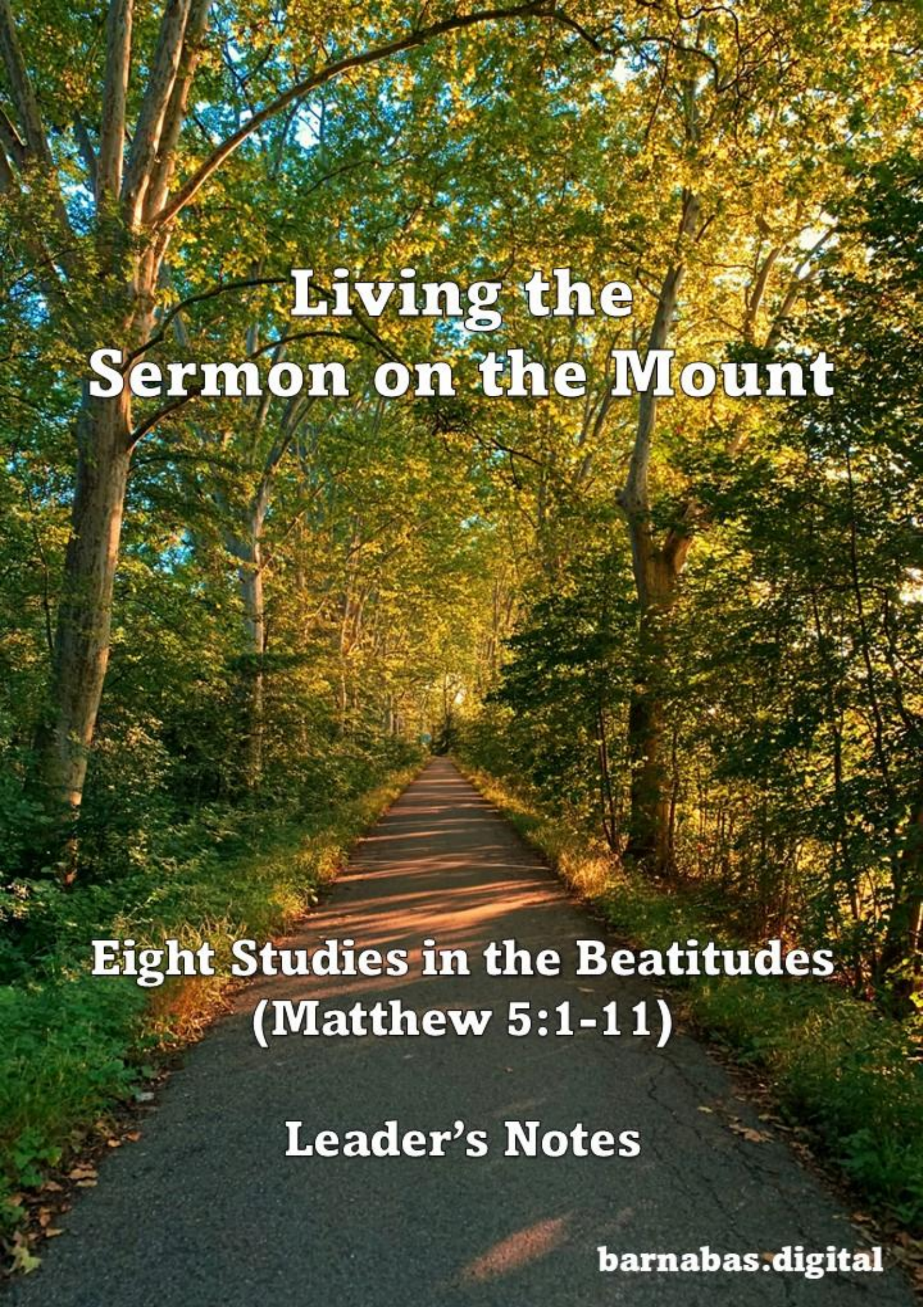


A paved path leads through a forest with trees showing autumn foliage. The path is straight and recedes into the distance, flanked by dense green and yellowing trees. Sunlight filters through the canopy, creating dappled light on the path.

Living the Sermon on the Mount

**Eight Studies in the Beatitudes
(Matthew 5:1-11)**

Leader's Notes

barnabas.digital

Eight studies in the Beatitudes

Matthew 5:1-11

Bible study leader's notes

Based on the book:

The Way of the Overcomer: Living the Sermon on the Mount

(freely downloadable from barnabas.digital)

These notes are also freely downloadable from

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Study 1 – Blessed are the poor in spirit

Start with prayer

Read the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-11):

Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them. He said:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit,

for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn,

for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek,

for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,

for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful,

for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart,

for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers,

for they will be called children of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,

for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

These are known as the Beatitudes, from Latin, *beatus*, meaning ‘blessed’ or ‘happy’.

Read: *Jesus said, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:3).*

Q: What does it mean to be ‘blessed’?

- The blessed are those who have reason to rejoice, to be happy about something.
- They are favoured by God and have much to look forward to.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:3).

Q: If a person is not poor in spirit, what are they like?

- They are self-reliant—they are confident in themselves, their abilities, their own strength, their wealth, their education.
- They think they don’t need God.
- They think that they have rights before God.

Q: If a person is poor in spirit, what are they like?

- They know in their hearts that they need God, that they are utterly dependent on Him.
- They know they have no rights before God because, as sinners, they are morally bankrupt. (bankrupt = unable to pay their debts)

- Christians are people who are poor in spirit.

Q: Why do people need God?

- Because, without Christ, all of us stand guilty and powerless before God. We are sinners and cannot pay back our debt to God.
- We need a saviour (Jesus), someone who will forgive us our sins and give us a new life free from the power of sin.
- We need God to enable us to live rightly and avoid the pitfalls in life.

Read: *Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."*

They are blessed because they inherit the Kingdom of Heaven and are God's people.

Q: What is the Kingdom of Heaven?

- The rule of Christ in our lives. Our lives are no longer under Satan's control, but Christ's.
- He becomes our Lord and our shepherd.
- He directs our lives for our good.
- He prepares us for the life to come—heaven.

Q: What is heaven like?

- God's world where everything is perfect and wonderful, and far better than we can imagine.
- A place where God's will and God's work are always done—where God's ways are followed perfectly.
- A place where there is no sin to spoil things.
- A place where there is no sickness, sadness or pain.
- A place more interesting, more beautiful, more colourful and with more enthralling music than anything on this present earth.
- A society more fun, with better relationships, more exciting sports.
- Somewhere which will exceed our wildest dreams and expectations in every way.

Read: *Speaking of himself, the apostle Paul wrote, "I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. ... up to paradise and heard inexpressible things, things that no one is permitted to tell" (2 Corinthians 12:2-4).*

What the apostle Paul saw was so wonderful it couldn't be put into words.

Q: What will people do in heaven?

- Continually discover more about the glory, the wonder, beauty and greatness of God
- Participate in the work of God, building and ruling, demonstrating and establishing truth and righteousness
- Endlessly find more treasure, more excitement, more interesting things, more wonder

Heaven is not boring!

Read: *Of the greatness of his [Christ's] government and peace there will be no end (Isaiah 9:7).*

Read: *If we endure, we will also reign with him [Christ] (2 Timothy 2:12).*

Christians are those who will reign with Christ—a work of great importance and satisfaction.

End with prayer

Study 2 – Blessed are those who mourn

Start with prayer

Read the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-11):

Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them. He said:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit,

for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn,

for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek,

for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,

for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful,

for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart,

for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers,

for they will be called children of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,

for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

Read: *Jesus said, “Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted” (Matthew 5:4).*

Reminder about what it means to be blessed. **Q: What does it mean?**

- The blessed are those who have reason to rejoice, to be happy about something.
- They are favoured by God.
- They will be overcomers—ultimately victorious in all the struggles of life.
- They are those who have much to look forward to in the next life.

Q: Why are they mourning? What are they unhappy about?

- They are troubled by their own sin.
- They are troubled by sin in the world.
- They are troubled by the failure of people to honour God.

Q: What is sin?

- Disobeying and rebelling against God.
- We sin in thought, word and deed.
- We sin by doing that which is wrong.
- We sin by failing to do that which is right.

Ask people to give examples of each of the sins mentioned above.

Q: Primarily, against whom do we sin?

- Against God.
- God is perfect in moral purity, completely free from sin in His nature, character and actions. When we sin, we offend God's holiness.
- To sin against God is far worse than throwing filthy dung onto a beautiful painting.

Q: What are people who mourn like?

- They think a lot about matters of right and wrong.
- They take their moral responsibilities seriously.
- They are not focused primarily on entertainment but on promoting righteousness.
- They will never be truly happy until Christ returns and puts an end to sin.

Read: *Jesus said, "Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted" (Matthew 5:4).*

Q: What does it mean that "they shall be comforted"?

- They shall be freed from the burden of sin—e.g. guilt and shame.
- They will be freed from fear, insecurity, loneliness.
- They shall be filled with peace and confidence and be empowered to have the most wonderful, deeply satisfying relationships.
- They will know a great sense of emotional and spiritual well-being.
- They will be filled with the knowledge of the love of God and His glory.
- They will know these things in part in this life, and fully in the next.

Read: *They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away (Isaiah 51:11).*

End with prayer

Study 3 – Blessed are the meek

Start with prayer

Read the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-11):

Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them. He said:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit,

for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn,

for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek,

for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,

for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful,

for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart,

for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers,

for they will be called children of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,

for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

Read: *Jesus said, “Blessed are the meek for they will inherit the earth” (Matthew 5:5).*

Q: Meek does not mean weak. What does it mean?

- Strength under control.

Q: If a person is not meek, what are they like?

- arrogantly assertive
- always thinking of themselves
- impatient and quick to argue
- boastful
- proud—they want to glorify themselves
- they want to dominate and rule over others for the sake of themselves
- resentful
- inwardly weak, lacking self-control

Q: If a person is is meek, what are they like?

- respectful of others
- conscious of God—they know God is watching and are glad of it
- humble—they do not regard themselves as superior and more worthy than others
- forgiving
- they have a ‘servant heart’—they think of others and their needs rather than themselves

- they are inwardly strong and able to assert themselves when it is right to do so

Jesus was perfectly meek, but he was also inwardly a very strong person.

Q: What are examples of Jesus showing strength?

- He drove out people who were abusing the temple.
- He fearlessly opposed the Pharisees even though they were plotting to kill him.
- He went to his death with great courage.

Read: “Blessed are the meek for they will inherit the earth”

Q: What does it mean to “inherit the earth”?

One day Christ will return to earth and restore it (make it perfect again).

- The earth with all its riches and opportunities will be given to the meek.
- The future will be theirs, and on an earth far more wonderful than the one we know today.
- One day they will be exalted—raised up to rule over God’s kingdom.
- They will be given power and authority to do good.

“For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted” (Matthew 23:12).

Read: *Jesus said, “Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? (Luke 16:10-11).*

In the life to come there are true riches, of greater value and worth than anything we could imagine on Earth – and these will be given to the meek who inherit the earth.

End with prayer

Study 4 – Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness

Start with prayer

Read the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-11):

Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them. He said:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit,

for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn,

for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek,

for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,

for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful,

for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart,

for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers,

for they will be called children of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,

for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

Read: Jesus said, *“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled”* (Matthew 5:6).

Q: What is righteousness? How would we describe a perfectly righteous person?

- morally upright
- free from sin
- free from enslaving addictions
- without fault in their actions, speech, thoughts and desires

Q: Is anyone perfectly righteous?

- No!
- Only Jesus.

Q: What does it mean to hunger and thirst for righteousness?

- to daily desire righteousness, to be right before God and to live a life that is pleasing to him
- to feel uncomfortable because we don't have it
- to long for holiness—for a pure heart that is like God's own heart

Hunger for food and thirst for water are a daily experience. So the longing for righteousness is a daily experience for the Christian. If someone doesn't know a desire for greater righteousness they need to ask God whether they are really a Christian.

Read: *Jesus said, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled."*

The Christian will never rest from his seeking righteousness until he is filled—and he will be filled because Christ promises it.

Q: What does it mean to "be filled"?

Q: How do you feel after a really good meal?

- Satisfied

Q: How does being filled with righteousness satisfy?

- It brings inner freedom, health and strength.
- It brings freedom from guilt, shame and insecurity.
- It brings a sense of well-being.
- It brings a great sense of confidence and empowerment.
- It brings life to the full, a capacity to enjoy the best that life can offer.

Q: When does the Christian experience all this?

- progressively in this life
- finally and perfectly in the next life

Read: *The apostle Paul wrote, "And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God" (Ephesians 3:17-19).*

End with prayer

Study 5 – Blessed are the merciful

Start with prayer

Read the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-11):

Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them. He said:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit,

for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn,

for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek,

for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,

for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful,

for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart,

for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers,

for they will be called children of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,

for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

Read: *Jesus said, “Blessed are the merciful for they will be shown mercy” (Matthew 5:7).*

Read the parable of the Unmerciful Servant in Matthew 18:23-35.

We should ask ourselves, “If someone wronged me, and later I came to have power over them, what would I do?”

- Would I take revenge?
- Or would I forgive?

Q: Can you give examples of Jesus showing mercy?

- forgiving those who crucified him

Read: *“Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with Jesus to be executed. When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing’” (Luke 23:32-34).*

- Jesus had left the riches and paradise of heaven to live on earth as a man and then to give up his life so that we could be saved. And people responded by crucifying him. But he forgave them!

Q: What are the consequences of becoming a vengeful, unforgiving person?

- We become bitter and twisted inside.
- We become a prisoner of our feelings.
- We lose our joy.
- We may become psychologically or physically ill.

Read: *Jesus said, "If you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins" (Matthew 6:14-15).*

- If we don't forgive others, then when we need God's mercy (e.g. we are desperate for Him to answer our prayers about something) we won't receive it.

Q: Why can it be so difficult to forgive people?

- Our pride. We think to ourselves, "How dare he do this to ME?"

Q: What are the consequences of becoming a forgiving person?

- Our hearts become freed from the burden of pride.
- We can let go of negative emotions, things that bring us down.
- We have energy to do useful and fun things.
- We can know a sense of God's forgiveness.
- We can have the joy of seeing God answer our prayers.

End with prayer

Study 6 – Blessed are the pure in heart

Start with prayer

Read the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-11):

Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them. He said:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit,

for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn,

for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek,

for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,

for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful,

for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart,

for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers,

for they will be called children of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,

for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

Read: *Jesus said, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God” (Matthew 5:8).*

Q: If a person is not pure in heart, what are they like?

- Proud, envious, lustful and idolatrous

Q: What is pride? What are the characteristics of the proud person?

- They believe they are better than others, more important and more worthy.
- They want to exalt themselves over others, to be the most honoured.
- They believe they have the right to demand the worship of others.

Q: What is lust?

- The desire to take for oneself, e.g. power, money, sex.
- Lust is all about self—how I can satisfy myself, irrespective of how much it costs others.
- Love is about giving of oneself to another; lust is about taking for oneself from another.

Q: What is idolatry?

- The worship of anything other than God.
- Worship of ourselves (pride).
- Worshipping (living for/serving) money or fame or power.

- Sport can be very good and a lot of fun. But if we give ourselves to it to the point that it comes between us and God, it has become an idol.

Q: If a person is perfectly pure in heart, what are they like?

- They love God with all their heart, with all their soul, and with all their mind (Matthew 22:37).
- They love their neighbour as themselves (Matthew 22:39).
- They are not proud but humble.
- They are not envious but rejoice when others are blessed.
- They are not lustful but generous.
- They want to live for the glory of God.

Read: *Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God" (Matthew 5:8).*

Q: Why is 'seeing God' such a blessing?

- There is nothing more fulfilling than seeing God.
- God is more exciting, more interesting, more beautiful, more fun than anything that we can possibly imagine.
- In God is to be found great treasure, heavenly treasure to which earthly treasure cannot be compared.
- God is infinite and therefore we can go on finding more and more wonderful things in Him forever.

Read: *Jesus prayed, "Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world" (John 17:24).*

Read: *The apostle Paul wrote, "But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body" (Philippians 3:20-21).*

- Christians will have new bodies, full of strength and health and power.
- They will shine with the glory of Christ.

God's people will be given a frame—a body and a spirit—that will enable them to look upon God. Without this, it would be too much for us. But with our glorified bodies and renewed spirits we will be able to do this and know indescribable ecstasy.

End with prayer

Study 7 – Blessed are the peacemakers

Start with prayer

Read the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-11):

Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them. He said:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit,

for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn,

for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek,

for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,

for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful,

for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart,

for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers,

for they will be called children of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,

for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

Read: *Jesus said, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God” (Matthew 5:9).*

Q: What are the main causes of arguments, fights and wars?

- pride—wanting to be the greatest
- greed
- envy
- selfishness

Q: If a person is a peacemaker, what are they like?

- They are quick to forgive.
- They desire reconciliation more than justice.
- They don't easily take offence.
- They're not quick to demand their rights.
- They are determined to find solutions to problems.
- They want to honour God in their relationships.
- They control their tongue.
- They bless their enemies.

Q: Does this mean that a Christian could never fight in a war?

- Many would say it's sometimes necessary to fight, for example, to protect one's family.
- What matters is what's going on in the heart. If we're fighting to take revenge, it's wrong.

Q: How can we be peacemakers in the place where we live or work?

Read: *Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God" (Matthew 5:9).*

Here, "called" means "declared to be". Christians are those who belong to God and have been adopted into His family.

Q: Why is it such a blessing to be among the children of God? What's so special about this?

- There is great privilege and honour.
- The children of God have a much higher status than the highest of angels.

Read: *Jesus said, "Yet to all who received him [Christ], to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12).*

Read: *The apostle Paul wrote, "The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory" (Romans 8:16-17).*

- Along with Jesus, we will inherit the treasure and glory of heaven, and receive honour and riches beyond all telling—the honour and riches appropriate for children of God.

End with prayer

Study 8 – Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness

Start with prayer

Read: *Jesus said, “Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (Matthew 5:10-12).*

Q: What does it mean to be persecuted because of righteousness?

- Being ill-treated because we do good and seek to do that which is right.

Q: What are examples of persecution?

- being ridiculed
- being insulted
- being slandered (when people falsely accuse us)
- being left out
- being rejected by family (e.g. converts from Islam)
- being unable to apply for good jobs (e.g. communist Russia)
- being imprisoned for preaching the gospel

Read: *The apostle Paul wrote, “In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Timothy 3:12).*

Q: Why do people persecute Christians?

- Christians are light and they expose darkness.
- Because the righteous lives of Christians make them conscious of their sin.
- They hate God and hate God’s people.

Q: How do Christians stand up to persecution?

Read: *The apostle Paul wrote: “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: ‘For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.’ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us” (Romans 8:35-37).*

- We overcome through Christ. It is a work he does in us.

Q: How should Christians respond to persecution?

- By not taking revenge and blessing those who persecute them.

Read: *Jesus said, “Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven.”*

Q: How will those who have been persecuted be greatly rewarded?

- heavenly honour
- heavenly riches
- heavenly glory
- heavenly knowledge and power
- unspeakable joy and sense of well-being

- opportunities to do exciting and fulfilling things so wonderful we cannot even imagine them
- they will reign with Christ

Read: *The apostle Paul wrote, "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18).*

Read: *The apostle Paul wrote, "Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him" (2 Timothy 2:11-13).*

- Christians will be exalted to the highest positions of government.

Read: *"Of the greatness of Christ's government and peace there will be no end" (Isaiah 9:7).*

Read: *"... everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away" (Isaiah 51:11).*

- They will know a joy and a peace and a fulfilment that cannot be imagined.
- They have great riches stored up in the bank of heaven.

Read again the first Beatitude: *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."*

We might paraphrase this as "The rich are the poor in spirit".

End with prayer