

REKINDLING OUR HUNGER FOR GOD

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst
for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Matthew 5:6 (NIV)

CONSECRATION WEEK 2023 STUDY GUIDE

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Christian Stronghold Church | Dallas

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WE'RE NOT JUST HAVING CHURCH, WE'RE GOING SOMEWHERE!

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DEVELOPING A HUNGER FOR GOD

Hunger is usually a sign of good health. When a person recovers from an illness, the first thing they want to do is eat. The same is true with spiritual hunger. When we have a strong hunger for the things of God, it is a sign that we are spiritually healthy. Spiritual hunger is one of the most important keys to the blessing and presence of God. It also brings great delight to the heart of God and is the most important quality that God looks for in our lives. The Bible says “For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect (loyal, undivided) toward him.” (2 Chronicles 16:9)

WHAT IS SPIRITUAL HUNGER?

Firstly: It is a strong desire for God’s presence and power. We see an example of this in the life of Moses. When God told him that an angel would go before them and cause them to possess the Promised Land, Moses told God that he was not interested unless God went with him. (Exodus 33:15) The presence of God was more important to him than the blessings of God.

Secondly: it is manifested by our dependence on God. Moses said in Deuteronomy 8:2 to the Children of Israel, “So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger ... that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord.” God allowed them to suffer physical hunger so that they would develop a hunger for a relationship with Him. That is why God sometimes may remove some of the natural things that distract us from Him so that we can learn to be dependent on Him. However, God wants us to have a hunger for Him even when we experience His blessings. David, who was the possibly the richest and most blessed person alive at that time said, “I am poor and needy!” (Psalms 40:17) He had a hunger for God, in an atmosphere of blessing.

Thirdly: It is is manifested by our openness to the Holy Spirit and the word of God. Jesus said in Luke 4:4, that man shall live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. If we have a hunger for God, then we will also have a hunger for His word. We love to read the Bible and meditate on His word.

THE BENEFITS OF SPIRITUAL HUNGER:

1. Hungry people will be satisfied and fulfilled: There are many scriptures that speak about the benefits of spiritual hunger. We read in Psalms 107:9, “He satisfies the longing soul and fills the hungry heart with goodness. Jesus said, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.” (7) The word ‘filled’ can also mean to be satisfied or fulfilled. Hungry people are contented people. Mary the mother of Jesus said in Luke 1:53 that God “... fills the hungry with good things but sends the rich away empty.” When we are hungry for God, we always want to receive more from Him, but the rich, those who think they do not need God and have everything they need, do not receive anything from God.

2. Hungry people will experience the refreshing and the power of the Holy Spirit. We read in Psalms 107:35-36, 38, that “He turns the wilderness into pools of water, and dry land into water springs. There he makes the hungry to dwell that they may establish a city for a dwelling place.” It says here, “they may establish a city for a dwelling place.” When we hunger for God, we establish a place for the presence of God, for He dwells among those who are hungry. They have a wonderful intimate relationship with God! Jesus also said, “Whoever is thirsty come unto Me and drink and out of your heart shall flow rivers of living water.” (John 7:37-39)

3. Hungry people will influence others for Jesus: We read in Psalm 107:38, “He blesses them (the hungry) and they multiply greatly.” There is great blessing for those who are hungry for God. They influence others for Christ and their churches grow.

HOW DO WE KNOW THAT WE ARE HUNGRY FOR GOD?

1. We will do anything and go anywhere to meet with God: In the natural, hungry people are desperate people and they will do anything and go anywhere to receive something to eat. Hunger is one of the strongest motivations of a man. In some countries, they will stand in long queues all day long just to receive some bread. In the same way, if we are spiritually hungry, we will do anything even if it costs us money and it is inconvenient to meet with God and to have His reality in our lives. Sometimes we will even fast and pray, because we are hungry for God’s presence and blessing. That is why people all over the world, will fly to places, even at great cost to experience the move of the Holy Spirit.

2. We love to spend time in God's presence: If we are hungry of God then it is not difficult for us to pray, read the Bible and worship God. We experience the reality of that verse that says, "deep calls unto deep." (Psalm 42:7) Something in us yearns for something in God. However, if we feel we do not have this hunger, we can begin to draw near to God today by faith and our hunger for God will begin to increase. James says, "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you." (James 4:8) If we take the first step, God will do the rest and give us the grace to draw near.

3. We have a desire to meet with other Christians: John writes and says that "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death." (1 John 3:14) Those that withdraw from fellowship and from relationships with other believers are those who have usually lost their hunger for God. I have heard so many tell me, "I love Jesus, I read my Bible and I pray, but I do not see the necessity of going to church." The truth of the matter is that they are spiritually dead and have lost their hunger for God. One of my favorite Psalms says that "Those that are planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing;" (Psalms 92:13-14) Hungry people are "planted in the house of the Lord" They are committed to a local church!

4. We lose our appetite for the things of the world: Although many things we do and watch are not sinful, they should not control our lives. Our love and hunger for God is often measured by our lack of desire for the things of the world. The Bible says, "Love not the world, nor the things of the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." (1 John 2:15) We will often find that worldly entertainment becomes boring to us because we have experienced something so much better, our relationship with God.

When we love the world and the things of the world, we lose our love for the Father. On the other hand, when we develop our love for the Father, we will lose our desire for the things of the world.

5. We are joyful and excited about the things of God: The Bible says that "the Kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." (Romans 14:17) When our Christian lives become boring, it means we may be losing our hunger for God. Hungry people are always excited and enthusiastic about the things of God and about following Jesus. They love to talk about the Lord and what He is doing.

6. We easily receive the blessings of God: The book of Proverbs says, “A full soul loathes the honeycomb, but to the hungry soul, every bitter thing is sweet.” (Proverbs 27:7) In the natural, hungry people are not fussy what they eat, they will even eat a dry piece of bread, and they will eat anything! Even “bitter things seem sweet to them!” In the same way, those who are hungry for God are easily edified and blessed. Even a boring sermon will bless them. They will always find something that blesses and are humble enough to receive from anyone whom God chooses. They are usually the ones that take notes during the sermons, and have an open and teachable attitude. We have had the privilege to minister to those in countries who are so spiritually hungry. Even simple truths bless them.

HOW DO WE BECOME HUNGRY FOR GOD?

1. Feed ourselves with God’s word: In the natural world, we lose our hunger when we eat. In the spiritual world, the opposite is true, we increase our hunger when we eat. The more we read and meditate on the Bible, the more our hunger for God’s word will increase. We will be like Jeremiah who said, “Your words were found, and I ate them, and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart.” (Jeremiah 15:16) The word of God, the Bible, produces spiritual hunger. The more we read it, the more we want to read it. In Hebrews it says, “For the word of God is living and powerful...” (Hebrew 4:12) The word ‘powerful’ is the Greek word, “energes”. Spiritual energy and hunger automatically is imparted to us when we read and meditate on the word of God.

2. Repentance: If we acknowledge and repent from that which steals our hunger. We can also repent of our lack of hunger for God, in the book of Corinthians we read how their repentance produced a supernatural zeal and hunger in their hearts for God. We read, “For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed after a godly manner, what diligence it produced in you ... what zeal, what vehement desire...” (2 Corinthians 7:11) They noticed that after they repented they had a new desire and hunger for God.

3. We can ask God to give us the gift of hunger: The Bible says that if “we ask anything according to the will of God, God will hear us, and if he hears us, we have the petition that we have asked for.” (1 John 5:14) Hunger is the will of God for our lives so we can ask God to give us that hunger. We cannot work up a natural hunger for God; we can only receive it by grace.

4. Expose ourselves to the move of the Holy Spirit: We can meet with those who are hungry for God, and where the Holy Spirit is moving. We are like a coal in the fire, when it is in the fire it will glow, but if we remove it from the fire, it will stop glowing. Those that are hungry for God will help us to increase our hunger for God. The Bible says that we should “... consider one another in order to stir up love and good works.” (Hebrews 10:24) Sometimes we need to go to places where the Spirit of God is moving in order to increase our hunger for God.

5. We can expose ourselves to those who have had encounters with God and who have been greatly used by God. We can listen to their messages, listen to their testimonies and read their books. One of the things that my wife and I do is to watch Sid Roth’s supernatural program each week where he interviews those who are greatly used by God and have had amazing experiences with Him. We read in Revelations that “The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” (Revelations 19.10) The word prophecy means ‘to do it again’. When we read the stories of those who were hungry for God, it will also increase our hunger for Him.

6. We can stop feeding ourselves with that that takes away our spiritual hunger. For example, if we eat junk food before eating a delicious meal, we will lose our appetite for the meal. In the same way, there are things that we are feeding our minds and hearts with that can take away our spiritual hunger for God. There are no laws against watching TV, spending time on the Internet, watching sport and other types of entertainment. But we need to be careful that these things do not cause us to lose our hunger for God. I have found in my own life, that there are things that are not considered sinful that takes away my hunger for God. Paul says, “All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful. All things are lawful for me, but not all things edify.” (1 Cor. 10:23) Often it is not what we watch or read, but the spirit behind it that grieves the Holy Spirit.

7. The importance of fasting: When we become hungry for natural food, we often stir up our hunger for spiritual food. When we fast, the influence of the flesh is weakened which makes us more aware of the influence of the Holy Spirit. I have often experienced a greater awareness of God’s presence when I fast. The best motive for fasting should be to deepen our desire for spiritual things and to deepen our relationship with Jesus. Jesus said “... but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast.” (Matthew 9:15) When Jesus, our Heavenly Bridegroom seems far away, we can fast because we desire His presence.

8. Do something for Jesus: When we are actively doing something for Jesus such as praying for the sick, encouraging people, preaching the gospel or teaching the Bible, our hunger for God will increase. Our active involvement in spiritual things, keeps us spiritually alert and hungry for God. Paul said to Timothy, "... Stir up the gift of God, which is in you by the putting on of my hands." (2 Timothy 1:6) If we feel that we are losing our hunger for God, then one of the best things we can do is to tell others about Jesus and heal the sick.

Finally: Jesus said, "... I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." (John 6:35) Our relationship with Jesus and our commitment to Him will cause us to lose our appetite for the things of the world and fulfill the hunger in our souls. Amen

Enduring Word Study Notes Mathew 5:1–16

Key Verse 5:5

Introduction to the Sermon on the Mount.

1. (1) Jesus prepares to teach His disciples.

And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him.

- a. And seeing the **multitudes**: The previous section mentioned that great multitudes followed Him, coming from many different regions (Matthew 4:25). In response to this, Jesus went up on a **mountain**.
 - i. It is wrong to think that Jesus went up on a **mountain** to remove Himself from the multitudes. It is true that Jesus gave this teaching to His disciples, but this use of the term is probably broad, including many among the great multitudes that followed Him mentioned in Matthew 4:25. By the end of the Sermon on the Mount, people in general heard His message and were amazed (Matthew 7:28).
 - ii. Luke says that this same basic material was, on a different occasion, spoken to a crowd of His disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem, and from the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, who came to hear Him and be healed of their disease (Luke 6:17). Yet, in the beginning of the teaching, Luke writes: Then He lifted up His eyes toward His disciples, and said (Luke 6:20). The sense of this is much the same as in Matthew; that this sermon was spoken to the disciples of Jesus, but disciples in a broad sense of those who had followed Him and heard Him; not in the narrow sense of only the Twelve.
 - iii. “Jesus was not monastic in spirit, and He had not two doctrines, one for the many, another for the few, like Buddha. His highest teaching...was meant for the million.” (Bruce)
 - iv. “A crypt or cavern would have been out of all character for a message which is to be published upon the housetops, and preached to every creature under heaven.” (Spurgeon)
- b. When He was seated: This was the common posture for teaching in that culture. It was customary for the teacher to sit and the hearers to stand.
 - i. “Sitting was the accepted posture of synagogue or school teachers (Luke 4:20; cf. Matthew 13:2; 23:2; 24:3).” (Carson)

- ii. Now in Matthew's record Jesus will speak and teach; it is God speaking but no longer through an inspired human personality like Jeremiah or Isaiah or Samuel; now the truth of God spoke through the exact personality of God.
- c. His disciples came to Him: This again probably has in mind a group much larger than the Twelve, who to this point have not been introduced as a group in this Gospel.
 - i. "He ascends the hill to get away from the crowds below, and the disciples, now a considerable band, gather about Him. Others may not be excluded, but the disciples are the audience proper." (Bruce)

2. (2) Jesus **begins to teach.**

Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying:

- a. Then He opened His mouth: This means that Jesus used his voice in a strong way to teach this crowd. He spoke with energy, projecting His thoughts with earnestness.
 - i. "It is not superfluous to say that 'he opened his mouth, and taught them,' for he had taught them often when his mouth was closed." (Spurgeon)
 - ii. "He began to speak to them with freedom, so as the multitude might hear." (Poole) "Jesus Christ spoke like a man in earnest; he enunciated clearly, and spake loudly. He lifted up his voice like a trumpet, and published salvation far and wide, like a man who had something to say which he desired his audience to hear and feel." (Spurgeon)
 - iii. "In Greek, it is used of a solemn, grave and dignified utterance. It was used, for instance, of the saying of an oracle. It is the natural preface to a most weighty saying." (Barclay)
- b. **And taught them, saying:** What they heard was a message that has long been recognized as the sum of Jesus' - or anyone's—ethical teaching. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells us how to live.
 - i. It has been said if you took all the good advice for how to live ever uttered by any philosopher or psychiatrist or counselor, took out the foolishness and boiled it all down to the real essentials, you would be left with a poor imitation of this great message by Jesus.
 - ii. The Sermon on the Mount is sometimes thought of as Jesus' "Declaration of the Kingdom." The American Revolutionaries had their Declaration of Independence. Karl Marx had his Communist Manifesto. With this message, Jesus declared what His Kingdom is all about.
 - iii. It presents a radically different agenda than what the nation of Israel expected from the Messiah. It does not present the political or material blessings of the Messiah's reign. Instead, it expresses the spiritual implications of the rule of Jesus in our lives.

This great message tells us how we will live when Jesus is our Lord. “In the first century there was little agreement among Jews as to what the messianic kingdom would be like. One very popular assumption was that the Roman yoke would be shattered and there would be political peace and mounting prosperity.” (Carson.)

- iv. It is important to understand that the Sermon on the Mount does not deal with salvation as such, but it lays out for the disciple and the potential disciple how regarding Jesus as King translates into ethics and daily living.
- v. It can't be proved, but in my opinion, the Sermon on the mount was Jesus' “standard” sermon. It was the core of His itinerant message: a simple proclamation of how God expects us to live, contrasting with common Jewish misunderstandings of that life. It may be that when Jesus preached to a new audience, He often preached this sermon or used the themes from it.
- vi. Yet we can also regard this as Jesus training the disciples in the message He wanted them to carry to others. It was His message, meant to be passed onto and through them. “In the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew shows us Jesus instructing his disciples in the message which was his and which they were to take to men.” (Barclay) In the Gospel of Luke, the material similar to the Sermon on the Mount comes immediately after Jesus chose the Twelve.
- vii. Barclay also points out that the verb translated taught is in the imperfect tense, “Therefore it describes repeated and habitual action, and the translation should be: ‘This is what he used to teach them.’”
- viii. It is clear that the Sermon on the mount had a significant impact on the early church. The early Christians made constant reference to it and their lives displayed the glory of radical disciples.

B. The Beatitudes: the character of kingdom citizens.

The first portion of the Sermon on the Mount is known as the Beatitudes, which means “The Blessings” but can also be understood as giving the believer his “be —attitudes” — the attitudes he should “be.” In the Beatitudes, Jesus sets forth both the nature and the aspirations of citizens of His kingdom. They have and are learning these character

All of these character traits are marks and goals of all Christians. It is not as if we can major in one to the exclusion of others, as is the case with spiritual gifts. There is no escape from our responsibility to desire every one of these spiritual attributes. If you meet someone who claims to be a Christian but displays and desires none of these traits, you may rightly wonder about their salvation, because they do not have the character of kingdom citizens. But if they claim to have mastered these attributes, you may question their honesty.

1. (3) The foundation: poverty of spirit.

a. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed: Jesus promised blessing to His disciples, promising that the **poor in spirit** are **blessed**. The idea behind the ancient Greek word for **blessed** is "happy," but in the truest, godly sense of the word, not in our modern sense of merely being comfortable or entertained at the moment.

- i. This same word for blessed — which in some sense means "happy" — is applied to God in 1 Timothy 1:11: according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God. "Makarios then describes that joy which has its secret within itself, that joy which is serene and untouchable, and self-contained, that joy which is completely independent of all the chances and changes of life." (Barclay)
- ii. In Matthew 25:34, Jesus said that on the Day of Judgment He would say to His people, Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. On that day, He will judge between the blessed and the cursed
- iii. He both knows and explains what are the requirements for the blessed one. We can also say that no one was ever blessed more than Jesus; He knows what goes into a blessed life.
- iv. "You have not failed to notice that the last word of the Old Testament is 'curse,' and it is suggestive that the opening sermon of our Lord's ministry commences with the word 'Blessed.'" (Spurgeon)
- v. "Note, also, with delight, that the blessing is in every case in the present tense, a happiness to be now enjoyed and delighted in. It is not 'Blessed shall be,' but 'Blessed are.'" (Spurgeon)

b. **The poor in spirit:** This is not a man's confession that he is by nature insignificant, or personally without value, for that would be untrue. Instead, it is a confession that he is sinful and rebellious and utterly without moral virtues adequate to commend him to

- i. The **poor in spirit** recognize that they have no spiritual "assets." They know they are spiritually bankrupt. We might say that the ancient Greek had a word for the "working poor" and a word for the "truly poor." Jesus used the word for the truly poor here. It indicates someone who must beg for whatever they have or get.
- ii. Poverty of spirit cannot be artificially induced by self-hatred; the Holy Spirit and our response to His working in our hearts bring it about.
- iii. This beatitude is first, because this is where we start with God. "A ladder, if it is to be of any use, must have its first step near the ground, or feeble climbers will never be able to mount. It would have been a grievous discouragement to struggling faith if the first blessing had been given to the pure in heart; to that excellence the young beginner makes no claim, while to poverty of spirit he can reach without going beyond his line." (Spurgeon)

- iv. Everyone can start here; it isn't first blessed are the pure or the holy or the spiritual or the wonderful. Everyone can be poor in spirit. "Not what I have, but what I have not, is the first point of contact, between my soul and God." (Spurgeon)
- c. **For theirs is the kingdom of heaven:** Those who are poor in spirit, so poor they must beg, are rewarded. They receive **the kingdom of heaven**, because poverty of spirit is an absolute prerequisite for receiving the kingdom of heaven, and as long as we harbor illusions about our own spiritual resources, we will never receive from God what we absolutely need to be saved.
 - i. "The kingdom of heaven is not given on the basis of race, earned merits, the military zeal and prowess of Zealots, or the wealth of a Zacchaeus. It is given to the poor, the despised publicans, the prostitutes, those who are so 'poor' they know they can offer nothing and do not try. They cry for mercy and they alone are heard." (Carson)
 - ii. "The poor in spirit are lifted from the dunghill, and set, not among hired servants in the field, but among princes in the kingdom... 'Poor in spirit;' the words sound as if they described the owners of nothing, and yet they describe the inheritors of all things. Happy poverty! Millionaires sink into insignificance, the treasure of the Indies evaporate in smoke, while to the poor in spirit remains a boundless, endless, faultless kingdom, which renders them blessed in the esteem of him who is God over all, blessed for ever." (Spurgeon)
 - iii. The call to be poor in spirit is placed first for a reason, because it puts the following commands into perspective. They cannot be fulfilled by one's own strength, but only by a beggar's reliance on God's power. No one mourns until they are poor in **spirit**; no one is meek towards others until he has a humble view of himself. If you don't sense your own need and poverty, you will never hunger and thirst after righteousness; and if you have too high a view of yourself, you will find it difficult to be merciful to others.

2. (4) **The godly reaction to poverty of spirit: mourning.**

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

- a. Blessed are those who mourn: The ancient Greek grammar indicates an intense degree of mourning. Jesus does not speak of casual sorrow for the consequences of our sin, but a deep grief before God over our fallen state.
 - i. "The Greek word for to mourn, used here, is the strongest word for mourning in the Greek language. It is the word which is used for mourning for the dead, for the passionate lament for one who was loved." (Barclay)

- ii. The weeping is for the low and needy condition of both the individual and society; but with the awareness that they are low and needy because of sin. **Those who mourn** actually **mourn** over sin and its effects.
- iii. This mourning is the godly sorrow that produces repentance to salvation that Paul described in **2 Corinthians 7:10**.

b. For they shall be comforted: Those who **mourn** over their sin and their sinful condition are promised comfort. God allows this grief into our lives as a path, not as a destination.

- i. Those who **mourn** can know something special of God; the fellowship of His sufferings (Philippians 3:10), a closeness to the Man of Sorrows who was acquainted with grief (Isaiah 53:3).

3. (5) The next step: meekness.

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

a. **Blessed are the meek:** It is impossible to translate this ancient Greek word *praus* (meek) with just one English word. It has the idea of the proper balance between anger and indifference, of a powerful personality properly controlled, and of humility.

- i. In the vocabulary of the ancient Greek language, the **meek** person was not passive or easily pushed around. The main idea behind the word “meek” was strength under control, like a strong stallion that was trained to do the job instead of running wild.
- ii. “In general the Greeks considered meekness a vice because they failed to distinguish it from servility. To be meek towards others implies freedom from malice and a vengeful spirit.” (Carson)
- iii. “The meek, who can be angry, but restrain their wrath in obedience to the will of God, and will not be angry unless they can be angry and not sin, nor will be easily provoked by others.” (Poole)
- iv. “The men who suffer wrong without bitterness or desire for revenge.” (Bruce)
- v. The first two beatitudes are mostly inward; the third deals with how one relates to one's fellow man. The first two were mainly negative; the third is clearly positive.
- vi. To be **meek** means to show willingness to submit and work under proper authority. It also shows a willingness to disregard one's own “rights” and privileges. It is one thing for me to admit my own spiritual bankruptcy, but what if someone else does it for me? Do I react meekly? This **blessed** one is meek:
 - They are meek before God, in that they submit to His will and conform to His Word.

- They are meek before men, in that they are strong — yet also humble, gentle, patient, and longsuffering.
 - vii. “Our word meek comes from the old Anglo-Saxon meca, or meccea, a companion or equal, because he who is of a meek or gentle spirit, is ever ready to associate with the meanest of those who fear God, feeling himself superior to none; and well knowing that he has nothing of spiritual or temporal good but what he has received from the mere bounty of God, having never deserved any favour from his hand.” (Clarke)
- b. **For they shall inherit the earth:** We can only be meek, willing to control our desire for our rights and privileges because we are confident God watches out for us, that He will protect our cause. The promise “they shall inherit the earth” proves that God will not allow His meek ones to end up on the short end of the deal.
 - i. “It looks as if they would be pushed out of the world but they shall not be, ‘for they shall inherit the earth.’ The wolves devour the sheep, yet there are more sheep in the world than there are wolves, and the sheep, continue to multiply, and to feed in green pastures.” (Spurgeon)
 - ii. “The meek of England, driven by their native land by religious intolerance, have inherited the continent of America.” (Bruce)
 - iii. “I had only to look upon it, all as the sun shone upon it, and then to look up to heaven, and say, ‘My Father, this is all thine; and, therefore, it is all mine; for I am an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Jesus Christ.’ So, in this sense, the meek-spirited man inherits the whole earth.” (Spurgeon)
 - iv. iv. Through the first three beatitudes we notice that the natural man finds no happiness or blessedness in spiritual poverty, mourning or meekness. These are only a blessing for the spiritual man, those who are new creatures in Jesus.

4. **(6) The desire of the one who has poverty of spirit, mourning for sin, and meekness: righteousness.**

Blessed are those who hunger **and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.**

- a. Blessed are those who hunger: This describes a profound hunger that cannot be satisfied by a snack. This is a longing that endures and is never completely satisfied on this side of eternity.
 - This passion is real, just like hunger and thirst are real.
 - This passion is natural, just like hunger and thirst are natural in a healthy person. This passion is intense, just like hunger and thirst can be.

- This passion can be painful, just like real hunger and thirst can cause pain.
 - This passion is a driving force, just like hunger and thirst can drive a man.
 - This passion is a sign of health, just like hunger and thirst show health
- b. **Hunger and thirst for righteousness:** We see Christians hungering for many things: power, authority, success, comfort, happiness – but how many hunger and **thirst for righteousness?**
- i. It is good to remember that Jesus said this in a day and to a culture that really knew what it was to be hungry and thirsty. Modern man—at least in the western world—is often so distant from the basic needs of hunger and thirst that they also find it difficult to hunger and thirst after righteousness.
 - ii. “Alas!’ says he, ‘it is not enough for me to know that my sin is forgiven. I have a fountain of sin within my heart, and bitter waters continually flow from it. Oh, that my nature could be changed, so that I, the lover of sin, could be made a lover of that which is good; that I, now full of evil, could become full of holiness!’” (Spurgeon)
 - iii. How does this hunger and thirst for righteousness express itself?
 - A man longs to have a righteous nature.
 - A man wants to be sanctified, to be made more holy.
 - A man longs to continue in God's righteousness.
 - A man longs to see righteousness promoted in the world.
 - iv. “He hungers and thirsts after righteousness. He does not hunger and thirst that his own political party may get into power, but he does hunger and thirst that righteousness may be done in the land. He does not hunger and thirst that his own opinions may come to the front, and that his own sect or denomination may increase in numbers and influence, but he does desire that righteousness may come to the fore.” (Spurgeon)
- c. **For they shall be filled:** Jesus promised to fill the hungry; to fill them with as much as they could eat. This is a strange filling that both satisfies us and keeps us longing for more.

5. **(7) Blessing to the merciful.**

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

- a. Blessed are the **merciful:** When this beatitude addresses those who will show mercy, it speaks to those who have already received mercy. It is mercy to be emptied of your pride and brought to poverty of spirit. It is mercy to be brought to mourning over your spiritual

It is mercy to receive the grace of meekness and to become gentle. It is mercy to be made hungry and thirsty after righteousness. Therefore, this one who is expected to show mercy is one who has already received it.

- The merciful one will show it to those who are weaker and poorer.
 - The merciful one will always look for those who weep and mourn.
 - The merciful one will be forgiving to others, and always looking to restore broken relationships.
 - The merciful one will be merciful to the character of other people, and choose to think the best of them whenever possible.
 - The merciful one will not expect too much from others.
 - The merciful one will be compassionate to those who are outwardly sinful. The merciful one will have a care for the souls of all men.
- b. **For they shall obtain mercy:** If you want mercy from others — especially God — then you should take care to be merciful to others. Some people wonder why God showed such remarkable mercy to King David, especially in the terrible ways in which he sinned. One reason God gave him such mercy was because David was notably merciful to King Saul, and on several occasions was kind to a very unworthy Saul. In David, the merciful obtained mercy.

6. (8) **Blessing to the pure in heart.**

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

- a. **Blessed are the pure in heart:** In the ancient Greek, the phrase **pure of heart** has the idea of straightness, honesty, and clarity. There can be two ideas connected to this. One is of inner moral purity as opposed to the image of purity or ceremonial purity. The other idea is of a single, undivided heart — those who are utterly sincere and not divided in their devotion and commitment to God.
- i. “Christ was dealing with men's spirits, with their inner and spiritual nature. He did this more or less in all the Beatitudes, and this one strikes the very center of the target as he says, not ‘Blessed are the pure in language, or the pure in action,’ much less *Blessed are the pure in ceremonies, or in raiment, or in food;’ but ‘Blessed are the pure in heart.’” (Spurgeon)
- b. **For they shall see God:** In this, the pure of heart receive the most wonderful reward. They shall enjoy greater intimacy with God than they could have imagined. The polluting sins of covetousness, oppression, lust, and chosen deception have a definite blinding effect upon a person; and the one **pure of heart** is freer from these pollutions.

- i. “For though no mortal eye can see and comprehend the essence of God, yet these men shall by an eye of faith see and enjoy God in this life, though in a glass more darkly, and in the life to come face to face.” (Poole)
- ii. The heart-pure person can see God in nature. The heart-pure person can see God in Scripture.
- iii. The heart-pure person can see God in his church family.
- iv. “One day, at an hotel dinner table, I was talking with a brother-minister about certain spiritual things when a gentleman, who sat opposite to us, and who had a serviette tucked under his chin, and a face that indicated his fondness for wine, made, this remark, ‘I have been in this world for sixty years, and I have never yet been conscious of anything spiritual.’ We did not say what we thought, but we thought it was very likely that what he said was perfectly true; and there are a great many more people in the world who might say the same as he did. But that, only proved that he was not conscious of anything spiritual; not that others were not conscious of it.” (Spurgeon)
- v. Ultimately, this intimate relationship with God must become our greatest motivation for purity, greater than a fear of getting caught or a fear of consequences.

7. (9) Blessing to the peacemakers.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

- a. Blessed are the peacemakers: This does not describe those who live in peace, but those who actually bring about peace, overcoming evil with good. One way we accomplish this is through spreading the gospel, because God has entrusted to us the ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18). In evangelism we make peace between man and the God whom they have rejected and offended.
- i. “The verse which precedes it speaks of the blessedness of ‘the pure in heart, for they shall see God.’ It is well that we should understand this. We are to be ‘first pure, then peaceable.’ Our peaceableness is never to be a compact with sin, or an alliance with that which is evil. We must set our faces like flints against everything which is contrary to God and his holiness. That being in our souls a settled matter, we can go on to peaceableness towards men.” (Spurgeon)
- ii. We commonly think of this peacemaking work as being the job of one person who stands between two fighting parties. This may be one way this is fulfilled; but one can also end a conflict and be a peacemaker when they are party to a conflict, when they are the injured or the offending party.

- iii. “It is the devil who is a troublemaker; it is God who loves reconciliation and who now through his children, as formerly through his only begotten Son, is bent on making peace.” (Stott)
 - b. For they shall be called sons of God: The reward of peacemakers is that they are recognized as true children of God. They share His passion for peace and reconciliation, the breaking down of walls between people.
 - i. He is blessed by God; though the peacemaker may be ill-treated by man, he is blessed by God. He is blessed to be among the children of God, adopted into His family, surrounded by brothers and sisters through the ages.
 - ii. “Now therefore, although it be, for the most part, a thankless office (with men) to interpose, and to seek to take up strife, to piece those again that are gone aside and asunder... yet do it for God's sake, and that ye may (as ye shall be after a while) be called and counted, not meddler and busybodies, but sons of God.” (Trapp)
 - iii. “And he sometimes putteth himself between the two, when they are very angry, and taketh the blows from both sides, for he knows that so Jesus did, who took the blows from his Father and from us also, that so by suffering in our stead, peace might be made between God and man.” (Spurgeon)
- 8. (10-12) The world's reception of these kind of people: persecution.
 - a. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Blessed are those who are persecuted: These blessed ones are persecuted for righteousness' sake and for Jesus' sake (for My sake), not for their own stupidity or fanaticism. Peter recognized that suffering might come to some Christians for reasons other than their faithfulness to Jesus (I Peter 4:15-16), and this is not what Jesus addressed here.

 - i. The character traits described in the Beatitudes are not valued by our modern culture. We don't recognize or give awards to the “Most Pure in Heart” or “Most Poor in Spirit.” Though our culture doesn't think much of these character traits, they do describe the character of the citizens of God's kingdom.
 - ii. “So the King adds an eighth beatitude, and that a double one, for those who because of their loyalty endure suffering.” (Morgan)

- b. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil **against you falsely for My sake**: Jesus brings insults and spoken malice into the sphere of persecution. We cannot limit our idea of persecution to only physical opposition or torture.
- i. In Matthew 5:10 they are persecuted for righteousness' sake; in Matthew 5:11 they are persecuted for the sake of Jesus. This shows that Jesus expected that their righteous lives would be lived after His example, and in honor to Him.
 - ii. It did not take long for these words of Jesus to ring true to His followers. Early Christians heard many enemies **say all kinds of evil against them falsely for Jesus' sake**. Christians were accused of:
 - Cannibalism, because of gross and deliberate misrepresentation of the practice of the Lord's Supper.
 - Immorality, because of gross deliberate misrepresentation of weekly "Love Feast" and their private meetings.
 - Revolutionary fanaticism, because they believed that Jesus would return and bring an apocalyptic end to history.
 - Splitting families, because when one marriage partner or parent became a Christian there was often change and division in the family.
 - Treason, because they would not honor the Roman gods and participate in emperor worship.
- c. **Rejoice and be exceedingly glad**: Literally, we could translate this phrase to say that the persecuted should "leap for joy." Why? Because the persecuted will have great reward in heaven, and because the persecuted are in good company: the **prophets** before them were also persecuted.
- i. "A strong word of Hellenistic coinage, from to leap much, signifying irrepressible demonstrative gladness...It is the joy of the Alpine climber standing on the top of the snow-clad mountain." (Bruce)
 - ii. Trapp names some men who did in fact rejoice and were exceedingly glad when persecuted. George Roper came to the stake leaping for joy, and hugged the stake he was to be burned at like a friend. Doctor Taylor leapt and danced a little as he came to his execution, saying when asked how he was, "Well, God be praised, good Plaster Sheriff, never better; for now I am almost home...I am even at my Father's house." Lawrence Saunders, who with a smiling face embraced the stake of his execution and kissed it saying, "Welcome the cross of Christ, welcome everlasting life."

- iii. Yet the world persecutes these good people because the values and character expressed in these Beatitudes are so opposite to the world's manner of thinking. Our persecution may not be much compared to others, but if no one speaks evil of you, are these Beatitudes traits of your life?

C. Where Jesus wants His disciples to display **their discipleship**.

1. (13) The followers of Jesus **should** be like salt.

“You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.”

- a. You are the salt of the earth: Disciples are like salt because they are precious. In Jesus' day, salt was a valued commodity. Roman soldiers were sometimes paid with salt, giving rise to the phrase “worth his salt.”
- b. You are the salt of the earth: Disciples are like salt because they have a preserving influence. Salt was used to preserve meats and to slow decay. Christians should have a preserving influence on their culture.
- c. You are the salt of the earth: Disciples are like salt because they add flavor. Christians should be a “flavorful” people.
 - i. “Disciples, if they are true to their calling, make the earth a purer and more palatable place.” (France)
- d. **If the salt loses its flavor...it is then good for nothing:** Salt must keep its “saltiness” to be of any value. When it is no good as salt, it is trampled underfoot. In the same way, too many Christians lose their “flavor” and become good for nothing.
 - i. “Most salt in the ancient world derived from salt marshes or the like, rather than by evaporation of salt water, and therefore contained many impurities. The actual salt, being more soluble than the impurities, could be leached out, leaving a residue so dilute it was of little worth.” (Carson)

2. (14-16) The followers of Jesus should be like light.

b“You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”

- a. You are the light of the world: Jesus gives the Christian both a great compliment and a great responsibility when He says that we are the light of the world, because He claimed that title for Himself as He walked this earth (John 8:12 and John 9:5).

- i. Light of the world means that we are not only light-receivers, but also light-givers. We must have a greater concern than only ourselves, and we cannot live only to ourselves; we must have someone to shine to, and do so lovingly.
 - ii. “This title had been given by the Jews to certain of their eminent Rabbis. With great pomposity they spoke of Rabbi Judah, or Rabbi Jochanan, as the lamps of the universe, the lights of the world. It must have sounded strangely in the ears of the Scribes and Pharisees to hear that same title, in all soberness, applied to a few bronzed-faced and horny-handed peasants and fishermen, who had become disciples of Jesus.” (Spurgeon)
 - iii. Jesus never challenged us to become salt or light. He simply said that we are—and
 - iv. we are either fulfilling or failing that given responsibility.
 - v. A key thought in both the pictures of salt and light is distinction. Salt is needed because the world is rotting and decaying, and if our Christianity is also rotting and decaying, it won't be any good. Light is needed because the world is in darkness, and if our Christianity imitates the darkness, we have nothing to show the world. To be effective we must seek and display the Christian distinctive. We can never affect the world for Jesus by becoming like the world.
 - vi. “Poor world, poor world, it is dark, and gropes in midnight, and it cannot get light except it receives it through us!...To be the light of the world surrounds life with the most stupendous responsibilities, and so invests it with the most solemn dignity. Hear this, ye humble men and women, ye who have made no figure in society, ye are the light of the world. If ye burn dimly, dim is the world's light, and dense its darkness.” (Spurgeon)
- b. Let your light so shine before men: The purpose of light is to illuminate and expose what is there. Therefore light must be exposed before it is of any use — if it is hidden under a basket, it is no longer useful.
- i. “Christ knew that there would be strong temptation for the men that had it in them to be lights to hide their light. It would draw the world's attention to them, and so expose them to the ill will of such as hate the light.” (Bruce)
 - ii. “Christ never contemplated the production of secret Christians, — Christians whose virtues would never be displayed, — pilgrims who would travel to heaven by night, and never be seen by their fellow-pilgrims or anyone else.” (Spurgeon)
 - iii. The figures of salt and light also remind us that the life marked by the Beatitudes is not to be lived in isolation. We often assume that those inner qualities can only be developed or displayed in isolation from the world, but Jesus wants us to live them out before the world.
- c. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden: Such a city is prominent and can't be hidden. If you see such a city from a distance, it is hard to take your eyes off of it.

In the same way, Jesus wanted the people of His kingdom to live visible lives that attracted attention to the beauty of God's work in the life.

- i. "It is as much as if our Saviour should have said, You had need be holy, for your conversation cannot be hid, any more than a city can that is built upon a hill, which is obvious to every eye. All men's eyes will be upon you." (Poole)
 - ii. "Not far from this little hill [where Jesus taught] is the city Saphet, supposed to be the ancient Bethulia. It stands upon a very eminent and conspicuous mountain, and is SEEN FAR and NEAR. May we not suppose that Christ alludes to this city, in these words of his, A city set on a hill cannot be hid?" (Maudrell, cited in Clarke)
- d. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand: The idea of a lampstand gives the sense that we are to be intentional about letting this light shine. Even as lamps are placed higher so their light can be more effective, we should look for ways to let our light shine in greater and broader ways.
- i. "What a lamp-stand was found for Christianity in the martyrdoms of the Coliseum, in the public burnings by pagans and papists, and in all the other modes by which believers in Christ were forced into fame." (Spurgeon)
 - ii. "The text says that the candle gives light to all that are in the house. Some professors give light only to a part of the house. I have known women very good to all but their husbands, and these they nag from night to night, so that they give no light to them. I have known husbands so often out at meetings that they neglect home, and thus their wives miss the light." (Spurgeon)
 - iii. "The venerable Bede, when he was interpreting this text, said that Christ Jesus brought the light of Deity into the poor lantern of our humanity, and then set it upon the candlestick of his church that the whole house of the world might be lit up thereby. So indeed it is." (Spurgeon)
- e. That they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven: The purpose in letting our light so shine by doing good works is so that others will glorify God, not ourselves.
- i. "The object of our shining is not that men may see how good we are, nor even see us at all, but that they may see grace in us and God in us, and cry, 'What a Father these people must have.' Is not this the first time in the New Testament that God is called our Father? Is it not singular that the first time it peeps out should be when men are seeing the good works of his children?" (Spurgeon)
 - ii. Jesus pointed to a breadth in the impact of disciples that must have seemed almost ridiculous at the time. How could these humble Galileans salt the earth, or light the world? But they did.

iii. The three pictures together are powerful, speaking of the effect of Jesus' disciples in the world:

- Salt is the opposite of corruption, and it prevents corruption from getting worse.
- Light gives the gift of guidance, so that those who have lost their way can find the path home.
- A city is the product of social order and government; it is against chaos and disorder.

iv. Bruce comments on this first reference to God as Father: "God, we learn, as Father delights in noble conduct; as human fathers find joy in sons who acquit themselves bravely."

PURPOSE OF FASTING

Fasting is spiritual discipline whereby we voluntarily go without food and/or other conveniences to better connect with God.

SCRIPTURE Matthew 6:16-18 (NIV)

“When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. 17 But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, 18 so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”

EATING/DRINKING

Water Only Daily between 12:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

Fruits and Vegetables Only Daily between 3:00 p.m.-12:00 Midnight

Refrain from sweets (pastries, cakes, cookies, candy, etc.) and sweet drinks (sweet tea, soda pops, etc.)

Persons familiar with or who would like to try the Daniel Fast, please feel free to do so. Guidelines for the Daniel Fast can be found at <https://ultimatedanielfast.com/ultimate-daniel-fast-food-guidelines/>

OTHER SACRIFICES

Giving up food is not the only way to fast. It is not necessarily what item you give up, but more about what that item means to you and how it reminds you to stay focused on the Lord. We can also fast from: Social Media for personal use (Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, etc.), TV, video games, and secular music and entertainment.

EXCEPTIONS

Persons with health problems or on medication, please consult your doctor and follow his/her instructions.