

BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO MOURN

(Matthew 5:4)

September 14-20th, 2014



WELCOME & SHARING

With these first few community group gatherings you may want to spend a few extra minutes welcoming and chatting. Don't OVERDO it but take the opportunity to make people feel welcome. Definitely do introductions for the first couple months, even every week (it communicates you are open to and expect newcomers). You may share a little about community groups and what your group will look like, what you hope to accomplish, etc. (see pp. 1 & 2 in your Community Group Leader Training Booklet).

Share some upcoming happenings, also include upcoming cGroup gatherings:

- **WORK DAY @ FLORAL AVE.** Saturday, September 20th 9am-noon. Tidying and painting! (The next one is Sunday night September 28th).

Opener Question: What's your favorite thing about the change of seasons into autumn?

STUDY/DISCUSSION

(1) Let's play word association. What comes to mind when I say the following words: (do them one at a time)

- mourning
- comfort
- kingdom
- joy

(2) Is there a difference between mourning and being gloomy? If so, how would you describe the difference?

(3) Before we get in the Beatitudes, let's look at some Old Testament background. Read Lamentations 1:1-21 together. What are some words and phrases the author uses to describe the emotional reactions to the fall of Jerusalem?

(4) Now read the following passages from the prophets. In each case, what do the prophets look forward to? (or break into 3 groups, each group working on 1)

- Isaiah 40:1-5

- Isaiah 61:1-7

- Jeremiah 31:1-14

>>READ>> Matthew 5:1-12.

(5) How do you think “Blessed are those who mourn...” is connected to the rest of the Beatitudes?

(6) What do you think Jesus wants us to mourn? (Or put another way: What is there to mourn in the world? in our own lives?)

(7) In what sense was Jesus himself a mourner? (Read Luke 13:34; 19:41-42)

(8) How does Jesus comfort those who mourn? (Read Luke 4:16-21)

(9) Eugene Peterson writes, “One of the immediate changes that the gospel makes is grammatical; *we* instead of *I*; *our* instead of *my*; *us* instead of *me*.” In what sense does living in community increase opportunities for “mourning”? Is it worth it? Why or why not?

(10) How does spiritual mourning lead us to live on mission in our city, neighborhood, school or workplace? Is God calling you to move toward a specific kind of hurt? Or to reach out to a specific person?

(11) Time permitting, pass out and read the attached handout. Does anything here help you better understand the second Beatitude? (Or take it home and use it in your personal devotional time).

PRAYER

Take some time and pray together. You can pray as a large group, break into smaller groups, split up into men and women, etc. If you share prayer requests, post them to the City so that your group can continue to be praying for each other.

In deep sadness human beings are in God's hands more than at any other time... Jesus beautifies mourning, not moping. He does not counsel the long face. He does, however, bless real sadness, a state that can as easily coexist with an outwardly happy life as do all the other normal contradictions of living. (The deepest joy may reside in persons with the deepest sadness). Sadness and joy are not mutually exclusive; they are often cause and effect. (Much folk music lives from this strange but strong combination). Jesus lends his authority to the perception that it is those for whom sadness is deep that God is real. (Frederick Dale Bruner)

Blessed are those who mourn when things are not as they were meant to be, because God mourns with you. (Michael Graham)

We need, then, to observe that the Christian life, according to Jesus, is not all joy and laughter... The truth is that there are such things as Christian tears, and too few of us ever weep them. Jesus wept over the sin of others, over the bitter consequences in judgment and death, and over the impenitent city which would not receive him. We too should weep more over the evil in the world, as did the godly men of biblical times. (John Stott)

The emphasis [in the second Beatitude] lies on the *bearing* of sorrow. The disciple-community does not shake off sorrow as though it were no concern of its own, but willingly bears it. And in this way they show how close are the bonds which bind them to the rest of humanity. But at the same time they do not go out of their way to look for suffering, or try to contract out of it by adopting an attitude of contempt and disdain. They simply bear the suffering which comes their way as they try to follow Jesus Christ, and bear it for *his* sake. Sorrow cannot tire them or wear them down, it cannot embitter them or cause them to break down under the strain; far from it, for they bear their sorrow in the strength of him who bears them up, who bore the whole suffering of the world upon the cross. They stand as the bearers of sorrow in the fellowship of the Crucified: they stand as strangers in the world in the power of him who was such a stranger to the world that it crucified him. This is their comfort, or better still, this *Man* is their comfort, the Comforter (cf Luke 2:25). The community of strangers find their comfort in the cross, they are comforted by being cast upon the place where the Comforter of Israel awaits them. Thus do they find their true home with their crucified Lord, both here and in eternity. (Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*)

You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; you have loosed my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness, O Lord my God, I will give thanks to you forever! that my glory may sing your praise and not be silent. (Psalm 30:11-12)