

MATTHEW 5:3-11

- In this passage of scripture, Jesus is describing one person, that has these character traits.
- Jesus is essentially saying that a person is happy, if they have these traits.
- This is Jesus, teaching us how to be, “happy”.
- It would be safe to replace the word **blessed** with the word **happy**.
- *Recap from sermon 4, we looked at what it means to hunger and thirst for God and what are some of the things that can cause us to lose our hunger and thirst for to God.*
- *We looked at how the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches can cause us to lose our hunger and thirst for God.*
- This week, we’re going to be studying: **MATTHEW 5:7** Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.
- It’s one thing expecting God to be merciful to us, when we sin, but how willing are we, to show mercy and forgiveness to others, when they’ve wronged us?

PROVERBS 25:21-22 “If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat; And if he is thirsty, give him water to drink; For so you will **heap coals of fire on his head**, And the LORD will reward you”

- There was a practice of having coals burning in containers at head height, to warm one’s head in cold times. The idea is that the one offending you would have a change of mind when seeing your forgiveness and good deeds.
- Forgiveness is a wonderful idea, till we have to forgive others.

MATTHEW 6:14-15 (NLT2nd) “If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins”

- It’s significant that Jesus said this, straight after He taught us the model prayer.
- The crux is that for our prayers to be effective, we have to be in a place of receiving mercy and forgiveness AND giving mercy and forgiveness.
- Mercy does not mean that we’ll never have to face the consequences of sinful actions. Godly chastisement is a tutor to keep us from falling in to the same sinful habits.
- Consider Samson, king David and the other man hanging on a cross next to Jesus.
- Samson died when the building collapsed on him, David’s child from Bathsheba, died and the man hanging on a cross next to Jesus also died.
- All had to face the consequences of their actions, while God showed them mercy.
- Forgiveness does not mean that the person has changed and it’s more about the forgiver’s freedom, than anything else.
- However, the Bible does teach that repentance will show true fruit:

MATTHEW 3:8, LUKE 3:8 Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance
(NLT2nd) Prove by the way you live that you have repented of your sins and turned to God.

ACTS 26:20(NLT2nd) and prove they have changed by the good things they do.

- Unforgiveness is like you drinking poison, in the hope that the other person dies.
- We can ask God to help us forgive others, before they show fruits of repentance.
- Forgiveness means treating the person as if the transgression never happened.
- We can forgive or “release” someone in our hearts, **even before they’ve changed**, by not allowing bitterness to poison us:

Bitterness is a killer

- When we allow unforgiveness to settle in our hearts, it festers and rots to become bitterness.
- Bitterness can hinder us from being baptized into The Holy Spirit. Consider this passage of scripture about Simon the sorcerer: **ACTS 8:14-24:**
- **Vs23** states: For I see that you are **poisoned by bitterness** and bound by iniquity.”
- The apostle Peter tells the sorcery to repent in **vs22** but he still refuses and asks them to do the praying for him instead in **vs24.**

HEBREWS 12:12-15 “Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, 13 and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed. 14 Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord 15 looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any **root of bitterness** springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled”

JAMES 3:13-17 “Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. 14 But if you have **bitter envy** and **self-seeking** in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. 15 This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. 16 For where envy and self-seeking exist, **confusion and every evil thing** are there. 17 But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, **willing to yield**, (**submit to Godly leadership** {Own emphasis}) full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy”

(MSG) “Do you want to be counted wise, to build a reputation for wisdom? Here’s what you do: Live well, live wisely, live humbly. It’s the way you live, not the way you talk, that counts. Mean-spirited ambition isn’t wisdom. Boasting that you are wise isn’t wisdom. Twisting the truth to make yourselves sound wise isn’t wisdom. It’s the furthest thing from wisdom—it’s animal cunning, devilish conniving. Whenever you’re trying to look better than others or get the better of others, things fall apart and everyone ends up at the others’ throats.

Real wisdom, God’s wisdom, begins with a holy life and is characterized by getting along with others. It is gentle and reasonable, overflowing with mercy and blessings, not hot one day and cold the next, not two-faced.”

- Consider this medical research:

Unforgiveness is classified in medical books as a disease. According to Dr. Steven Standiford, chief of surgery at the Cancer Treatment Centers of America, refusing to forgive makes people sick and keeps them that way.

With that in mind, forgiveness therapy is now being used to help treat diseases, such as cancer.

"It's important to treat emotional wounds or disorders because they really can hinder someone's reactions to the treatments, even someone's willingness to pursue treatment," Standiford explained.

Of all cancer patients, 61 percent have forgiveness issues, and of those, more than half are severe, according to research by Dr. Michael Barry, a pastor and the author of the book, [The Forgiveness Project](#).

"Harboring these negative emotions this anger and hatred, creates a state of chronic anxiety," he said.

"Chronic anxiety very predictably produces excess adrenaline and cortisol, which deplete the production of natural killer cells, which is your body's foot soldier in the fight against cancer," he explained.

Barry said the first step in learning to forgive is to realize how much we have been forgiven by God.

"When a person forgives from the heart which is the gold standard we see in Matthew 18, forgiveness from the heart we find that they are able to find a sense of peacefulness.

Quite often our patients refer to that as a feeling of lightness," he said.

Barry said most people don't realize what a burden anger and hatred were until they let them go.

- In **MATTHEW 19:8** and **MARK 3:5** Jesus speaks about the hardness of the heart. The greek words used are porosis and sklerokardia, which is were we get our word "sclerosis" which is used in medical terms to describe hardening of the arteries.
- We can only really learn to forgive others, once we've realized just how much Jesus Christ has forgiven us.

CARE GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Describe in your own words, what you understand by the word "forgiveness"
2. In what ways can we tell, whether or not we've forgiven somebody who's wronged us?
3. Why do you think God won't forgive us, as described in MATTHEW 6:14-15?
4. What can we do, to ensure bitterness does not take hold in our lives?
5. Examine your own heart and let The Holy Spirit show you if there's any hidden bitterness or unforgiveness towards anyone.
6. Repent of the unforgiveness and bitterness and pray for one another about these issues.