

Study Hints for Thinking Further

International Bible Lessons

Matthew 5:1-12

Sunday, October 30, 2011

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Some Bible study groups or classes can further discussion by asking some or all of the **Five Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** below. Others may want to send the bulletin size *International Bible Lesson* home with their students for further study in the coming week to encourage continuing Bible study. The *Study Hints for Thinking Further* below are not actually intended to be answers to the discussion questions, but hints a teacher may use to help students think through and discuss the questions in class.

1. Why do you think Jesus began His beatitudes by saying those who are poor in spirit are happy or blessed? How might this differ from a worldly perspective?

Before we begin to make the changes in our behavior, choices, and commitments that we need to make, we need to see that we need to make them—that we are not the people that we need and want to be according to the will of God. When we humbly see our need to change, we are poor in spirit. We are blessed when we recognize this situation and begin to change, because change begins with recognition of our situation, and this will lead us to true and lasting happiness. The worldly perspective may be that we should change to be more successful or happier irrespective of our moral or spiritual choices, or that our problems are everyone else's fault and not our fault. The perspective of Jesus is that we need to be spiritually and morally aligned with our heavenly Father, and the truth of His Word (the Bible and the Word incarnate, Jesus himself), and the Holy Spirit will help us do this: this will lead to true happiness now and forever with God and all who love God.

2. What is the promise in the second beatitude? How might this promise encourage a follower of Jesus?

The promise is that those who mourn will be comforted. Those who mourn thinking they can never make themselves better morally or spiritually will be comforted to know that with the help of the Holy Spirit and the teachings of Jesus and the Bible that they can make the changes they seek—conformity to the perfect will of God. Those who mourn over physical troubles can rejoice to know that the great Healer can help them and others, and in the life to come they will be healed completely—never to suffer again.

3. What does the world usually think of a meek person? What does Jesus think about a meek person? Why do you think there is a difference in thinking?

The worldly person thinks he can take advantage of the meek person. Jesus thinks the meek person can control himself with the help of the Holy Spirit no matter what the provocation or temptation. Some mistake meekness for weakness, when meekness can be a sign of inner strength and reliance on Jesus and His wisdom. The meek person does not need to allow the worldly person to abuse or use him or her.

4. What is the relationship between hungering and thirsting for righteousness and purity of heart?

We continue in our spiritual growth when we hunger and thirst to be righteous in our choices and behavior, when we seek to be cleansed on the inside by Jesus Christ, our Savior. A righteous person seeks to do the will of God at all times, and this is the same as seeking purity of heart. The pure in heart will seek to do Jesus' will at all times and rely on Jesus to help them.

5. Why are the followers of Jesus persecuted rather than honored by the world? Why do you think some in the church persecute those in the church who are truly seeking to follow Jesus?

The followers of Jesus have different goals and values from those committed to using the world to meet their personal, selfish desires and needs. Therefore, the worldly and the followers of Jesus will come into conflict when the followers of Jesus try to live by higher standards and refuse to compromise with or cooperate with or be used by the worldly person to achieve their worldly aims. Some in the church are not truly followers of Jesus, but are in the church for other reasons. They have not grown spiritually through the beatitudes and Jesus' sermon on the mount—they have arrested spiritual development; therefore, they will not see things (or seek to see things) from God's perspective or the perspective of those who put God's will and following Jesus first and foremost in their lives.

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