

Disruptive Discipleship Discussion Guides

September - November 2020

Week 1 – An Overview: Flourishing in the Kingdom

SEPTEMBER 20, 2020

DISRUPTIVE DISCIPLESHIP

AN OVERVIEW:

FLOURISHING IN THE KINGDOM

MATTHEW 05.1-12

Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them. He said: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is	the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst	for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers,...
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Teaching Text

Matthew 5: 1-12

Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them. He said:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

Recap

This week, Pastor Jon set the foundation for our season-long study of Jesus' teaching of the Beatitudes. In the face of the crises around us, we need to be rooted more deeply than ever in the core teachings of Jesus about discipleship and the Kingdom of God. When we look

below the surface of our current moment, many of the crises in our culture are Crises of Discipleship caused by the Church failing to live out the teachings of Jesus. We face the Crisis of Identity because we often define ourselves by secondary cultural issues, rather than our primary allegiance to Jesus and his Kingdom.

We also face a Crisis of Moral Distinction inside the Church by building our foundation on the same foundation as the world. This has led us to a Crisis of Our Witness, causing us to no longer look like Jesus even though we claim to bear his name. In the midst of the disruption around us, God is revealing these spiritual crises, calling us to disrupt our regular lives, and evaluate the kinds of disciples we are going to be with Jesus as our standard. As we look to the Sermon on the Mount, we discover a similar atmosphere to today, charged with tension and expectation for change. But as Jesus teaches what a blessed life truly is, and who is going to bring it forth for the world, we find a king and a kingdom that does not meet anyone's expectations and shakes people to their cores. The blessed life Jesus promises went beyond mere happiness, and spoke to a joyful sense of peace combined with the favor of God, allowing for true flourishing.

People today are still aching for this kind of peace--this good life--and Jesus is still saying he can give it to us, but there must be a shift in how we live. Jesus did not want to re-enforce the culture of the time, but fundamentally change it, and the same is true today. The Beatitudes are ultimately the characteristics of Jesus, and he is asking us to take them on, measuring ourselves against the Son of God instead of the shallow culture of our world. This is the time to reset our core convictions and realign our character, nature, and lifestyle, so that our hearts beat at the same pace Jesus' does.

Spiritual Practices

We're introducing practices for your Group to adopt as you study the life and teachings of Jesus:

Scripture Reading: [Here is a 90 day reading plan](#) through all four Gospels. Download the YouVersion app and select to do this plan "with friends." Once you invite members from your group to join you, you can all track together with the plan and save notes, questions, and comments on passages.

Scripture Memorization: Verse by verse we'll be memorizing the beatitudes together. This week spend some time meditating on the whole of the passage and asking God for fresh revelation of what is likely a familiar text. Next week we will begin by memorizing Matthew 5:2-3

Prayer and Fasting: I'd encourage you to set a prayer and fasting goal as a group this season. Whether it's once this season, once a month, or one meal a week. Let's anchor our community in shared perseverance and practice.

Discussion Guide

Connect

1. What is a book, movie, saying, or song that reminds you of today's "happiness movement?"

Check In

1. Which of the Beatitudes really fell afresh on you this week and why?

2. Do any of our goals and visions from last week align with the Beatitudes? Provide specific examples, referring to the CG Goals Form we filled out last week.

Contemplate

Read aloud all 8 Beatitudes twice. What are some related verses in the Bible that allude to the Beatitudes? Read those aloud as well and discuss parallels you see.

Consider

1. Which of the Beatitudes are you most convicted to pray over for insight, wisdom, and conviction?

2. At the beginning of his sermon, Jon talked about the need to stop and reset our spiritual pace in the midst of crisis. What would it look like to stop, disrupt your current spiritual status quo, and reset?

Create

Choose from one of the options below:

a) Grab a piece of paper and make three columns. Write the 8 Beatitudes in the first column. In the second column, write a verse in the Bible that relates to this Beatitude. In the third column, pray and jot down any thoughts the Spirit brings to mind. Maybe He is calling you to lean into an area of discomfort, or create measurable goals, or re-prioritize your time.

b) Give everyone a few minutes to write the teaching text by hand. Discuss any other words or phrases that jump out at you after you're finished writing. Hang this up somewhere you'll see it a few times a day and, through repetition, begin to memorize it.

Cover

Pray that every day our lives would be formed more towards Jesus, and that the Beatitudes would pierce our hearts and convict us of ways we can be transformed to exemplify and follow Him better.

CHURCH OF THE CITY^{NY}

Week 2 – Poor in Spirit

SEPTEMBER 27, 2020

DISRUPTIVE
DISCIPLESHIP

POOR IN SPIRIT

"BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN
SPIRIT, FOR THEIRS IS THE
KINGDOM OF HEAVEN."

An illustration featuring two dark hands reaching upwards to hold a large white heart. Surrounding this central heart are four smaller white hearts, each containing a black heart symbol. The background is a textured, light pinkish-red color.

Teaching Text

Matthew 5:3

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Recap

This past Sunday, Pastor Jon brought the concept of poverty of spirit to light and how that allows us to continue building a strong foundation in our faith. In our everyday lives, we often allow material abundance to feed into our pride, obstructing our acknowledgement of our spiritual bankruptcy. The inevitable self-righteous path we follow shifts the focus away from God's grace and we begin to believe we have single-handedly earned all of our wealth. Prosperity leads to pride, and pride serves as the source of all other sin. The result of this phenomenon can be seen in our society today, where we suffer from collective narcissism. This narrative makes every aspect of our lives about us instead of God. Jesus said that our pride will exclude us from the kingdom of God, and we must come with empty hands in order to open up the doors to everything the kingdom has to offer. To continue looking upward at his grace, we must choose humility every day rather than our self-preservation. We must become humbled and poor in spirit in order to become truly blessed in God's kingdom.

Spiritual Practices

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Scripture Memorization: Verse by verse we'll be memorizing the beatitudes together. This week spend some time meditating on and memorizing Matthew 5:3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Prayer and Fasting: I'd encourage you to set a prayer and fasting goal as a group this season. Whether it's once this season, once a month, or one meal a week. Let's anchor our community in shared perseverance and practice.

Discussion Guide

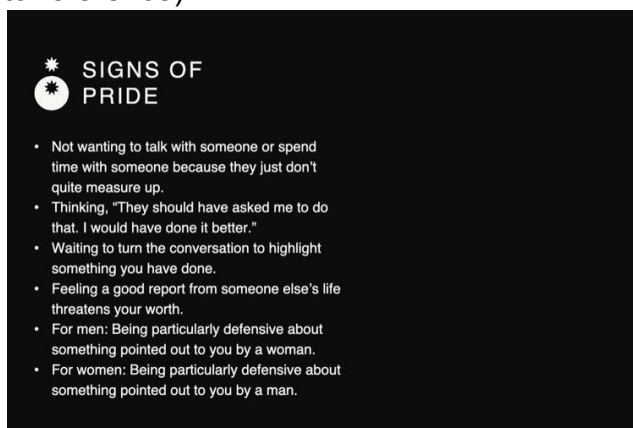
Connect

1. Who is someone – either fictional or real – who you think exemplifies being poor in spirit or having humility?

Check In

1. Before hearing the sermon, how did you interpret being "poor in spirit?"

2. Which of the Signs of Pride stuck out to you? (Pictures of the list are included for leaders to reference)





SIGNS OF PRIDE

- Hearing about another person's problems and feeling better about yourself because it has not happened to you.
- Hearing someone tell a story, and waiting for you name to be mentioned or included in it.
- Trying to serve God without prayer.
- Thinking pride is not that big of a problem for you.
- Not confessing sin unless you are backed into a corner and confronted.



SIGNS OF PRIDE

- Pride looks down on others.
- Pride does not listen well.
- Pride is stubborn.
- Pride is not eager to learn because it is confident in what it already knows.
- Pride is not quick to admit wrong because it fears it may look bad or lose its position.
- Pride is competitive and is easily threatened.
- Pride is insecure.
- Pride finds it hard to rejoice in the success of others.

Contemplate

Have someone read aloud James 3:14-16, one of the passages Jon references. What words catch your attention? What does "disorder and evil practices" look like on earth, and what can we do in response?

Consider

1. God's heart is to create an environment where people can flourish, but pride is toxic and can corrupt the kingdom of Heaven. How do you think we as the church can balance both accepting people for who they are (a sign of humility) while also protecting the culture of God's kingdom?

2. Pastor Jon gave a quote from Jeff Cook that said, "Pride is not thinking too much of myself, it is thinking of myself far too much." What do you think are the key differences between these two things and how does that connect to having "spiritual bankruptcy?"

Create

Pastor Jon provided a list of things to watch out for when we are prideful (or what a prideful person may exhibit). Either write or draw what being "poor in spirit" looks like -- or what the

opposite of pride looks like -- to you personally. You could even draw yourself and identify what it would look like in relation to your head, your heart, your hands, your feet, your gut, etc. Perhaps think back to what was shared during the Connect time. Share and discuss if time permits.

Cover

Break into small groups and pray that we will put in the work to cultivate a culture of being "poor in spirit" both as individuals and as the church. If comfortable, share what you personally struggle with when it comes to pride during a time of confession. Thank God for loving us despite our pride, and ask him to teach us to come to him with empty, open hands.

Week 3 – Blessed Are Those Who Mourn

OCTOBER 4, 2020

DISRUPTIVE DISCIPLESHIP

BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO MOURN

MATTHEW 5.4
4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

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Teaching Text

Matthew 5:4

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted."

Recap

This past Sunday, Pastor Olivia shed light on the second beatitude in the Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed are those who mourn." This message, rich with poignance and timeliness for both the original audience and our culture today in the midst of this collective loss, discussed mourning as a holy invitation to participate in Christ's redemptive work. We looked at three common alternatives to mourning—repression, retreat, and resignation—and their

respective dangers, and took a deeper look at the correlation between suffering and sin. Then we looked at Jesus, described in God's word as "a man of sorrows," and his example of redemptive mourning in his life and death. Christ's mourning brought about salvation, deliverance, and healing, and he invites us to mourn in the same way. We mourn the brokenness of this world through tears of deep sorrow and great joy; we are comforted by the Holy Spirit and are thus able to comfort those around us; we wait for the day in which he "will wipe every tear from our eyes"; and we enter into God's redemptive story through holy grief and expectant hope.

Spiritual Practices

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Scripture Reading: [Here is a 90 day reading plan](#) through all four Gospels. Download the YouVersion app and select to do this plan "with friends." Once you invite members from your group to join you, you can all track together with the plan and save notes, questions, and comments on passages.

Scripture Memorization: Verse by verse we'll be memorizing the beatitudes together. This week spend some time meditating on and memorizing Matthew 5:4 "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted."

Prayer and Fasting: I'd encourage you to set a prayer and fasting goal as a group this season. Whether it's once this season, once a month, or one meal a week. Let's anchor our community in shared perseverance and practice.

Discussion Guide

Connect

1. What is the nicest thing someone has ever done for you while you were grieving?

Check In

What are some words, images, or feelings that you associate with grief? Have any of those been changed by Pastor Olivia's sermon?

Contemplate

Ask someone in the group to read Psalm 126:5-6. Take time to discuss the imagery that the author uses and its symbolic meaning.

1. What does it mean to sow with tears?
2. What joyful songs have you reaped in your own life?

Consider

1. In Matthew 5:4, Jesus tells us that those who mourn are blessed and shall receive comfort. There are two examples of Jesus himself mourning that Pastor Olivia provided: a) at the death of Lazarus, and b) upon entering Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. What is the difference between our personal mourning and the mourning Christ exemplifies?

2. In Nehemiah 1:5-7, Nehemiah mourns for the city of Jerusalem before asking to return and lead the rebuilding of the wall. Nehemiah's first step, as a man of great faith, was to mourn over the brokenness of the city before listening to the call that God put on his heart. Do we give ourselves time to mourn or do we try to move on to intercession and action immediately?

Create

On a small piece of paper, write down something that you have not properly mourned, perhaps something long forgotten or something fresh and tender in your heart. Take a few minutes for a few volunteers to share, if they are comfortable, or share in smaller breakout groups. Pray together for healing where there is brokenness and for joyful songs to be reaped. Allow for a moment of silent contemplation.

Cover

If you're not there already, break into small groups and pray for what the Holy Spirit is putting on your heart to mourn, whether in your personal life or in public. The world is broken and there is much to grieve, but take heart, our tears of intercession may lubricate the wheels of history.

Cover

Break into small groups and pray that we will put in the work to cultivate a culture of being "poor in spirit" both as individuals and as the church. If comfortable, share what you personally struggle with when it comes to pride during a time of confession. Thank God for loving us despite our pride, and ask him to teach us to come to him with empty, open hands.

Week 4 – Blessed Are The Meek

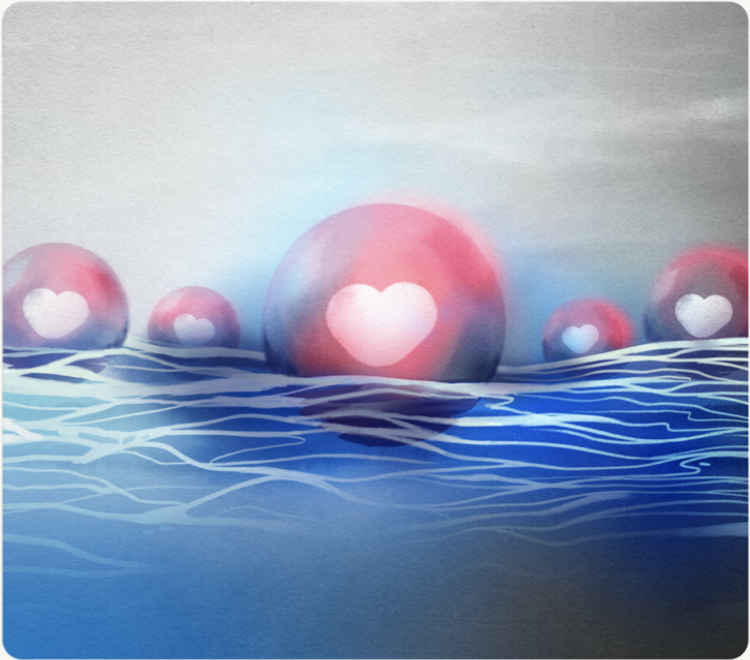
OCTOBER 11, 2020

DISRUPTIVE
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BLESSED ARE THE MEEK

MATTHEW 5.5
Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

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Teaching Text

Matthew 5:5

"Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth."

Recap

This Sunday, Pastor Suzy illuminated the third beatitude in Jesus's Sermon on the Mount: blessed are the meek. At the time of Jesus's teaching, the listeners were under Roman rule in their promised land, questioning when their covenant promise would be fulfilled and they could finally inherit the land. Jesus succinctly replied that the meek are the inheritors. The meek are those who practice reserved strength, even when the wicked prosper. They entrust the Lord with their security, peace, and prosperity since it is him, and not the world, who is meant to sustain our souls. Jesus not only teaches us how to be meek, but he embodies meekness himself as our humble King. We can become more like him by practicing the following tenets of meekness: 1) trusting God when the wicked prosper; 2) trusting God for security, peace, prosperity, and success; 3) recognizing who God sees as righteous, holy, and meek, and living in obedience; 4) resting in our future inheritance; and 5) imitating Jesus. In living out these tenets, we enter into the true Shalom of the New Jerusalem.

Spiritual Practices

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Scripture Reading: [Here is a 90 day reading plan](#) through all four Gospels. Download the YouVersion app and select to do this plan "with friends." Once you invite members from your group to join you, you can all track together with the plan and save notes, questions, and comments on passages.

Scripture Memorization: Verse by verse we'll be memorizing the beatitudes together. This week spend some time meditating on and memorizing Matthew 5:5 "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth."

Prayer and Fasting: I'd encourage you to set a prayer and fasting goal as a group this season. Whether it's once this season, once a month, or one meal a week. Let's anchor our community in shared perseverance and practice.

Discussion Guide

Connect

If you could write a one-sentence poem about the feelings that autumn elicits in you, what would it be?

Check In

What is the predominant emotion that you've been living in this week?

Contemplate

Ask someone (or multiple people) to read one of the following passages aloud. Allow your group to sit with the verses for a bit. Then, dig into the passage with the following question:

- Matthew 11:29
- Matthew 21:5
- Psalm 37:1-11
- Philippians 2:5-11
- Isaiah 53:7-12

1. What does this passage reveal about meekness?

Consider

1. Why was inheritance of land such good news in Jesus's day? What would the equivalent of inheritance of land look like for our lives today?

2. What are your biggest challenges to living a meek life?

Create

On a piece of paper, write down something that you are not fully trusting God with in your life at the moment. (This will be shared with group members, so please inform them beforehand). After everyone is done writing, have all group members show their words to the camera and each member of the group can volunteer/choose one of the other member's words to pray for, popcorn-style.

Cover

Break out into small groups and continue praying for each other's pursuit of meekness. Ask the Spirit for words of encouragement for each other. If you feel the Spirit is giving you a word/image for another group member, please take courage and share it, whether publicly or through the personal chat if more private.

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Week 5 – Those Who Hunger And Thirst For Righteousness



OCTOBER 18, 2020

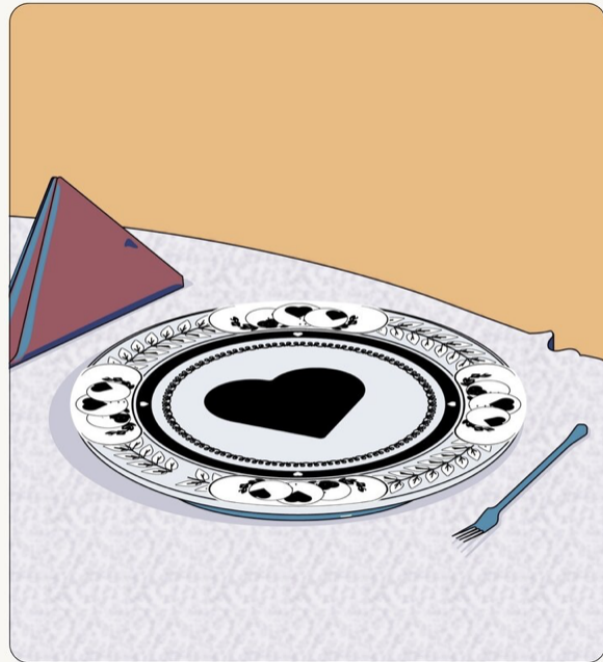
DISRUPTIVE
DISCIPLESHIP

HUNGER FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS

MATTHEW 5.6

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst
after righteousness, for they shall be filled.

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Teaching Text

Matthew 5:6

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled."

Recap

We continue in the beatitudes this week with the fourth stage of Christian discipleship: blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. This is the first "positive" beatitude we encounter as a natural outgrowth of the previous three that addressed self-seeking (addiction to wealth), self-satisfaction (addiction to pleasure), and self-serving (addiction to power or control). When we are emptied of these self-sins, we are given a greater desire for righteousness and a longing for what God has.

The Kingdom of God comes to those who hunger and thirst for Biblical righteousness, which embodies both the private and the public, both personal holiness and social justice. This vision of righteousness brings about the healing and renewal we so desperately need. We see examples of public and private righteousness in Amos 2:7, where Amos speaks out against sexual immorality (private) AND oppression (public), and in James 1:26-27, where James calls for disciples to look after orphans and widows in distress (public) AND to keep oneself from being polluted by the world (private).

As followers of Jesus in this moment in history, we are constantly tempted to satiate our appetites at the cultural table rather than develop a single all-consuming starvation for the righteousness of God. However, God promises that those who truly hunger and thirst will be filled, wanting nothing more. May we keep reading the Gospels for Jesus's compelling

discipleship, guard our appetites and cultivate hunger for the things of God, and commit to right response (rather than just right opinion) to what God is putting in front of us. May we seek a potency of righteousness.

Spiritual Practices

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Scripture Reading: [Here is a 90 day reading plan](#) through all four Gospels. Download the YouVersion app and select to do this plan "with friends." Once you invite members from your group to join you, you can all track together with the plan and save notes, questions, and comments on passages.

Scripture Memorization: Verse by verse we'll be memorizing the beatitudes together. This week spend some time meditating on and memorizing Matthew 5:6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled."

Prayer and Fasting: I'd encourage you to set a prayer and fasting goal as a group this season. Whether it's once this season, once a month, or one meal a week. Let's anchor our community in shared perseverance and practice.

Discussion Guide

Connect

What is your go-to method of relaxing or dealing with stress?

Check In

What has been a highlight and a low-light of the month of October for you so far?

Contemplate

Choose two or more of the following passages to read with your group:

- Psalm 33:5
- Job 42:5-6
- Luke 5:8
- Revelation 1:17-19
- Luke 4:18-19
- James 1:26-27

Ask someone (or multiple people, depending on how many passages you choose to read) to read the passages aloud. Allow your group to meditate on these verses for a few minutes. Then dig into the passages with the following question:

1. What common thread do you see in these biblical persons' responses to God's righteousness?

Consider

1. How does a biblical vision of justice differ from a secular view of justice?

2. Pastor Jon talked about how God's vision of righteousness encompasses both holiness (private) and justice (public). Where in your life have you seen God growing a hunger for these two aspects of righteousness this year? Where do you feel convicted to hunger for more?

3. What do you find most challenging about the call to pursue biblical justice?

Create


Give your CG members a few minutes to reflect individually on the question: What are some of the cultural distractions that are preventing you from fully hungering after godly righteousness this week/month/year?


You can have them write these down/make a list (feel free to play some music for these few minutes), and let them know they will have space to share what they wrote with others in the breakout rooms.

Cover

In smaller breakout rooms, share what you wrote about the things that distract you from hungering for God's righteousness. Lift up these distractions in prayer, so that we can cover each other in protection from the cultural frenzy of these coming weeks and remain fixated on God's vision for our world.

Week 6 – Blessed Are The Merciful

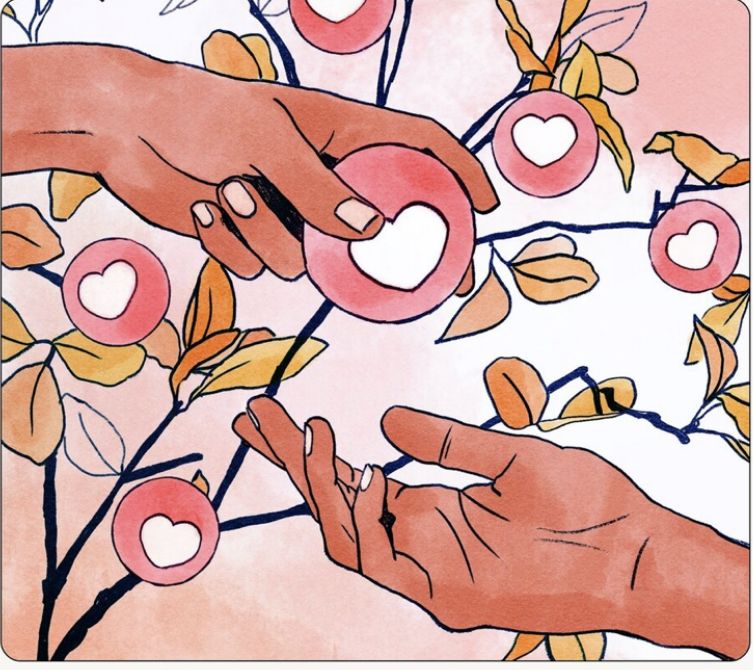
 OCTOBER 25, 2020

 DISRUPTIVE DISCIPLESHIP

BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL

MATTHEW 5:7
Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

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An illustration showing two hands, one larger and one smaller, reaching towards a heart-shaped apple on a branch. The branch is part of a tree with several other heart-shaped apples and yellow leaves. The background is a soft pinkish-red color.

Teaching Text

Matthew 5:7

"Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy."

Recap

This Sunday, Pastor Jon introduced us to the lead pastor of Transformation Church in South Carolina, Dr. Derwin Gray. Dr. Gray continues our series on the beatitudes, this week dissecting what Jesus means in Matthew 5:7 when he says, "Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy." In America today we are facing a lot of divisiveness. It often feels like we are in schools of piranhas, waiting for people who we disagree with to blow up. Dr. Gray reminds us that to "seek justice without mercy makes the oppressed become the oppressor and the cycle of violence continue." It's imperative in these times to remember that no one deserves mercy on their own merit, but because God is merciful to us through his gift of Jesus, we are called, as the body of Christ, to show love and mercy to our neighbor.

In the context of history, Dr. Gray tells us that Samaritans and Jews had been in a 400-year feud producing much animosity and ugliness between the people. Samaritans were considered "half-bred" as they were both Jew and Gentile. Luke 10:30-33 tells us that a priest coming from the temple and as well as a Levite walk past the bloodied Jewish man who was robbed and beaten without stopping to offer him help. Though we know the complex relationship between the Jews and Samaritans, in verse 33, Jesus emphasizes that the Samaritan "had compassion" for the man. While the Jew was the last person the Samaritan should aid, it shows being a merciful person means loving God by loving people you are not supposed to love, considering every human being is your neighbor, and crossing

ethnic, cultural, and religious barriers to help hurting people. The Samaritan meets all of these markers for showing mercy and paints an image of a person who is willing to count the cost of loving {his} neighbor.

Dr. Gray exhorts us to take up a mantle of mercy. Ultimately, though we are all bloodied by sin and the messiness of our lives, God shows us mercy through sending Jesus to be our Good Samaritan. Because of the free gift of mercy we receive, we have an obligation not only to show our neighbors mercy, but to also love them and honor the image of God in them.

Spiritual Practices

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Scripture Memorization: Verse by verse we'll be memorizing the beatitudes together. This week spend some time meditating on and memorizing Matthew 5:7 "Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy."

Prayer and Fasting: I'd encourage you to set a prayer and fasting goal as a group this season. Whether it's once this season, once a month, or one meal a week. Let's anchor our community in shared perseverance and practice.

Discussion Guide

Connect

1. What is something that brought you unexpected happiness this week?

Check In

When is a time in your life that someone showed you mercy when you did not deserve it?

Contemplate

Take another look at The Parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-27. Ask someone (or multiple people) to read the passage aloud. Allow your group to meditate on these verses for a few minutes. Then dig into the passage with the following questions:

1. What stands out to you about the actions of the different people in this story?
2. Based on this passage, what do you think it means to have mercy on someone?

Consider

1. Dr. Gray reminded us that because Jesus died for everyone, loving your neighbor means loving everyone. How does this challenge the way you interact with people you disagree with or who have different beliefs than you?
2. What would it look like for you to honor the image of God in someone that the world would expect you to ignore?

Create

Take a few minutes to reflect on these questions:

Who are the people around you that you are 'not supposed' to love?

How are you being asked to have compassion on them this week/month/year?

Feel free to write these down/make a list for yourself. Consider sharing them with a friend or small group so you can pray about them together and encourage each other.

Cover

Pray for the people or groups that the Spirit has brought to your mind. Ask for discernment about how to "go and do the same" as the Good Samaritan, and courage to step forward, as Jesus did for us, with mercy and compassion.

CHURCH ON THE CITY^{NY}

Week 7 – Blessed Are The Pure In Heart



NOVEMBER 1ST, 2020

DISRUPTIVE
DISCIPLESHIP

BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART

BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN
HEART, FOR THEY WILL SEE GOD.

MATTHEW 5.8

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Teaching Text

Matthew 5:8

“Blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God.”

Recap

This Sunday, Pastor Ashley Anderson preached about how to cultivate a pure heart (Matthew 5:8). Purity of heart is the radical reorientation of our entire lives to focus solely on God’s will and his goodness. Purity means leveraging our desires for His kingdom’s purpose and allowing God’s will on earth to be the single driving force of every decision that we make. Purity is not restrictive and condemning, but is instead a person to love—a good God on a relentless pursuit for the people He loves. Jesus came to heal us from the inside out. He was—and is—not at war WITH our hearts but FOR our hearts. He turned the world upside down with His love which purifies and restores us, a beautiful hope for our church to rest in today in the midst of a pandemic, deep injustice, and an election around the corner.

On our path to pure hearts, we can stumble off course and fall into three main pits. First, we can will the right thing for the wrong reason. At its best, this is moralism, and at its worst, this is hypocrisy. Nobody hates hypocrisy more than Jesus (Matthew 23:27-28), and in order to remove hypocrisy from the church, we must first let Jesus remove it from our hearts. Second, we can repress purity by pretending that we will nothing, pushing down our desires and denying that they even exist. Finally, we can stumble into the pitfall of idolatry: willing the right thing among many things. Jesus is not asking to be one thing on a list of many things, He’s asking to be the only item on the list. Instead of placing God at the top of a long list of

desires, what if we actually moved God to the center of each desire (Colossians 3:23-24, 1 Corinthians 10:31)?

So how do we cultivate pure hearts? First, we must ache to encounter God. When we see God, our desires are changed, and as we begin to see God, we'll begin to hate sin (Proverbs 4:23, 2 Timothy 2:22). Next, we must flee from sin by admitting the sin that has crept into our heart and ruthlessly eliminate environments of temptation out of our life. Finally, we must frequently and honestly confess our sins to God and others. Sin won't destroy us, but concealing it will.

Spiritual Practices

We're introducing practices for your Group to adopt as you study the life and teachings of Jesus:

Scripture Reading: [Here is a 90 day reading plan](#) through all four Gospels. Download the YouVersion app and select to do this plan "with friends." Once you invite members from your group to join you, you can all track together with the plan and save notes, questions, and comments on passages.

Scripture Memorization: Verse by verse we'll be memorizing the beatitudes together. This week spend some time meditating on and memorizing Matthew 5:8 "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God."

Prayer and Fasting: I'd encourage you to set a prayer and fasting goal as a group this season. Whether it's once this season, once a month, or one meal a week. Let's anchor our community in shared perseverance and practice.

Discussion Guide

Connect

1. What is a new skill or concept you learned this week or would like to learn?

Check In

Has purity ever had a negative connotation at any point in your life?

Contemplate

Ask a group member to read 1 Samuel 16:7 aloud, perhaps a few times, while others listen and internalize the passage. After further reflection, discuss the following questions:

1. Is the Holy Spirit revealing anything new or refreshing to you about God's character from this passage?

2. Does this passage reflect how you view yourself and others day to day? Why or why not?

Consider

1. Pastor Ashley discussed the importance of frequently and honestly confessing our sins. What are ways you incorporate confession in your daily life and/or what are ways you can begin to incorporate confession into your life?

2. What holds us back from confessing our sin and bringing our struggles into the light? Is there anything that would make this practice a little easier?

3. How can we redefine what purity means in the modern world while retaining its biblical significance?

Create

Take some time to reflect on what we've discussed and brainstorm the following questions on a sheet of paper:

a. What are some ways you can redirect our natural inclination to run from our sins and begin embracing honest confession?

b. How can you be a support system for others to turn to when they need to confess and receive healing? (James 5:16)

If you're comfortable with your list, please share with a friend or break into smaller groups for prayers and encouragement.

Cover

This week, let's pray for one another as we practice returning love back to the one who loved us first—Jesus. Ask God to help us set our hearts on His goodness and to allow His presence to transform us into people with pure hearts.

Week 8 – Blessed Are The Peacemakers



Teaching Text

Matthew 5:9

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.”

Media

Recap

A day after the announcement of the President-elect, Pastor Jon Tyson preached on Jesus' call to be peacemakers (Matthew 5:9). At a time when the world thought leadership meant violence and military domination, Jesus declared that peacemakers were the children of God. Despite his audience's expectation of a messianic general, Jesus introduced the idea of peace with God as revolutionary action. This peace was understood as the webbing together of God, humans, and all creation in justice, fulfillment, and delight. Yet Thomas Merton succinctly pointed out that, “We are not at peace with others because we are not at peace with ourselves, and we are not at peace with ourselves because we are not at peace with God.”

Just like the original audience of the beatitudes, we are living in a culture that is rife with hate, violence, and fear. A culture can be defined as a community with a powerful idea or figure at its center that then reaps the fruit of what is sowed. What is at the center of our culture? If the peace we seek is merely the absence of violence, then we fail to change the culture growing around us. For peace to exist on earth, Jesus must be at the center of our culture. He is our peace that unites across all boundaries. His is a love that makes no

distinction between friend and enemy and seeks out everyone without fail. When we place Jesus at the center of our lives, “we have access to the Father by one Spirit” (Ephesians 2:18), and we sow the seeds of the kingdom of God.

Spiritual Practices

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Scripture Reading: [Here is a 90 day reading plan](#) through all four Gospels. Download the YouVersion app and select to do this plan “with friends.” Once you invite members from your group to join you, you can all track together with the plan and save notes, questions, and comments on passages.

Scripture Memorization: Verse by verse we’ll be memorizing the beatitudes together. This week spend some time meditating on and memorizing Matthew 5:9 “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.”

Prayer and Fasting: I’d encourage you to set a prayer and fasting goal as a group this season. Whether it’s once this season, once a month, or one meal a week. Let’s anchor our community in shared perseverance and practice.

Discussion Guide

Connect

1. If you were a color, what color would you be right now? Why?

Check In

Prior to hearing the sermon, how were you thinking about peace and peacemaking in light of the U.S. elections that happened this week?

Contemplate

Ask someone in the group to read Ephesians 2:14-18 aloud for others to listen to and internalize. Discuss the following questions:

1. What are your initial thoughts on this passage? Is the Holy Spirit revealing anything to you?

2. How do you envision a “new humanity?”

3. What do you think it means for a new humanity to be reconciled to one another and to God?

Consider

1. The first type of peace Pastor Jon mentioned was cultural peace, or the absence of conflict. He compared "cancel culture" where every small act of violence is seen as a threat, compared to "common humanity justice" as an alternative vision. What do you see as the key difference and how can we be peacemakers while also seeking to redeem broken parts of our world?

2. Pastor Jon said peacemaking is not about uniformity, but about unity in diversity. What do you think this means? What holds us back from achieving it?

3. What are some practical ways you think we can be peacemakers and reach across divides to create a peace that heals the world one person at a time?

Create

Have everyone find a piece of paper and some writing tools.

Spend time in silence or playing worship music, and independently take time to write or draw what you see when you think of what Martin Luther King Jr. called "the beloved community," or manifesting Jesus's vision of agape love.

If there is time and you feel comfortable, share at the end with the wider group.

Cover

This week, let's pray for each other as we are called to be peacemakers in a divided church, country, and world. May God give us each a clear vision of how we can use our gifts to bring peace to the areas in our lives that need it the most.

Week 9 – Blessed Are Those Who Are Persecuted

FALL VISION SERIES



DISRUPTIVE DISCIPLESHIP

MATTHEW 05.1-12

¹ Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, ² and he began to teach them. He said: ³ “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁴ Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. ⁵ Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. ⁶ Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

⁷ Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. ⁸ Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. ⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. ¹⁰ Blessed are those who are

persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹ “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me...

Teaching Text

Matthew 5:10-12

“Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

Recap

As we continue our series on the Beatitudes, Pastor Jon preached on Christ’s blessing over those who are persecuted. There are three types of persecution Jesus discusses in this passage: physical, verbal, and emotional. As we look back on church history and consider the global persecution of our brothers and sisters in other countries, we see countless examples of this. But in our modern, American context, we see a perhaps more subtle version of persecution expanding into our HR policies, social media feeds, and the like. In a world that is offended by righteousness and the Christian’s claims of Christ’s exclusivity as the way to freedom, our efforts to follow Jesus and cling to His words will increasingly set us against the current of our culture.

Jesus confirms in this passage that we will experience persecution, but He invites us to respond through rejoicing and gladness. Persecution develops in the Christian a deep spiritual formation into the image of Jesus and the joy of being faithfully united with Him. It reminds us of our calling as exiles in this world and our desperate need to renounce the idols of being liked, freeing us from a life of slavery to the opinions of others. Finally, it produces in

us a humility that cultivates a heart of love for the people that persecute us. As we look to Jesus, we see His example on the cross of joyfully bearing the weight of persecution and in His final breaths praying for those who led its charge. In this we rejoice and prepare our hearts to do the same in the world around us.

Spiritual Practices

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Scripture Reading: [Here is a 90 day reading plan](#) through all four Gospels. Download the YouVersion app and select to do this plan "with friends." Once you invite members from your group to join you, you can all track together with the plan and save notes, questions, and comments on passages.

Scripture Memorization: Verse by verse we'll be memorizing the beatitudes together. This week spend some time meditating on and memorizing Matthew 5:10-12: "Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

Prayer and Fasting: I'd encourage you to set a prayer and fasting goal as a group this season. Whether it's once this season, once a month, or one meal a week. Let's anchor our community in shared perseverance and practice.

Discussion Guide

Connect

1. If you could have one superpower, what would it be and why?

Check In

What's been the most predominant emotion in your heart this week? Is it serving you or stealing joy?

Contemplate

Ask someone in the group to read John 15:18-25 aloud for others to hear and contemplate. Discuss thoughts on the below questions:

1. What is your first reaction to hearing Jesus's honest words here? Is it fear? Is it relief? Does anything confuse you? If so, why?

2. When you examine your daily actions at this moment, do you identify more as a citizen of heaven or a citizen of earth?

3. Have you felt persecuted because of your beliefs/stance on moral/ethical issues before? If so, what was the situation (physical/verbal or emotional) and how did it affect you?

Consider

1. In order to become a victor over persecution, we need to shift our mentality from a nationalist perspective to that of exiles, with our primary citizenship belonging to Heaven. How would our responses to worldly critique change if we were to re-orient our minds like this?

2. In order to prepare ourselves for persecution, we need to break the fear of human opinion. Is there a specific area of our lives in which we've submitted to a specific human authority? Why do we think this specific area is so hard for us?

3. What might "working out our convictions in advance" look like for us if we implemented this in our personal lives? In our work lives? On social media?

Create

Take some time for all to reflect and pray for the Lord to reveal where we might be softening or muting the gospel in our daily lives. Once identified, allow time to also understand the root/reason why we are doing this. For those who are comfortable, allow them to share both points, and if time allows, ask the group to pray popcorn-style for those who want help in relinquishing the fear of persecution and cultivating a heart of love for those who persecute them.

Cover

Pray for self-awareness as to where we might be holding back from being true image bearers of Jesus, and for strength and conviction in our citizenship in Heaven. Pray by name for those who have persecuted us recently.

Week 10 – City on a Hill



NOVEMBER 29TH, 2020



DISRUPTIVE
DISCIPLESHIP

A CITY ON A HILL CANNOT BE HIDDEN

YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.
A CITY ON A HILL CANNOT BE HIDDEN.

MATTHEW 5:14

CHURCH.NYC



Teaching Text

Matthew 5:13-16:

“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.”

Recap

To wrap up our series on disruptive discipleship before Thanksgiving, Pastor Jon preached on Jesus's closing metaphor for the Beatitudes: that those who embody Jesus's kingdom are the salt and light of the world. The Beatitudes are the values of God's kingdom manifested in our personalities. In line with 2 Corinthians 13, which calls us to examine ourselves to see whether or not we are in the faith, they are an objective standard to measure ourselves with and form our identities around, rather than public opinion.

Pastor Jon begins by contrasting a vision of modern-day Christians under the Moral Influence Theory versus the Kingdom Embodiment Theory. The Moral Influence Theory, which has captured much of our imagination, says that when Christians show up, they should be nice. Rather than this watered-down, colorless version, the Kingdom Embodiment Theory states that when the Holy Spirit is producing the Beatitude characteristics in us, we

embody the reality of the rule and reign of God. When God's Kingdom is embodied, we as disciples can function in a potent and provocative way.

When Jesus preached Matthew 5:13-16, what would the 1st century heroes have heard instead of how we hear 'be nice in the neighborhood'? In the 1st century, salt was an extremely valuable commodity and also used to officialize covenants. Similarly, when Jesus talks about salt, He is primarily talking about radical allegiance to Him in a culture of compromise. When he talks about light, Jesus asks us to engage in boundary-crossing missions, to show up with the light in us, to the places that are dark. What Jesus is after is not the big or dramatic, but the potent, through small things done with integrity. In fact, Jesus's warning is to be potent, or there will be no place for you.

Unlike the Islamic philosophy of Ketman, which is to create a private sanctuary of the mind that isn't compromised while externally doing what is needed in order to get along with the culture, Jesus shows us that the better strategy is to be honest, and to hold our convictions with humility. In being salt and light with purity and integrity, we can become potent disciples of our times that our cities and communities need.

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Discussion Guide

Connect

1. What are some things you consider to be potent?

Check In

Do you have a memory of being impacted by a small act of faithfulness?

Contemplate

Read 1 John 2:3-6 aloud and take a moment to contemplate the questions below:

1. What does it mean to live as Jesus did?
2. How can the vision, values, love, and call of Jesus manifest themselves in your personality and circumstances?

Consider

1. Jesus envisions authentic and potent disciples who live out the beatitudes and purify, preserve, and bring out the flavor of his kingdom in the world. Who is someone that you associate with this kind of potent discipleship?
2. The darkness of our current time is an opportunity for the church to step in and bring boundary-crossing light. What does crossing boundaries look like for you?
3. Jesus doesn't say that disciples need to be liked, but recognized as different. There is something provocative about someone humbly and sincerely holding to their convictions. Are there any areas in your life where you find yourself giving into compromise or convenience to just "get along" with culture?

Create

We are called to be potent, provocative, radical disciples who are willing to bring the light of the gospel to hard and scary places. Take a few minutes to reflect and pray for the Lord to reveal where He is asking you to take your light. Brainstorm a list of different ways you can bring the hope and light of Christ to these people or places during this season. After everyone has made their list, ask a few volunteers to share their ideas.

Cover

Take some time to pray over the people and places the Spirit brought to mind, and ask God to go before you in these spaces to prepare hearts to receive him. Pray for courage to hold on to your convictions humbly and sincerely as you go out into the world this week.