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When I received Jesus as my Lord and Savior, I was 12 years old. I’ll never forget what the pastor said as he finished praying for me: “Well, Charles, grow up and be a good boy.” I heard the kindness in his words but at the time didn’t know the Christian life could be a lot more challenging than those instructions indicated.

That’s something we discover later, as we seek to follow the Lord daily. I’m so glad you’ve joined us as we continue our study of the Beatitudes. The words Jesus preached to His followers are powerful keys to who we are in Him and who we’ll become as we learn to walk in His ways. I encourage you to pray for His close companionship each time you open this guide. The more you experience His presence, the more you’ll understand what His words mean for you.

Growing in Christ’s image isn’t something we complete on this earth. It’s a lifelong pursuit for every one of us. Thankfully, the Bible says this is part of God’s plan—as believers, we are “predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son” (Rom. 8:29). I hope it comforts you to know your heavenly Father has already foreseen your success. God bless you as you follow Him.
Did you know that early Christians thought of the Beatitudes as a kind of spiritual ladder? No one was exempt from the need to climb it, and the only way up was rung by rung—one at a time. And that’s a good way for us to think about the Beatitudes as well: These verses are like a ladder, and the integrity of the whole depends on the connection of one part to the next.

Jesus’ words in this passage are meant to transform the way we interact with the world, and we need each statement to understand the others. Our willingness to be poor in spirit, for example, will help us seek God’s comfort when we’re mourning. And as we surrender what grieves us, we begin to grow in humility.

Studying and following Jesus’ teaching is the way to become what God wants us to be. So in this volume of Blessed to Be, while considering meekness (Matt. 5:5 ESV) and the hunger for righteousness that is borne out of it (v. 6), we will end the quarter by contemplating what a pursuit of righteousness looks like in those who thirst after God, crying out for His mercy in order to be merciful in their own life (v. 7).

Memorizing the Beatitudes

This year, we’ll memorize a section of the Sermon on the Mount, practicing a few verses at a time. And when we put them all together, we’ll have memorized the Beatitudes! Our quarterly guides will provide the verses you need to focus on for each month. This quarter, we’ll practice...

“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.”
—Matthew 5:5-7 (ESV)
APRIL

BLESSED TO BE

MEEK
In the beginning, God gave the first humans dominion over His creation (Gen. 1:26). Since then, we’ve made various efforts to subdue the earth, often without considering the cost. From building the tower of Babel to claiming distant lands as our own, we have focused heavily on increasing riches and expanding borders. It’s important to consider if this is what God had in mind when He tasked Adam and Eve with tending and cultivating His creation (2:15).

Imagine what it must have been like for the disciples and others listening to Jesus preach the Sermon on the Mount. They would have been familiar with conquerors and emperors—their own towns and countries were occupied, and almost never in a gentle way. In this context, how would they have considered God’s command to humankind in Genesis? Think about how Jesus’ sermon, particularly the Beatitudes, might have affected their own understanding of dominion and the way they interacted with the world around them—that is, with His creation.

Memorize You’ll see a selection from the Bible each week, as a reminder to work on memorizing the Beatitudes. This month you’ll focus on the bold verse:

“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.”
—Matthew 5:5-7 (ESV)

Pray Use this prayer, or let it inspire one in your own words, as you move through the weekly reflections in this section.

Heavenly Father, thank You for Your gentleness. I am in awe of Your unending love. Your Son Jesus humbled Himself for me and willingly suffered. Please help me to follow His example in my own life. Produce in me a spirit of meekness, Lord, and let me be of one mind with You. I long to express Your goodness in my interactions with others. Amen.
The world tells us

that in order to be happy, we have to work hard to get everything we desire. We must be powerful, strong, even aggressive. Yet throughout Scripture, we are encouraged to live with meekness—or gentleness—toward God and the world around us.

When we think of what it means to be meek, we may imagine someone quiet, introverted, and perhaps weak. But Jesus isn’t referring to any of those characteristics. Instead, He wants us to display the kind of gentleness that’s unselfish, calm, and genuine. And when we live this way—as though we don’t deserve anything—we may find the truth of His promise that we truly have everything we need.
**Try This**

As you contemplate the Beatitudes and the Sermon on the Mount this year, be mindful of how each verse builds on the previous one. For example, Matthew 5:3 directs our attention to our own helplessness. Then verse 4 asks us to consider our sin and grieve it. And the next one challenges us to use meekness when interacting with the world. But what does that look like? Write down some examples of meek people from both Scripture and your own life. For instance, you might list Moses (Num. 12; Deut. 34) or Paul (2 Cor. 10; Gal. 5) because of the way they exemplify this attribute. Looking at your list of past and present names, what qualities do you notice they have in common?

**Memorize**

“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.” —Matthew 5:5 (ESV)
Meekness doesn’t have to be complicated. But often when our brokenness gets involved, what should be simple no longer is. We fail to view ourselves rightly before God. And though our heart and mind are eager to point to His goodness, we struggle to express genuine humility and gentleness to the world.

The way we see ourselves in relation to God affects our relationships with other people. When we think of how God sees us, it’s amazing that He considers us honored sons and daughters and never holds back in His love for us. And maybe that’s the way we should regard others—always remembering what an amazing gift it is when they think well of us, concentrate on what we’re saying, and spend time with us, broken vessels that we are.
Try This

Take time to contemplate how you interact with the people around you—the way you communicate your opinions, offer comfort or advice, or share information. Are you passive? Do you hold your tongue to avoid conflict? Maybe you struggle with pride or a critical spirit. As you pray this week, offer these self-observations to the Lord, asking Jesus to help you express His meekness and gentleness in your relationships.

Memorize

“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.” —Matthew 5:5 (ESV)
Who doesn’t want to have the last word in an argument or win a heated debate? It can feel great in the moment, but it can also have destructive consequences. More often than not, this kind of intense interaction leaves everyone involved feeling bad. On the other hand, patiently listening and trying to meet others where they are—especially when there’s disagreement—likely takes greater time and energy. It requires setting aside one’s own opinions and emotions.

It can be hard to discern when it’s okay to assert ourselves and when to curb that inclination. For one thing, meekness, like other virtues, isn’t a trait most of us are born with. Nor is it often something we willingly choose to display. Try thinking of it as a muscle that has to be exercised or a new skill that must be learned. Meekness develops over time, through practice and experience. But that alone isn’t enough. We need the presence of the Holy Spirit to produce gentleness and humility in us.
Try This

Discernment is an important part of healthy, successful conversations. Some of us find it easier to speak out, while others are more comfortable staying silent. This week, ask God to reveal clearly what to say and when to say it. Invite Him to guide your discernment of when to assert yourself, pull back, or try to build a bridge.

Memorize

“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.” —Matthew 5:5 (ESV)
Christ longs to express His life through your personality, your lips, your hands.

Charles F. Stanley,
Wisdom From Above
The struggle to fully embrace men and women with disabilities isn’t anything new—not in society at large, and not for the people of God. Just as disabled individuals today are often pushed to the margins, so too were the blind, lame, and lepers in Jesus’ time. And while the majority of people who lived in first-century Israel tried to avoid interacting with them, Jesus frequently and intentionally traveled through areas where outcast men and women were forced to live.

Remember the story about Bartimaeus in Mark 10? When Jesus passed him on the road from Jericho, His disciples were prepared to ignore the blind man, just as they’d always done, perhaps holding Bartimaeus responsible for his condition (see John 9:1–12). Jesus’ followers even tried to silence him as he cried out to the Lord, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” (Mark 10:47). But that day, in healing Bartimaeus from his blindness, Jesus also freed him from the social stigma that came with it.

We may not witness that kind of physical healing in our churches today, but there’s something in the story of Bartimaeus for us to consider: Jesus calls us to follow His example and serve disabled men and women as we would any other member of God’s diverse family. But there are things that hold us back. One difficulty we have is that we often don’t personally know any people with a disability. We don’t know what they’re passionate about, what their dreams are, what their sense of humor is like—we don’t know their stories.
Where mercy belongs
For now, let’s consider the story of one such person. Tim Landis, a husband and father, has spent much of his adult life serving people with disabilities, both by teaching biblical literacy to those inside the church and through occupational training outside the church. His ministry is filled with the kind of compassion and empathy that comes only when one is himself disabled.

Unlike Bartimaeus on the road near Jericho, Landis was not born blind but instead was diagnosed in childhood with a degenerative eye condition called retinitis pigmentosa. After his 18th birthday, when most of his peers were heading to college, Landis’s eyesight rapidly declined. And within seven years he was legally blind.

Landis remembers feeling a wide range of emotions at that time—anger, bitterness, despair. Simple tasks that were once second nature soon became arduous and overwhelming, from household chores to squeezing the right amount of toothpaste. He also used to enjoy walking into church on a Sunday morning—greeting familiar faces, drinking coffee, and chatting with friends in the foyer. But as a blind man, he began clinging to the edges of the room, sliding his hand and cane along the wall to avoid the chaotic foot traffic. As people crisscrossed to greet each other, the last thing Landis wanted to do was bump into someone and draw more attention to himself. His extroverted personality had not changed, but his blindness limited his ability to connect with others in social settings, including at church.

Landis’s experience is common among people with blindness and disabilities of all kinds. Too often, our churches aren’t set up as welcoming places, and the members of our congregations feel ill-equipped when it comes to knowing how to respond or even speak with someone different from them in these ways.

The good news is that today a growing number of faith communities are exploring how to compassionately and effectively engage with disability. Landis’s church, for instance, created a dedicated ministry team whose main goal is to cultivate a welcoming environment where anyone—regardless of physical or intellectual ability—will feel at home on walking through the doors. Inside, greeters won’t just give directions to where the bathroom is; they’ll guide the person all the way there. And when a mother brings her autistic child, the team will assign an older “buddy”—whom they have specifically trained—to accompany him or her to Sunday school.

While there are many practical ways a local church can help disabled members feel welcome, it’s the underlying human connection that gives them the feeling that they truly belong. Here, the body Christ has a unique opportunity in its call to recognize the value of each member, where those considered the least in society’s eyes can hold the greatest honor.

When a church intentionally incorporates men, women, and children with disabilities, not only does it create space for their unique contributions, but it also makes more room for the human needs and dependencies of everyone else. You see, mercy is reciprocal—when we extend it, it reaches back to us. And if the church is a merciful place where all are free to be fully themselves, then every one of us experiences the joy of being accepted—just as we are.
Humility is a struggle

for everyone. At some point, in some fashion, we long to have our own way. But more often than not, these desires are not borne out of strength. Instead, they’re rooted in insecurity and fear. We’re constantly struggling—striving to fill gaps, gain approval, or achieve success—which can sometimes feel foolish or even pointless.

In these moments, we must remember the apostle Paul’s words: “The foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men” (1 Cor. 1:25). By holding back instead of imposing our own preferences, we’ll begin to recognize that our security lies not in what we do or demand; rather, it comes only from trusting in God and bringing Him glory.
Try This

“Cease striving and know that I am God,” Psalm 46:10 reminds us. Yet so often we do the opposite: We work longer and harder to get answers, solve problems, and be better. This week, think about what it means to trust God—to know that He is who He says He is. Can you think of any areas of life where you don’t fully trust Him? As you pray this week, offer these to God with humility, and request His help to trust Him more.

Memorize

“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.” —Matthew 5:5 (ESV)
the first humans to cultivate and keep the earth (Gen. 2:15). In doing so, He offered them the opportunity to steward a world with enough space for all living things to flourish and be what they were created to be. He gave them the power to maintain harmony or bring discord to His creation.

Just as our relationship with God affects our other relationships, the way we personally relate to people has an impact on society and the world around us. And having a posture of gentleness in these interactions is essential to being good stewards of His creation.
Try This

Imagine you are listening to Jesus preach the Sermon on the Mount. What might His disciples and other followers have been thinking when He said the meek are blessed and will inherit the earth? Perhaps they felt encouraged to continue growing in meekness. Or maybe they felt overwhelmed at the responsibility. What do you picture when you think of inheriting the earth? As you pray this week, ask God to help you remain strong and demonstrate gentleness, as He does.

Memorize

“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.” —Matthew 5:5 (ESV)
This month, we contemplated what it means to be meek while at the same time having dominion. We focused on being gentle and faithful stewards—of our own lives, our relationship with the Lord and others, and the earth we will one day inherit.

As we look ahead, continue to focus on bringing meekness into your interactions and experiences. A gentle spirit is essential in seeking after what is true and right—and we’ll explore this idea further next month.

Questions for Reflection

As we end this month and look ahead to the next, take a moment to think about these questions. You can answer them in your head, write your thoughts in a journal, or discuss them with your friends or small group.

→ WHAT IS THE OPPOSITE OF MEEKNESS? How does meekness bring glory to God?

→ TRUSTING GOD SEEMS TO GO HAND IN HAND WITH MEEKNESS. What does this look like in your own life?

→ HAS YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF INHERITING THE EARTH changed this month? If so, how?

One More Look

In our year-long project of memorizing the Beatitudes, this month you learned:

“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.” —Matthew 5:5-7 (ESV)
serving Jesus

is all about obedience,
submission of our will to His,
being sensitive to His daily guidance,
and being committed to fulfilling His will for our lives.

Charles F. Stanley, Walking Wisely
MAY

BLESSED TO BE

HUNGRY
Many of us have never had to face an ongoing scarcity of food and potable water. But even today in our modern world, there are people on every continent who know what it means to go without—and they understand how urgent it is to have their needs met.

This is the same kind of urgency Jesus wants us to have in our yearning for righteousness. He doesn’t ask us to be perfect—He knows we’ll all fall short and need to repent. Instead, God wants us to actively pursue His will with our entire being—heart, soul, mind, and spirit. It’s the kind of longing only He can satisfy. This month we will explore what it looks like to live motivated by that earnest pursuit.

**Memorize** You’ll see a selection from the Bible each week, as a reminder to work on memorizing the Beatitudes. This month you’ll focus on the bold verse:

“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.”
—Matthew 5:5-7 (ESV)

**Pray** Use this prayer, or let it inspire one in your own words, as you move through the weekly reflections in the following section.

Heavenly Father, thank You for the way You call each of us to Yourself. You have put eternity in my heart, and I long to experience the life You want me to live. Help me demonstrate the kind of goodness and righteousness that come only from You, Lord. I pray for the strength to pursue Your will and seek the satisfaction only You can offer. Amen.
Righteousness is more than just following rules and abiding by the law; it’s a continuous desire for holiness and justice. And in Matthew 5:6, Jesus blesses not the righteous, but those who seek righteousness. It’s important to understand the difference. Paul’s epistle to the Romans explains that righteousness comes by faith (1:17). In other words, as we seek and confess God’s righteousness, He will establish our own (10:2-10). Jesus’ words offer blessing to those who hunger and thirst to do His will: those who act justly, love kindness, and walk humbly with Him (Mic. 6:8).

But to truly pursue righteousness, it is essential to first recognize how imperfect we are. Once we gain a correct perspective on our own sinfulness, we have a proper place from which to begin and can approach God in a posture of meekness and humility. And the more we admit our unrighteousness, the more we will come to realize that ultimate satisfaction comes from God’s promises and healing.
Try This

Jesus uses the word *righteousness* multiple times in the Sermon on the Mount—He speaks about hungering and thirsting for it (Matt. 5:6), being persecuted because of it (v. 10), and having more of it than the religious leaders (v. 20). This week, contemplate what it means to have a genuine desire for righteousness in today’s world. What does that hunger—that longing—look like? And what does it mean to be satisfied in our pursuit?

Memorize

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.”
—Matthew 5:6 (ESV)
Longing is a universal trait. From Hannah’s deep desire for a child (1 Sam. 1:1-18) to our own pursuits for success or relationships, all human beings know what it is to feel restless or deeply want something we don’t have. And many of us have knelt in prayer, grieved by a perceived lack, and asked God to provide what we seek—or remove the obstacles that seem to prevent it.

But one desire God placed in our hearts surpasses all others—a longing for eternity. Many try to meet this deep-seated need with temporary satisfaction, but it simply won’t work. Speaking to the prophet Isaiah, God questioned this tendency of ours, asking, “Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy?” (55:2). He is drawing us to Himself, asking us to seek Him so we may live (v. 3). The one who created us knows satisfaction will elude us until we find it in Him.
Try This

It’s easy to get caught up in our daily to-do lists, family responsibilities, and the demands of our jobs. But in Colossians 3, encouraging the church to take an eternal perspective, Paul says, “Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth” (v. 2). As you reflect this week, think about what some of those “things above” might be. Take time to read what Scripture says about the earthly versus the eternal—and the promises we can look forward to. (You might consider verses like Psalm 90:12; Matthew 6:19-24; Philippians 2:9-11; and 2 Timothy 4:8.)

Memorize

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.”
—Matthew 5:6 (ESV)
When babies are hungry, they cry until someone feeds them. As children get older, they learn to recognize and articulate their needs. Then in adulthood, people learn to rely on themselves, and the result is that they forget what it’s like to hunger with the urgency of an infant. For many of us today, that applies to spiritual hunger, too. God made us to be satisfied by His love, yet we often avoid Him and try to fill that need in many other ways.

Our culture’s abundance of entertainment and distractions makes it hard to recognize the cues of spiritual hunger. But to identify what truly satisfies our souls, it’s important that we learn what those signals are. Thankfully, we have tools to help us do that: worship, prayer, confession, giving generously, serving others, and fasting. Regular participation in all of these things will sharpen our awareness of how utterly dependent we are on God, thereby helping us to realign our thinking with Scripture.
As part of their pattern of daily life, early Christians and first-century Jews demonstrated righteousness by fasting, praying, and serving people in poverty. So when Jesus spoke of these things in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 6:1-18), the people listening were already familiar with what such practices looked like in their own lives and communities.

This week, make a list of habits that demonstrate a pursuit of righteousness in today’s world, such as fasting, praying, giving, and serving. Is anything on the list already part of your regular routine? If there are practices you’d like to incorporate, how might you get them started? And remember, you don’t have to do everything on your list at once. The pursuit of righteousness is a lifelong journey of surrender.

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.”
—Matthew 5:6 (ESV)
miraculously feeding a crowd of 5,000 people, Jesus spoke to many of His followers, saying, “I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst” (John 6:35). They followed Him because of the miracle, but Jesus relieved their earthly hunger as a way of showing them that He is the only way to true, eternal satisfaction. He wants to do more than just fill our stomachs and meet our earthly needs—He wants to transform our desires.

Imagine if we viewed our earthly desires as reminders of our eternal desire for the Lord—then, whenever we drank a warm cup of tea, enjoyed a beautiful sunrise, competed in a race, or spent time with loved ones, we’d be getting a glimpse of the satisfaction promised to us. In Surprised by Joy, C. S. Lewis talks about his journey to faith and uses the word sehnsucht to describe an experience of inexpressible yearning or desire. But this German term says more than the English word yearning can convey; it implies a certain tension—almost like the feeling of a real experience that is now just a memory. And so it is with us as we await the Lord’s return: We are hungry for a familiar, felt experience that is just out of reach.
As you think about eternal satisfaction, keep in mind that it doesn’t mean your earthly pleasures are unimportant. They are good things given to enjoy, but more importantly, they serve as reminders of what is ultimately promised by Jesus Himself. This week, reflect on what the satisfaction of an ardent, hungry pursuit of righteousness might look like. Consider what the Lord promises, and as you pray, reflect on His greatness and mercy—giving thanks for a loving Savior who promises we can look forward to full satisfaction when He returns.

Memorize

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.”
—Matthew 5:6 (ESV)
This month, we explored what it looks like to pursue righteousness with an insatiable hunger—in the present moment yet with an eternal perspective. We also examined what it means to long for the kind of satisfaction that comes from God.

As we move ahead, continue to think about your own pursuit of righteousness—your desire to be gracious and merciful, your longing for peace and justice. Remember this next month as we expand our understanding of mercy, both from God and in our interactions with the world.

Questions for Reflection

As we end this month and look ahead to the next, take a moment to think about these questions. You can answer them in your head, write your thoughts in a journal, or discuss them with your friends or small group.

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**IN OUR CONTEMPLATION OF THE BEATITUDES,** we’ve returned to the idea that each verse builds on the previous one. How might a posture of meekness in your life create a hunger and thirst for righteousness?

**DIKAIOSYNÉ, THE GREEK WORD THAT IS OFTEN TRANSLATED** as “righteousness” in the Bible, can also be rendered as “justice,” “holiness,” or “integrity.” Practice reading Matthew 5:6 out loud, replacing “righteousness” with one of these three other meanings. Does this change your experience or understanding of the word?

One More Look

In our year-long project of memorizing the Beatitudes, this month you learned:

“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. **Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.** Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.” —Matthew 5:5-7 (ESV)
The longing for God we have in this life will be fulfilled when we meet Christ face-to-face.

In our fallen state, it’s easy to focus on ourselves and overlook the needs of the people around us—those who might be hurting or less fortunate than we are. Yet God’s desire is for us to be merciful, just as He is merciful. That means we are to shift the focus away from ourselves and be loving, kind, and generous to these individuals.

In other words, from our relationships with friends and loved ones to those with neighbors, strangers, and even our enemies, God wants us to reflect His lovingkindness (which is another translation for the word mercy). Jesus tells us that when we offer mercy in our interactions, we too will receive it. This month we’ll explore what’s involved in demonstrating and receiving the kind of mercy that comes only from the Lord.

**Memorize**  You’ll see a selection from the Bible each week, as a reminder to work on memorizing the Beatitudes. This month you’ll focus on the bold verse:

“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. **Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.”**
—Matthew 5:5-7 (ESV)

**Pray**  Use this prayer, or let it inspire one in your own words, as you move through the weekly reflections in this section.

Heavenly Father, thank You for loving me and revealing Your mercy. I know that You are with me even when I feel overwhelmed by the injustice and brokenness in this world. Help me to be merciful in a way that honors You. Lord, I am blessed to know that because of Your sacrifice, Your lovingkindness will prevail. Help me to reflect You every day in the way I live. Amen.
Matthew became one of the disciples, Jesus was invited to a banquet with “many tax collectors and sinners” (Matt. 9:9-10 ESV). The Pharisees, enraged that the Teacher would dine with such sinful people, confronted His disciples about what they considered poor judgment. The religious leaders lived by strict rules, ceremony, and sacrifices. But in their reaction to Jesus, they neglected to show mercy to His dinner companions. Jesus challenged their thinking, sending the Pharisees away to learn what it means that God desires “mercy, and not sacrifice” (v. 13).

We’ve seen this contrast between mercy and sacrifice before. In Hosea 6, God tells the people that their love and loyalty are fleeting, like the morning dew that goes away after a short time (vv. 4-6). He doesn’t want them to simply go through the motions—whether the burnt offerings in the Old Testament or the strictness of the Pharisees.

Jesus wants us to seek after Him with our whole heart—and out of that loving pursuit to feel affection and mercy toward one another. We, too, are sick, and He is the only cure.
Try This

Jesus often challenged the Pharisees' thinking and behavior. We see this when He challenged them to prioritize mercy, justice, and faithfulness—the “weightier provisions of the law” they’d neglected (Matt. 23:23). As you go about your week, try to be aware of your thoughts and preoccupations. What commands your time and impulses? Are you conscious of a desire to be merciful or seek God’s mercy? Take time to write down your thoughts, or discuss them with a trusted friend or loved one.

Memorize

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.” —Matthew 5:7 (ESV)
wrongs you, what is your first reaction? You might feel that the person’s offense needs to be addressed, or perhaps you want to use his or her actions as a public example of what not to do. Maybe you even believe that wrongs must be punished at any cost.

Now picture that the individual in question is you. Imagine that out of suffering, pain, or even desperation, you’ve hurt or betrayed someone’s trust. You’d hope to receive mercy—to be met with forgiveness, grace, and compassion, despite the circumstances.

We learn how to receive mercy by first extending it to others. And we should aim to extend mercy the way God offers it to us, undeserving and broken people that we are. God revealed Himself to Moses as “merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love” (Ex. 34:6 ESV). The Lord chooses to be merciful with us—He desires our good. And He wants us to choose mercy in our day-to-day life, too. He wants us to hope and work for the good of one another.
Try This

This week, think about experiences in your life when someone has shown you mercy or you’ve had the opportunity to be merciful to others. Perhaps you were forgiven for wrongdoing or injustice, or maybe you were able to meet someone in a season of suffering. What did it look like for you or the other person to choose mercy in those situations—to root for or work toward the good of someone else?

Memorize

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.” —Matthew 5:7 (ESV)
God’s love and God’s forgiveness go hand in hand.

As do
God’s love and God’s grace.

CHARLES F. STANLEY, DISCOVER YOUR DESTINY
the journey from Jerusalem to Jericho was treacherous—the winding, downhill path was a perfect place for highway robbers to lie in wait. In the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37), Jesus tells of a Jewish man robbed and left for dead on this very road. Other Jewish travelers continued to pass by, until finally a Samaritan man stopped and cared for him, saving the injured man’s life.

To say the Jews and Samaritans did not get along is an understatement—they viewed one another with contempt. Yet the Samaritan traveler set aside these differences and, intentionally risking his own safety in a dangerous place, helped the victim in a time of grave need.

Similarly, being merciful—that is, being a good neighbor—often requires us to be deliberate in the way we live and respond to others. We have the opportunity to act in a way that promotes not only our own good, but also the good of our families, community, and all of God’s creation.
Try This

When someone you care for is suffering or experiencing injustice, you likely feel compassion and desire to alleviate the person’s pain and meet his or her needs. Think about what it means to extend that same compassion to your neighbors, your city, and even society at large. Can you think of a few ways you might demonstrate compassion throughout your community? As you pray this week, ask God to help you see opportunities to extend kindness in broader ways to His creation.

Memorize

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.” —Matthew 5:7 (ESV)
There is risk involved with intimacy, but whenever you are tempted to hold back, remember God gave all He had so He could demonstrate His unconditional love toward you.

Charles F. Stanley,
Standing Strong
You might feel

uncertain about when to show mercy—or even whether to show mercy in certain situations. While Jesus doesn’t give us specific rules for every circumstance we encounter, we do know that God is both just and merciful. Justice might look like people getting what they deserve, both in punishment and reward. In contrast to that, mercy can mean that people get better than we think they deserve.

However, if someone is being hurtful, abusive, or harmful to another person, it isn’t merciful to allow that behavior to continue. In such circumstances, mercy may mean allowing justice to take place in order to redeem a situation or prevent further harm.

As we navigate the complexities of daily life, the best thing we can do is endeavor to be as much like Jesus as we can. And the Beatitudes provide the roadmap for understanding what that looks like. As we grow in our understanding of what it means to become dependent on God, feel grieved by sin, be meek in our interactions, and hunger for good, we can be merciful in the way the Lord intended.
Try This

Though we often think of justice as a negative thing—namely, a punishment—it can also be positive. We see this throughout the psalms, many of which are prayers crying out for God’s fairness to make things right. This week, take time to meditate on how justice and mercy work together. When is justice a good thing? How can an act be merciful even if justice is served?

Memorize

“How blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.” —Matthew 5:7 (ESV)
This month, in reflecting on what it means to be merciful, we explored both what mercy is and what it isn’t. We examined our own reactions to being wronged and considered how justice and mercy work together in our understanding of the faith.

As we look ahead, continue to ask God to reveal opportunities to be merciful—to yourself and the world around you—and contemplate how you might reflect His love and grace. This is an essential part of understanding what it means to be pure in heart, which we’ll explore next month.

Questions for Reflection

As we end each month and look ahead to the next, take a moment to think about the questions in this section. You can answer them in your head, write your thoughts in a journal, or have a discussion with your friends or small group.

WHERE DOES MERCY COME FROM? What is required for us to become merciful people? Think about the qualities of both a person who is merciful and someone who isn’t.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO FOCUS ON the “weightier matters of ... justice and mercy and faithfulness” (Matt. 23:23)? Would it require changing anything about your daily habits or other areas of your life?

One More Look

In our year-long project of memorizing the Beatitudes, this month you learned:

“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.” —Matthew 5:5-7 (ESV)
Fight your battles on your knees—in humility before the Lord your God. Go before him with a reverent and submitted heart.

CHARLES F. STANLEY,
STANDING STRONG
Each of Jesus’ statements in the Beatitudes includes a condition of the heart—or way of being—and a promised result when we live out the trait described. These ideas aren’t always easy to grasp, and they seem to ask much of us. But they remind us to have an eternal perspective as we do our best to reflect Christ in the present moment.

This quarter, we first examined the importance of meekness—that is, the gentleness and faithfulness we’re to demonstrate as stewards of God’s promised inheritance. We continued by contemplating what it means to long for and pursue righteousness as if our life depends on it. And finally, we explored what it looks like to offer and receive mercy.

As we look ahead to the next volume of this year’s ministry guide, keep thinking about what it means to be blessed. Building on what we’ve learned so far, we’ll consider:

- How to be pure in heart and seek to see God.
- How we can become peacemakers.
- How we can become righteous, even in times of persecution.

One More Look

This quarter, you memorized a section of the Sermon on the Mount as part of our year-long project. The bolded text is what you’ve learned so far:

“Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying: ‘Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

‘You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people’s feet. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.’” —Matthew 5:1-16 (ESV)
When you recognize God’s control over your life, you are able to be like one of His little birds and place yourself entirely in His care.

Charles F. Stanley, I Lift Up My Soul
Keep it going!

Have you checked out all these ways to expand your Blessed to Be journey? Throughout 2020, we’re going deeper. Immerse yourself in the true joy of reflecting Christ as we study the Beatitudes together.

**TV/Video** | Watch sermons on TV and at intouch.org/blessed the first Sunday of each month.

**Radio** | Listen for messages on the Beatitudes in our broadcasts.

**In Touch Devotional** | Reflect on the Beatitudes and put them into practice with special Sunday readings.

**In Touch Magazine** | Go deeper with articles and features inspired by the Sermon on the Mount.

**From the Pastor’s Heart** | Be challenged and encouraged by Dr. Stanley’s monthly letter teaching on Jesus’ words.

intouch.org/blessed | Visit our website to enjoy the most recent Blessed to Be offerings—sermons, articles, and more.

“Blessed to Be: A Study of the Beatitudes” Facebook Group | Join brothers and sisters in Christ for daily, weekly, and monthly encouragement. Share the experience!