

# ***How Can Disciples Grow Spiritually?***

## ***International Bible Lesson***

**Matthew 5:1-12**

**Sunday, October 30, 2011**

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*“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled” (Matthew 5:6—NRSV).*

*“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied” (Matthew 5:6—ESV).*

*“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled” (Matthew 5:6—KJV).*

In Jesus’ beatitudes, He taught the stages of spiritual growth that His disciples could expect to pass through as they trusted in Him and obeyed His commands. The spiritual development of Jesus’ followers will begin with their humble recognition of their spiritual poverty; they will confess they lack spiritual discernment and strength. Admitting their spiritual need opens the door to living in the kingdom of heaven.

As His disciples continue to follow Him, they will begin to mourn the fact that they are not what God expects them to be or what they want to become; however, with Jesus’ quiet strength and teaching they will be comforted and guided to spiritual maturity. As they draw closer to Jesus, they will become meek from seeing the way Jesus faced His troubles in this world. With Jesus’ help, they will become better able to control themselves when provoked by those who grasp for more and more at their expense. Instead of condemning others, a further sign of His disciples’ spiritual growth is seeing and admitting how far they, along the world, have wandered away from what is good, just, and according to the will of God. They hunger to be right with God; they thirst for righteousness to reign in the world; they trust Jesus’ promise that they will be satisfied with the justice and righteousness He will bring someday. As His disciples turn from their sins, they will be merciful and receive mercy. They will become pure in heart and seek to make peace wherever possible. Though persecuted for righteousness and Jesus’ sake, they will rejoice and be glad, knowing their reward will be great in heaven.

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## **Thinking Further**

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?

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

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?

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

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?

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