

KEYS TO HAPPINESS

MATTHEW 5:1-12

"One day as he saw the crowds gathering, Jesus went up on the mountainside and sat down. His disciples gathered around him, and he began to teach them." -Matt. 5:1-2

As you begin your group time use one or more of the following questions to get the conversational ball rolling:

What makes you happy in life? What brings a smile to your face and can brighten your day?

What did you pursue thinking it would make you happy, but maybe had the opposite effect or was an empty promise in the end?

In this first section of Jesus' sermon we examine what many call "The Beatitudes" originating from the Latin word *beatus* meaning "blessed, happy." Each beginning with "Blessed are..." these short statements summarize the essence of the Sermon on the Mount. Here Jesus addresses the age old question, "How do I find happiness?" What we realize is that in Jesus we find more than a temporary or circumstantial feeling of happiness, and instead enter a state of well-being in relationship to God that belongs to those who respond to His ministry.

Jesus pointed out the first key to happiness is to **BE AWARE OF YOUR CONDITION.** **Read together Matthew 5:1-3.**

What does it mean to be "poor in spirit," and who are these people Jesus speaks of?

Read Luke **12:32-34**. What does this verse reaffirm in our main passage about those who are willing to confess their spiritual bankruptcy?

Where in your life do you need to recognize your brokenness and inability to overcome the punches this world is throwing? How can you surrender, or tag Jesus to take your place in the fight?

The second key to happiness is **BE AWARE THERE'S COMFORT.** **Read Matthew 5:4-6 together.**

Share with the group a time you may have felt blessing or comfort in the midst of mourning. What does **Revelation 21:4** say about our current/future state?

God used Jeremiah to bring a word of comfort and encouragement to Israel. Read **Jeremiah 31:12**. Referring to Israel, why do you think God restored them to their position of blessing and abundance?

Why does God restore us through times of difficulty and sorrow? Thinking about the purpose of a garden, how can your life be "like a watered garden?"

What does it mean to "hunger and thirst for righteousness," and how will this comfort and fill you more than the things of this world?

Finally, Jesus indicates one of the keys to happiness is to **BE AWARE THERE ARE REWARDS**. Read **Matthew 5:7-12** together.

Have you ever allowed something to block you from following Jesus? When have you felt like you missed out on rewards because following Him was too hard?

What type of treatment did the prophets endure, and what rewards did they reap because of their faithfulness? Give an example from scripture if possible.

What unhealthy things might you need to clean out of your life to receive God's rewards today? Use **1 Peter 2:1-3** as a starting point. What benefit do you read?

Pray:

As you close your time together pray that God would make you aware of your condition before Him. Pray that God would give you comfort as you walk through the fiery furnace of this life knowing there are rewards here and now, as well as in eternity. Ask God to show you the meaning of true happiness through a life submitted to His authority.

Connect:

Matthew 5:1 says, "Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down his disciples came to him. And he opened his mouth and taught them saying . . ." The audience is probably two concentric circles: the inner circle of the disciples, and the outer circle of the "crowds." It says in verse 1 that he taught his disciples. But look at the end of the sermon in Matthew 7:28, "And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes." So it is clear that the crowds were listening and that Jesus wanted them to listen even though the sermon is primarily addressed to professing disciples. This is the way our Sunday services at Village are conceived. Primarily the word is prepared to feed and strengthen and inspire the worship and life of God's people. But we pray that more and more there will be the curious, the onlookers, the skeptical, the searchers, the doubters who come to Village the way the crowds gathered in behind the disciples on the mount. Where do you stand, and what can you do to encourage more people in the crowd to gather around and hear the message God would have for them?