



“The Missing Peace”

Paul’s Letters Small Group Plan

As we have worked through the beginning of the sermon on the mount in Matthew 5, we have found that the first four beatitudes describe a life humbled and taught by God. A spirit of admission and openness. As we continue, we will discover that the last four beatitudes describe this same life now changed and used by God. A spirit of growth and ministry. The turning point is the fifth beatitude. Here is where we find out if the first four beatitudes are really making a difference in our lives.

In the first four beatitudes the focus is on us — our lives and our attitudes. And if God's change is really occurring in our lives, then the last four will show how the focus will shift to other people. We will find the desire and the power to show mercy, purity and peacemaking. And even though no one in our city is receiving the kind of persecution Jesus is probably describing, the principle can be drawn that anyone who follows Him at the level of involvement He describes here, will be misunderstood, insulted, misquoted and generally disliked.

OPEN IT / INTRODUCE IT ...

- How do the first four beatitudes prepare us for the last four?
- How is a lack of mercy or purity a sign that we need to return to humility, mourning, meekness and hunger?

LOOK AT IT / STUDY IT ...

— MERCY —

Colossians 3:13

Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

- How does God build the attitude of mercy in our hearts?
- What does “bear with” mean and how is it different from “forgive”?
- If we forgive as God does – describe His desire, His attitude and the extent of His forgiveness?
- How would you know if God’s forgiveness is influencing yours?

— PURITY —

1 Peter 1:22

Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart.

- In many contexts, like the beatitudes and in 1 Peter, purity carries the meaning “utterly sincere” “no hypocrisy” “transparent.” Why is this kind of purity vital when mercy and forgiveness are given?
- What feeds and nourishes the sincere, transparent, pure life?
- What kills the sincere spirit and thus kills the forgiving heart?

— PEACE —

2 Corinthians 5:17-18

¹⁷ *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!* ¹⁸ *All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.*

- What did God’s ministry of reconciliation cost Him?
- What did Jesus’ ministry of reconciliation cost Him?
- What did Paul’s ministry of reconciliation cost him?
- What does your ministry of reconciliation cost you?

— PERSECUTION —

John 15:18-19

¹⁸ *“If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first.* ¹⁹ *If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.*

- Who in our world really suffers for their faith?
- What is the difference between standing up for your faith and being obnoxious for your faith?
- On what occasions have you found that speaking the truth or showing love has led to hostility?
- According to what we know about Jesus, how should we respond to criticism from the world?

USE IT / APPLY IT ...

- How does your individual relationship with God (UpReach) equip you to forgive those who hurt you?
- How does your relationship with believers (InReach) inspire you to forgive those who hurt you?
- How does your commitment to ministry (OutReach) motivate you to forgive those who hurt you?
- Close by asking God for a deeper understanding of His amazing love and forgiveness.