

To KNOW Christ and one another more deeply,
To CARE for one another in truth and in love,
To GROW as followers of Jesus.
- CG Mission Statement

Worship: Colossians 1:15-20

(Here is a psalm/song to help your group as you worship. You can go through it together or in groups in meditation and/or in prayer.)

¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶ For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities: all things were created by him and for him. ¹⁷ He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. ¹⁹ For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

Icebreaker

Share about the last time you did something kind for someone or someone did something kind for you. How did it make you feel?

Aid for Discussion: Sermon Summary

Introduction to the Sermon on the Mount 5:1-2

When He, Jesus, saw all the people, He went up into the mountain. And when He sat down, His friends sat down around Him. And He opened His mouth and He was teaching them, saying these things:

This introduction is a helpful reminder that Jesus – not his teaching – is the subject and focus.

Jesus' Blessings (The Beatitudes) 5:3-16

“My blessings on the poor-in-spirit, because theirs is the very Kingdom of Heaven!

My blessings on the broken-hearted, because they will find healing embrace!

My blessings on the little people of the world, because they will be given the Coming Earth!

My blessings on the hungering and thirsty for things to be right, because they will be so deeply satisfied!

“My blessings on the mercy-full, too, because they will be filled to overflowing with mercy!

My blessings on the pure-in-heart, because they are the ones who will actually see God!

My blessings on the peace-makers, because they will be the members of God's very own family!

“My blessings on those who take flack for doing what is right, because God's Kingdom is theirs!

My blessings on you my friends and students especially when people give you flack, saying unfair, unkind and hurtful things about you wrongly, because you are trying to follow me. Celebrate and be joyous when this happens, because your reward will be huge in Heaven. This is exactly how people treated God's prophets in the past.

“You, my friends and students, are the actual salt of the earth! But watch out! If salt loses its saltiness, what good is it? It's good for nothing except to be thrown out and trampled on. You, my friends and students, are the actual light of the world! A city on a hill cannot be easily hid. No one lights a lamp and then puts it under the table. No, they put it atop the table so it can give light to everyone. So please, let your light shine out there in the world, so when people see the thoughtful ways you live, they will begin to think well of your Father in Heaven.

Jesus begins his sermon, not with commands, but with blessings. And He blesses those who hurt rather than the “haves”. He addresses our spiritual needs and blesses us in the midst of the pain and brokenness. But Jesus also reminds us that we should not be surprised at how the world treats us; in fact, we should expect it. Out of these blessings, Jesus calls us to give ourselves to God for the sake of our hurting world through the following commands.

The "Gateway" into the Bible

I didn't come to get rid of the Old Testament; I came to fill it full of meaning – to fulfill it, as you will see. I want to tell you something very important: until Heaven and earth pass away, *nothing* will drop out of these biblical commands until everything in them has happened. But whoever does and teaches these commands will be honored in the Kingdom. Unless your way of life is more real and honest than some of your Bible teachers and the "super-religious", you won't even get into the Kingdom of Heaven. So listen carefully: honor the entire Bible!

About Anger

"You have heard it was said, 'You must not murder' and 'Whoever murders will face The Judgment'. But I am telling you: Every single person who nurses a grudge against another is going to have to face The Judgment. And whoever says to another 'You jerk!' will face a still higher judgment. Two examples to help you do the right thing: First, if you are bringing an offering to the Lord and remember someone is holding *anything* against you, then forget your offering and go immediately to try very hard to make up with that person. *Then*, come before the Lord with your offering. Second, reconcile with anyone you argue with, even if you're just now walking together to court.

About Lust

"You have heard the Bible says, 'Do not be unfaithful to your marriage partner.' But I am telling you: Every man who is staring at a woman so that he can lust after her has already been unfaithful to his present or future marriage partner in his heart.

About Divorce

"It was said in the Old Testament, 'Whoever divorces his wife must at least give her a bill of divorce. But I'm telling you: Every person who is divorcing his wife at all – except for one reason: unfaithfulness – then that divorcing person is practically causing the poor divorced person to be unfaithful later on. And whoever marries a divorced person is breaking up a marriage too.

About Oaths

"Again, you have heard, 'Don't ever do something you swore you wouldn't do; instead, keep all oaths you make.' But I am telling you: Don't sweat *at all* – neither by Heaven (because it is God's throne, not yours), nor by the earth (for it is God's footstool), nor by Jerusalem (because it is the city of the Messiah King, not yours). Don't even swear by your own head, because you can't change a single hair by swearing it so. No, let the way you make a deal be simple, true and specific – a 'Yes' or 'No.' Anything more comes straight from the Evil One.

About Revenge

"You have heard, 'Get even with people by just penalty – an eye for an eye or a tooth for a tooth.' But I am telling you: Don't try to get even with a bad person at all! If someone slaps your cheek, offer the other as well. And if a person wants to take you to court for your coat, let them have your shirt too. Whoever forces you to go one mile, offer to go two. Don't say no to those who want to borrow from you; give to them. Pray for your opponents and be at peace.

About Hate

"You have heard it said, 'Love your neighbor, but hate your enemy.' But I am telling you, love your enemies and pray for those who give you trouble, so that you can be the real children of your Heavenly Father. He lifts the sun up over both the bad and the good; He sends rain down on both the undeserving and the deserving. If you just love the people who love you, what kind of reward do you expect? Even the people you least respect live that way. And if you just give a warm hello to your family and close friends, what's so special about that? Don't even atheists live like that? I really do expect you to become perfectly mature people, just like your Heavenly Father is perfectly mature."

Guiding Question of the Week

(This question is intended as a target for the whole conversation. Do not ask for responses now. It will be repeated later in the study.)

What does it mean to be mature in Christ?

Questions for Discussion

(Remember it is better to wrestle deeply with two good questions than gloss over many. Sub-bullets are intended for potential follow-up.)

- 1) What stood out to you in this passage (Matthew 5)?
 - What does it mean to be blessed? How does the world define it? How does Jesus define it?
- 2) Matthew 5:3-15 lists out Jesus' blessings for the "poor", the "fulls", and the "flacks". Which one describes where you are right now? Where does God meet you in this? What is the specific hope you can have in this season?
 - Poor-in-spirit
 - Broken-hearted
 - Little people of the world
 - Hungering and thirsting
 - Merciful
 - Pure in heart
 - Peacemakers
 - Taking flack for doing what is right
 - Taking flack for following Christ
- 3) **Guiding Question:** What does it mean to be mature in Christ?
 - How does our culture define maturity?
 - Read Matthew 5 again. How does the passage describe maturity in Christ?
- 4) What does it look like to be salt and light to the people and community around us?
 - How can our Community Group be a "city on a hill" in our neighborhood?
- 5) Do you think it's possible to live this way, as laid out in Matthew 5? Or do you think it's just an ideal?
 - Are there certain things you can do (practice) to make it more of a natural response?
 - How can we as a community help each other grow in spiritual maturity?

Praying for One Another

(Here are some ideas from the study to help focus your time in prayer as a group. Use by themselves or along with other prayer requests.)

- Pray through Matthew 5:3-16. Name how you feel/think about yourself right now. Do you feel poor-in-spirit? Wrestling with your faith spiritually? Receiving flack for doing what is right? Respond with Christ's words for those counterparts and what He might be inviting you to in verses 17-48.
- Read Matthew 5:17-48 (list of Jesus' commands). Did a specific one resonate with you? Pray through what God's invitation might be for you. What kinds of things might need to take place for you to accept God's invitation?