

Matthew 10:22 NLT - 22 And all nations will hate you because you are my followers. But everyone who endures to the end will be saved.

2 Timothy 3:12 NLT - 12 Yes, and everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

1 Peter 4:14 NLT - 14 So be happy when you are insulted for being a Christian, for then the glorious Spirit of God rests upon you.

The more we reflect Christ and represent him to the world, the more likely we are to share in his suffering.

*What do you find as sources of persecution for the Christian in America today? Would you include persecution from those who are “religious”?*

## WRAP-UP

The story of faith revealed in the Bible leads us by way of the beatitudes to Jesus and the Kingdom of God. We start our journey responding to the revelation of God by recognizing our spiritual poverty, grieving our sinful state and humbling ourselves. From there we hunger and thirst for the righteousness only gained by faith in Jesus. Once we’ve placed our faith in Him we are in a process of transformation. We extend mercy to others as we realize the mercy we ourselves have received. We allow God’s Spirit to wash us and cleanse our hearts and we pursue peace by helping others to know the Prince of Peace. Along the way we can expect the same response that Jesus had; persecution. But our reward is that we inherit the kingdom of heaven, and that far outweighs the cost.

## Memory Verse

*Matthew 5:10 NLT - 10 God blesses those who are persecuted for doing right, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.*

## PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life: \_\_\_\_\_

Pray for your group members’ needs: (see back for more space)

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*Challenge- Remembering the mercy we have received from God watch or ways you can extend mercy to others this week.*

## “Jesus & A New Kingdom”

*Live A Better Story- Week #5*

## INTRODUCTION

In our current sermon series, we have been looking at the scriptures as a story. But not only a story of what has been, we see it as our story. The stories in the Bible illustrate principles that can be applied to our own lives. And there is a common element, some might call a thread, that weaves throughout every story of the Bible. That is the story of our need for redemption through a savior, and that is the story of Jesus. In the Sermon on the Mount we find Jesus announcing the Good News that not only can we be saved, we can be transformed by God’s Spirit into a kingdom people. That declaration of good news, also referred to as the beatitudes, shows the path each of us follows in our spiritual journey.

## Ice Breaker (Optional—8 min)

What is one thing that always makes you happy?

## STUDY QUESTIONS (45 MIN)

### 1. Responding to the Revelation of God

Each verse in this passage begins with the same word, *makarios* which can be translated as blessed or happy. It may not make sense to us to say, “happy are they that mourn” but when we look at the results and the ultimate destination of this journey the meaning comes into focus. The first three statements reflect how we respond when we begin to grasp who God is and who we are.

Matthew 5:3-5 NLT - 3 "God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs. 4 God blesses those who mourn, for they will be comforted. 5 God blesses those who are humble, for they will inherit the whole earth.

Sometimes it takes dire circumstances for us to realize how spiritually bankrupt we were, for others the lightbulb went off and it just all made sense.

*Describe the circumstances that brought you to a realization of your need for God.*

When we are confronted with such weighty truth, we can try to ignore it, or we can let it affect us. One natural response to our sinful condition is grief or mourning.

*How do we see God using our grief over sin as an avenue to offer hope and comfort?*

*Why is humility an important part of this process of responding to our need for God?*

## 2. Seeking Answers to our Helplessness

After recognizing our spiritual poverty, grieving our sinful state and humbling ourselves we are ready to seek answers to our helplessness.

Matthew 5:6-9 NLT - 6 God blesses those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they will be satisfied. 7 God blesses those who are merciful, for they will be shown mercy. 8 God blesses those whose hearts are pure, for they will see God.

God's blessing is promised to the one who seeks *dikaioynē* which is justice or righteousness.

*After recognizing the depth of his neediness, what did Paul conclude about how his hunger for righteousness could be met?*

Philippians 3:9b NLT - .... I no longer count on my own righteousness through obeying the law; rather, I become righteous through faith in Christ. For God's way of making us right with himself depends on faith.

Once faith in Christ is introduced, we see a transformation begin. In verse 7 we find those who are merciful are blessed.

*If mercy means "not getting the penalty you deserve", what are some practical examples of how we can show mercy?*

The pure in heart are blessed, perhaps because they see God. A pure heart is one that is washed clean.

*How did David seek to have his heart purified?*

Psalm 51:10 NLT - 10 Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a loyal spirit within me.

## 3. Change of Actions

Once God begins to transform our character, we see that transformation reflected in our actions. Not only do we feel compelled to extend mercy, we also work towards peace.

Matthew 5:9 NLT - 9 God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God.

When Jesus spoke these words, Israel was under Roman rule. They longed to see God's promised kingdom come. But at his first coming Jesus did not oust the Romans as they had hoped. Before there can be a lasting peace on earth, there needs to be peace between man and God. Shortly after the Sermon on the mount, the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray. In that prayer Jesus taught them to pray that God's kingdom would come, and God's will would be done on the earth. But that was not followed by "help us overthrow our enemies and set up your government here."

*How did the last two verses of the Lord's Prayer turn the focus back on the relationship between God and man? How can we further the kingdom of God on earth?*

Matthew 6:9-13 NLT - 9 Pray like this: Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy. 10 May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. 11 Give us today the food we need, 12 and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us. 13 And don't let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the evil one.

The final blessing of the beatitudes may be the most confounding. "Blessed are those who are persecuted for doing right (or for righteousness sake)." We have already established that it is Christ's righteousness we seek. So in this sense, it is being Christ-like that leads to our persecution.

Matthew 5:10 NLT - 10 God blesses those who are persecuted for doing right, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.

We may tend to skip over these verses about being persecuted, but it is clear that we can expect it if we are follower of Christ.