

READ MATTHEW 4:12-17 WITH 5:1-12, "HAPPINESS IS..."

- 1.A. According to Matthew 4 when did Jesus begin His teaching ministry? Where did He first begin to teach and preach? Why did He target that area in verse 14? What message of light did He share in verse 17?
- 1.B. As we continue to reflect on the background material to Christ's great sermon, read Matthew 4:23-25. As Jesus traveled throughout Galilee, what three tasks did He accomplish? How was He received? According to verse 25 who followed the Christ and where did they come from? (*Note: The term, Decapolis, refers to a ten-separate-city-area that was east of the Jordan River. Our word, metroplex, best describes the word, Decapolis.*) If you have access to a biblical map, how far were the people traveling in order to hear and see Jesus?

Note: Matthew 5-7 records Jesus' wonderful Sermon on the Mount. This section of scripture is one of the most important sections of the four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John). It is very important, however, to realize that Jesus' sermon does not present two great truths. First, the way of salvation is not presented by the Savior. Rather the sermon shows those, already in a right relationship with God, how they shall conduct their lives. Secondly, the truth of the indwelling Holy Spirit is not presented as Jesus spoke to the crowds.

- 2.A. Before the Most Holy God, who can stand rightly? See Romans 3:10-12. Fortunately, God provided for us even though we are naturally "worthless." How can we become right before God in Romans 3:21-23? Also see John 1:12 and John 3:36. What did Jesus do in order for us to be made right in Romans 3:24-25 and Hebrews 9:28?
- 2.B. As Jesus teaches the people in Matthew, He, of course, has not yet gone to the cross and given "His life as a ransom for many." Therefore, before Christ died, how did one become right with the Holy God? See Genesis 15:6 with Habakkuk 2:4.
- 2.C. **THOUGHT QUESTION:** If you were to stand before God's holy throne today, would you be found right before Him? Have you placed your faith in Jesus who gave His life just for you?

- 3.A. Now, as we begin to delve into Jesus' greatest sermon, in Matthew 5:1-2 where did Jesus go in order to teach? Toward whom did He address His teaching? Why do you think He sat down to teach?
- 3.B. Verses 3-11 begin with the words, blessed or happy is, and these verses are commonly called "the Beatitudes". What do you think the word, blessed, means? How has God blessed us in Ephesians 2:4-7 and why has he showered us with His blessings? What must we do to experience the blessings of God? See Ephesians 2:8-9.
- 3.C. In our society happiness is a temporary feeling often based upon circumstances. The happiness God gives us; however, is grounded in Him. His happiness is a permanent state of being as we possess the favor of God. Are you happy today? Why, or why not? With which happiness do you identify: the temporary feeling or the permanent state of being?
- 4.A. In Matthew 5:3-12 Jesus shares eight characteristics of those who are blessed. Each characteristic comes with a corresponding promise. What first trait is found in verse 3? What promise belongs to them?
- 4.B. People who exhibit this first quality are those who completely depend on God and not themselves. Those who are "spiritually bankrupt" realize that they can't please God in and of themselves. **CHALLENGE QUESTION:** Read Isaiah 6:1-8 with Philippians 2:3-11. As you compare Isaiah and Christ's experiences, how can this quality be developed in us when our society teaches us to be just the opposite?
- 4.C. Read Luke 18:9-14. Jesus, in this story, contrasts two individuals. In verse 9 why did Jesus tell the story? In your own words describe the two men and their actions in the temple. Which man exhibited a poverty of spirit, and how did God reward him?

- 5.A. As we get back to the Beatitudes, what second characteristic and promise is in verse 4? What should cause us to grieve? See David's example in Psalm 51:3-4. In your opinion, what other biblical characters grieved in this manner?
- 5.B. According to Psalm 51:5 sin is not just a one-time act. Fortunately, restoration and renewal are always available when we mourn and confess our sin. See 1 John 1:9. Psalm 51:1-12 reflects David's desire for repentance. Verses 13-17 describe David's renewed spiritual life. What evidences of his renewed spirit do we see in these verses?
- 5.C. Our third characteristic is meekness in Matthew 5:5. What promises can the meek claim? What does it mean to be meek? See Matthew 11:28-29. Read Psalm 37:3-13. How does the psalmist describe a meek person in verses 3-8? (Hint: focus on the verbs in these verses.) According to the psalmist in Psalm 37:7-13 how should the meek react and respond to the wicked? What will happen to the wicked? What fate awaits those who are meek?
- 5.D. Is your life characterized by meekness? How can we enhance a meek spirit in our lives?
- 6.A. What fourth characteristic is listed in Matthew 5:6? Those who exhibit this quality are promised righteousness. Using a dictionary or Bible Dictionary, define righteousness. Define righteousness in your own words.
- 6.B. Many people in our culture do not seem to "hunger and thirst after righteousness". How can we develop a hunger and thirst for God and for the things of God? Be as practical as possible. Also see Psalm 119:11-16 and Proverbs 2:1-5 for some help as you start thinking along these lines.