



Small Groups

Small Group Discussion Guide

If You Want to Be Happy (Part 2)
Teaching series: "The Sermon on the Mount"

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Matthew 5:3-12

(Discussion Guide by Erin Rodewald)

June 6 and 7, 2020

Jesus spoke truth into the discourse of his day. His words speak truth still and are especially important for a nation reeling under the heavy burden of racial injustice, widespread violence, civil unrest, and riots - and let's not forget the pandemic. We have become a polarized people, shouting at one another in anger instead of listening to each other in love. But we can break that pattern. Jesus' teachings in the Sermon on the Mount provide a way forward.

Opening Question: Lately, have you been spending more time listening to the news or listening to God's voice?

If you want to be happy — even in the midst of difficult times — learn what Jesus says will make you happy and then build that into your life. We started on that path by looking at the first four beatitudes found in the Sermon on the Mount. They remind us to 1) understand who we are before God, 2) grieve over the groaning of this world, 3) show a surprising gentleness toward others, and 4) cultivate a deep longing for righteousness (*Matthew 5:3-6*). Now let's explore the remaining four beatitudes:

Read Matthew 5:7-12

I. Extend compassion to people who don't expect it

If you want to be happy, extend compassion in unexpected ways — kindness, empathy, patience, forgiveness — to people who don't expect it. *Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy (v.7).*

Micah 6:8 (NIV) "He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and walk humbly with our God."

1. Read Luke 10:25-37. How did the Good Samaritan in this story demonstrate compassion in unexpected ways?
2. In her book, *Be the Bridge*, author Latasha Morrison writes, "Forgiveness is a healing balm. It's the way to freedom, the way to peace." Do you believe forgiveness primarily benefits the person who has been harmed? Why or why not?

II. Invite God to search your heart

If you want to be happy, ask God to help you clean out the daily dirt that has accumulated in your heart. *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God (v.8).*

Psalms 139:23-24 (NIV) "Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

1. **How do you practice confession?**
2. **How does the act of confession draw you closer to God? Why is it an important step toward forgiveness and a changed heart?**

III. Bring people together who like being apart

Peacemakers are active, not passive. They seek to represent God in the conversation, not to agitate or remain neutral, but to build bridges. *Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called children of God (v.9).*

Romans 12:18 (ESV) "If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all."

1. **When you think of a peacemaker, a bridge builder, who comes to mind? What are some of the characteristics you would use to describe them?**
2. **Why is it seemingly easier for people to play the role of agitator or to remain on the sidelines than it is to engage as a bridge builder? What are some ways we can bring people together instead of driving them apart?**

IV. Be willing to suffer for doing good

In a sea of secular voices, it is God's voice we need to listen to. Let Jesus change your attitude toward other people. In our own spheres of influence, we can each talk to, listen to, pray for and love the people we know or with whom we come in contact. The world might think that foolish. We might even be criticized or persecuted. But the reward will be worth it! *Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (v.10-12).*

John 15:18 (NIV) "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first."

1. **It's difficult to break away from our own echo chambers sometimes. We might even be afraid that listening to another point of view could compromise a strongly held position. What are some ways you prepare your heart to hear a different or contrary idea?**
2. **Have you ever been criticized for doing something you know is right in God's eyes? How did you handle that situation?**

Read Matthew 22:36-39. Pray for God to help you humbly offer grace and love to the people you interact with this coming week, even as they express themselves differently than you do.