

PLUNDERING THE TREASURE TROVE: INSTALLING GEMS FROM JESUS

A Life Group Discussion Guide for *The Sermon on the Mount* as translated in ***A FAR BETTER LIFE***

James G. Friesen, Ph.D.
Revised, August, 2011

Welcome to "Installing Gems from Jesus." This revised discussion guide brings new ideas together with a newly developed clinical tool. You will learn to identify gems from Jesus, and how to bring them into your daily life. The new tool is *Installing God's Word*. You can learn all about it in the article with that name at jamesgfriesen.com. When you *install* gems from Jesus, you will be ready for any problem that comes up.

After studying and leading group discussions about this sermon for more than 12 years, I am rather stuck. I really haven't been ready to "move on to something else" the whole while, because what I see in this sermon continues to inspire me. New gems keep emerging from the text. The deeper I go the more I find, and, of course, I would like to help other people see what I see. I hope that this guide will stir within you a deeper desire to discover the beauty that abounds in this sermon.

Starting in January of 2011, I learned to combine "soaking the scriptures" with some recently discovered brain exercises, and have been referring to it as *Installing God's Word*. I use it a lot, especially near the end of counseling sessions, and people love it. Get ready to let some joy sprinkle itself into your day, when you install a gem. Dig in and open yourself anew to the richness of listening to Jesus.

As a psychologist I have been using these ideas from Jesus. In *A Far Better Life*, Part 1 covers the teachings in this sermon, and Part 2 applies them to Christian Counseling. Even though this book is about counseling, *these ideas from Jesus* are for everybody – not only for people in counseling. Readers tell me that they spend most of their time talking about Chapter 2, which is a translation of *The Sermon on the Mount*. People also talk about the final chapter, "Lessons about Healing Hearts", but they keep coming back to the second chapter. That is why this study guide covers only that chapter. It contains precious treasure for us all, in and out of Christian Counseling.

Once I began translating this sermon, I could not stop re-working the ideas and scrutinizing what Jesus was saying. The message seemed too good to be true. Jesus' words kept ringing in my ears, and I kept coming back to the sermon, continually inspired. People who have discussed this material in group settings have told me that they keep coming back to it time and again, in subsequent meetings, which suggests that they are having the same reaction as mine. Jesus' ideas are refreshing and clear, and will not be dismissed. I have not found anything else that even comes close. This sermon reached out and grabbed me, starting with *The Beatitudes*, and Jesus drew me closer to Himself, the closer I got to this sermon. These are the most important three chapters in the most important book of all time. Please pardon all of these clichés! It's a gusher, a goldmine, a pinnacle – let's just call it "The Treasure Trove."

Finding Gems

Installing God's Word puts people deeply into biblical truth. While talking with people, before and after that process, they have given me a few ideas about how it works best. Let's take a popular passage as an example – *Ezekiel 36:25-27*. It reads like this:

This is what the Sovereign Lord says. "I will wash you with pure water and you will be clean. I will give you a new heart. I will give you a heart of flesh to replace your heart of stone. I will place my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my ways, and keep my decrees."

As precious and reassuring as that reads, it contains a few gems placed rather closely together. There are gems about God guaranteeing that He will do the cleansing, about the promise of being clean, about receiving a new heart, about receiving God's Spirit and even about how He will help us keep His decrees. It can be hard to focus on all of them at the same time. *Installing* a passage with so many beautiful truths in it can, at times, prevent each gem from coming into focus as it should.

I recently *installed* those verses with a group by reading the whole passage, and then narrowed the focus to, "I will place my spirit within you and help you walk in my ways." That is the gem we *installed*, and everyone got a visual. One person saw the spirit being placed in her heart, which seemed to include more of the passage than the narrowed-down gem. The idea I'm trying to develop here is when you settle on one aspect of the verse – a few simple words – it seems most effective. Even for the person mentioned above, her vision was simple – God's Spirit was being placed in her heart.

As you work through the sermon and the discussion guide, I hope that you will begin to find new gems from Jesus. *Using your own words* to capture the gist of the gem, speak them aloud as you *install* them. One person calls this, "personalizing it." Your gem will be whatever God brings into focus for you from His Word. Write it down, *install* it, and go back to it a few times during the day.

Here is the above passage as I have personalized it. "Lord, wash me with pure water so I will be clean. Give me a new heart and place your spirit within me, so that I can walk with you more closely and follow your decrees."

As you learn to install gems, you may want to use just a part of the verse you have personalized. "Place your spirit within me" would be just right to install, as would "Lord, help me to walk more closely with you today", or "Lord, wash me with pure water so I will be clean." As you begin to focus on any passage, the Lord will highlight particular words or lines for you, so that you can install them.

You will find abundant gems as you enter into this sermon's study, but let me point out one that is a life-changer.

"The Kingdom of the Heavens" means that the Father is right by your side, ready to help you with any problem, any time you call on Him. It's more than "You've got a friend." It's more like, "You've got a resource with unlimited power." **Gem #1: God is right by my side, ready to help me with any problem that comes up.** (Matthew 4:17.)

Please *install* this gem, and expect to go back to the words and the visual during the day. It is advisable not to *install* more than one biblical passage at a time. Each gem is enough to focus on for at least a day. You can enjoy other gems during other days.

The Sermon's Setting

Shortly after He was baptized, Jesus began His ministry by speaking in some of the local village synagogues. Lives were touched right away. His crystal clear message reached people's hearts. His first sermons in those settings were not recorded in full, but we have this "nutshell version" in *Matthew 4:19*. From it we have found Gem #1.

You can turn your life around because *the Kingdom of the Heavens* is at hand. The Father is right beside you, ready to help you with any problem that comes up. (The wording and the meaning of this teaching are discussed in *A Far Better Life*, page 9.)

"The Kingdom" was what the Jewish nation had been awaiting, since Moses. Jesus' first message announced the arrival of the "Kingdom" promised by so many prophets. The most-used translations of this text fail to convey how life-changing this message was. By calling it "good news", translators completely understate its power. "Gospel", which is the correct word, should be explained in the translation. It is the type of "good news" that Jesus was announcing. "Gospel" is the word used for the message that a new king has been born, or that the government has been replaced. Jesus says:

Welcome to the new era. The long-promised Kingdom is here. The era of being stuck in an oppressive life is over. You can begin anew, because the Father's presence now surrounds you. Call on Him! See for yourself that His guidance and power will pull you through hard times, and you will be the victor. The *Kingdom* gets God's presence into your life when needed.

That hope-bearing message was solid gold. His audience was ready to listen to anything else He had to say, if that much was true. They flocked to hear Him.

As we find in the first chapter of *A Far Better Life*, gem #1 comes from the term, "The Kingdom of the Heavens." In that culture, "heavens", plural, meant "the air around you; your living space." This told people to invite the Father into their living space. Jesus was saying that His kingdom is wherever they may be. He will supply His power whenever He is invited. "Call on the Father. He is close at hand." How completely simple that is, yet how rich.

Please keep in mind that this new teaching was attracting widespread attention well before He delivered *The Sermon on the Mount*. It stood alone – an unprecedented message, dramatically different from anything ever taught. Its immediate, helpful effect is why so many folks followed Him. People were strongly drawn to the idea that the creator of the universe is "at hand", ready to be a caring Father. People came to hear Him from every remote village, and followed Him up the mountainside where they heard this sermon. The first gem had led them to follow Him, and, as it turned out that day, that gem is woven throughout the whole sermon. The Father is available to help us bring these teachings to life in our daily walk. What gem could be more valuable?

It would be great to do some time travel, to hear the full, word-for-word presentations of His first message. He must have said quite a bit more than we have in the "nutshell version" from Matthew's account. It would have been captivating to see His facial expression, hear His voice inflection and discover how He used everyday language.

A time traveler would also want to hear the entire *Sermon on the Mount*, with all of the examples and connecting points. What we have is an outline of what He said that day, but not the entire sermon. In this discussion you will look at an outline of *The Sermon on the Mount*, which helped His listeners remember the sermon. Those times were much different for dedicated learners. Without pencils, papers, recorders, power point projectors, TV broadcasts or newspapers, these listeners used mental outlines as memory aids. Rabbis would arrange their comments like that to help people remember major points. Today's preachers print out key sermon points, complete with blank spaces, as a memory aide. As you will see, the "outline approach" shows the flow of ideas in the original sermon.

Here is a little more about how outlines were used back then. They emphasized the main point by placing it in the center, not at the end, and the sub-points lined up before and after it. The first half pointed ahead to the main point, and the second half pointed back to it. So just what is the main point – the climax – of this sermon? *The Lord's Prayer*. If that is true, then what does this suggest about the sermon?

1. *The Lord's Prayer* summarizes the sermon.
2. The first half of the sermon shows how wounds keep us distant from the Father, and block His entry into our life. Wounds block our prayers. We are only able to pray *The Lord's Prayer* with our whole heart if those wounds are helped.
3. Both halves of the sermon provide details about what it takes to turn every area of our life over to Him, which is a major theme of *The Lord's Prayer*.
4. The closing point of the sermon, about the house on the rock, lines up with the sermon's opening teaching, *The Beatitudes*. They reassure us that the Father will be with us during the hardest of times, which is also what the "house on the rock" passage says.
5. The wounds from the sermon's first half need to be taken care of so that the family-of-God traits, mentioned in the second half, can direct our lives. Wounds make it harder to put the teachings in the second half into practice. Both halves point to the climax – "Talk everything over with the Father, to heal the wounds that keep you stuck, so that you can develop Family-of-God traits."
6. Here is another solid gold truth: The sermon's second half shows us what our character will look like in the family of God.

As you can see, this approach presents *The Sermon on the Mount* in a completely different light than most people are accustomed to. Instead of taking this sermon as a collection of Jesus' teachings about many topics, including prayer, this outline suggests that the sermon is carefully organized, from start to finish, in a way that listeners can easily remember. Everything points to overcoming wounds, to praying and to developing lives that change the world because we are in the family of God.

I believe that *The Sermon on the Mount* is a more fully developed account of the early sermons. For you time travelers, in case you don't get back there to hear Jesus' first sermons, I believe that it is close enough for you to read *The Sermon on the Mount*. You will find that this sermon most eloquently expresses the mature development of the seeds from the early sermon. *When Jesus first urged people to turn their lives around by inviting the Father into their living space, (from the earlier sermon) they probably did not know how to do that. This sermon spells that out.*

A Brief Outline of *The Sermon on the Mount*

Keep these points in mind when you study this outline. The first and last points (1 and 1') are related, points in the middle of each half (2 and 2') also are related, and the main point (3) is in the middle. Here is how those points line up.

1. Trust that the Father will be there to help you during hard times.
 2. Let Him help with your heart wounds, so you will not live from your hurt.
 3. Put the Father first, and talk everything over with Him. Get His power and guidance into every area of your life.
 - 2'. Seek His guidance to develop His family traits, and to live from a heart shaped by Him.
- 1'. Let this sermon guide your life, and you will do well during the hardest times.

A More Detailed Outline

1. *The Beatitudes* (Matthew 5:3-12). The Father will be with you during the hardest of times, particularly when you are spiritually broken, overcome with sadness, treated unfairly, trying to live correctly, seriously drained from being merciful, deeply longing to stay pure, overmatched in your peacemaking efforts and when you are persecuted because you follow Jesus. Because He is with you, you will find yourself full of joy. Invite Him into your living space, and you will enter into the Kingdom of the Heavens.

2. You don't have to let your life be guided by your hurt. Wounds can control your heart when they bring up hopelessness, contempt, lust, dishonesty, retaliation and false righteousness (Matthew 5:13-6:6). In each of these, Jesus stresses it is crucial to win the battle at the heart level, or it will surely be lost. "Taking care of these wounds" is often what we think of when we speak of "healing." Jesus does not definitively spell out exactly how this happens, apart from continually seeking the Father's guidance.

3. *The Lord's Prayer* (Matthew 6:7-13). Talk everything over with the Father. He is to receive highest honor. Invite Him to take control of every area in your life, just as He is in control of Heaven, to help you with relying on Him, with forgiveness, with staying pure, and with living each day from your heart instead of from your hurt. (The underlined material summarizes the sermon.)

2'. When hurt no longer clogs up your heart, the Father will be right there to guide you to live from your transformed heart. He will bring these characteristics into your daily life – forgiveness, genuineness, peacefulness, loving relationships and sincerity. These declare to everyone who your Father is (*Matthew 6:14-7:23*).

1'. Building your life on this sermon is like building your house on a rock. During the hardest of times He will be with you, and you will withstand any storm. But be very clear about one thing – hearing this sermon is not enough. Only when it directs your life, will you be able to withstand the force of any storm. Without His guidance and power, you will face certain destruction (*Matthew 7:24-27*).

TABLE OF CONTENTS FOR THESE TEN DISCUSSIONS

1. The Father in Your Living Space – Jesus Stirs Excitement throughout the Countryside
2. An Overview of *The Sermon on the Mount*, from the Vantage Point of *The Lord's Prayer*
3. Thriving During the Hardest of Times – *The Beatitudes* and the Storms that Can Destroy You
4. Hopelessness, Peacefulness and Your Heart
5. Contempt, Loving Relationships and Your Heart
6. Lust, Loving Relationships and Your Heart
7. Dishonesty, Genuineness and Your Heart
8. Retaliation, Forgiveness and Your Heart
9. False Righteousness, Sincerity and Your Heart
10. Living in The Father's Family

Guidelines for Leading the Groups

I like to open with worship music and end with 15 to 30 minutes of prayer. Groups of any size can use these guidelines. For groups larger than eight people, it becomes hard for everyone to stay involved. In those groups it helps to put people into smaller groups of 4 or less, for the meeting's second part, so that every person gets into the discussion.

You will find Opening Questions for sharing in a group of any size. Not every question needs to be discussed, but take 10 to 15 minutes getting people involved. *Feel free to introduce questions of your own, covering material as you feel led.* Then separate people into smaller groups. Here is a tip: Splitting couples and close friends into separate groups breaks patterns of silence. The Small Group questions can take from 30 to 45 minutes. Individuals will uncover new feelings, so breaking up into small groups is one way to insure that people will be able to get their feelings supported. It is precisely there – in groups of four or less – that the family of God process emerges.

When the groups get back together at the end, people will be ready to share what they discussed, and the process can become more family-like than ever. *Install* a gem together after prayer time. The prayer tends to go deeper after people get back together from the smaller groups, than it does for meetings that omit splitting into smaller groups.

Try to read the material ahead of time. These ten sessions are based on the first three chapters in *A Far Better Life*, so you will want to become familiar with those chapters. If you do not read the particular section ahead of time, please do not miss the meeting. You will still be able to join in because the content is not complicated, and the book's page numbers are included for most of the questions. Whatever you learn in these discussions should be shared because this helps it come right into your life. Create a warm "family of God" reception at each meeting so people will speak from their heart. This is the process that we are hoping to create. Try to have some snacks at the end, because this brings people's walls down, and encourages them to open up. If people have opened up their feelings during the discussion, it helps to have some informal, chatting time at the end to gradually bring the process to a close.

A Key Idea: One person told me he has never been able to turn his life completely over to God, causing him great anguish. Hopelessness and alcoholism persist despite his best efforts to get Christian help. I briefly explained the first gem, about the Father in our living space. Although he had been a Christian for years, that really opened up his eyes. Then we discussed the ideas from meeting #4, about hopelessness. Here is this man's key: He needs to seek the Father's guidance and power each time he considers drinking alcohol. That is where he comes to a "crossroad moment." "Am I going to go this way or that?" We went over the previous time he had been drinking, and found a hopeless part of him. After prayer for healing for the hopelessness, he began to believe that the first gem could help him turn every area of his life over to God. For each crossroad moment, he can turn to the Father right then and there. Each problem that is overcome gets God into one more area of his life.

It is not as though a person can just turn their whole life over to God at once, as he had believed. Getting the Father into every area of life involves character building. It takes time and it takes a plan. The plan is to welcome the Father into every moment when hurts come up, asking Him to heal them. That clears out the blockages that stop a person from living in their heart. Gems make the plan easier to follow.

Please prepare for a fresh look at *The Sermon on the Mount*. Expect to find life-changing gems, and let the plundering begin. Hold onto as many of the gems as you can. Jesus created them for you.

Meeting 1: The Father in Your Living Space – Jesus Stirs Excitement throughout the Countryside

Please reflect on how complicated translating this sermon is. We are two thousand years away, and the differences between cultures create quite a challenge. Translators work very hard to get readers from there to here. They take into account that Jesus was speaking in the *Aramaic* language, that what we have are translations of His words as they were recorded in an early form of *Greek*. Another challenge is that we don't have the original *Greek* manuscripts among the hundreds of early copies. It is a rigorous, scientific study of words, on the one hand, and yet it is a creative effort to bring out ideas and visions in a fashion that conveys the literary richness of the original message. We are not simply asking which words were used. We are seeking to enter into the Master's frame of mind, as He developed His message. A few of His words can open up vast vistas of meaning to you, in powerful, new ways. Expect that to happen in this and in each session.

Let's take one of His ideas which is a gorgeous gem. It is covered in *A Far Better Life's* opening chapter, and is our starting point. This is a huge departure from customary thinking. Jesus did not refer, at least in this text, to a "Kingdom of Heaven," as though He were going to promote such an establishment. Stop thinking that the creation of an earthly kingdom has any place in the sermon. The term He used each time was "the Kingdom of the Heavens." The *Greek* text makes that very clear, and it stuns me that English translations give us the wrong wording. That particular wording puts Jesus' teaching in a completely different light, to those who heard Him. "Heavens" means "the air around you – your living space." Let this sink in. Jesus was conveying a grand vista of paramount theological meaning when He chose to use the plural form of "heaven." His listeners got it right away – this sermon is about getting the Father's guidance and power to surround them where they live, here and now. He turned the countryside on its ear by simply using that phrase.

One other translation up-grade will be necessary to catch the power of Jesus' message here. "Repent" means, "To turn your life around, and start moving in the opposite direction." This word instilled hope for Jesus' listeners. "No matter how off track your life is, the Father will help you turn your life around." Jesus was inviting people to take Him at His word. "You will be able to do this with the Father's help."

He was not saying that His Kingdom is someday going to be an establishment of some sort. He was saying that His Kingdom will be wherever you are if you ask Him to join you. He will rule in your living space. He is completely ready to join you, bringing His power and wisdom, as soon as you call on Him. What an incredibly impactful meaning those few words convey! The Father is available to help you with any problem that comes up. Jesus' words get us started, but it is through discussing it and getting the Father's guidance into our daily life that we come to know what Jesus really meant.

Here is an interesting note for you armchair theologians. A popular way of describing “salvation” is to call it “establishing a relationship with God.” Jesus did not exactly use those words, but we find that everything He said describes just that. “Establishing a relationship with God” is a good way to tell people in our culture what “salvation” is. Here is the interesting part. Jesus’ revolutionary teaching was this: “The Father is ready to help you in your living space, so call on Him at any time.” Is that about “establishing a relationship with God”, or what? Jesus’ wording was a great way to tell people *how to establish a relationship with God*. “The Kingdom of the Heavens” is an inspiring, challenging and hopeful way to talk about a relationship with God. If His Kingdom is wherever I am, that makes a difference all of the time. We can see that this approach to establishing a relationship with the Father calls upon us to take an active part, and not just let “the relationship” remain rather passive and abstract.

In case any of you armchair theologians are still in doubt whether this understanding of the “kingdom of the heavens” holds any weight, please consider this: *The Bible* is a series of stories about people who were in trouble. When they invited God to help them, He came through, big time. It makes tons of sense to me that this teaching is a great “one line summary” for the entire *Bible*: *You can turn your life around by welcoming the Father into your living space*. How perfect a fit it is for Jesus to make His entry onto the religious scene with that teaching. It was His starting point, and it became His central point, one that He kept coming back to, time after time.

Opening Questions

1. What are your thoughts about working on a translation of the *Bible*? What would you do if you were translating it?
2. Which is your favorite translation?
3. How would you explain “establishing a relationship with God” to a friend?
4. Certain moments can make or break a day. You can either do something or do something just the opposite. Let’s call those “crossroad moments.” Can you give a few examples of crossroad moments?
5. How can the Father’s presence help you with those crossroad moments?

Small Group Questions

1. How would you explain to a friend who was doing really badly, about turning their life around?
2. How do people understand, “Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand”, which is what people usually read in popular translations in *Matthew 4:17*?
3. What does that message ask people to do?
4. Would that create much excitement?
5. What does the teaching, “The Father is in your living space”, ask you to do?

6. Why would His listeners get excited about that?
7. When you ask Him to join you, does God give you guidance and power?
8. Imagine that you were in the crowd that heard Jesus earliest sermons: "You can turn your life around because *the Kingdom of the Heavens* is at hand. The Father is right beside you, available to help you with any problem that comes up." (See *Better Life*, page 9.) Do some role playing in your small group, with one of you trying to explain the "Kingdom of the Heavens" teaching to the others, who are hearing it for the first time, and are full of serious questions.

When the Groups Re-Assemble

After you summarize what each group has discovered, please share what each of you hopes to get from this series of discussions. Then take turns and talk to the Father about those hopes.

Install Gem #1: God is right by my side, ready to help me with any problem that comes up. (Matthew 4:17.) Personalized. Dear Father, please join me right now. I need your help.

Thoughts for the Week

When you are caught up in a crossroad moment, you may try to figure it out alone, and then later you will remember that you should have talked it over with the Father *during the crossroad moment*. The trick is to be ready for those critical moments, and talk things over with Him on the spot. Welcome Him into your desires, urges and feeling surges that are not yet under His guidance, by revisiting Gem #1 when they try to take over.

Meeting 2: An Overview of *The Sermon on the Mount* from the Vantage Point of *The Lord's Prayer*

We will shape our discussions by beginning with the sermon's main point, instead of at its start. In *The Lord's Prayer* we find major ideas from the rest of the sermon, which strongly advocates that the sermon we have is in outline form. If *The Lord's Prayer* is the main point, we would expect it to be a capsulated summary of the sermon. Let's see if that is true. The translation here is altered from what is found in *A Far Better Life*. If you keep dwelling on this sermon, as I have, God will keep on showing you new gems.

Our Father, always near, may Your name receive highest honor. Let Your Kingdom gain control in every area of our lives. Provide direction for us here on earth, as You provide direction in heaven. Help us to rely on Your generosity each day. Forgive our offenses in the same way that we have forgiven others. Please do not lead us toward temptation but rescue us from evil.

Personalized. Dear Father, always near, may Your name receive highest honor. Let Your Kingdom gain control in every area of my life. Remind me to talk everything over with You. Provide direction for me here on earth, as You provide direction in heaven. Help me to rely on Your generosity each day. Forgive my offenses in the same way that I have forgiven others. My heart struggles to stay pure, so please do not lead me toward temptation but rescue me from evil.

Here are some points touched on in this prayer, more fully developed in the sermon.

1. The Father's readiness to help is the key to solving everyday problems.
2. Bringing honor to His name is to be our life's goal – not to honor ourselves.
3. Allowing Him to lovingly every area of our life should be our heart's desire. He heals our wounded hearts so we can live as members of His family.
4. We need help for daily worry. Healed hearts can rely on Him.
5. Forgiveness comes naturally from transformed hearts, particularly when the hearts are no longer pushed by retaliation urges.
6. Our hearts will tell the world about our true family membership, so our prayer should be to honor Him by taking on the traits of the Father's family.
7. Staying pure in a world of temptation and evil will require the Father's help.

If this prayer is the climax of the sermon, and if every teaching in the rest of the sermon points to it or is an application of it, that puts *The Lord's Prayer* in a position where its importance is sky high. It is not merely one of Jesus' teachings. It is His *primary* teaching. It carries His main ideas about getting the Father into your life.

Opening Questions

1. Do you feel okay about praying aloud when you are in a group setting?
2. In your growing-up years, did your parents pray with you at bed time? Do you still pray at bed time?
3. When and where do you usually pray?
4. What happens inside of you when you pray?
5. Which of the seven points above are you working on?

Small Group Questions

1. When you recite the traditional version of *The Lord's Prayer*, what images appear in your mind? What images does this translation bring?
2. Talking with a Father who is "always near" is a sweet way to begin a prayer. It contains the faith that He not only cares, but that you can count on Him. How difficult is it to pray with this much openness and trust?
3. How does it change the prayer to pray to a Father who is far away, in heaven?
4. How has the closeness of the Father helped you at crossroad moments?
5. What is difficult about forgiveness?
6. When you call upon the Father to rescue you from evil, what happens?

When the Small Groups Re-Assemble

Please share what you have discovered for the first time from *The Lord's Prayer*. *Install Gem #2: Please take control in every area of our lives and guide us, just as You guide everything in heaven. The Lord's Prayer.) Personalized. Let Your Kingdom gain control in every area of my life. Remind me to talk everything over with You. Provide direction for me here on earth, as You provide direction in heaven.*

In share and prayer, have people open up as much as they can for prayer requests.

Thoughts for the Week

Pay attention to crossroad moments, those pivotal times that push you in one direction or in another. They can stop you from living from your heart. For example, in case you are asking Him to rescue you from the evil in this world, there may be crossroad moments when you lose self-control. Ask Him to strengthen you during those moments, so that you will be ready for the rest of your day. Revisiting Gem #2 just then may be a big help. Write down what happens when you call on Him to help you and be prepared to share it in future meetings.

Meeting 3: Thriving During the Hardest of Times – The Beatitudes and the Storms that Can Destroy You

The Beatitudes

1. *God's blessing rests on those who are spiritually broken. The Kingdom of the Heavens is for them, and it makes everything new. Personalized.* Dear Father, I am spiritually broken. Welcome me into your Kingdom. Fill my life with your presence, which makes everything new.

2. *God's blessing rests on those who are overcome with sadness. His immediate comfort is always near. Personalized.* Dear Father, I am overcome with sadness. Please provide your presence to comfort me.

3. *God's blessing rests on those who do not give up when they are treated unfairly. He will help them win in the end. Personalized.* Dear Father, it hurts so much to be treated unfairly. Please surround me with your presence, and help me not to give up.

4. *God's blessing rests on those who strive to live correctly. His guidance will bring them peace as they make daily decisions. Personalized.* Dear Father, you know how sincerely I want to follow you. Please keep me in your presence, so that I can be at peace as I make decisions each day.

5. *God's blessing rests on those who are seriously drained from being merciful. His loving presence will keep them filled up. Personalized.* Dear Father, you know how much I want to spread your mercy. Please fill me with your loving presence, so that I will have enough mercy for others.

6. *God's blessing rests on those who deeply long to have a pure heart. As they keep their eyes on Him, He will help them to be pure. Personalized.* Dear Father, you know that my desire is to have a pure heart. Please help me to keep my eyes on you, and guide me to be pure.

7. *God's blessing rests on those who are devoted to peace. His children are peacemakers, and He will join them in their efforts. Personalized.* Dear Father, you know that I am devoted to bringing peace, but it is so elusive. Please be my guide so I can become a better peacemaker.

8. *God's blessing rests on those who are persecuted for doing what is right. The Kingdom of the Heavens is for them, and it makes everything new. Personalized.* Dear Father, please stay with me when persecuted for doing what is right. Help me to dwell in the Kingdom of the Heavens, where your presence makes everything new.

Immediately, Jesus builds on the closing *Beatitude*:

God will bless you while you are being insulted, persecuted and slandered because you follow me. Get ready for a big surprise. Great joy will come to you while you are being persecuted, because of His presence (in the "heavens"). God has always been close to people, like the prophets, who follow Him despite opposition. His presence will give you great joy (A Far Better Life, pages 13-14).

Read aloud the final paragraph on page 13 – *The Beatitudes'* core idea.

The Storms that Can Destroy You

When my words direct your life, it will be like building your house on a rock. Your life will be solid. You will be able to withstand anything. The wind and the rain-swollen streams may beat upon your house but it will be as good as new. It has the right foundation. But if you hear my words and do not put them into practice, that will be like building your house on the sand. When the wind and the swollen streams pound against it, your house will be completely destroyed (p 27).

The Beatitudes are a perfect introduction to this sermon, as they expand on what we have from Jesus' earlier sermon – "You can turn your life around by asking the Father into your living space." *The Beatitudes* add that He will be with us during our most difficult moments. And the teaching about the storms is a perfect ending. Even under the most difficult conditions, a life under His direction will get you safely through the nastiest storm.

Jesus' teaching about this "kingdom" is, well, upside down, at least when compared with kingdoms that are set up by human rulers. Earthly kingdoms have power amassed at the top and not very much of it comes down to average folks. But "the Father in your living space" gives individuals who are at the bottom of the ladder, a generous share of the power. In this kingdom the power starts within each person and spreads sideways, as opposed to earthly kingdoms, where power accumulates at the top and trickles downwards from rulers to average people. Therefore, in the kingdom of the heavens, the Father brings a sense of empowerment, and His people find that they are successful when they request His help. In this kingdom people make things happen. It is not made up of people who lollygag about, waiting to be taken care of by their rulers, but rather the people are empowered to change the world around them. As the Father helps us wherever we are, we will change the world because of the power that we receive from Him. His kingdom affects the world at the grassroots level through us.

This sense of His power close at hand helps a lot in dealing with feelings. *The Beatitudes* show Him at work to help us change our internal world at the feeling level. Most people take a different approach to dealing with strong, negative feelings. It seems right and natural, and is almost automatic to “stay away from bad feelings.” As a psychologist I have seen that approach does not work in the long run. Negative feelings need to be dealt with, not avoided. I believe that *The Beatitudes* and the teaching about destructive storms are psychologically *gorgeous*. Jesus does not teach that we are supposed to dodge bad feelings and then expect to end up in joy. Jesus is asking people to invite the Father into the crossroad moments when negative feelings are trying to gain control. Spiritually broken, overcome with sadness, hanging in there when treated unfairly, and the other negative situations alluded to in *The Beatitudes* are intended to be dealt with, not avoided. The Father’s presence will help, and because of His presence, there will be joy. This is the same idea that we see in the teaching about destructive storms. His presence will provide guidance and power in the battles for your heart. He will help you process the negative feelings that accompany horrible events.

“Crossroad moments” happen when desires, urges and surges in feelings interrupt your life. There is often a sense of urgency. “Am I going to go this way or that?” Crossroad moments come from the wounds mentioned in *The Beatitudes*. The moments when a person feels spiritually broken, overcome with sadness, treated unfairly, striving to live correctly, failing at being merciful, staying pure, making peace or being persecuted – those “crossroad moments” are a chance to ask for the Father’s help. He can deliver relief to the wounds that are emerging right then. That is when the Father’s presence makes a difference. Don’t avoid the negative feelings. Invite Him to help you with them, so that you can win in the end.

The lovely development here is how beautifully this fits in with the rest of Jesus’ teaching about transforming your heart. When the Father is guiding your heart, you will not need to avoid negative feelings. You can believe at the heart level that He will be with you, especially during negative events and crossroad moments, and that He will guide you through the storms in your life. When you go through the narrow gate, Jesus will shed enough light for the road ahead. You will find yourself entering into negative feelings, instead of avoiding them, and you will end up in joy. Transformed hearts will lead you *through* the hardest of times, not *around* them. Power for crossroad moments comes from His presence, and leads to success.

Building character. Looking at *The Beatitudes* in this light, we can see them not only as promises to help us during the difficult times in life, “the storms,” but they are also promises to build our character as we welcome the Father into our life, especially during crossroad moments. Think about how *The Beatitudes* read: establishing a new spiritual life, overcoming sadness, hanging in there and winning in the end, living correctly, being merciful, staying pure, peacemaking, and getting His direction moment by moment. Wow! That is a pretty big bunch of promises. Yet, that is where

Jesus says He will take you. It begins by Him promising that the Father will be available to help build your character, and it ends by promising to equip you to withstand the worst storms.

You need to keep in mind that the key to it all is getting the Father into each crossroad moment, so that He can help you build your character.

Opening Questions

1. What is a *Beatitude*? Is that word in the original text?
2. Which of *The Beatitudes* do you relate to most easily?
3. How do you feel when you are in the difficulty mentioned in that *Beatitude*?
4. How does it change your life if you decide to *encounter* your negative feelings, along with the help of the Father, instead of avoiding them?

Small Group Questions

1. What storm could destroy your life? Can you see that *The Beatitudes* may be talking about that kind of a storm?
2. Do you know what it's like to be "spiritually broken?" Is that true of you from time to time, much of the time, all of the time, or was it true of you only before you became a Christian?
3. Being overcome with sadness, treated unfairly, striving to live correctly and being drained because you are merciful can very easily seem like problems that may never be resolved. How do *The Beatitudes* suggest that these hardships can be resolved? Do you believe that they can be resolved?
4. How do you build your life on these teachings, as is mentioned at the end of the sermon? How do you build your life on "the sand?"
5. At the end of any particular day, can you tell whether you have been building more on the rock or on the sand?
6. The final paragraph on page 13 points out that joy comes from being with the Father. What is it about being with the Father that helps you most?

When the Groups Re-Assemble

Please share not only the new insights you have found while in the smaller groups, but include your thoughts about some "hard times" that may be coming up for you these days. Pray about these times, during your prayers for one another, before you close.

Install Gem #3: God blesses those who strive to live correctly. He gives them guidance and peace. (The fourth *Beatitude*.) *Personalized.* **Dear Father, you know how sincerely I want to follow you. Please keep me in your presence, so that I can be at peace as I make decisions today.**

Thoughts for the Week

Ask the Father to help you during crossroad moments, when you feel impelled to not deal with negative feelings. It is in placing yourself under His control during crossroad moments (desires, urges and surges in feelings) that you will get Him into every area of your life. Feeling super wonderful during church worship may be good, but that does not get the Father's guidance into every aspect of your life. The crossroad moments that pop up during the rest of the week are where He can make His way into every nook and cranny of your life.

Meeting 4: Hopelessness, Peacefulness and Your Heart

The Overview Table, below, shows Jesus was a master teacher, delivering a beautifully interconnected sermon. *The Beatitudes* list eight ways that seriously block people from hearing God's voice during crossroad moments. From spiritually broken to persecuted, they are exactly how people struggle all of the time. After the *Beatitudes*, Jesus took up these struggles in the sermon's first half. This covers what life is like when Living from Your Hurt. Make no mistake: *The Lord's Prayer* emphasizes talking everything over with the Father, so that He can gain control in your life, just as He is in control in heaven. Following *The Lord's Prayer* the sermon changes tone, going back over those areas, to get the Father's help with each one. Living from Your Heart is what it is like to live in the family of God. The initial problem areas are now gleaming with His trademark image. And it is all woven together in outline form.

In meetings 4 to 9 we will work on connecting the dots between *The Beatitudes* and the rest of the sermon. Jesus takes your most serious problems and turns them into the traits that fit into His family. Isn't that just like God, bringing lots of good out of the most difficult problems. That is what you are seeking in these discussions.

An Outline for Meetings 4 to 9 – The Overview Table

<u>Meeting</u>	<u>Beatitude</u>	<u>Living from Your Hurt</u>	<u>Living from Your Heart</u>
4	Sadness - #2 Being Merciful - #5	Hopelessness – p.14	Peacefulness – p. 23, 24
5	Treated Unfairly Being Persecuted	Contempt	Loving Relationships
6	Living Correctly Staying Pure	Lust	Loving Relationships
7	Making Peace	Dishonesty	Genuineness
8	Spiritually Broken Treated Unfairly	Retaliation	Forgiveness
9	Living Correctly	False Righteousness	Sincerity

How are you coming with crossroad moments? As we work through these meetings, you will find that the wounds highlighted during each meeting will bring challenges, during crossroad moments. Sometimes they are “triggers” – hopelessness, contempt, lust, dishonesty, retaliation and false righteousness that come bursting into your day. You can be in a lot of pain, but because the Father is close, you can get through it and live from your heart. Gems will come in handy during crossroad moments. The Father will help you remember them at the right time.

The first half of this sermon, pages 14 to 20, is about preparing your heart to pray *The Lord's Prayer*, without holding anything back. Wounded hearts produce unsteadiness and dividedness. After healing comes to the particular wounds, wholeness can emerge so that a person can pray that prayer with unity of heart.

In this meeting we will be looking at the "sadness" *Beatitude*, at the "Hopelessness Wound", and then at "Peacefulness", as a trait in the Family of God. Peacefulness emerges as a character trait, while hearts are being transformed by the Father.

However, there is a fascinating aspect of this sermon that we must look at before we go any further. Following *The Lord's Prayer* the sermon takes a different tone. *Each teaching in the second half builds upon earlier points. His ideas build upon one another. When He laid out The Beatitudes, He was ready to build upon them throughout the rest of the sermon. In the same way, the sermon's second half is built upon the first half.* Take a glance at the box above, to see how the sermon's points are inter-related. Here's what's fascinating – *The Beatitudes* are about specific *blockages* in our life – painful wounds that can lead to crossroad moments. Jesus takes us through those wounds, and in the second half He teaches about how we can rise above them. What is the result? We can live from a heart guided by the Father.

Keeping Jesus' building-upon-earlier-ideas approach in mind, we can look at this meeting's topic – Hopelessness, Peacefulness and Your Heart. It begins with the 2nd and the 5th *Beatitudes* – "God blesses those who are overcome with sadness. His immediate comfort is always near," and "God blesses those who are seriously drained from being merciful. His loving presence will keep them filled up." If you have a constant awareness that the Father is available for comfort at crossroad moments, you will be ready to deal with sadness and with being seriously drained *when those triggers come up*, and you will not be overcome. But even then, hopelessness can result, particularly if your life is a parade of set-backs and disappointments. But before we go further into Jesus' approach to hopelessness, let's take a look at a popular translation of this passage.

Here is the *New International Version* translation of Jesus' teaching about hopelessness – salt and light – which immediately follows *The Beatitudes*.

You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men (*Matthew 5:13*).

It is hard to look at those words and construe that Jesus was saying it is good to be salt, even though that is often what is taught. There is a folksy saying that has risen because of this teaching: "That person is the salt of the earth", which means "really good inside." That saying is cute, but it does not make any sense to me.

Understanding this teaching opened up for me only after I had seen that the sermon's first half is about wounded hearts. Then the meaning leaped out at me. As a psychologist, I have seen that hopelessness is profoundly difficult to overcome. It would be correct for Jesus to address hopelessness. It cannot be overlooked when looking at heart wounds. Here is Jesus' approach to hopelessness. (Pages 14 and 15)

You may feel like salt on the ground. Salt is only valuable if it stays salty, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be discarded and trampled by men. I really do understand that you sometimes feel like an old pile of discarded, trampled salt. If you lose life's richness, you may believe that you will never get it back.

But here is something encouraging to keep in mind. You are the light that shines throughout the world, and you will make a difference everywhere you go. You will carry God with you. Like a city on a hill, you will not be hidden. People do not light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on a stand so that it will give light to everyone in the house. In the same way let your light shine before men so that they may see your good deeds and glorify the Father who helps you with everything. Don't give up. You will make a difference, and God will receive all of the credit.

Jesus begins this half of the sermon by bringing hopefulness solidly into the picture. "Don't give up. You will make a difference." When hopelessness reigns, a person can find no reason to pray. Quite honestly, a person stuck in hopelessness has no use for God. This is why Jesus addressed hopelessness to start the woundedness section. Only when this wound is cleared up can *The Lord's Prayer* be prayed from a unified heart.

Opening Questions

1. What do you see is the connection between "salt" and "light" in this teaching?
2. What do you think about the "building ideas" approach in the Overview Table?
3. What makes people hopeless? (Give as many examples as you can.)
4. How many people do you know who sometimes struggle with hopelessness?
5. How do you encourage people who are hopeless? Does it work?
6. Does this teaching suggest a way to overcome hopelessness?

Small Group Questions

1. Can you see some crossroad moments when you have felt sad or drained from being merciful? How can you handle those moments?
2. Re-read the verses about salt and light on pages 14 and 15. What images come to you? How do you feel when you catch those images?

3. Hopelessness is most people's worst nightmare of a feeling. What about you?
4. How does hopelessness affect your heart?
5. What kind of a personal injury (wound) would produce hopelessness?
 - Injuries usually come from traumas or from neglect.
 - Look for present day injuries, past injuries, spiritual or emotional injuries.
6. How does a person go from "salt" to "light"?

When the Groups Re-Assemble

Instead of sharing what you discussed in the small groups, please read aloud the scripture on page 24. Then *install Gem #4: **It all comes down to believing that the Father will generously take care of you. Do not worry at all about tomorrow, even though you could find enough evil to worry about in every "tomorrow" if you tried. Drop your worries. You can rely on Him to take care of you.*** (From Matthew 6:34.) *Personalized. Dear Father, please help me to rely on your generous provision – to believe from my heart that you will take care of my every need.*

Pray that you will let God develop that kind of peacefulness in your heart. Then go around the group with share and prayer time.

Thoughts for the Week

Choices about money, foods, cars, kids' schedules, too little time, temptation – wow, there are so many crossroad moments that have worry attached to them. Keep track of when you tense up or dwell on worry-related stuff. Re-visit Gem #4.

Meeting 5: Contempt, Loving Relationships and Your Heart

<u>Meeting</u>	<u>Beatitude</u>	<u>Living from Your Hurt</u>	<u>Living from Your Heart</u>
4	Sadness Being Merciful	Hopelessness	Peacefulness
5	Treated Unfairly - #3 Being Persecuted - #8	Contempt - p. 16,	Loving Relationships - p. 24, 25
6	Living Correctly Staying Pure	Lust	Loving Relationships
7	Making Peace	Dishonesty	Genuineness
8	Spiritually Broken Treated Unfairly	Retaliation	Forgiveness
9	Living Correctly	False Righteousness	Sincerity

It is a ruthless and unpredictable world. People often suffer because of unprovoked anger and violence. As *The Lord's Prayer* indicates, we are to rely on Him to rescue us from the evil we find all around us. But even when our prayer life is going well, we can still tire of unexpected insults and assaults. And we can find that contempt comes up inside. *Contempt is the feeling that automatically emerges when someone blocks you from living the life that you want to live.*

Contempt not only interferes with loving relationships, it interferes with a person's prayer life. Perhaps you have seen contempt in others. It builds up inside and then it will not go away. It, perhaps more than any other feeling, is poisonous. It damages self and others. "I'm mad at my brother, and I'm mad at God, and I'm not going to simply forget it." Jesus knew about that poison, and how easy it is for people to get caught up in it. The third *Beatitude* is where He began to address contempt, and He addressed it again in the 8th *Beatitude*. Both *Beatitudes* promise that His presence will help us to win difficult battles.

God helps those who do not give up when they are treated unfairly. He will help them win in the end.

God helps those who are persecuted for doing what is right. The Kingdom of the Heavens is for them, and it makes everything new.

Contempt does not have to reign in our lives. As Jesus put it, you need to catch contempt problems early so that they do not clog up your heart. Read the "Contempt" section aloud, starting on page 16.

Opening Questions

1. What is our automatic, human reaction to being treated unfairly? (Give some personal examples.)
2. Can a person hide contempt? How does it show itself?
3. What about racism, and de-valuing people's human rights – does that come from contempt?
4. What have you observed about contempt and court proceedings?
5. How does contempt creep into family settings?

Small Group Questions

1. Can you think of crossroad moments when you were treated unfairly or persecuted? How could you handle those moments?
2. Stick with this understanding: Contempt comes up because someone blocks you from living the way that you wish. How does contempt affect your heart?
3. What are the signs that contempt is building up inside of you?
4. Jesus mentioned a few points in the "Loving Relationships" section that help us with contempt, on page 25: stop judging people, look at your own faults, stop being pushy about your religious ideas, be genuine, be non-manipulative and treat people as you want to be treated. Which of these helps you with contempt?
5. If it's all about loving God, neighbor and self, how does contempt get in the way?
6. How does the Father help your heart with contempt?

When the Groups Re-Assemble

Do your best to share highlights from the smaller groups. Have someone try to summarize just how contempt becomes poison in the family of God.

Install Gem #5: Always treat others in the way that you would like to be treated. (Matthew 7:12.) Personalized. Dear Father, please help me with my integrity, treating others as well as I expect to be treated.

In your prayer time, keep on sharing your weekly requests, and include problems that are showing up during crossroad moments, as you live in God's family.

Thoughts for the Week

Whenever a friendship begins to go south, even for a few minutes, invite the Father into your living space. Loving relationships can develop by working through problems when you live in the kingdom of the heavens.

Meeting 6: Lust, Loving Relationships and Your Heart

<u>Meeting</u>	<u>Beatitude</u>	<u>Living from Your Hurt</u>	<u>Living from Your Heart</u>
4	Sadness Being Merciful	Hopelessness	Peacefulness
5	Treated Unfairly Being Persecuted	Contempt	Loving Relationships
6	Living Correctly -#4 Staying Pure -#6	Lust – p. 17	Loving Relationships – p. 24, 25
7	Making Peace	Dishonesty	Genuineness
8	Spiritually Broken Treated Unfairly	Retaliation	Forgiveness
9	Living Correctly	False Righteousness	Sincerity

Ads about improving sexual performance are making their way onto prime time TV. Popular Christian books and programs about sexual addiction and pornography are also making their way into the Christian community. Perhaps the time has come to focus on this problem. Jesus surely did not leave it off of His “problems” list.

Two of Jesus’ *Beatitudes* suggest He will not dodge this problem:

God blesses those who try very hard to live correctly. His guidance will bring them peace as they make daily decisions.

God blesses those who deeply long to stay pure. As they keep their eyes on Him, He will guide them.

“The Father in your living space” is essential to living correctly and to staying pure. Please read aloud the first full paragraph on page 17.

Perhaps this is a good time to review what the heart is, and how it operates. The heart is where God meets you. If you are going to get Him into every area of your life, that will be because you are keeping your heart clean, which makes Him welcome into each area. If you read the last full paragraph on page 19, you will get an idea about heart battles. Lust is a battleground, and your identity may very well go to the victor.

Opening Questions

1. Do you believe our culture is changing its attitudes about sex and fidelity?
2. What is your church’s stance on “living correctly” and on “staying pure”? Is it a “rules approach”, or does it invite God to help with sexual problems?

3. Does that stance push people away from your church or draw them toward it?
4. Are men or women better at solving “the lust problem?”

Small Group Questions

It may be a good idea to break up into men's and women's small groups for this topic.

1. Share crossroad moments when striving to live correctly or staying pure have been critical in your day. How can you handle those moments?
2. What kind of an injury (wound) can lead to problems in this area?
3. What damage can come from pornography?
4. How can lust damage your heart?
5. Let's get real: We're all driven by sexual urges, we're all designed to relate sexually and we're all supposed to bring sexual impulses under control. In which arenas of your daily life do you get tested here?
6. How does “asking the Father into your living space” work for you in this area?
7. In which of the areas highlighted by Jesus do you need the Father's help in the area of lust – stop judging people, look at your own faults, stop being pushy about your religious ideas, be genuine, be non-manipulative and treat people as you want to be treated?

When the Groups Re-Assemble

Please share what you have discovered about the Father's role in this battleground issue. ***Install Gem #6: God's blessing rests on those who deeply long to have a pure heart. As they keep their eyes on Him, He will help them to be pure.*** (The sixth *Beatitude.*) ***Personalized. Dear Father, you know that my desire is to have a pure heart. Please help me to keep my eyes on you, and guide me to be pure.***

Take time for share and prayer.

Thoughts for the Week

Living from your heart will help you to be the person that you are all of the time, particularly in the area of sexuality. Gem #6, used at crossroads moments, can help you retain respect and consideration in the sexual arena. Your identity as a sexual person was not handed to you by your parents, but by your creator, who wants to bless you just as He created you.

Meeting 7: Dishonesty, Genuineness and Your Heart

<u>Meeting</u>	<u>Beatitude</u>	<u>Living from Your Hurt</u>	<u>Living from Your Heart</u>
4	Sadness Being Merciful	Hopelessness	Peacefulness
5	Treated Unfairly Being Persecuted	Contempt	Loving Relationships
6	Living Correctly Staying Pure	Lust	Loving Relationships
7	Making Peace- #7 Dishonesty – p. 17		Genuineness – p. 23
8	Spiritually Broken Treated Unfairly	Retaliation	Forgiveness
9	Living Correctly	False Righteousness	Sincerity

Every time you talk *with anyone*, you must believe that the person is being honest, or the conversation would be a farce. *Truth* is fundamental. We must believe that the other person is the truth, or there is no reason to speak further. You carry that fact with you into every conversation, so you will need to be transparent and refreshingly honest – genuine – if you expect to have meaningful relationships. Trust and honesty go hand-in-hand. The opposite of trust – betrayal – leads to hostility. Bottom line: Dishonest people are not trustworthy, and end up with hostile relationships.

The Father wants to help you develop honesty, as we will see in the “dishonesty” and the “genuineness” teachings. But let’s first take a look at how one of *The Beatitudes* prepares us for those teachings.

God’s blessing rests on those who are devoted to peace. His children are peacemakers, and He will join them in their efforts.

Welcoming the Father into your peacemaking efforts makes sense. This *Beatitude* stresses that creating peaceful relationships is difficult, but it is an essential part of life in the Father’s family. *His participation in peacemaking means that it will be joyful. It will be worth the effort.* A peacemaker must be trustworthy (genuine). Please read the “Dishonesty” section on page 17.

Let me highlight a conversation that I had on a plane with a woman from Asia. When she saw that I was reading a book about Multiple Personality, she could hardly wait to tell me about her culture. She assured me, “my people always wear a happy face!” She described how they appear to be one person at home and are completely different in public. This is a must, because they are not allowed to give any clues about their family. She emphasized that child abuse is rampant there, and hiddenness keeps the abuse secret. She became animated about how very split “her people” are,

completely hidden to the outside world. At first I left that plane ride smugly considering my culture to be much better than hers. That did not last. Soon I began to realize that we are the same. In fact, it seems almost inevitable that people from any culture will not open up in public about their home problems. Anyone can wear a mask.

Opening Questions

1. What are the advantages and disadvantages of wearing a mask?
2. "Happy faces, every one!" The TV world attacks honesty. Can you remember photos from a century ago, when people did not wear phony smiles? Those photos were more believable than today's. How does needing to "look good" affect our spiritual life?
3. How does this affect people in a church setting?
4. What kind of an injury (wound) would lead to dishonesty?
5. Please read the "Genuineness and Your Heart" section on page 23. Can you see how deception gets in the way of "living from your heart"?

Small Group Questions

1. Which of the areas that Jesus mentioned on page 23 do you need some work on – appearing very religious, appearing financially fit, or being satisfied with living "in the light" only part of the time? (That final clause refers to "integrity", as mentioned on page 17.)
2. Do you see the connection between "genuineness" and "fellowship" in the Family of God?
3. There are *levels* of genuineness. How deeply transparent and refreshingly honest can you be with people? Can you speak of your deepest conflicts and your deepest areas of doubt?
4. For these final questions, please consider "transparency" and "genuineness" to be synonyms. Here is a fact: genuineness invites genuineness from the other person. (Transparency invites transparency.) What can you do to be more genuine/transparent?
5. What prevents you from being more genuine?

When the Groups Re-Assemble

Install Gem #7: You will not be able to hide what is in your heart. People will be able to see what you really collect – external treasures or eternal treasures. (Matthew 6:21.) Personalized. Dear Father, please help me to stay on your pathway, so that I will not need to fool anyone.

What does genuineness look like? Please share what you discovered about transparency and about genuineness.

Thoughts for the Week

Sharing with those close to you about your struggles, including hopelessness, anger, lust and worry, will help you become more transparent. Being genuine takes considerable effort. Look for crossroad moments in which you *could* be more open, but are also compelled to hide. The Father's help is essential to produce the right words and to edit the wrong ones.

Here is a kind of summary statement to live by: Your heart does not need to "work" at speaking the right words and avoiding the wrong ones. That comes easily for hearts under His guidance, in the Kingdom of the Heavens.

Meeting 8: Retaliation, Forgiveness and Your Heart

<u>Meeting</u>	<u>Beatitude</u>	<u>Living from Your Hurt</u>	<u>Living from Your Heart</u>
4	Sadness Being Merciful	Hopelessness	Peacefulness
5	Treated Unfairly Being Persecuted	Contempt	Loving Relationships
6	Living Correctly Staying Pure	Lust	Loving Relationships
7	Making Peace	Dishonesty	Genuineness
8	Spiritually Broken - #1 Treated Unfairly - #3	Retaliation – p. 18	Forgiveness – p. 21
9	Living Correctly	False Righteousness	Sincerity

Preparation for becoming a forgiving person. I have been all over the map for years, trying to explain forgiveness to people. It is especially hard for the most seriously abused people to even speak about forgiving the monster who hurt them so badly. I believe that Jesus' three-part approach to teaching about forgiveness works pretty well. It begins with the humbling experience of getting in touch with our human condition – being spiritually broken. That is where the first *Beatitude* provides a solid foundation. God will be with us in our brokenness, and will help us start anew. Thanks so much, Jesus, for starting us right there. He makes it clear that it is not be honest to speak words of forgiveness unless there is a depth of understanding about being forgiven for our own brokenness.

Looking at the third *Beatitude*, we can see the first component of what it takes to become a forgiving person. “Not giving up when treated unfairly” does not come naturally, but to stick it out prepares us to forgive. It slows the retaliation response, and needs to be in place before forgiveness can be achieved. Forgiveness takes some character development.

Clear thinking about forgiveness. Most “forgiveness” explanations ooze with sloppy thinking. Of all the messages, seminars and talks that I have heard about forgiveness, none has given a definition. Consequently, there has seldom been any practical understanding conveyed. I always explain forgiveness with two examples of what forgiveness **is not**: It **is not** a feeling, and it **is not** reconciliation. You will not feel a certain way with forgiveness, and there is no formula that promises reconciliation. Here is the definition that I have been using for about 15 years. *Forgiveness is the decision to not retaliate.* That definition has stood the test of time, and seems to fit just about any situation that comes up. I am very pleased to find that this definition fits hand-in-hand with Jesus' teaching.

Jesus' teaching about retaliation and forgiveness. It is noteworthy that Jesus put the retaliation teaching just ahead of *The Lord's Prayer*, and the forgiveness teaching immediately after it. These two teachings are complementary, like two sides of the same coin. Forgiveness is even mentioned in the prayer, so we can see how central it is in Jesus' thinking.

(1) Face your brokenness and face your reaction to being treated unfairly. This will begin to build your character, so that you will be ready for the rest of His approach to forgiveness. (2) Give up retaliation completely, and then you will be able to (3) forgive others from your heart. Working this out with the Father during crossroad moments will produce heart-based forgiveness.

Read aloud the "Retaliation" section on page 18.

One-sided or two-sided forgiveness. When forgiveness works, the offending person makes recompense – a sharing of money or tears or something that pays back the offended person. This is "two-sided forgiveness." That is not how things usually work. The offending person usually gets defensive and denies any wrongdoing. The offended person is unjustly left to pay the damages and suffer the injury, with no repayment or chance for correcting the injustice. One-sided forgiveness is called for when you have been unjustly damaged, and need to forgive the offending person even though there was no confession. This is so tough – beyond the extent of our natural ability. This sermon leads us to strive to be honest when we have offended others, and then seek two-way forgiveness. The difficulty comes in the area of one-way forgiveness, when we do not forgive the offenses of others (verse 15). Bottom line: When the person has hurt me, and I do not forgive, I am the one who will suffer. If I cannot forgive, I will live with the destabilizing urge to get even, or to nurse my unhealed wounds.

Making forgiveness happen. You can take a look at the "Loving Relationships and Your Heart" section on pages 24 and 25. The Father in your living space may help you with judging others, looking at your own faults instead of others', and His other suggestions there.

Opening Questions

1. What is the difference between two-way forgiveness and reconciliation?
2. What is the difference between two-way forgiveness and one-way forgiveness?
3. Why do you think that forgiveness is the first family-of-God trait mentioned, following "The Lord's Prayer"? (Notice that unforgiveness smacks of contempt.)
4. If the definition is, "Forgiveness is the decision to not retaliate", what makes it hard to choose that decision?
5. What makes it easy to be generous with family and friends, and yet hard to be generous with enemies?

Small Group Questions

1. To forgive others when they sin against you is tough. How can the Father who is right by your side help you with forgiveness?
2. How does this help you build character?
3. Give some examples of times when one-way forgiveness has been called for in your life. (Perhaps when you have been abused, or when you have been taken advantage of financially, or in a lawsuit.)
4. Can you share instances when the lack of forgiveness has led to problems in your life or in your family?
5. How did you “get over” the desire to retaliate?
6. Does it help you in crossroad moments to go over the first and third *Beatitudes*? If not, how can you make those *Beatitudes* more helpful?

When the Groups Re-Assemble

What does a forgiving person look like? *Install Gem #8: God’s blessing rests on those who are spiritually broken. The Kingdom of the Heavens is for them, and it makes everything new.* (The first *Beatitude*.) *Personalized.* **Dear Father, I am spiritually broken. Welcome me into your Kingdom. Fill my life with your presence, which makes everything new.**

Thoughts for the Week

Since forgiveness is not a feeling (it is a decision) you can forgive even though you don’t feel good about the offending person. Crossroad moments that have anything to do with forgiving can make or break your day. Seek to live in the Kingdom of the Heavens, which is “working on your own stuff” instead of holding onto grudges.

Meeting 9: False Righteousness, Sincerity and Your Heart

<u>Meeting</u>	<u>Beatitude</u>	<u>Living from Your Hurt</u>	<u>Living from Your Heart</u>
4	Sadness Being Merciful	Hopelessness	Peacefulness
5	Treated Unfairly Being Persecuted	Contempt	Loving Relationships
6	Living Correctly Staying Pure	Lust	Loving Relationships
7	Making Peace	Dishonesty	Genuineness
8	Spiritually Broken Treated Unfairly	Retaliation	Forgiveness
9	Living Correctly - #4 False Righteousness - p. 19 Sincerity - p. 26		

“Righteousness” means “living rightly”, or “living correctly.” *Trying* to live correctly misses the point. When our heart *desires* to live correctly we will not feel forced to live right, but we will seek it. I believe that when a heart has Jesus’ touch, wanting to live correctly comes automatically. That is what the “living correctly *Beatitude*” is all about – sensing that we need to be pure in heart or we will not get life right.

Still, this is a call to examine if we are *truly* getting life right. With the Armor of God in *Ephesians*, it is correct living (the breastplate of righteousness) that protects your heart. It can go both ways: Try to live right and you will protect your heart, and *visa versa*. Invite the Father to bring both your heart and your actions into alignment with Him.

The “not good enough” wound. The “False Righteousness” section on page 19 is about attracting personal attention by appearing to be very religious. Please read it aloud, and then try to think of some of your crossroad moments that spring from this wound. “Living from your hurt” on that page goes contrary to “may your name receive honor, not mine.” There must be an unhealed wound that gets in the way of giving honor to God. This wound may very well be a “not good enough” wound that does not stop seeking personal attention. Healing will need to come before the person can automatically promote God instead of self.

The “false pride” wound. Another area of woundedness is found in the “Sincerity” section, on page 26. This one sneaks up on us all. When God does great things through us, it is so easy to take credit. I do not heal people. I call upon God to heal people, often after helping identify a wound. I do not expel spirits. God sends them away. He does the work and I am privileged to watch Him overcome evil with good. Even though that is truly my heart, there is always a hint of the following kind of thinking somewhere in the back of my mind: “God is so lucky to have me on His team.” This comes from a “false pride” wound. Acts 19:11-23 brings us an informative story about

people who try to use the power of God's name for their personal glory. Take a little time to read it and see if you have crossroad moments that come from this wound.

"Hiding their selfish heart behind the appearance of good behavior." What a chilling way for Jesus to describe people's false righteousness. People will know when I want to get all of the credit, and when I want to be center stage. People will also be able to tell when I am pleased to "reflect His glory" (2 Corinthians 3:17-18). That happens when our heart receives power from the Father who is in our living space.

Opening Questions

1. Do religious settings tempt you to appear more "righteous" than elsewhere?
2. What examples come to your mind of certain people being a bit falsely righteous?
3. Have you ever been in a church where that was a big factor?
4. How does "looking good" get in the way of "righteous living"?

Small Group Questions

1. Are there times you feel pushed to be falsely righteous, like praying in public?
2. How does the "not good enough" wound show up in your life?
3. Can you explain how these wounds produce false righteousness?
4. How does false righteousness obstruct a person's heart?
5. What can you do to be more sincere?
6. Explain how talking with the Father about "false righteousness" during crossroad moments can build your character.

When the Groups Re-Assemble

This meeting could be painstakingly revealing. Take a risk and share what the Father in your living space has been telling you about sincerity.

Install Gem #9: You will face judgment if you are devoted to yourself, hiding your selfish heart behind the appearance of good behavior. (Matthew 7:22-23.) Personalized. Dear Father, help my heart to be fully devoted to you.

Thoughts for the Week

Saying, "May your name receive honor, not mine" is not humanly natural, and feels a bit alien at first. However, when it comes from a heart that is guided by the Father, a wonderful feeling emerges while honoring Him.

Meeting 10: Living in The Father's Family

The Family of God and Other Families. A few years ago I read a counselor's definition of "what a family is." He wrote that a family is the people who meet a person's deepest needs. He did not distinguish between a person's biological family and the social network of people who fill those needs. Although I'd like to cite the writer, I've long forgotten who he is, but let's thank him for sharing that insight. Needs begin early in life, where we cannot physically survive without caretakers, and we continue to rely on other people for survival throughout our whole life. Meeting deep needs continues to pull at us quite strongly. It is not an option to "make it on your own" as an adult, any more than it is an option to strike out on your own as a newborn.

Meeting maturity needs. For those of you with a copy of *The Life Model: Living from the Heart Jesus Gave You*, look at the "Maturity Indicators Chart", pages 51 to 56. The five stages of maturity are listed there, along with the most important needs to be met during each stage. Here is a brief summary, to help people understand about progressing in maturity, and helping each other live better in the family of God.

A community consists of people in each of the 5 stages of life, assisting each other to complete their maturity tasks. The first stage is infancy, ages 1 to 3, where a person learns to receive life unconditionally. The next stage goes from 4 to 12, where a person learns to take care of self. Then comes adulthood, stage 3, and that lasts from 12 until parenthood. The task there is to learn to care for self and others. Parenthood – stage four – includes the task of caring unconditionally for an infant, teaching stage 2 children to take care of themselves, and helping young adults to reach their goals as well. Stage 5 is the elder stage, which begins when the children have left home. An elder's task is to use every lesson from previous stages, to teach to people who are downstream. Every person in the first four stages needs to learn how to successfully reach their maturity goals, along with help from elders. Each person is to be involved with people in all of the other stages, giving to those downstream and receiving from those upstream. Uh, elders, you will need to receive too, so please find elders who are upstream to get your elder-stage needs met.

The "Maturity Indicators Chart" takes a page to cover each stage, and lists personal tasks for people in each stage. There is also a column for how the community and family can contribute to the task, and a third column for what happens when the stage-related tasks fail. The final column goes beyond other approaches to developmental psychology by tying together the person's individual maturity tasks with what is supposed to be received in family life, and how that can lead to "mental illness" when it fails. For further study, please consult a copy of *The Life Model*.

Meeting maturity needs and spiritual needs. As we began this meeting's discussion notes, we saw that your family consists of the people who meet your deepest needs. I hope that the above section about maturity will guide people to satisfy each other's deepest maturity needs. But even when the deepest maturity needs are met, there is another essential need – to receive life from the creator. That is where the family of God can meet your deepest spiritual needs. In the same way that a child models after parents, there is a similar pathway for spiritual growth – we need other humans to show us how it works. The Father's contribution is key, but so are other humans' contributions. Here is a metaphor to describe how these forces can work together:

Rockets must carry two kinds of tanks to create their power – one for fuel and one for oxygen. The fuel will not burn unless it is mixed with oxygen when it is ignited. Got a rocket? It won't have any power without both. We find the same applies to humans. Our family supplies the fuel and God supplies the oxygen. There is no power available to us when we worship our family – the “just family” option – or when we say that we don't need people – the “just God” option. Clearly, God is essential, but so is His family. Apart from God and His family, this planet becomes a barren wasteland of twisted maturity and empty spirituality. Family dysfunction? Spiritual brokenness? They are birds of a feather.

It is becoming clear why Jesus spent so much time going over the traits that help His family – forgiveness, genuineness, peacefulness, sincerity and loving relationships. These come from the Father guiding our character development, as we have seen in the past six meetings. It is also why Jesus spent a few years with the disciples. He needed to show them what it looks like to live from a heart guided by the Father.

Building character takes time. Take a look at what we found in the third discussion, about how people can look as *The Beatitudes* come on line in their life: establishing a new spiritual life, overcoming sadness, not giving up, living correctly, being merciful, staying pure, peacemaking, and getting His direction moment by moment. Remember that *The Beatitudes* are a promise that the Father will help you develop into that kind of a person. Building character takes time.

What can we expect? Jesus did not directly answer this question. “What happens when people develop His traits and live from their heart?” Amazing accomplishments. Think about it. People you know who have walked with God for a while tend to make a pretty big difference. How do they do it? By following His guidance in fairly insignificant, daily tasks. The Father magnifies the effects of those small tasks. Over time, He does bigger and better work in and through us. His “kingdom in the heavens” now is much more than a catchy phrase. It truly is wherever we go, because He is there and He makes huge changes, transforming His family, but transforming the world by working through them. What He said about us being the light of the world is what happens when people develop His traits and live from their heart.

Spending sustained time with God turns people into powerhouses. That is not what they seek, but that is what happens. A few examples are found in the Bible. Of course there were the disciples, a collection of nondescript men, who we found changing Jerusalem at first, and soon they changed the world in wonderful ways. Three years with Jesus did a lot for them. That was also the case for Paul. When we found him knocked off of his horse, it took him three years with Jesus as his personal trainer before he was good to go. And what was the result? He was ready to carry the good news to the far reaches of the Roman Empire, in a life changing way. He created a growing movement, and the kingdom of the heavens spread from one person to another, house to house, city to city because he was spreading light. People became passionate Jesus followers in many home-based life groups through his work.

His disciples and the Apostle Paul are easy to spot when we are looking for people who learned directly from Jesus. But what about John the Baptist? I believe that he is a great example of what to expect from someone who lives in the family of God. John was Jesus' second cousin, so if anyone would be influenced by Jesus during his growing-up years, it would be him. *The Gospel of Luke* tells us that John's and Jesus' mothers were cousins, and that John leaped for joy in the womb when Mary announced to John's mother that she would bear the Messiah. John sensed Jesus' presence from his earliest days, while he was still in Elizabeth's womb. And it must be true that as the same-age cousins grew up, they must have gotten together quite a few times while at family gatherings, and at Jerusalem twice or three times each year, during the national holidays. If I were John as a young child, I would look forward to being with my cousin Jesus. It must have been a majorly stretching boyhood for John to have Jesus around a few times each year. I believe that John got his impetus to become who he was because of Jesus. Jesus even got him to understand "the good news", as no other person could. It is telling – even striking – to note that at three places we find *The Gospel of Matthew* quoting John while he was baptizing and preaching, and he was using very similar language as Jesus.

1. In *Matthew* 3:2 we find John giving the same sermon that Jesus gave: "You can turn your life around because the Father is ready to join you in your living space, to help you with anything that comes up." The manuscript of *Matthew* has John using the exact words that we hear from Jesus' "nutshell" account of His early sermons, found in *Matthew* 4:17. This suggests that Jesus helped John, during his pre-public years, to grasp the importance of "establishing a relationship" with the Father.

2. In *Mathew* 3:10 John the Baptist admonished the Pharisees that if they don't show good fruit, they will be cut down and destroyed like bad fruit trees. That's exactly what Jesus said in *Matthew* 7:10.

3. John drove his point home to the Pharisees by calling them a “brood of vipers” (*Matthew 3:7*), which is one of the terms used by Jesus in His challenge to the Pharisees in *Matthew 23*.

It should not surprise us when we hear in *Matthew 3:13* that John was reluctant to baptize Jesus. He said that it is Jesus who should baptize John. He was talking to his cousin, who had very strongly shaped his thinking. Please do not consider this to be a minor point: John the Baptist knew about the kingdom of the heavens from Jesus – establishing a relationship with God – and that term propelled John into the lime light. That idea came directly from his cousin. John’s message (*Matthew 3:2*) was identical to Jesus’ first message (*Matthew 4:17*). When Jesus asked to be baptized, John could have said, “That would be like a new Christian baptizing his pastor!” Bottom line: John became a man who made a wonderful difference in many peoples’ lives. He changed the world because he lived in the family of God, and because what he received from Jesus gave his life its direction.

Turning every area of life over to the Father. As mentioned earlier, it is during our crossroad moments that we have a chance to turn a new area of life over to God. Throughout this discussion guide we have been finding that *The Beatitudes* have helped us identify crossroad moments – when we are overcome with our spiritual brokenness, sadness, being treated unfairly, and the other difficulties. Let’s say that crossroad moments occur because desires, urges and surges in feelings come from wounds. Bouts of hopelessness, contempt, false righteousness and the other wounds would like some relief. They can catch us off guard, leaving us on our own to deal with the interruptive feelings. That is where the Father’s presence makes a difference. Don’t avoid the negative feelings. Invite Him to help you with them, so that you can win in the end. As each crossroad moment is turned over to Him, you will be a step closer to giving Him control in every area of your life.

Living in the family of God. Perhaps the crucial crossroad moments are those that come up in the family setting. We can see that getting maturity needs met during each succeeding stage of life is tough. Helping each other, and not hindering each other to get through the stage-related tasks, is just where crossroad moments make a difference. Are you oozing with contempt? That will block you from listening to the people in your family. Are you hopeless? That will block you from being available for your family. I trust that these two examples will give you a sense of the bigger picture: As the Father develops His traits in your life, you will be maximally loving to your family members, and your family will have a good chance of being guided by the Father.

As *The Sermon on the Mount* unfolded, Jesus outlined just what it takes for people to stop living from their hurt, and receive the Father’s guidance so that they can live from their heart. That is when the family of God works best.

Opening Questions

1. Was your church background in a “restrictive” or “permissive” church?
2. Which *Beatitude* points to your life?
 - First: spiritually broken
 - Second: overcome with sadness
 - Third: treated too unfairly to hang in there
 - Fourth: struggling to live correctly
 - Fifth: drained from being merciful
 - Sixth: striving to be pure
 - Seventh: depleted from peacemaking
 - Eighth: persecuted for your spiritual life
3. How do these struggles affect your family life?
4. Which wound does your *Beatitude* deal with? (Hopelessness, contempt, lust, dishonesty, retaliation and false righteousness are mentioned in the sermon.)
5. Are these the “storms that can bring your house down”, as the final teaching in this sermon puts it?

Small Group Questions

1. Describe your best and worst experiences in “the family of God.” (Try to keep it brief. Just summarize the situation in a sentence or two.)
2. How have these affected your at-home family?
3. How has God led you during these times?
4. How can you use these experiences to help people who are close to you in the family of God?

When the Groups Re-Assemble

Share what you have learned about living in “the Family of God.”

Install Gem #10: Jesus stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, “Whoever does the will of my Father in the Heavens is my brother and sister and mother.” Personalized. Dear Father, always near, strengthen me and guide me to follow your will, and to take my place in your family.

Thoughts for the Future

Giving the Father control in every area of your life will take winning many little skirmishes over a long period of time. He will give you grace along the way, so don't be too hard on yourself when you lose a few skirmishes. The Father will help you win in the end.

A LIST OF GEMS FROM THIS DISCUSION GUIDE

Gem #1: God is right by my side, ready to help me with any problem that comes up. (Matthew 4:17.) *Personalized.* Dear Father, please join me right now. I need your help.

Gem #2: Please take control in every area of my life and guide me, just as You are in control of everything in heaven. (The Lord's Prayer.) *Personalized.* Let Your Kingdom gain control in every area of my life. Remind me to talk everything over with You. Provide direction for me here on earth, as You provide direction in heaven.

Gem #3: God blesses those who strive to live correctly. He gives them guidance and peace. (The fourth Beatitude.) *Personalized.* Dear Father, you know how sincerely I want to follow you. Please keep me in your presence, so that I can be at peace as I make decisions today.

Gem #4: It all comes down to believing that the Father will generously take care of you. Do not worry at all about tomorrow, even though you could find enough evil to worry about in every "tomorrow" if you tried. Drop your worries. You can rely on Him to take care of you. (Matthew 6:34.) *Personalized.* Dear Father, please help me to rely on your generous provision – to believe from my heart that you will take care of my every need.

Gem #5: Always treat others in the way that you would like to be treated. (Matthew 7:12.) *Personalized.* Dear Father, please help me with my integrity, treating others as well as I expect to be treated.

Gem #6: God's blessing rests on those who deeply long to have a pure heart. As they keep their eyes on Him, He will help them to be pure. (The sixth Beatitude.) *Personalized.* Dear Father, you know that my desire is to have a pure heart. Please help me to keep my eyes on you, and guide me to be pure.

Gem #7: You will not be able to hide what is in your heart. People will be able to see what you really collect – external treasures or eternal treasures. (Matthew 6:21.) *Personalized.* Dear Father, please help me to stay on your pathway, so that I will not need to fool anyone.

Gem #8: God's blessing rests on those who are spiritually broken. The Kingdom of the Heavens is for them, and it makes everything new. (The first Beatitude.) *Personalized.* Dear Father, I am spiritually broken. Welcome me into your Kingdom. Fill my life with your presence, which makes everything new.

Gem #9: You will face judgment if you are devoted to yourself, hiding your selfish heart behind the appearance of good behavior. (Matthew 7:22-23.) Personalized. Dear Father, help my heart to be fully devoted to you.

Gem #10: Jesus stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, "Whoever does the will of my Father in the Heavens is my brother and sister and mother." Personalized. Dear Father, always near, strengthen me and guide me to follow your will, and to take my place in your family.

Keep track of the new Gems that you find, and develop a journal for the beauties that you *install*. This is a way to build your life on the kind of a foundation that Jesus said would prepare you for any storm.