

Blessed are Those who Mourn
Matthew 5:4
Small Group Guide

Opening Icebreaker Question:

- If you were forced to give up some body part—i.e., a hand, foot, ear, nose, etc.—which would you be most willing to part with? Which part would you be most reluctant to give up?

OPTIONAL BACKGROUND READING/INTRO: Last week we started a summer message series called “Happiness.” We’re thinking about the question, “Is there some kind of life that brings true satisfaction across life stages and circumstances?” To get to the answer, we’re looking at a little piece of Jesus’ teaching known as the Beatitudes, at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount. The Beatitudes are 8 statements that Jesus made about life in God’s kingdom. They all start with the phrase, “Blessed are...”

Some scholars have said that the best way to understand the word *blessed* is to translate it, “Happy.” In other words, Jesus is showing us what the good life looks like. Jesus teaches that there is an objective state of happiness—a kind of life that would be all-satisfying for you regardless of where you’re born or what century you’re born in, what grades you got in school or how much money you’ve made. Each Sunday in July and August we’re looking at one of the Beatitudes to see what it says about true happiness.

This week we’re looking at what is perhaps the most difficult, most puzzling beatitude of them all, the second beatitude, in **Matthew 5:4**. **“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.”**

1. What is your first reaction to hearing Jesus’ statement of Matthew 5:4?
2. Let’s discuss how you would define what it means to “mourn.” Pastor Josh says, “To mourn is to grieve a loss.”
 - a. However, what does it mean to grieve? Is it the same as being sad?
 - b. In addition, what does destructive mourning look like? Can you overdo it? Underdo it?
 - c. What does healthy mourning look like?
3. Who is Jesus speaking about, when he says, “Blessed are those who mourn?”
4. Peter Kreeft, in his book *Back to Virtue*, writes,

The world is the source of mourning. It is, and will be until the end of time, a vale of tears, despite our honest but doomed attempts to turn it into a Paradise, and also despite our dishonest but largely successful attempts to deny that basic truth to ourselves.

Does it make any difference to you that everyone experiences loss and thus will need to mourn? Why? What do you think differentiates people who suffer loss (in general) from those who will experience the blessedness that Jesus offers in it?
5. On a scale of 1-10, with 10 being high, how much do you fear loss or suffering? Explain.
6. Before we give you Pastor Josh’s viewpoint on the next page, how do you think Jesus would like us to approach loss based on this verse, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted”? What exactly is Jesus saying about mourning?

7. Pastor Josh says that what Jesus is saying is, “The willingness to mourn the losses you experience is a necessary component to living the kind of true happiness, or blessedness, that we all long for.” To mourn honestly and authentically means accepting two healthy choices that Jesus gives you.
- One of those is “the choice to mourn honestly when loss find us.” How easy and/or difficult have you found it to honestly mourn the losses that you have experienced?
 - The other choice that Josh mentioned is the choice to take on certain kinds of mourning for the sake of the reward. **What rewards can and do come from a willingness to grieve?**
 - Quite a few scholars say that v4 is tied to v3, meaning, “Blessed are you when you feel grief over your own sin and brokenness.” **How is this true and what impact does that have on your sense of loss?**
 - How does the grace that comes from Jesus’ death on the cross (Romans 8:1) affect our grief over sin and brokenness?
8. We’ve discussed who Jesus is speaking about and what mourning is. Now, why does it lead to the good life?
- What do the two quotes below tell you about why mourning leads to the good life?
 Author William Barclay says: “When things go well it is possible to live for years on the surface of things; but when sorrow comes a man is driven to the deep things of life, and, if he accepts it aright, a new strength and beauty enter his soul.”
 Peter Kreeft says that every sorrow “hollows out a place in us for God.”
 - What does it mean to you that Jesus went through the greatest loss and came out alive? How was his loss greater than any of ours?
 - In addition, the end of the Bible describes the final victory of Christ over loss and sadness. Following is Sally Lloyd Jones’ paraphrase, in the *Jesus Storybook Bible*, of Revelation 22:
 [We know,] in some mysterious way that would be hard to explain, that *everything is one day going to be more wonderful for once having been so sad....*
 The ending of the story will be so great, it will make all the sadness and tears...seem like just a shadow that is chased away by the morning sun.
How does this make you feel about loss after hearing this?
9. Do you have any unresolved losses? How can we mourn with you and pray for you?
10. Prayer: Among our usual prayer requests, let us pray for these unresolved losses and share in their mourning as appropriate.