

FIRST BAPTIST **ROGERS**

valiantwarrior

SEMESTER TEN
THE MAN GOD BLESSES

introduction

TO VALIANT WARRIORS

In the Old Testament, certain groups of men were noted as “valiant warriors” or “men of valor.” These men displayed courage and determination in battle. King David had his “mighty men.” These men proved themselves to be trustworthy in battlefield situations. These brave warriors were not limited to one tribe or people group. They were only limited by their courage and determination.

Valiant means possessing or showing courage or determination. Obviously, a warrior is one who is engaged in a war. A war has been underway since the Garden of Eden. The kingdom of God has been under assault by the kingdom of darkness. Satan’s temptation to Adam and Eve that led to their sin resulting in the Fall of all mankind was the declaration of war against God’s kingdom.

Biblical manhood and masculinity was also attacked in the garden on that day. Adam had been created first, given dominion over the earth and even named his wife. Satan did not initially go to Adam but to his wife, Eve with the temptation. It is understood that Adam was most certainly right there while his wife was being tempted. Adam abdicated his leadership responsibility in protecting his wife. He then followed her into the same sin that she had committed. Since then, God’s people have battled against the kingdom of sin and darkness. But also, men have battled for biblical manhood and masculinity.

Men are at their best when they are valiant warriors, battling for the kingdom of God and rescuing the disadvantaged in the name of the King. Robert Lewis subtitled “Men’s Fraternity,” A Quest for Authentic Manhood. Valiant Warriors hopes to be another leg in the race or step in the journey in this quest. David challenged his son, Solomon in 2 Kings 2:2-4, “I am going the way of



all the earth. Be strong, therefore, and show yourself a man. Keep the charge of the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His ordinances, and His testimonies, according to what is written in the Law of Moses, that you may succeed in all that you do and wherever you turn, so that the LORD may carry out His promise which He spoke concerning me, saying, ‘If your sons are careful of their way, to walk before Me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, you shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.’”

We hope to show men how to be men, valiant warriors through this study. We believe that the key to men being transformed is first by the Word of God. Another key is men in small groups for discussion, prayer, accountability and encouragement. As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another. It is out of that desire and vision that we have embraced the following guidestones.

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Valiant Warrior Mission

To disciple men to follow Christ and to live and lead in their homes, churches, and communities for God’s glory.

Valiant Warrior Vision

To see an army of men devoted to Christ leading their families and this church to serve Christ and bring Him glory until Jesus returns.

Valiant Warrior Strategy

To disciple men in small groups to lead their families and their church to serve Christ and bring Him glory until Jesus returns.

Valiant Warrior Promise

Judges 6:12 “The LORD is with you, O valiant warrior.”

Valiant Warrior Code of Honor

To grow in Christlikeness personally. To be committed to my family and Christ’s church. To intentionally encourage other men in Christlikeness and commitment to the church.

Valiant Warrior Scripture References

2 Chronicles 14:8 "Now Asa had an army of 300,000 from Judah, bearing large shields and spears, and 280,000 from Benjamin, bearing shields and wielding bows; all of them were valiant warriors."

Deuteronomy 3:18 "Then I commanded you at that time, saying, 'The Lord your God has given you this land to possess it; all you valiant men shall cross over armed before your brothers, the sons of Israel.'"

Joshua 1:14 "Your wives, your little ones, and your cattle shall remain in the land which Moses gave you beyond the Jordan, but you shall cross before your brothers in battle array, all your valiant warriors, and shall help them."

Joshua 8:3 "So Joshua rose with all the people of war to go up to Ai; and Joshua chose 30,000 men, valiant warriors, and sent them out at night."

Joshua 10:7 "So Joshua went up from Gilgal, he and all the people of war with him and all the valiant warriors."

Judges 6:12 "The angel of the Lord appeared to him and said to him, 'The Lord is with you, O valiant warrior.'"

Judges 11:1 "Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a valiant warrior..."

Judges 18:2 "So the sons of Dan sent from their family five men out of their whole number, valiant men from Zorah and Eshtaol, to spy out the land and to search it;"

1 Samuel 10:26 "Saul also went to his house at Gibeah; and the valiant men whose hearts God had touched went with him."

1 Samuel 14:52 "Now the war against the Philistines was severe all the days of Saul; and when Saul saw any mighty man or any valiant man, he attached him to his staff."

1 Samuel 18:17 "Then Saul said to David, 'Here is my older daughter Merab; I will give her to you as a wife, only be a valiant man for me and fight the Lord's battles.'"

1 Samuel 31:12 "All the valiant men rose and walked all night, and took the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Beth-shan, and they came to Jabesh and burned them there."

2 Samuel 2:7 "Now therefore, let your hands be strong and be valiant; for Saul your lord is dead, and also the house of Judah has anointed me king over them."

2 Samuel 17:10 "And even the one who is valiant, whose heart is like the heart of a lion, will completely lose heart; for all Israel knows that your father is a mighty man and those who are with him are valiant men."

1 Chronicles 28:1 "Now David assembled at Jerusalem all the officials of Israel, the princes of the tribes, and the commanders of the divisions that served the king, and the commanders of thousands, and the commanders of hundreds, and the overseers of all the property and livestock belonging to the king and his sons, with the officials and the mighty men, even all the valiant men."

2 Chronicles 13:3 "Abijah began the battle with an army of valiant warriors, 400,000 chosen men, while Jeroboam drew up in battle formation against him with 800,000 chosen men who were valiant warriors."

VALIANT WARRIOR

SEMESTER 10: THE MAN GOD BLESSES

I have often heard men say, "I am a blessed man." I have said and heard it said, "God bless you." In reading the Scripture, it is obvious God does bless His people. It is just as obvious that followers of Jesus, Valiant Warriors, want to receive the blessing of God. So, our pursuit this semester will be to be "The Man God Blesses."

We will discover God blesses certain men and in certain ways. We want to be those men to receive the blessing of God.

The word "blessed" is used in the Old Testament and New Testament alike. Five Psalms begin with "Blessed" and it is used more than that throughout the Psalms. It is also most prominent in the introduction of the Sermon on the Mount in what we call the Beatitudes. Psalm 1 and the Beatitudes will be studied in three of the lessons. But we will go back before then to establish God's plan from the beginning in blessing His people.

At creation in Genesis 1:28, we see the first blessing in Scripture placed upon Adam and Eve. God has been blessing His children throughout history. The creation account in Genesis is fundamental and foundational to all we believe. It is like running a race or going on a trip. If you start out wrong or in the wrong direction, it will mess up your trip or race. You may not ever arrive, especially if you are heading in the wrong direction.

Valiant Warriors embrace the inspiration, infallibility, and inerrancy of Scripture. We believe the first verse in the Bible, Genesis 1:1, *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."* If you believe Genesis 1:1, then believing the rest of the Bible follows. Creation is where everything starts and everything is grounded. Here we find at the very beginning the blessing of God upon His people.

*Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. **God blessed them;** and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth."*

Along with God's blessing came an assignment, a responsibility. God's blessing was associated with the work given to Adam in this creation passage. The blessing of God starts at the beginning. The blessing of God comes with an expectation Adam will obey God with the blessing. The purpose of the blessing is to provide the ability to fulfill the responsibility that comes along with the blessing.

We will discover God always blesses His men so they can obey Him, serve Him, serve others, and fulfill God's will. The blessing of God is not simply for a man's idle enjoyment. The blessing of God is enjoyable as it is used for God's glory and His intended purposes in us and through us.

Let us begin the journey of the blessing from God resulting in service and kingdom advance.

God blesses a man to bring glory to God.

Lesson 1: Creation: God blesses a man with a biblical view of Creation.

Lesson 2: Redemption: God blesses a man by forgiving his sins.

Lesson 3: Delight: God blesses a man who delights in His Word.

Lesson 4: Faith: God blesses a man of faith.

Lesson 5: Character: God blesses a man of character. Part 1

Lesson 6: Character: God blesses a man of character. Part 2

1 Corinthians 16:13-14 *"Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, **act like men**, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love."*

week one

CREATION:

GOD BLESSES A MAN WITH A BIBLICAL VIEW OF CREATION.

SEMESTER 10
THE MAN GOD BLESSES

When you start out wrong, it is very difficult to get to the right destination. When it comes to biblical manhood, it is important to start at the beginning instead of working backwards. God is the Creator of everything. He has His intended purpose behind His creation. When we modify His original design, we will miss His intended purpose which is ultimately to glorify His Name.

First of all, God blesses a man He created.

The New Testament makes frequent references to the Old Testament. Jesus quoted the Old Testament Scriptures. In doing so, Jesus was affirming His belief in the Old Testament as inspired, infallible, and inerrant.

Jesus also referenced the Old Testament when questioned about marriage and divorce. It has been correctly noted in *Male & Female He Created Them*, Jesus did not reference polygamists like Abraham, David, and Solomon when making reference to marriage. His reference was always to Creation and the first marriage between Adam and Eve.

Matthew 19:3-9

Some Pharisees came to Jesus, testing Him and asking, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason at all?" And He answered and said, "**Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE**, and said, 'FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH'?" "So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate." They said to Him, "Why then did Moses command to GIVE HER A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE AND SEND her AWAY?" He said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; **but from the beginning it has not been this way**. "And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery."

When asked about divorce, Jesus quoted from Genesis with reference to creation. In verses four and eight, He mentions "from the beginning." In summary, Jesus affirms the creative design in God making male and female distinct, specific, and purposeful. He affirmed a one-flesh union between a man and woman in biblical marriage. He affirmed the permanence of marriage (6). He gave explanation that "from the beginning" divorce had not been the way. It was the Fall and sin and the hardness of the heart that brought about divorce.

Paul also referred to creation in regard to biblical manhood and leadership in the home and church.

1 Timothy 2:9-15

"Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments, but rather by means of good works, as is proper for women making a claim to godliness. A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. **For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve**. And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. But women will be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint."

When considering God's design for marriage, family, and manhood, it is best and biblical to follow Jesus' example and go back to creation.

Genesis 1:26-31

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth." Then God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you; and to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the sky and to everything that moves on the earth which has life, I have given every green plant for food"; and it was so. God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Created in the Image and Likeness of God

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness

Much has been made about people being made in the likeness of God and rightfully so. Sometimes people have used the argument to move forward their presuppositions and personal bias. But the "imago Dei" is an important foundational truth in understanding the Scripture, the Fall, and redemption. It is worthwhile to note the exegetical nuggets of truth in this passage. The singular, God-affirming monotheism in a polytheistic culture uses the plural pronouns "us" and "our" to express the plurality within the Godhead. While a full-blown Trinitarian theology is not yet in view, it is projected here for further revelation to come.

"Image" and "likeness" have been the subject of much discussion throughout church history. Some have argued for the distinction between the two words with specific detail under each category. The importance of the "image" and "likeness" is critical.

A summary of Kenneth Matthews survey of biblical views of image and likeness is below.

Although Genesis tells who is created in the "image of God," both man and woman (1:27; 1 Cor 11:7; Jas 3:9), it does not describe the contents of the "image."¹

The principal thesis until this century had identified the "image" as the spiritual or immaterial properties of a person. Since the time of Irenaeus (ca. 185), a common view in the church was to differentiate between "image" (*selem*) and "likeness" (*dēmût*). This may well have been influenced by the erroneous addition in the LXX where "and" (*kai*) was written between "image" and "likeness." It is thought that "image" refers to the ability to reason while "likeness" refers to a person's correspondence to God in spiritual attributes. As a consequence of human sin, the "likeness" has been lost but the "image," which distinguishes a person from the animal order, persists unaltered. Augustine also attempted to explain the "image" in ontological terms by appealing to a trinitarian image, such as human memory, knowledge, and will (The Trinity X.4.17–19). This coincided with the common interpretation of the plural "Let us make" as a trinitarian reference. He emphasized that mankind was created perfect in the garden to do the good, but sin resulted in their incapacity to obey apart from God's enabling grace.²

Reformed theology has traditionally held that mankind was created in the image of God, which was perfect in knowledge and righteousness, suffered irreparable destruction in the fall, and is delivered only through Christ's death and resurrection, whereby the image is being progressively transformed in the believer (2 Cor 3:18) until its state of perfection at the resurrection (Rom 8:29; 1 Cor 15:49; Col 3:9–10).

¹ Matthews, K. A. (1996). *Genesis 1-11:26* (Vol. 1A, p164). Broadman & Holman Publishers.

² Matthews, K. A. (1996). *Genesis 1-11:26* (Vol. 1A, pp. 164–165). Broadman & Holman Publishers.

Thus “the incarnate Son actualizes the perfection of the manhood which we have sinfully perverted.”¹⁸⁷ Our century has witnessed the rise of rival viewpoints that have challenged the ascendancy of the old view that the “image” was primarily spiritual and ontological. Among them is the converse opinion that the *imago Dei* is chiefly physical form.³

During this latter half of our century the dominant interpretation, though not new (e.g., Chrysostom), has become the “functional” one, that the “image” is humanity’s divinely ordained role to rule over the lower orders (1:26, 28). Often related to this interpretation is the idea of “royal” administration: mankind is God’s “image” representing him on earth as his royal vice-regent.⁴

The importance of “*imago Dei*” is rooted in the belief mankind is at the top of God’s creation and unique from all other creation. This is further emphasized in the command to take dominion over the rest of creation. It is the foundation for valuing all people regardless of age, race, gender, language, culture, and more. It is this truth that causes Valiant Warriors to reject racism, abortion, murder, abuse, and all that does not treat people with the love and dignity given to every human being by God. This high view people created in the image of God in no way condones attitudes, behaviors, and activities of people who violate, minimize, blaspheme, and reject the truth of God’s Word. Valiant Warriors must value and treat all persons with dignity, and at the same time must not compromise the truth of God’s Word. We certainly believe these are not mutually exclusive. Jesus is our example as the One who loved and died on a cross for those who did not believe in Him. He died for them while not condoning their beliefs and actions.

Discuss what it means to be made in the image of God. Consider how that gives value to all people of every race, nation, and language.

Created Male and Female

“God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”

Genesis 1:27 uses the word “create” three times. In the same way with the same importance God created “man” in “His own image,” He created them male and female. God created them different and distinct and not the same. Unfortunately, there is blurring of the lines God clearly established at creation. A man is not better than a woman. He is just different. A woman is not better than a man. She is just different.

This creative design was distinct biologically. Men and women are similar in most aspects biologically. They both have ears, nose, mouth, digestive systems, neurological systems, etc. But they also have distinct biology centered around the reproductive system. Without getting into great detail, men and women have different anatomy that are unique to a male and a female. For years, everyone would agree these distinct and different biological anatomies is what makes you male and female.

This creative design was distinct physically. Men are typically stronger than women. Certainly, there are some women who are stronger than some men. All would have to agree that is the exception and not the rule. Until recently, that was the goal behind separating men’s and women’s sports. The fastest man in the world is much faster than the fastest woman in the world. That goes for all sports related to running and strength. The occasional Little League World Series girl or Division III kicker is a one-off who is a rare exception. It is a physically biological fact that men, because of muscle mass, testosterone, and other factors, are physically stronger than females. Therefore, men are distinct physically from women.

³ Mathews, K. A. (1996). *Genesis 1-11:26* (Vol. 1A, pp. 165–166). Broadman & Holman Publishers.

⁴ Mathews, K. A. (1996). *Genesis 1-11:26* (Vol. 1A, p. 166). Broadman & Holman Publishers.

This creative design was distinct for procreation. Men and women are distinct, but they are complementary. They are created to go together. God said it was not good for Adam to be alone. This has a companionship and relational purpose in the creation of Eve out of Adam's side. But there is also procreation of other people. Without Eve, Adam would be alone. With Eve, Adam would not only have Eve, but they would have ability to procreate and obey God's command to be fruitful and multiply. The population of the planet hinges on this creative design and purpose of God. Adam and Eve are distinct with different reproductive organs so together, they can have children who would grow up to procreate with people of the opposite sex.

Unfortunately, that which seemed so obvious to most everyone throughout all history has come under question. When a United States Supreme Court Justice cannot answer or does not know the answer to the question, "What is a woman?" we know we have reached the threshold of a Romans 1:21-32 world.

This creative design was distinct theologically. Since the creation account is recorded in the Bible, it is a doctrinal issue. It is theological. God's creative design is about God's glory. It is about worshipping the God of the Bible. When we discredit, distort, or disavow God's creative design, then we become idolaters. People have made an idol out of the creation or themselves in rejecting God's creative design.

I have often said if you believe Genesis 1:1, *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,"* then believing the rest of the Bible comes easy. While this is not the space to argue for a young earth view of creation, I do think even that position is very important for me personally in being consistent with my approach to biblical interpretation. The simple logic is God is able to create everything in six 24-hour days. That is not too hard for Him. God is able to create everything in six seconds or one second because He is God. He had a purpose in six days related to six days a person should work then rest on the Sabbath. So logically, God could create everything in any amount of time He chose.

The Bible gives no credible reference to a day age or gap theory of creation. It is just not there. Those who insist on a much older earth should consider God most certainly created a world with age as Adam nor Eve were considered by anyone to be an infant upon creation. Trees, animals, vegetation, and sea creatures would all be mature at creation. One of my professors in seminary proposed the question, "If you cut down a tree in Adam's day, do you suppose it would have rings in the trunk?" Of course, it would.

So, the simplest, most straight forward reading of the biblical text would lead to a literal six-day creation in my humble, but accurate, opinion.

Discuss the importance of believing in the biblical account of Creation.

What are some key foundational principles to the Christian faith established in the first chapters of Genesis? Consider many attacks on the inerrancy of the Bible are launched against the first 11 chapters of Genesis.

Let us get back to the issue at hand. God created them male and female, distinct but complementary. The distinction was by God's design. The distinction is necessary and important to fulfill God's plan. Deviation from God's design creates serious consequences.

Discuss the fact God created them "male" and "female" distinctively different from each other. Consider the purpose and importance of the distinction between male and female.

God's design in Genesis 1-2 is corrupted by the Fall in Genesis 3. Eve, and then Adam, was tempted by Satan to eat from the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The only tree they were forbidden from eating was what they ate from. They had access to all the other trees, but they chose the only one they could not choose. That is human nature. That is sinful nature. Their fall plummeted all creation into sin. Adam abdicated his role as the leader of his wife and acted passively in letting his wife take the fruit, unchallenged by him. He then followed his wife into the same sin by eating the fruit. Instead of leading, he was looking. Instead of resisting temptation, he was receiving the temptation. The Garden was lost. Biblical manhood was lost. Biblical womanhood was lost.

God in His grace came to Adam and Eve in the Garden to restore His relationship with them before removing them from the Garden. God would lead them and their seed down a road of redemption that would lead to ultimate redemption through His Son Jesus Christ. Since that day in the Garden, sin has been rising. We have seen the assault on God's creative design and biblical manhood.

Why is it there is an increase of vocal opponents of God's creative design suggesting a different way or new orthodoxy pertaining to male and female creation order and design? This does not catch God by surprise. There is nothing new under the sun. When "new" heresies arise, a little research reminds it is an old heresy just retooled with maybe a few new terms. The sexually deviant behavior away from clear and historical biblical morality and marriage is nothing new. Social media and an ever-increasing anti-biblical morality media and an end-of-the-age prophesied morality easily explain the louder and probably increased opposition to biblical morality, marriage, and gospel message. This culture has given way to the mainstream of LGBTQ+ ideologies that have infiltrated even elementary schools and other public places where children are exposed to drag queens and multiple other forms of ungodly, deviant behavior. Scripture warns and explains such in Romans 1.

Romans 1:21-32

For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.

Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

*For this reason **God gave them over** to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.*

*And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, **God gave them over** to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.*

Homosexuality and transgenderism and any gender dysphoria are contrary to God's creative design for sexuality, biblical morality, biblical manhood, and biblical womanhood. How anyone could arrive that such behavior or belief is normative or acceptable to God's creative design is explained in Romans 1. "God gave them over" in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to degrading passions, and to a depraved mind (24,26, 28). They exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man (23). They exchanged the truth of God for a lie (25). They exchanged the natural function for the unnatural, men with men committing indecent acts (27).

God created order in sexuality and gender. Sin creates disorder in everything including sexuality and gender. For a detailed study of this area, *Male and Female He Created Them: A Study on Gender, Sexuality, & Marriage* by Burk, Closson, & Smothers.

Discuss the importance of the distinction between male and female.

Considering more Christian parents and grandparents are having children and grandchildren who are announcing their homosexuality or transgenderism, discuss how to have considerate conversations and discussions with those children and others while not compromising the truth of Scripture.

Discuss the positives of God's created design and how to champion His plan in the culture we live in today.

God Blessed Them

God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth." Then God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you;"

The first beatitude blessing is found upon mankind. Associated with this blessing is something to do. God blesses with the expectation Adam will respond accordingly. The man blessed by God has been given responsibilities. The Valiant Warrior assumes responsibility. Irresponsibility cuts the legs out from under biblical manhood. One of the hallmark traits of biblical manhood is assuming responsibility.

Here we see responsibility tied directly to God blessing them. It is reasonable to conclude with the blessing of God comes the expectations of responsibility.

Be fruitful and multiply,

Adam was to be fruitful and multiply. This command was the result of the one-flesh union between a man and his wife. The two will become one flesh. This sexual act between a husband and wife in marriage is consummation of the marriage. It is the uniting together of two people in a physical, emotional, and spiritual union. Paul would later teach how this union reflects the mystery of Christ and His church. The outward result and the reward of this union (Psalm 127) would be children. God did not populate the earth all at once in His creative act. He created only two people (and not a biblically unsubstantiated Pre-Adamic race) with the assignment these two people, through the God ordained one-flesh relationship, would populate the earth. They would create the family unit. This foundational plan of God could never be accomplished except through a heterosexual union of a husband and a wife who are male and female, respectively.

As believers and Valiant Warriors, we advocate for families. A family is a husband, wife, children, grandchildren, aunts, uncles, and cousins. It is multi-generational relationships originated out of the one-flesh union of a husband and wife.

Obviously, a homosexual relationship cannot yield children. Nor can a transgender man posing as a woman have a baby. It is amazing these statements have to be made. It is so obvious, but most importantly, it is biblical.

It is also important to point out this a command God has given. As a couple who struggled with infertility for years, I am very much aware of the fact all married couples may not have children. But it is the normal, natural, and biblical desire a married couple should want children. I know for us, as we thought Lisa would not get pregnant or carry a child to term, our desire for children was not quenched by this season of 17 years. We adopted our first two sons. We believe that is as much a part of God's plan and will for us as the two biological sons Lisa gave birth to in years 17 and 19 of our marriage. I believe under different circumstances we would have probably had more than four children. For us, these four boys were God's blessing on our marriage.

In this command is the idea of fruitfulness. I do not want to do exegetical gymnastics to connect fruitfulness to Jesus speaking of bearing much fruit where He insists on much fruit and abundant fruit. But I do want to challenge much of the thinking today among Christian men and women in deliberately planning and designing their family to have one boy and one girl and no more. Make sure you have prayed and let God set the pattern for your family. We live in a very selfish and materialistic time and place. We can be so blinded by the materialism that surrounds us and by the selfishness within us. Obviously, Abraham and Sarah had only one son. Isaac only had two sons. So, sometimes God ordains families with not a lot of kids. But Jacob had 12 sons and many families through the years have had large families with many children.

"Fruitful" typically implies more than one or two pieces of fruit. *"The fruit of the womb is His reward"* would typically be considered more than one or two. Although, those who have been able to have only one child certainly consider their one child a reward.

Also, the command to multiply carries with it more than one or two. We often speak in terms of growing an organization or a church in comparing the difference between multiplication and addition. Multiplication always results in much more. Certainly, the multiplication can be applied generationally, but you have to have more than one child to move from addition to multiplication. This paragraph is more technical and numerical. The command is spiritual and theological. Make no mistake this command is primarily for the population of the earth. In other words, it is about having children. For those who are not married or cannot have children or more than one or two children, then as with everyone regardless of family size, we are to make disciples of all nations or have spiritual children of all nations.

Subdue it; and rule over...

God's plan from the beginning was for mankind to rule over creation. The fish, animals, and plants were to be under the subjection of mankind. God gave Adam responsibility. The man God blesses is a responsible man. The man God blesses assumes responsibility. The opposite of that man is one who is irresponsible. Adam was a farmer, a rancher, and steward of God's creation. Valiant Warriors step into their responsibility and do not abdicate it. God created a man to shoulder the load and step up to the plate and lead.

Men were created to lead and follow. Men follow God and other godly men. Men have overwhelmingly been the ones who have fought in wars. Men were the ones who mostly died when the Titanic sank. When the Titanic sank, 110 women died, 56 children died, and 1,357 men died. Men gave up their seats on the lifeboats for the women and children. That is what men do.

When men get it right, things go better. When men get it wrong, things are bad. Prisons are filled with men. Men commit most of the crimes and cause most of the trouble. Men also solve problems and rescue people. Men also preach the gospel to a lost world and to Christ's church.

I love Stu Weber's book title of *Tender Warrior*. I like his book *Four Pillars of a Man's Heart*. In this book, he describes how a man's heart out of balance can lead to apathy or being a brute. But when in balance with God's Word and the Holy Spirit, this pillar stands straight and strong as a leader, protector, provider, lover, and friend. Godly leadership is good. Ungodly leadership is bad.

This is what Paul was talking about in 1 Corinthians 16:3-4.

1 Corinthians 16:13-14 *"Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong let all that you do be done in love."*

The man God blesses believes in biblical creation. He embraces the image bearing distinctions between men and women. He advocates for God's plan of marriage being between a man and woman consummated in a one-flesh union. He assumes his blessing of responsibility in growing his family with his wife as God leads and provides. He assumes leadership responsibility in his home, his church, and his world. He acts like a man.

Discuss the commands God gives to Adam at creation. How do we fulfill these commands? Notice these commands were reissued to Noah after the Fall and the Flood in Genesis 9:1-7. What does it mean God would reissue these commands to Noah?

What does it mean to "act like a man?"

Discuss the five commands in 1 Corinthians 16:13-14.

week two

REDEMPTION:

GOD BLESSES A MAN BY FORGIVING HIS SINS.

SEMESTER 10
THE MAN GOD BLESSES

If we pick up from last week's lesson out of Genesis 1 and 2 by moving forward to Genesis 3, we run into what theologians have labeled "The Fall."

A biblical worldview is made up Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Restoration. Last week, we learned the man God blesses has a biblical view of Creation. In that view, he embraces the biblical view of distinctions between men and women that are complementary in fulfilling God's purposes. Gender is not only biological, but it is biblical and theological. At Creation God established marriage and Adam, the husband, as the leader, protector, provider, lover, and friend. The Creation answers the question of "How did we get here?" or "How did this all start?" Biblical Creation is a rejection and refutation of evolution. *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth...*

The Fall answers the question of "What is wrong with us?" or "What went wrong?" It is certainly obvious to all something is wrong. Genesis 3 gives the account of how sin entered into the world and the devastating implications of sin. It was a personal choice made by Adam and Eve that had universal consequences on all creation. This study will consider the problem of the Fall.

Genesis 3 introduces Satan and sin to God's new creation and to Adam and Eve in particular.

Genesis 3:1

Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?" The woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.' " The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die! "For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

Satan has taken control of this serpent and tempts Eve first. The strategy began with usurping the leadership of Adam. He did not come to Adam, but the serpent came to Eve. From Genesis 2, we find God created Adam (man) first out of the dust of the ground (7). God then planted a garden and placed Adam in it (8, 15) and told him to cultivate and keep the garden. Then, God gave Adam the command to not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (16-17). Then, God created Eve (18, 20-23). She was created out of Adam. She was created after Adam. She was created after Adam was given the command to not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

So, Satan does not approach Adam who was given the command directly, but rather, he approaches Eve. A reasonable assumption is Adam was close by. Another reasonable assumption is Eve acted initially independent of her husband. Adam was passively watching and waiting to see what happens instead of providing leadership and spiritual protection for his wife. Eve was acting independently from her husband and in contradiction to what God had said.

The strategy was also questioning the Word of God, *"Indeed, has God said?"* This is always the strategy of Satan. He questions the Word of God. He throws doubt on what God has clearly stated. He further speculates about what God means (4-5). Satan questions the Word of God and casts doubt on the intentions and integrity of God's Word and God Himself.

One of the major responsibilities of the Valiant Warrior is to know, believe, live by, and defend the Word of God. God blesses a man of His Word.

Genesis 3:6

"When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate."

In one fatal swoop, Satan tempted, and Adam and Eve sinned. This fruit was a "delight to the eyes." It looked good. It was good for food in their eyes. They thought the fruit would make them wise. They were wrong. They trusted Satan. They trusted their eyes. They trusted their desires. They did not trust God's Word. It is the original sin to listen to and trust everything, everyone, and even yourself over God's Word.

What was Satan's (the serpent) strategy in his temptation of Eve?

What did Eve do that led to the Fall?

Since Adam and Eve lived in a perfect world, what does their sin say about human nature?

Where was Adam and what was he doing while Eve was being tempted?

Consider Eve's influence over Adam. What does this say about Adam's leadership?

Genesis 3:7-13

Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings. They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. Then the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" He said, "I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself." And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" The man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate." Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" And the woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

The consequences of this cataclysmic sin were they covered themselves (7 self-righteousness), they hid from God (8-10), and they blamed others (12-13).

Discuss the immediate consequences and reactions to Adam and Eve's sin by God and by them.

The Lord not only took the initiative to come to Adam and Eve, not waiting on them, but He also set into motion His response to their sin.

Genesis 3:14-24

The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; on your belly you will go, and dust you will eat all the days of your life; and I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel." To the woman He said, "I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth, in pain you will bring forth children; yet your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you." Then to Adam He said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it'; cursed is the

ground because of you; in toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. "Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; and you will eat the plants of the field; by the sweat of your face you will eat bread, till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return." Now the man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all the living. The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them. Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever"—therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken. So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life.

The consequences of sin were devastating. The serpent was judged (14-15). Verse 15 provides what some theologians call the *proto-evangelion*. *Proto-* means first. *Eu-* means good. *Angellion* means news or announcement. It is the first good news. God, in veiled language, is prophetically looking ahead to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. The bruising of the feet speaks of the crucifixion of Christ. The bruising of the head is the crushing of Satan in the victory through Christ's death.

The woman will suffer pain in childbearing and she will desire to rule over her husband (16). But as in the original design, he will lead (rule over) her. Consider K. A. Mathews' explanation.

Although sexual "desire" conforms to v. 15, better is the explanation suggested by Gen 4:7b, where "desire" and "rule" [*māšal*] are found again in tandem: "It desires to have you, but you must master [*māšal*] it." In chap. 4 "sin" is like an animal that when stirred up will assault Cain; it "desires" to overcome Cain, but the challenge God puts to Cain is to exercise "rule" or "mastery" over that unruly desire. If we are to take the lexical and structural similarities as intentional, we must read the verses in concert. This recommends that 3:16b also describes a struggle for mastery between the sexes. The "desire" of the woman is her attempt to control her husband, but she will fail because God has ordained that the man exercise his leadership function. The force of the defeat is obscured somewhat by the rendering "and he will rule"; the conjunction is better understood as "but he will rule." The directive for "rule" is not given to the man, for that has already been given and is assumed (2:15, 18); rather, the issue of "rule" is found in God's directive toward the woman, who must succumb by divine edict. Thus the Lord affirms in the oracles of judgment the creation order: the serpent is subjected to the woman, the woman to the man, and all to the Lord. "In those moments of life's greatest blessing—marriage and children—the woman would serve most clearly the painful consequences of her rebellion from God."

What is the nature of the man's "rule"? "Rule," as verb or derivative, is found seven additional times in Genesis, where it may indicate governance (1:16 [twice], 18; cf. Ps 136:7–9) and refers to exercising jurisdiction (24:2; 37:8; 45:8, 26). The temperament of "rule" in the Old Testament is dependent on the varying circumstances in which that power is exercised. The term is used too broadly to isolate its meaning in 3:16b lexically as either beneficent or tyrannical. Human jurisdiction over the lower orders, however, is expressed by the different verb "dominate" (*rādā*; 1:28), suggesting that the man does not "rule" his wife in the sense that he subdues the animals. We cannot understand the divine word "he will rule over you" as a command to impose dominance any more than v. 16a is an exhortation for the woman to suffer as much as possible during childbirth. It is a distortion of the passage to find in it justification for male tyranny. On the contrary, ancient Israel provided safeguards for protecting women from unscrupulous men (e.g., Deut 24:1–4), and the New Testament takes steps to restrain domination. Paul admonished men and women to practice mutual submission (Eph 5:22–33) and cautioned husbands to exercise love and protection without harshness (Col 3:19). Because of the threat of harsh dominance, Paul commanded Christian charity toward women in the community of the home and the church.⁶

⁶ Mathews, K. A. (1996). *Genesis 1-11:26* (Vol. 1A, pp. 251–252). Broadman & Holman Publishers.

The man will work the ground now filled with thorns and thistles. Work was ordained for the man prior to the Fall. Now work is harder because of the Fall. The ground fell under the curse of sin (17-18). Adam will return to the ground in death.

The Lord removed them from the Garden to prevent them from eating from the tree of life that would have perpetuated their sinfulness into eternity. Instead, the Lord provided animal skins for them, pointing ahead to a sacrificial system where the blood of animals would point ahead to Jesus Christ's death on a cross for sin. While Adam and Eve introduced sin into the world and contaminated all creation with that sin, God in His grace came to them in the Garden. Despite the fact Adam and Eve were hiding, covering their sin and shame, and blaming others, God still came to them with the provision of a better and more sufficient covering.

This provision of animal skins and initiative in coming to them points ahead to redemption. Redemption is being bought or purchased. God would pay a price to purchase His children from the slavery of sin.

Discuss the consequences God imposed on Adam and Eve because of their sin.

Discuss Genesis 3:15. What are some of the veiled or shadowed prophetic implications of God's pronouncement?

Why would God replace the fig leaves Adam and Eve obtained to cover their nakedness with animal skins? Read Hebrews 9:22.

Redemption is what the solution is to the problem. The Fall is what man (Adam and Eve) did. Redemption is what God did. God comes to the rescue. He comes to the Garden and seeks out Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve are hiding from God because of their sin. Their shame and guilt were instantaneous. God's intervention was decisive and loving. Redemption was completed by Jesus Christ's death on the cross and resurrection from the dead. People acquire redemption by faith. God provides redemption according to His grace. People have never earned redemption by keeping the law or doing good deeds.

The greatest blessing a person can experience is having their sins forgiven. For some men, they are not aware of their own sin, so many do not appreciate the enormity of this blessing of God. The same way Satan lied to Eve and questioned God's Word, Satan is lying to self-righteous people today minimizing sin and its reach and its consequences. Satan convinces men God's Word cannot be believed or trusted. Satan convinces men to trust their instincts or worldly wisdom. So, we can say blessed is the man who understands he needs to have his sins forgiven. Forgiveness is not extended to those who do not think they need it.

Discuss what it means to be self-righteous.

The Psalmist captures this blessing in Psalm 32 and Paul paraphrases this passage in Romans.

Psalm 32:1-2

"How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered! How blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit!"

Romans 4:7-8

"Blessed are those whose lawless deeds have been forgiven, and whose sins have been covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not take into account."

Paul quotes in the New Testament after the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ what David understood in the Old Testament pertaining to the forgiveness of sin.

The previous verses (1-6) appeal to religious Jews using Abraham as an example of a person who was not justified by his good deeds but rather by faith.

*"What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. **For what does the Scripture say? "ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS."** Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness, just as David also speaks of the blessing on the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works."*

In Romans 3, Paul had established the fact all people are sinners. All have fallen short of God's glory. No one was righteous before God. Because of this problem, people were separated from God because of their sin. This would apply to religious and devout Jews and irreligious and pagan Gentiles.

The Psalmist (David) and Paul refer to the man who is blessed in multiple ways regarding the disposition of his sin.

First, his transgression is forgiven.

The word for "transgression" is "pesha" in the Hebrew. It carries the idea of breach of trust, rebellion, deviation from the will and desire of God. Paul uses the word for "lawless deed" in the Greek translation. The important thing to note is here the transgression is forgiven. To be forgiven in the Hebrew means to be lifted up or to carry away or take. Forgiveness means there is no longer any anger or offense there.

Second, his sin is covered.

The word for "sin" is "chataah" in the Hebrew. This has similar meaning as transgression but has a nuance of missing the mark or a deviation from God's designed and desired will. But here the sin is covered. This is the idea of expiation in the covering of sin. It does not mean covering like sweeping it under the carpet when in reality it is still there. This covering coincides and complements the forgiveness aspect of the sin and connects with the idea of imputation Paul uses in the Romans passage. Sin is covered and forgiven so God does not see it. We are covered with the blood of Jesus Christ and with His righteousness. Jesus takes our sin and gives His righteousness.

Third, the LORD does not impute iniquity.

The word "impute" means to reckon, consider, or count towards their account. David understood that through forgiveness there was no imputation of guilt, which is the meaning of the word translated "iniquity." On the other hand, the New Testament expounds on the concept that in Christ the imputation of guilt is replaced with the imputation of the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

David knew what he was writing about pertaining to sin. David is known for two extremes. He was called "a man after God's own heart." He offered some of the most heartfelt, God-honoring prayers recorded in Scripture. He had noble ambition for building the Lord a temple. He prepared and prayed for his son Solomon to walk with God and obey His statutes and commandments. He wrote many psalms that have provided comfort and hope for multitudes of believers throughout history.

Despite all of that, David was a great sinner. Many are familiar with his story. David was the king of Israel. He had many men who served under him and served him as valiant warriors and mighty men. One of those men was Uriah the Hittite. Uriah was an honorable man. He had a beautiful wife named Bathsheba. While Uriah was away fighting a battle for King David, David saw Bathsheba and wanted her. What David wanted as the king, he got. After his encounter with Uriah's wife, she became pregnant.

If the adulterous affair was not bad enough, David sought to cover up his sin. He brought Uriah in with hopes he would go into his wife and he would then think this child Bathsheba carried was his child. But Uriah was more honorable than David in that he refused to go into his wife while his fellow soldiers were engaged in battle. But David would take another step to cover his sin.

David ordered for Uriah to be brought to the front lines and for the Hebrew forces to withdraw leaving Uriah alone on the front line, which would be the equivalent of an execution. This plan was carried out and Uriah the Hittite died that day. David would then take Bathsheba as his wife. It would appear David's plan, scheming, and conniving worked. Except, God knew.

God sent His prophet Nathan to David and told David a story about a rich man who had many sheep, but instead of killing one of his own sheep, he killed the pet sheep of a man who only had one sheep. When Nathan asked David what should happen to such a man, David replied the man should die. Then Nathan told David, you are the man. The Bible says the Lord struck the child Bathsheba had and the child died.

As Valiant Warriors, we will still sin. We need to know how to deal with our sin. It begins with coming face-to-face with the reality of our sin. We must not minimize it or justify it. The attitude is that everyone sins or what I did is no worse than what he or she did or not as bad. We must take our sin seriously and honestly. We must own our sin and assume responsibility. We must seek forgiveness.

Psalms 51 records David's repentance from that sin. This serves as a biblical guide for our process of repentance.

*"Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; according to the greatness of Your compassion blot out **my transgressions**. Wash me thoroughly from **my iniquity** and cleanse me from **my sin**. For I know **my transgressions**, and **my sin** is ever before me. Against You, You only, **I have sinned** and **done what is evil** in Your sight, so that You are justified when You speak and blameless when You judge. Behold, I was brought forth in **iniquity**, and **in sin** my mother conceived me. Behold, You desire truth in the innermost being, and in the hidden part You will make me know wisdom. Purify me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness, let the bones which You have broken rejoice. Hide Your face from **my sins** and blot out all **my iniquities**. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation and sustain me with a willing spirit. Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners will be converted to You. Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, the God of my salvation; then my tongue will joyfully sing of Your righteousness. O Lord, open my lips, that my mouth may declare Your praise. For You*

do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it; you are not pleased with burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise."

David mentioned seven times in the first four verses *"my sin, my transgression, my iniquity, evil."* David was greatly convicted of his sinfulness. He called his sin evil. He said his sin was ever before him. It plagued him at night where he could not sleep. It plagued him in the day to where he could not work or think. He understood his sin was against God first and foremost. God blesses a man who recognizes his own sin and assumes responsibility for it.

He then requested God do something for him. Notice at this point, David was not saying what he was going to do. He was asking God to do what only God can do. David makes several requests from God and those requests are cumulative and progressive.

He requests God be gracious to him.
He requests God blot out his transgressions.
He requests God wash him from his iniquity.
He requests God cleanse him from his sin.

The second and third stanza combine an air of hope amid his humble repentance. While continuing to ask God to wash him, hide His face from his sin, blot out his iniquities, he makes hopeful requests.

He believes God will make him know wisdom.
He believes God will make him clean.
He believes God can make him whiter than snow.
He believes God can make him hear joy and gladness.
He believes God can make his broken bones rejoice.
He believes God can create a clean heart in him.
He believes God can create a steadfast spirit in him.
He believes God can restore the joy of His salvation.
He believes God can sustain him with a willing spirit.
He believes God can empower him to teach sinners.
He believes God can empower him to sing of His righteousness.

God blesses a man with His redemption by way of genuine repentance.

Repentance is a gift God grants (2 Timothy 2:25-26).

"...with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will."

Repentance is the first evidence of personal redemption (2 Corinthians 7:10).

"For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death."

Romans 4:7-8

"Blessed are those whose lawless deeds have been forgiven, and whose sins have been covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not take into account."

Discuss the difference in a man trying to cover his sin and God covering his sin.

Discuss the blessings of the second and third stanzas of Psalm 51.

Read Romans 3:10, 23; 5:1, 8; 6:23; 8:1; 10:9-10.

Ask if anyone in the group needs to have their sin forgiven by trusting in Jesus Christ as Savior. If you need to trust Christ and want to do that, let the discussion leader know and he will talk with you after the lesson, or you can just do what Romans 10:9-10 says. Be sure to let someone know you are trusting in Christ.

Allow for a prayer time for men to walk through David's prayer of repentance in Psalm 51.

week three

DELIGHT:

GOD BLESSES A MAN WHO DELIGHTS IN HIS WORD.

SEMESTER 10
THE MAN GOD BLESSES

Psalms 1 begins, "Blessed is the man..." At the heart of this first Psalm is *his delight is in the law of the LORD*.

This Psalm is really the inspiration for the title of this study, "The Man God Blesses." This Psalm is ascribed to a human author. It is only appropriate for us to see (as all Scripture) God is the author. It is a short six verses divided simply into the way of the righteous or blessed and the way of the wicked. The way of the righteous is most prominent. The way of the wicked is almost a passing comment like the "chaff" used to describe the wicked.

The emphasis or main idea is the great value of the Word of God to the blessed man. Valiant Warriors and blessed men are men who delight themselves in God's Word. Men are passionate about their sports teams, their hunting, their fishing, their cars, their trucks, their kids' sports, their hobbies, and recreation. The list goes on and on.

The blessed man delights in the Word of God. It is little wonder Satan distracts men from reading, memorizing, and meditating on God's Word. If men would drink and eat from God's Word, they would develop an appetite for the Word that would draw them regularly to this well that never runs dry. Psalm 119 shouts the value and centrality of God's Word. It is obvious the Psalmist starts this 150-chapter book with what will permeate its pages.

This study will lead us to study the Beatitudes from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount.

The Sermon on the Mount, using the corresponding word in Greek, will go on to expound it still more radically.

Old Testament scholars Keil and Delitzsch also note:

As the New Testament sermon on the Mount, as a sermon on the spiritualized Law, begins with μακάριοι, so the Old Testament Psalter, directed entirely to the application of the Law to the inner life, begins with אשרי. The First book of the Psalms begins with two אשרי 1:1; 2:12, and closes with two אשרי 40:5; 41:2. A number of Psalms begin with אשרי, Ps. 32, 41, 112, 119, 128; but we must not therefore suppose the existence of a special kind of ashre-psalms; for, e.g., Ps. 32 is a משכיל, Ps. 112 a Hallelujah, Ps. 128 a שיר המעלות.⁸

"How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers. The wicked are not so, but they are like chaff which the wind drives away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish."

The first psalm begins with a triune prohibition for the "blessed man" before getting to what he should be doing. It is understood you cannot be going opposite directions at the same time. God points out the stark contrast in these two pathways.

⁸ Keil, C. F., & Delitzsch, F. (1996). *Commentary on the Old Testament* (Vol. 5, p. 48). Hendrickson.

Warren Wiersbe outlines these first three verses.

A person who is separated from the world (1)

A person who is saturated with the Word (2)

A person who is situated by the water (3)

"How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers!"

Where modern psychology, and even the modern church today, would advocate for a message about the "blessed man" should begin with positive affirmations, God begins His hymnal with negative prohibitions. We often say we want people to know what we are for and not just what we are against. While I agree with that statement, I think we can see here it is equally important for people to know what God is against or opposed to. In summary, it is more than just doing the right thing. Not doing the wrong thing is important in living this life following Christ. We cannot do the right thing until we stop doing the wrong thing. We cannot flourish in the midst of sin.

As a person who is interested in structure, grammatical construction, and movement in a passage, I love the contrasting and progressive verbs in verse one. The psalm warns against walking, standing, and sitting. Each of these actions imply time exposure. They are different, but they reflect a common idea in this context. Those who walk in wickedness, stand in sin, and sit as a scoffer are somewhat synonymous. But they can also be considered unique and distinct. They also could be considered progressive.

The blessed man does not walk in the counsel of the wicked.

Walking in the counsel of the wicked carries the idea of walking with or even walking by. It is an "on the move" action. Their counsel would be their advice, or the way they see the world. This stands in parallel and adversative to the Law of the Lord the righteous man delights in.

Unfortunately, many men are more familiar with the counsel of the world or the wicked than the counsel of God. These men are not only more familiar with this counsel of the wicked, but they are walking in it. They are running in these circles. They are active in this kind of thinking. Certainly, sexual immorality would be in view here. The world embraces and endorses sexual immorality and rejects biblical morality. That is why many people do not think anything today of an NFL quarterback quoting the Bible and confessing to be a Christian while living unmarried with a woman or being engaged in casual sexual relationships. Some sources report a high percentage of single people, even regular church attenders, who have casual sex regularly.

It is not uncommon for people who have been raised in a home where they regularly attended a church preaching a biblical view of morality and marriage to have chosen to live with their fiancé prior to getting married for financial reasons or as a trial run. This makes sense to some people. I have had that conversation with young people who have grown up in this church. I have had them tell me they have prayed about it and do not "feel" it is wrong.

The "blessed" man does not live by the counsel of the culture or what feels right. The "blessed" man obeys the Word of God above the winds of the culture and personal desires and financial rewards.

The blessed man holds to biblical morality and rejects and avoids immorality.

Another area that could be in view in this passage is greed versus generosity. The counsel of the wicked would be to strive for material gain at all costs or even as a high priority. This could lead to being engaged in ungodly business simply because it is financially profitable. This could also lead to ungodly or immoral practices within a legitimate business for financial gain. In either case, the Valiant Warrior should avoid ungodly businesses and ungodly business practices. These would include stealing and lying.

Do not accept their advice. Their counsel is wicked.

Discuss what kind of advice or counsel the world and culture is giving that is contrary to what God's Word states. What are some ways you have chosen to walk in the counsel of the wicked?

The blessed man does not stand in the path of sinners.

Standing in the path of sinners does not mean we have no contact with sinners. Jesus is a friend of sinners. It means we do not identify or participate in the sins of sinners. We are not one of them. Abraham was different from the Egyptians. When he lied about Sarah in order to preserve his life and blend in, it was pointed out in God's Word as weakness, sinfulness, and wrong.

Standing in a path reflects the idea of being known or recognized in that location. It would be like sitting, which follows. Standing is different from walking and sitting. Standing in sin is more settled than walking in sin or wickedness. I think there is also progression from counsel of the wicked to the path of sinners. No longer are the wicked giving counsel the main problem. You standing in this pathway of sin is the issue.

I have seen it repeatedly that when married women start going out to bars without their husbands and even with other women, it never leads to anything good. This is especially true if the married woman is going with single women. Disaster is just around the corner. The same is true when a married man goes to the bar with his single friends. Single men should not hang out in bars either. Nothing good happens there, but without question, a lot bad has happened there.

Their wicked counsel has become your preferred place to stand. They are not the problem as much as you are the problem. You like it. I have seen this over and over through the years in the areas of alcohol, gambling, and marital unfaithfulness. Men deny they have a problem in these areas because they enjoy it. They have rationalized that what feels so right cannot be so wrong. Their feeling and sinful desires override godly counsel, and confrontation, and most importantly, God's Word.

Discuss the places of sin you have stood in or have seen others stand in because they like it and wanted to stand there.

Do not pursue their pursuits.

The blessed man does not sit in the seat of scoffers.

Sitting in the seat of scoffers seems a more settled state. There is a finality to sitting down. When we think about Jesus "sitting down" at the right hand of God, it brings notion of the once and for all King assuming His rightful place to never be unseated. On the other hand, in a negative way, it speaks of a more final settled state. Also, the term "scoffer" conjures up ideas of aggressive opposition against the way of God and righteousness. This is more than just sinful lusts and indulgences. This carries the idea of aggressive

opposition. The ideas of blasphemy, mockery, and cynicism are detected here. Those who make fun or light of spiritual things are in view. Avoid the classroom of the atheist, agnostic, humanist, cynic who makes light of sin and the things of God. Do not sit down in the seat of the scoffer. This does not mean you cannot sit down with someone who is lost or even a skeptic or cynic to share the gospel with them. But you should be aware and cautious lest you fall into seat of the scoffer yourself.

Counsel, way and seat (or 'assembly', or 'dwelling') draw attention to the realms of thinking, behaving and belonging, in which a person's fundamental choice of allegiance is made and carried through; and this is borne out by a hint of decisiveness in the tense of the Hebrew verbs (the perfect). It would be reading too much into these verbs to draw a moral from the apparent process of slowing down from walking to sitting, since the journey was in the wrong direction for a start. Yet certainly the three complete phrases show three aspects, indeed three degrees, of departure from God, by portraying conformity to this world at three different levels: accepting its advice, being party to its ways, and adopting the most fatal of its attitudes—for the scoffers, if not the most scandalous of sinners, are the farthest from repentance (Prov. 3:34).⁹

If Christians start listening to the counsel (advice, plans) of the ungodly, they will soon be standing in their way of life, and finally will sit right down and agree with them.¹⁰

When men begin to question what they have previously believed about biblical matters, it could be an indicator of a skepticism or cynicism that could be summarized by the word "scoffers." We have skeptics and cynics who question anything and everything the church does in the community and in the world. Motives and methods are questioned and brought under criticism. I am not talking about honest questions and scrutiny. I do believe we need accountability and shared assessments. As iron sharpens iron, so one sharpens another kind of participation, cooperation, and partnership.

Today in particular, there seems to be a considerable group of people who have chosen to criticize publicly and question other believers all the while not criticizing or even taking a stand against the culture and wickedness. On social media, one believer questions another believer's motives and tone while ignoring the frontal assault on the church concerning biblical morality and marriage. Satan has distracted many away from the mission of making disciples into a mission of criticizing disciples publicly with the result of turning off potential disciples.

Sometimes those who do no ministry are the greatest critics of those who do ministry. We all struggle and none of us do ministry perfectly. But we need not sit in the seat of the scoffer. Those who are seated are not moving forward on the mission. It is a settled state of sitting in the seat of the scoffer.

Discuss the problem of the scoffer today. How can you keep from being in the seat of the scoffer?

There is a way the blessed man does not go so he can go the way of the righteous.

The blessed man not only avoids the pitfalls of the wicked. The blessed man pursues the Word of God.

"But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night."

The blessed man delights in God's Word. His pleasure and satisfaction come from God's Word. Consider all the things that bring pleasure to men. God's Word is the source of pleasure to the blessed man.

⁹ Kidner, D. (1973). *Psalms 1–72: an introduction and commentary* (Vol. 15, p. 64). InterVarsity Press.

¹⁰ Wiersbe, W. W. (1993). *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament* (Ps 1:1–3). Victor Books.

Unfortunately, many, if not most, men do not know or appreciate the power and positive impact of God's Word on their life.

Satan tempts men to neglect God's Word. Some men reject God's Word, but many simply neglect God's Word.

The Word of God is the key to experiencing the blessing of God. It is impossible to please God without faith (Hebrew 11:6). It is impossible to know God and grow in your relationship with God apart from the Word of God.

Jesus is called the living Word of God (John 1:1; 1 Peter 1:3). The Word of God is the living, enduring, and imperishable seed of salvation (1 Peter 1:23).

Psalm 119 highlights the impact of God's Word. This is the first of 176 verses organized under each letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

"How blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the LORD."

There have been times in my life I sensed a dryness in my walk with the Lord. Psalm 119 has been a source of revival for me and for the Psalmist. Psalm 119 frequently uses the word "revive" and seven times it is connected to God's Word. It is also linked to "according to (the Lord's) lovingkindness." The Word of God is an equivalent expression in terms of reviving and rescuing to God's lovingkindness. The fact God has given us His Word is an expression of His lovingkindness. The word most often used for "lovingkindness" in the Old Testament is the Hebrew word "chesed." This important word is like "grace" in the New Testament.

God's Word is a delight to the blessed man and a source and means of revival.

Psalm 119:25

"My soul cleaves to the dust; revive me according to Your word."

Psalm 119:50

"This is my comfort in my affliction, that Your word has revived me."

Psalm 119:93

"I will never forget Your precepts, for by them You have revived me."

Psalm 119:107

"I am exceedingly afflicted; revive me, O LORD, according to Your word."

Psalm 119:149

"Hear my voice according to Your lovingkindness; revive me, O LORD, according to Your ordinances."

Psalm 119:154

"Plead my cause and redeem me; revive me according to Your word."

Psalm 119:156

"Great are Your mercies, O LORD; revive me according to Your ordinances."

We frequently say around here we do not worship the Bible, but everything we know about the God we worship is found in the Bible. There is no knowledge of God that contradicts the Bible or is outside the Bible. The Bible is God's completed written revelation to mankind. Some would say Jesus is God's full revelation, because Jesus is God. We certainly agree with that statement. I believe it is unnecessary and unwise to separate the revelation of the person of Jesus and the revelation of God's Word. It is somewhat a hair-splitting activity that really bears no benefit or fruit.

Because of the high value and position of God's Word, we understand why it has a prominent place and role in the life of the blessed man.

Here as in other places, because of the importance of the Word of God, it is meditated upon.

"...And in His law he meditates day and night."

This verse echoes Joshua 1:8.

"This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success..."

It is a well-established practice of the blessed man and the successful man to meditate on God's Word. Obviously, this means to think about the Word of God. The frequency of "day and night" informs us this is not an occasional consideration. This is a constant awareness of God's Word. Our reading and thinking about God's Word causes us to think about Him and His Word constantly.

I am sure you have had things on your mind on occasion and you just cannot get them off your mind. You are thinking about it all the time. Oftentimes, these are troubling things or sad things. If you or a close family member has just received a bad medical diagnosis, then that is what you are thinking about. If one of your children is having a lot of trouble, then that is what you find yourself thinking about all the time.

On the other hand, it can be the same with positive things. If you have a big trip planned with your family, you may find yourself thinking about what you need to pack to bring or how you will spend your days. The point is we do fill our minds with something. Sometimes we are in a passive mode where our circumstances determine what we think about all the time.

The blessed man takes the initiative and meditates on God's Word. He fills his mind with the Word of God. He reads the Bible. He memorizes Scripture. He meditates on God's Word. As he thinks about a verse or passage, he applies it to his life and ministry.

Jesus prayed to the Father, *"Sanctify them in truth, Your Word is truth"* (John 17:17). The Word of God purifies our mind and heart. It sanctifies us, which means it makes us holy or Christlike.

What do men typically delight in?

Discuss the importance of God's Word. Why is it important? What makes it important?

Most men do not memorize or meditate on God's Word. Talk about a reasonable approach to spending more time in God's Word and beginning to memorize and meditate on God's Word. Do not set such a high standard you are sure to fail. Start slow in small steps and let that small short step encourage and propel you to the next step.

The Psalmist introduces a simile describing the blessed man is "like" a tree firmly planted by streams of water. One of the big mistakes for novice tree planters is not providing a good supply of water over a long period of time, especially upon first being planted. I have seen my tree investment wilt because of lack of water.

"He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers."

Compare Psalm 1:3 to John 15:1-8.

Discuss "fruit in season," "leaf does not wither," and "whatever he does prospers."

The final three verses serve as a warning to the wicked. They are like the chaff which is the hull of the grain that is almost weightless and easily blows away with a puff of wind. They have no weightiness. They do not last. They are soon blown away. They have no roots or foundation unlike the tree firmly planted by the water.

"The wicked are not so, but they are like chaff which the wind drives away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish."

When impending judgment comes, they will not even be able to stand. The Bible states, *"It is appointed unto man once to die then the judgment."* There is a Great White Throne judgment reserved for the lost who are in view in this Psalm.

But 2 Corinthians 5:10 also speaks of the Judgment Seat of Christ which all believers will appear before.

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."

1 Corinthians 3:12-15 speaks further of this judgment for believers. This passage warns deeds described as wood, hay, and straw would be burned up in this judgment. 1 Corinthians 3:15 states *"if any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire."*

So, it is apparently possible for true believers to be engaged in works that will not last. While eternal judgment and condemnation are not going to happen for the true believer, our work could be like chaff or straw and not make it to heaven with us.

The wicked will perish and the works of some believers will perish.

Discuss the impact on you of the wicked perishing.

Discuss the impact on you that some works classified as wood, hay, and straw will burn

week four

**FAITH:
GOD BLESSES A MAN OF FAITH.**

**SEMESTER 10
THE MAN GOD BLESSES**

Hebrews 11:1-40

Valiant Warriors are surrounded by stories of faith. Our nation's history is a story of faith. Whether it is was the voyage of Christopher Columbus, the pilgrims, the early settlements, the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, World War I, the Great Depression, or another World War. We would agree we are here today because of the belief in a better future of so many who have gone before us.

This is even more true in Christian history. Our Lord leads the way, but His apostles suffered greatly for His cause because they believed in a better future, along with that early church leaders like Ignatius (fed to lions) 110, Polycarp (burned) 2nd century, Irenaeus (beheaded) 202, John Huss (burned) 1415, William Tyndale (strangled and burned) 1536, and every century between and since has had its martyrs who have sacrificed for the cause of Christ because of their faith. You and I have been greatly impacted by the faith of others.

How do you live differently as a believer than you would if you were not a believer? What difference does your faith make?

This passage is absent of the second person imperatives or exhortations we have seen in the previous chapters in Hebrews. In this chapter, the author/pastor is making a convincing argument based upon facts and history so compelling that if his audience listens, they will believe and join in with these Old Testament saints of faith in living by faith.

The just shall live by faith. Habakkuk 2:4; Hebrews 10:38; Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11

Living by faith requires clear understanding of biblical faith.

Faith is hope in an unseen reality. 1

Faith is substance or assurance of things hoped. It is substance. It has weight and reality. It is more than wishful thinking. It is not faith in faith. It is faith in someone and what that someone has said and done. Literally, the text means "being hoped for." It is a present passive participle carrying continuous action. The hope is not in the one doing the hoping.

The things hoped for are described further as *evidence of things not seen*. Evidence serves as proof. Our Christian faith is rooted in fact, history, and proof. We have often said we never ask people to take a leap into the dark, but rather, take a leap into the light.

It is important to understand Valiant Warriors growing up in West or the United States have been raised with a Judeo-Christian influence at the very least. So, it is a shorter step to get from our background to taking a step of saving faith than someone who grew up in South Asia. What seems so obvious to us, seems so strange to our friends with totally different backgrounds. Both backgrounds have to take a step of faith. Both cannot get to Christ without the step. Like whether you are three feet from getting on a boat or six inches from getting on the boat, in both cases, you are not on the boat. When the boat sails, you both are left behind.

Let us get back to the evidence. Josh McDowell's well-known apologetic book is called *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*. Jesus Christ stepped into history and lived publicly. The Bible is a well-known and impeccable book that includes a variety of literary styles including history, prophecy, and the Gospels. The biblical record and the well-documented incredible life of Jesus Christ, His death on the cross, and

resurrection from the dead are facts of history recognized by any honest and reputable scholar applying the same requirements on other events in ancient history that are readily embraced as fact.

These events, works, and life of Christ serves as the evidence needed to believe in that which is “not seen.” Obviously, if you can see it, then you do not need faith. You just need sight. So, faith is believing in the unseen. We do this all the time. We talk to people on the phone we do not see. We cannot see our heart or lungs, but we know they are there.

Faith has always been the means of God’s approval. It is by faith we have understanding of things pertaining to Creation (3). Faith is the means of pleasing God and being rewarded by God (6).

Hebrews 11 contains what we call the “hall of faith.” People who walked by faith are listed along with some of their steps of faith. Their actions and activities were attributed to faith. There is an inseparable relationship between faith and obedience. James called it faith and works. He wrote, *Faith without works is dead.*

A study of these listed shows a variety of events and outcomes all tied to faith. The Valiant Warrior must walk by faith and live by faith. Let us review this list and discuss these men.

“By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks.”

What was the difference between Abel’s offering and Cain’s? What does it mean “though he is dead, he still speaks?”

“By faith Enoch was taken up so that he would not see death; AND HE WAS NOT FOUND BECAUSE GOD TOOK HIM UP; for he obtained the witness that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God.”

What do you know about Enoch? Genesis 5:21-24

“By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.”

Discuss the repeated and great faith Noah had to demonstrate in building the ark. Genesis 6-9

Certainly, the father of faith is Abraham. More verses are devoted to his life in this chapter than anyone else’s. A significant amount of Genesis gives us a view of his extraordinary life. Look at each verse that begins with “By faith” and discuss what Abraham did that demonstrated faith and what the lessons are for us today.

“By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going.”

Discuss how faith plays out in the call, the obedience, and the not knowing where he was going.

"By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God."

Discuss living on a promise and looking for a land as an alien in a foreign land. Lean into the "city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God."

There seems to be an interlude from Abraham specifically, although all this applied to him. Take some time to read verses 12-16. The author says "all these died in faith without receiving the promises." That can only mean the promises are not for the here and now.

"Therefore there was born even of one man, and him as good as dead at that, as many descendants AS THE STARS OF HEAVEN IN NUMBER, AND INNUMERABLE AS THE SAND WHICH IS BY THE SEASHORE. All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. And indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them."

Discuss the fact they saw and welcomed the promises without receiving them.

What does it mean to be a stranger and exile on the earth versus being a citizen of the earth?

What difference does it make when you desire a "better country?" What does it mean to you that God "has prepared a city for them (you)?"

Verse 17 picks up another even in Abraham's life. Abraham's willingness to offer up Isaac was the greatest demonstration of Abraham's faith, in my opinion. These verses give us great insight into what was going on in Abraham's mind and his faith.

"By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; it was he to whom it was said, "IN ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS SHALL BE CALLED." He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type."

Discuss how Abraham's previous faith experiences prepared him for this one. Make personal application to you growing in faith from one step to the next.

Discuss how Abraham had faith in the resurrection. Consider Old Testament hope in the resurrection. (Job 19:25-27, Daniel 12:2, Isaiah 26:19, Psalm 71:20)

"By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, even regarding things to come."

"By faith Jacob, as he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff."

"By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the exodus of the sons of Israel, and gave orders concerning his bones."

Moses gets the next greatest amount of attention from the author of Hebrews. Consideration should be given that all God did was in conjunction with faith in Moses' life. It actually began with Moses' parents.

"By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's edict. By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward. By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing Him who is unseen. By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood, so that he who destroyed the firstborn would not touch them. By faith they passed through the Red Sea as though they were passing through dry land; and the Egyptians, when they attempted it, were drowned."

Discuss how faith contributes to all decisions a Christ-follower makes. What faith action of Moses' life stands out to you?

Living by faith is not judged by its immediate and apparent visible outcome. There are some who are rewarded outwardly. As we have noted, all of these did not receive their reward in this life, but some of them did receive some vindication and some escape and some victory. That is why they are listed by name and their stories are recorded in Scripture. Their victories were by faith, but most all of those listed also had significant struggles, failures, and sin in their lives.

Look at verses 32 and 33. Read verses 32 and 33.

"And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets, who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions..."

The faith and sacrifice of those referred to in these verses resulted in outward and obvious blessing or reward.

As we continue in our text we also see temporal deliverance.

"...quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received back their dead by resurrection..."

While their names are not mentioned, we are certainly reminded of Daniel for sure, Samson, and even David in shutting of lions' mouths. We are reminded of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in quenching the power of fire, numerous prophets escaped the edge of the sword, Gideon became strong in weakness and won a great battle with minimal forces, the widow of Zarephath and the Shunamite woman each received their children back from the dead.

Listen, we have a great God who can and has repeatedly delivered His people and He has delivered us. And sometimes when we sacrifice for His cause and His kingdom, He delivers us miraculously from the very situation. Sometimes He is there with us in a Lion's Den or a fiery furnace and brings us out on the other side.

But then again, sometimes the outcome is different. Instead of being among the obvious like Daniel, Shadrach, the widow of Zarephath, and the Shunamite woman, sometimes it is God's plan for us to be among THE OTHERS. As a matter of fact there are a lot more OTHERS than the OBVIOUS OUTWARDLY VICTORIOUS. That is why it is important for us to not minimize the impact of the unknown by over emphasizing the impact of the known. We see that in ball teams. The ones on the field are fewer than the ones on the entire team. I have been the kid who never got in, where it did not work out. There are kids who try harder than the starters, are more respectful to the coaches, who are under-appreciated by everyone except maybe their parents. Sometimes that is true in our journey with Christ. He is the only One who really sees and appreciates. But you see, He is really the only One who matters.

"...and OTHERS were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection; and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated (men of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground. And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect."

Many scholars attribute many of these actions against God's people to the intertestamental period, or the Maccabean period, when Antiochus IV Epiphanes was persecuting Judaism even to the point of sacrificing a pig on the altar. But we know that while the author of Hebrews was looking back on history, He was also prophesying of centuries of persecutions upon the church that would follow. Today at this writing, our brothers and sisters in Christ in Nigeria are being slaughtered by militant radical Muslims. More people are dying for Christ today than any day in history.

Living by faith is not only believing without seeing, but it is also believing without receiving.

"And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised,"

Verse 40 is a causal clause or statement. It gives the reason behind the previous verse. The author of Hebrews states *because God had provided something better for us*. This is a startling statement on many fronts.

"...because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect."

Hebrews carries the idea of "better" throughout, especially that Jesus is better. But here we see the better is for "us."

The key is to be found in the word *made perfect (teleiōthōsin)*, another familiar idea in this epistle. Here however it is used in a corporate sense with the idea of completeness. No part of the true Christian community can be complete without the rest.¹¹

Faith today completes God's redemptive plan. 40b

We have unity with Old Testament believers.

There is continuity in God's redemptive plan. Verse 40 serves as a connector between Hebrews 11 and

¹¹ Guthrie, D. (1983). *Hebrews: An Introduction and Commentary* (Vol. 15, p. 249). InterVarsity Press.

Hebrews 12. What is better for us (11:40) is celebrated by a great cloud of witnesses (12:1).

Christ's superiority brings something better for us.

It is like the completion of a jigsaw puzzle. If a piece is missing the picture is incomplete. Just as 2,000 years of church history was a part of God's plan of redemption, the events of today are also a part of God's plan of redemption. Jesus said in Matthew 24:14, *"This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come."* You have a part. It is an important part. It will require faith and action and sacrifice. You may receive visible and present blessing, but you may not. You may not see it in this life, but you will be rewarded in eternal life.

Valiant Warriors are men of faith. We must walk by faith. We must live for a future reward. We must look for a better country, a better city. The better city has a divine architect and builder. This is not our home. We are exiles and aliens in a foreign land. We live based on promises, not strictly on what we can see now. We are not alone. We have had a multitude of brothers who have gone before us. We know the names of some of them. We know the victories of some of them. But there are the others. The others are more in number and paid a greater sacrifice in some cases with little notice or recognition by the world or even in Scripture. Except, they were *men of whom the world was not worthy* (38). Many Valiant Warriors in Nigeria and other parts of the world are men whom the world is not worthy of. We all do not walk the exact same path to fulfill our earthly purpose, but we do all walk our path the same way. That is, by faith.

Discuss some great heroes who have suffered greatly for the cause of Christ.

In all honesty, most of us have never suffered like "THE OTHERS" mentioned in verse 35. All are not asked to suffer like that. Discuss why is that to both statements. Do you think you are willing to suffer like that?

Discuss the importance of each generations' contribution to God's redemptive plan and the connectedness of each generation to the previous. Take a look over into Hebrews 12:1-3 to give you some ideas.

week five

**CHARACTER:
GOD BLESSES A MAN OF CHARACTER. PART 1**

SEMESTER 10
THE MAN GOD BLESSES

The most famous “blessed” passage is found in the most famous sermon ever preached by the most important person whoever preached a sermon. More books and articles have been written on the Sermon on the Mount than just about any passage in all the Bible. The first section of that sermon is known as the Beatitudes. Nine times in consecutive fashion Jesus begins His statement with the word “blessed.”

The word “blessed” is defined by several Greek dictionaries and Lexicons as happy with the implication of enjoying favorable circumstances. It is the idea that if someone asks, “how is your marriage?” you respond, “I’m blessed,” meaning you are very happy and feel fortunate in your marriage. When people ask how our church is doing, I often reply we are blessed and I am blessed to be here. I am expressing I am fortunate, and we are fortunate. Our good circumstances are not largely our own doing, but what God has done.

Let us read the context of this happy message.

Matthew 5:1-2

“When Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain; and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him. He opened His mouth and began to teach them, saying...”

Jesus on occasion would withdraw from the crowds into the mountains. Here Jesus takes the crowd with Him to the mountain. The site named the Mount of the Beatitudes in Israel provides a sloping hillside where multitudes could gather. His disciples in particular came to Him. “Identifying the disciples as Jesus’ audience is crucial for recognizing the ethics of the sermon as applying to those already committed to Jesus as a group of his followers trying to live together in community.”¹²

The crowds also should be considered within earshot of Jesus’ teaching, giving them the opportunity to learn what genuine discipleship involves.

There has been some debate on how to interpret the Sermon on the Mount. Some dispensationalists suggest this is the ethic of the millennial reign when Christ sets up His kingdom on earth; thus, it has little or no practical benefit to the believer today. Some suggest this ethic is so difficult it simply shows the impossibility of keeping the Law and thus earning heaven. While I think elements of both thoughts have some merit, I choose to believe this passage has practical application for the disciple of Christ in their spiritual walk.

First, it important to note heaven is not the result of a person who lives by or keeps these beatitudes. Salvation is by grace through faith in Christ and not a result of works. So, Valiant Warriors always resist the man-centered religion of works righteousness.

But we do believe that through the work of the Holy Spirit that indwells every believer, it is possible and even expected the Christ-follower will be blessed by God when fulfilling these spiritual expectations. We have selected a subtitle of Character for this lesson and the next. The objective is to express an inward work of God in a person’s heart. It has more to do with who you are than what you do. Understanding that who you are will impact what you do. Christ came to justify His children. This act of justification is what God does for His children in declaring righteousness for an unrighteous person. This act is initiated by God and is given to the undeserving. It does not come from within the believer. It comes from God to the believer. Another aspect of our salvation is adoption, which again, does not come from the believer. A person does not adopt themselves. To understand the application of the beatitudes to a believer’s life, the believer must first understand salvation in terms of justification, adoption, regeneration, and all God has done. Our salvation is a work of God on your behalf that comes outside you and is given (gifted) to you.

¹² Blomberg, C. (1992). *Matthew* (Vol. 22, p. 97). Broadman & Holman Publishers.

This work of God that He does that comes outside you impacts you inwardly. It is a positional change, but it is also a relational change and a heart change. You have a new relationship with God as His son/child. You also have a heart/desire (mind, will, emotion) change. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, *"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, old things have passed away and all things have become new."* We have often focused on outward things being different like quitting drinking, cussing, running around, lying, stealing and the such. Certainly, salvation should impact all areas of our life. But what Paul was getting at more than outward behavior is giving us a new heart and a new desire and a new direction consistent with our new destiny and new spiritual DNA. You now have Christ in you in the person of the Holy Spirit.

After understanding our salvation by grace apart from works, then we can begin to understand our sanctification, or spiritual growth, towards Christlikeness. Our spiritual growth toward Christlikeness or sanctification is also by grace. It is a misunderstanding to think salvation is all on God and sanctification is all on me. Someone has correctly said that sanctification is all on God and all on me. I cooperate with what God is doing in my life that results in spiritual growth toward being more like Christ. A key component to my spiritual growth is the Word of God. The teaching of Jesus' truth that sanctifies. As Valiant Warriors consider these beatitudes, it is with a sincere desire for God to cause these spiritual traits to be found in us. I would suggest these spiritual traits or biblical character qualities are like the Fruit of the Spirit displayed by those who are filled with the Holy Spirit.

So, we understand we do not gain favor with God by having these spiritual traits. We have the favor of God (salvation), so God helps us desire and possess these qualities that result in a blessed life. God's intentions towards His disciples are kind and loving. He blesses us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ. He gives us everything pertaining to life and godliness.

The Beatitudes, as they have traditionally been called from the Latin word for "blessings," are a common biblical form in both Testaments (e.g., Ps 1:1; Prov 3:13; Dan 12:12; Matt 11:6; Acts 20:35; Rev 1:3). The word "blessed" refers to those who are and/or will be *happy, fortunate*, or as those who are "to be congratulated" because of God's response to their behavior or situation. An important change in tenses separates vv. 3 and 10 from vv. 4–9. In the first and last Beatitudes, Jesus declares God's kingdom to be present for those who are blessed. In the intervening verses he refers to future consolation. Partial recompense may come in this age, but complete fulfillment of Jesus' promises often requires waiting for the age to come. Numerous passive voice verbs function as divine passives; e.g., "they will be comforted" means *God will comfort them* (v. 4). The Beatitudes form an appropriate introduction to Jesus' sermon as they remind his disciples that God blesses them before he makes demands on them (the body of the sermon). The same sequence appeared at Sinai. God redeemed his people from Egypt and reminded them of his blessings before giving them his law.¹³

The beatitudes have been grouped in various ways. Perhaps the best way is to link the three beatitudes in vv. 4–6 (all sharing the initial π - of the opening beatitude) as directly spelling out aspects of the poverty of the opening beatitude; and to connect the three beatitudes in vv. 7–9 as identifying a linked set of personal qualities that mark out an orientation that has been forged in those who have learned appropriately from the hard experiences God has allowed them to pass through. The eighth beatitude in v. 10, which rounds off the set and is joined with v. 3, will have to do with fidelity to God despite, through, and even because of the experience of impoverishment.¹⁴

3 *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

4 *"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.*

5 *"Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.*

6 *"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.*

¹³ Blomberg, C. (1992). *Matthew* (Vol. 22, p. 97-98). Broadman & Holman Publishers.

¹⁴ Nolland, J. (2005). *The Gospel of Matthew: a commentary on the Greek text* (p. 197). W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press.

7 *"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.*

8 *"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*

9 *"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.*

10 *"Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

11 *"Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me.*

12 *"Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

For many of these beatitudes, the general prerequisite is need. Those who are poor in spirit mourn, hunger, thirst, have been persecuted, and insulted. Also, the beatitudes challenge Valiant Warriors to be different. It is rearranging the typical value system to be more radical. Authenticity and inward character are what Jesus is talking about in the beatitudes.

Let us consider the first beatitude.

God blesses the humble.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

There are a variety of ideas of what "poor in spirit" means. I believe humility captures the overall idea best. Certainly, in the first century, there was a real poverty need especially among followers of Christ. We are aware of Paul's writing in 2 Corinthians pertaining to the collection for the poor saints hit by the famine. It was out of their poverty the Corinthian believers gave to help the believers in Jerusalem. It was a common state to be poor for the first century Hebrew Christian.

This blessed person is not just poor but is poor in spirit. The economic situation can contribute to the attitude of being poor in spirit. The idea of neediness as opposed to self-sufficiency is in view. Dependence is better than independence in this case. I understand the desire and goal to get to a place where you are not dependent on someone else especially financially. We call that being responsible. It is good and biblical for men to work and to provide for their family. It is a blessing to be able to not only provide for your family, but to be generous with others who are in need and the church.

While all of this is good and biblical, if we are not careful, we can let our responsible and biblical activity in working hard and providing for our family and others lead us to subtly believe we can provide righteousness only God can give. We overestimate our good character and underestimate our desperate need for God's grace not only in our salvation, but in our everyday sanctification. The fact material wealth is a lousy provider of peace, joy, and character is well-documented and easily observed.

These beatitudes launch with a full understanding of our desperation for God everyday no matter how long we have been saved. This desperation for God is balanced out by God's amazing love and His great acts of love to rescue and redeem you. Just as a new born baby is totally dependent on his mother in order for him to grow up, you are totally dependent on God to help you grow spiritually.

This awareness is humility. God opposes the proud and gives grace to the humble. The reward for the humble is the kingdom of heaven. Humility unlocks the entire kingdom.

"Poor in spirit," as a virtue, must refer not to a poor quality of faith but to the acknowledgment of one's spiritual powerlessness and bankruptcy apart from Christ (cf. Goodspeed, "Those who feel their spiritual need").¹⁵

¹⁵ Blomberg, C. (1992). *Matthew* (Vol. 22, p. 98). Broadman & Holman Publishers.

In other words, both Matthew and Luke picture “those who because of sustained economic privation and social distress have confidence only in God.”¹⁶

It fits in with the fact that in many periods of world history including our own, the gospel has spread fastest among those who have had the fewest possessions to stand in the way of whole-hearted commitment to God.¹⁷

The reward for those “poor in spirit” is “theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” God’s kingdom is made up of humble servants and humble leaders dependent on Him. It is no wonder that business leaders have discovered what Jesus was teaching 2,000 years ago. Jim Collins in *Good to Great* describes the Level 5 Leader as humble and unassuming. Happy is the humble Valiant Warrior. Sad is the proud man. God is opposed to this man.

Read Luke 18:9-14 and discuss which man possessed humility and which man did not.

Read Revelation 3:14-18 and discuss the problem in this church.

Consider the words to this verse of the hymn “Rock of Ages.”

Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling;
Naked, come to Thee for dress,
Helpless, look to Thee for grace;
Foul, I to the fountain fly,
Wash me, Saviour, or I die!

What does it mean to be humble?

How can a man take steps toward humility? Maintain humility?

God blesses those who mourn.

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.”

The next beatitude has to do with mourning. It can be translated as grieving or weeping. This grieving is largely due to circumstances in life. This is an intense word used here. It is a passionate lament of the broken hearted. Paul even expressed such deep despair for his spiritual condition in Romans 7:24, *“Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?”*

Jesus does not qualify mourning so it can be applied to whatever causes us to mourn. You should weep over the sin in your life that nailed Jesus to the cross. You certainly grieve over situations of regret, physical sickness, broken relationships, financial needs, professional dysfunction, and the list goes on and on.

Mourning includes grief caused by both personal sin and loss and social evil and oppression. God will comfort now in part and fully in the future. That Christian mourning does not outweigh happiness as the more dominant characteristic of the Christian life remains clear from Matt 9:15.¹⁸

In our Isaiah 5:20 day where men call evil good and good evil, there is a warped grief or anger by some who push for the acceptance and affirmation of their sin. Sin that violates the clear teaching of Scripture is the very sin that needs to be mourned. We grieve as Valiant Warriors that we live in a culture readily embracing teaching and beliefs diametrically opposed to the clear teaching of Scripture pertaining to biblical manhood, biblical marriage, and clear gender distinctions between men and women as established at Creation. We grieve over the sad moral condition of

¹⁶ Blomberg, C. (1992). *Matthew* (Vol. 22, p. 98). Broadman & Holman Publishers.

¹⁷ Blomberg, C. (1992). *Matthew* (Vol. 22, p. 99). Broadman & Holman Publishers.

¹⁸ Blomberg, C. (1992). *Matthew* (Vol. 22, p. 99). Broadman & Holman Publishers.

our world deceived by the enemy exchanging the truth of God for a lie.

Some of your mourning should be over personal sin. It is not as though you do not sin. A mourning over our sin leads to repentance. As we studied earlier in David's psalm of repentance in Psalm 51, we see his grief. It is a good thing for believers to live with an attitude of repentance. This is just a carry-over from the first beatitude. It is further evidence of awareness of our dependence upon God. Our dependence upon God opens the door where God can bless us in ways beyond our own abilities.

The reward for those who mourn is that you will be comforted.

When someone you love dies, God promises to comfort you. When something happens at work or school or in your family that causes you to mourn, God promises to comfort you. This beatitude is a promise of the presence of God in your life. His presence is not an indifferent presence that does not know what to say or do. He is actively comforting in real and substantive ways.

The comfort of God is greater than the comfort of words or people. The comfort of God comes largely from the Word of God. That is why the Valiant Warrior must be a man of God's Word. The psalms are filled with words of comfort God gave to men like David who found themselves grieving over loss, hiding in caves for safety, experiencing every emotion imaginable. Jesus does not say where the comfort is coming from in this passage, but we are certain God and His Word are primary sources of His comfort.

While the comfort of God and His Word is the greatest comfort, God uses His people also to bring comfort to our hearts. We should look to God's people for comfort. We should let God's people bring comfort. We can be guilty of rejecting God's plan for comfort in both cases. Sometimes people are so disappointed with people not comforting them as they expected that they miss out on receiving direct comfort from God and His Word. The grieving and mourning end up not resulting in comfort, but rather bitterness and anger. This is certainly not the "blessed" God intends. On the other side, Valiant Warriors should see themselves as instruments of comfort in the hand of God. As we bring comfort, we do so with our presence, our prayers, and God's Word.

Why is it hard for men to "mourn, weep, and repent with great emotion?"

What are some things Valiant Warriors should weep about?

Does anyone have an experience of deep grief where God provided great comfort? How did comfort come?

If you have time, read Psalm 51:1-17 (16-17) and discuss what repentance looked like for David. What should it look like for you?

God blesses the meek.

"Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth."

The next beatitude runs opposite of what a lot of people think pertaining to manhood. The word "meek" can also be translated "gentle." The Jews in that day certainly wanted God to deal gently with them, but they did not see gentleness was an admirable quality, especially for a man in that day.

In today's high-pressure, over the top, type A personality culture, gentleness is not celebrated almost anywhere. We do not tell our boys to be "gentle" when they are on the ball field or playground. Chuck Swindoll suggests today's world views such admonition to be equivalent to a "cross between a wall flower and a wimp."

The word for gentleness in the first century Koine Greek could be applied to a wild stallion that was broken and brought under control. Words that calmed angry words and emotions would be considered gentle words. People who treated others with dignity and courtesy were considered gentle and kind.

Jesus Himself said in Matthew 11:29, *"I am gentle and lowly in heart."* Dane Ortlund in his book *Gentle and Lowly* points out this is the only passage that speaks about Jesus' heart. Ortlund contends Jesus is not harsh, not quick triggered, reactionary. He is understanding with open arms rather than a pointed finger.¹⁹

Gentleness is also listed in the graces of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians in 5:22-23.

*"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, **gentleness**, self-control; against such things there is no law."*

So, if you want to be like Jesus, be gentle. If you are filled with the Holy Spirit and display the fruit of the Spirit, you will be gentle. If you want to be a blessed man, be gentle.

The word is also translated "meek." I always like the phrase meekness is not weakness. Moses was called the meekest man on the earth (Numbers 12:3). We know Moses was no weakling. I have always liked the definition of "power under control." When a Valiant Warrior is strong, he can display that strength by not having to win every argument and come out on top when it is not necessary. He is brave and strong and stands up and speaks up when it is necessary and can make a big difference. His strength is most often displayed in his sacrifice and service. Gentleness is the attitude of the sacrificing servant.

Servant leadership is a popular term today. Gentle leadership is a biblical term.

Gentleness is a valuable quality in personal evangelism. Gentleness is relational and inviting to others. Gentleness is also valuable in shepherding ministry. "A word fitly spoken" is a gentle word.

Describe what a "gentle or meek" man does and does not do.

Read Galatians 5:22-23 and discuss these graces, especially gentleness. Consider the way the culture views these graces.

Read Matthew 11:29-30 and discuss what Jesus was talking about in His invitation. What does it mean to be "gentle and lowly in heart?"

¹⁹ Dane Ortlund, *Gentle and Lowly*, (Crossway: Wheaton, 2020), 19.

week six

**CHARACTER:
GOD BLESSES A MAN OF CHARACTER. PART 2**

SEMESTER 10
THE MAN GOD BLESSES

We are going to pick up this lesson where we left off. If you did not participate in Lesson 5: Part 1 then you may want to go back to Lesson 5 to pick up the background material on the Sermon on the Mount and the Beatitudes.

The next beatitude is for those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.

God blesses the passionate for Him.

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied."

This beatitude deals with our passions and desires. People go to extremes for their passions. Football fans sit out in the rain, sleet, and snow to passionately cheer on their team. Some of those fans sit out with their shirts off, their bodies painted, and carry on in a way that would land you in a mental institution except when you are in or around a football stadium.

I have often told the story of my observation at a hospital one day. It was cold, raining, and wind-blowing. As I made my way into the hospital entrance, there was a man hooked up to an IV with the pole in hand, wearing a hospital gown with no shirt underneath or over and no pants underneath and over, and he was hopping on one foot. And you can guess what he was doing outside in the elements. He was smoking. He loved cigarettes so much or was addicted to them that it caused him to go to extreme measures to get the satisfaction his body craved.

Again, Jesus promises a blessed state to those who express a need like "poor in spirit" and "mourn." This need is to hunger and thirst for righteousness. The idea of "hunger and thirst" communicates extreme desire. It also communicates a physical need, except the object of the hungering and thirsting is given as righteousness.

The Psalmist expresses, *"As the deer pants for the water brook, so my soul longs after You."* To hunger and thirst expresses our great desire for God, His kingdom, and His righteousness.

New Testament scholars Blomberg and Morris explain this beatitude.

For the poor, "righteousness" would include having their basic needs for food met, but it goes on to include a desire to see God's standards established and obeyed in every area of life. Again, God promises that his purposes will be accomplished and that his justice will eventually reign (cf. Isa 55:1).²¹

Jesus is speaking of an intense longing after *righteousness* that may be likened to both hunger and thirst. Everyone now and then does what is right, but Jesus is pointing his hearers not to occasional acts but to a passionate concern for the right. *Righteousness* is often used in the New Testament for the right standing believers have before God because of Christ's atoning work, but this is often said to be a Pauline concept rather than one that Matthew sets forth. Now it is plain that Matthew has a strong interest in the upright living that should characterize the servant of Christ, and we must not try to turn him into a pale shadow of Paul. But we must not minimize his emphasis on grace either (cf. v. 3). Specifically we should notice that he is not suggesting that people can make a strong effort and achieve the righteousness of which he is writing: it is a given righteousness, not an achieved righteousness. The blessed do not achieve it but *hunger and thirst* for it. They will be *filled*, which surely means that God will fill them (cf. 6:33, "his righteousness"). We need not doubt that the term here includes the doing of right, an indication that we are expected to live in full accordance with the will of God. How could anyone have a strong desire for a right standing before God without at the same time strongly wanting to do the right? Today there is a strong emphasis on

²¹ Blomberg, C. (1992). *Matthew* (Vol. 22, pp. 99–100). Broadman & Holman Publishers.

social righteousness, the liberation of people from oppression, and that can scarcely be out of mind either. *Righteousness* is a rich and full concept, but whichever way we understand it, it is a righteousness that people cannot produce of themselves. We are to do our best and we may be able to avoid "the gutters of life," but this righteousness is a gift of God. And of those who have this wholehearted longing for the right Jesus says, *they will be filled*. They do not achieve it of themselves, but God fulfils their longing. God will not disappoint anyone who has this deep desire to do his will. Those who long for righteousness will have a full measure, not a mere trace. There are two thoughts here, the first of which insists on the disposition of the seeker. The good gift of God does not come indiscriminately to all the race, but only to those who seek it wholeheartedly. The second is that, for all their intense longing, the seekers do not fill themselves with righteousness, but are filled; righteousness is a gift of God.²²

The Valiant Warrior must consider and discipline their passions and desires. One of my favorite verses is Psalm 37:4 where the psalmist writes, *"Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart."* What an awesome promise that you can have the desires of your heart. The issue is the heart. Another beatitude will address the issue of a pure heart. Across a multitude of people, there would typically be a multitude of desires. Certainly, God is not promising the granting of all desires with no qualification. God's design is for Him to shape our hearts to where we desire what He desires for us. That is why the condition is delighting ourselves in the Lord. This would mean loving what He loves and doing what He does.

As I am writing this material, a dear friend of mine, Clyde Tempel has been placed on hospice. Those who know Clyde know he has a half-century medical career to go with an even longer walk with Christ. He is also a detailed planner. Immediately upon being placed on hospice and actually before this, he communicated the same thing. Clyde told me what to say at his funeral. He said, "Tell people to know the Lord, and figure out what His plan is for your life and then do it." Clyde continues to express gratitude for the life he has been able to live, and by the way, is still living as I write this. He delights himself in the Lord by knowing Him and fulfilling God's plan for him. The result is he cannot imagine anyone having a better life than him. It is a gift to those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.

Some discussion could be made concerning what is righteousness that you should hunger and thirst after. I certainly think righteous living is God's desire for His children especially as opposed to unrighteous, sinful living. But I do not think the emphasis is on a try harder, self-righteous work. As Pink observes, "In many Old Testament passages 'righteousness' is synonymous with 'salvation.'"²³ I have pointed out in studies of Romans that often times throughout the book of Romans the word "gospel" can be easily substituted wherever you find the word "righteousness." That is because the righteousness Jesus speaks of is not derived from the works of men. It is a righteousness that comes by grace through faith. It is a gift and not earned.

So, our hungering and thirsting is for the gospel, God's grace, and His unmerited favor. We crave this because we are sinners. We cannot be satisfied by our own efforts and our best works when it comes to our relationship with God. Our relationship is not based upon a works-based righteousness. Our relationship with God is based on His initiative of grace, forgiveness, and sacrifice towards us. We hunger and thirst for a righteousness that must be given and imputed. We long for something we cannot acquire for ourselves. Jesus has purchased this righteousness for us in that He is giving us His righteousness.

So, on another level by desire this grace-based righteousness only Jesus can give, we are really hungering and thirsting for Him. Paul expressed that desire of knowing Christ in Philippians 3:10. He was willing to forsake and count all things as loss for the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ. This idea is

²² Morris, L. (1992). *The Gospel according to Matthew* (pp. 99–100). W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press.

²³ Pink, A. W. (2005). *An exposition of the Sermon on the Mount* (p. 25). Logos Bible Software.

stated by Jesus a little later in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 6:33, *"Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added unto you."* Seeking carries the idea of a desire that moves you to persistently pursue. When we seek God's kingdom and His righteousness, then God will give us that and everything else that goes with it.

This is a beatitude of desire and seeking and pursuing the right things, or righteousness, which is God's grace, gospel, and favor.

The ones blessed with this passion for God will be rewarded with satisfaction. They will be content in Christ. They will have peace that comes from Christ. In a day where spiritual starvation is prevalent, you can be full of Christ and satisfied with Him and in Him. As Swindoll states in *Simple Faith* on page 31, "God's pantry never runs low. His wells never run dry." Lisa and I were awakened on Christmas Day 2023 with no water in our house. We have a well for our water supply. What are the chances of getting a repairman on Christmas day? I did get someone on the phone to walk through just about everything that could be wrong (At least now I know what to check). Nothing seemed to work. Finally, he said turn everything off and pull the breaker on the well pump for at least two hours. After two hours, everything worked and has been since. So in our day, not only does Jesus' well never run dry but His well pump never goes out!

God offers an all-you-can-eat buffet of His righteousness.

When you desire the right things as a Christ-follower, you will be satisfied and filled with Jesus. A hungry man does not have to be begged to eat. The spiritually hungry will hunger and thirst for God and His righteousness, which is only through His grace and gospel.

What do you desire most in your life?

What would you say are your top three passions in life?

Discuss how your passions impact how you feel, what you think about, and how you spend time and money.

Discuss how you can direct your heart and passion with some things you do.

Read Philippians 3:7-12. Discuss Paul's steps to know God and how important it was to him.

Read Philippians 4:10-19. Discuss Paul's testimony and journey of contentment.

The previous beatitudes are more vertical dealing with a believer's relationship with God. The remaining beatitudes appear to be more horizontal in nature. Certainly, our horizontal relationships with others are spiritual and reflect our relationship with God.

God blesses the merciful.

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy."

Men in general are not known for their mercy. The worldly manhood culture exalts pride and arrogance and brutality.

Yet, God promises those who give mercy will be those who receive mercy. You typically want someone to show mercy to you. Jesus tells the story in Matthew 18:21-35 of a man who was forgiven a great debt only to turn around and not forgive someone who owed him a much lesser debt. The man in this story was rebuked and his debt was reinstated and he was punished. The master said to his unforgiving servant, *"Should you not also have mercy on your fellow slave in the same way that I had mercy on you?"*

This is a reciprocating beatitude. The blessing you receive is the blessing you give to others. In particular, the blessing is mercy. Mercy is God's tenderheartedness toward the miserable.

The enemies of mercy are many. Sometimes mercy is needed toward the irresponsible. When we arrive at the conclusion a person does not deserve mercy, that is the only situation where mercy can be supplied. You do not get grace and mercy because you deserve it. The fact you or anyone else does not deserve grace and mercy is what makes it grace and mercy.

Jesus made similar comments pertaining to forgiveness. He said if you do not forgive, then you will not be forgiven. These are extreme and absolute statements of Jesus. The issues of mercy and forgiveness are paramount items in our spiritual journey. Your unwillingness to show mercy and forgive forfeits your forgiveness and mercy.

While this beatitude may not seem to be the most exciting of them all, it could be the most important regarding our personal walk and relationship with God. No forgiveness and no mercy are extreme measures.

Mercy reflects an understanding of your own need of mercy. Mercy defeats selfish pride and arrogance thinking you are better than someone else. Mercy realizes what God has done for you in Christ. Mercy shows empathy towards others in their plight and pain of life.

Mercy is much more than a feeling. As a matter of fact, our feelings and emotions vary from time to time and from person to person. I may not feel the exact same way you feel about a situation. But there may be a proper response to a situation you and I can both carry out although our feelings about the situation may vary significantly.

So, mercy is shown more than it is felt. People can feel sad about someone's plight and do nothing to help them. The person who acts is the one who shows mercy. This is demonstrated in the story of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37. Jesus was responding to the question, "Who is my neighbor?" He concludes His story with, *"Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers' hands? And he said, 'The one who showed mercy toward him.' Then Jesus said to him, 'Go and do the same.'"*

So, the Good Samaritan "showed mercy" by bandaging the wounds, loading him up, taking him to an inn, taking care of him, and then paying the innkeeper to continue to take care of him. Mercy is action more than a feeling. Mercy costs the person giving mercy. Mercy does not expect a repayment. Mercy is not a loan. It is a gift of time, money, and most of all, love.

We might could learn just as much from the priest and the Levite who did not show mercy. They were busy and did not have time. They were clean and did not want to get dirty. Many of us are way busier than we should be. Our busyness often gets in the way of ministry. We do not have time to stop and talk. We do not have time to stop and serve. We do not have time to stop and show mercy. Some people have

elevated their lifestyle to a place that stooping to care for the hurting, the homeless, the dirty, and the irresponsible cramps our lifestyles. Gated communities have become popular if you can afford it. The gates can protect from thieves and unwanted soliciting. As believers, we need to make sure the gates do not prevent us from showing mercy to those outside our gates.

Discuss the challenges of showing mercy.

Discuss mercy in light of justice.

What happens to those who do not show mercy?

This beatitude steps back into the personal vertical. It is more individual than communal. This is a critical beatitude. It is one that has always captured my attention and inquisitiveness. I do believe if you can get this right and receive the blessing of this beatitude, then the others would fall in line. I guess you could say this may be a lead measure in our sanctification.

God blesses the pure in heart.

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

Everything rises and falls spiritually with the heart. When we say heart, we are talking about the seat or center of the mind, will, and emotions. We are talking about the whole person. It is hard to separate our mind, will, and emotions. It is even difficult to separate our bodies from the mix. Obviously, we can lose a finger, a hand, a leg (you get the idea) and still remain a whole person. The Bible describes the body as the temple of the Holy Spirit and as instruments of righteousness or unrighteousness. So, for our purposes, when I speak of the heart, I am talking about our mind, will, and emotions. Our bodies carry out and act on what our heart directs. The heart is what you do not see directly.

The Bible says man looks on the outward appearance and God looks on the heart.

It is amazing how many grandmothers speak of their wayward grandchildren with the words, "They have a good heart." That may be common grandma-speak, but it is not sound theology. The Bible tells us just the opposite pertaining to the heart.

Jeremiah 17:9 tells us *"The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it?"* So what grandma says contradicts what the prophet Jeremiah had to say. Let us take a closer look at what Jeremiah wrote.

The heart is deceitful. That means you cannot trust the heart of a man. Deceit means lying and dishonesty and misleading. I have often said you do not have to teach your kids to lie. I have heard some parents say their kids would never lie to them. Those parents are delusional or just do not pay close attention to stuff. We all have had the temptation to exaggerate or minimize whatever is necessary to help our intentions. What a man does in the secret place away from the eyes of his wife, his children, his employer, his pastor without the work of the Holy Spirit will be dishonoring to God. Men tend to minimize their sin thus being deceptive and deceived themselves.

Proverbs 14:12 *"There is a way that seems right to man, but the ends are the ways of death."*

The heart is desperately wicked. The first thing is the heart is desperate. We know the heart is dead

spiritually (Ephesians 2:1), so we know that means desperate. Because you are a sinner, your sin causes you to be separated from God.

Isaiah 59:2 *"But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear."*

The deceived and desperately wicked state of a man's heart requires the radical action of salvation. Man does not need a swimming lesson to swim in the swimming pool of life. He needs a lifeguard to dive into the bottom of the pool, bring him up, and then do CPR because we are dead in sin and trespasses.

God must resurrect our deceived, desperately wicked, and dead heart.

Isaiah 59:1 *"Behold, the LORD's hand is not so short that it cannot save; nor is His ear too dull that it cannot hear."*

David cried out to God in Psalm 51:10, *"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me."*

He cried out to God in Psalm 26:2, *"Examine me, O LORD, and try me; test my mind and my heart."*

Just as in our physical body, our heart health is very important. Our spiritual health is dependent on the condition of our heart.

Proverbs 23:7 *"As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he."*

Luke 6:45 *"The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart."*

Matthew 15:19 *"For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders."*

Proverbs 4:23 *"Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life."*

1 Samuel 13:14 *"The LORD has sought out for Himself a man after His own heart..."*

The blessing of the pure in heart is they will see God. Obviously, the opposite of that is they would not see God. This speaks of an awareness of God's presence and attentiveness to God's work. Those whose hearts are not pure have no awareness of God. They cannot see the hand of God. They do not perceive the work of God around them. They are blinded and confused and deceived.

The Russian astronaut went into space and reported he did not see God. A rocket ship, scientific technology, and education does not guarantee the seeing of God. Financial success and business acclaim is no guarantee to see God. Political power and correctness does not guarantee a person will see God. Only the pure in heart will see God.

The pure in heart will see God in the good times and in the grief times and ultimately in the glory time.

It is difficult to make allowance for the impure of heart among the saved. There are obvious moments in the

biblical saints' lives like David, Peter, and characters like Solomon where they are not living a life pleasing to the Lord. Actually, reading through Genesis in the new year as I write this material, I see the pattern of deception from Satan, to Eve/Adam, Cain, Noah's daughters, Abraham and Sarah with Hagar and Ishmael, Rebekah and Jacob against Esau and Isaac, and the list literally goes on and on generation to generation.

The bottom line is wherever you find yourself today, pursue a pure heart. Ask God to cleanse your heart and create a new heart.

Discuss what the Bible means when it records the word "heart."

Discuss the problem of the heart.

Discuss the priority or importance of the heart.

Discuss the solution to our heart problem.

Discuss the blessing of a pure heart. What does that mean?

Someone has said peace is that glorious moment in history when everyone stops to reload. This beatitude has a lot to do with conduct that reflects character. Jews typically hated and despised the Gentiles in the first century. For them, peace would be when the Gentiles were made to pay and brought into submission. In many ways, we live in that kind of world today. It is a toxic world with high emotional cancel culture dominating the day. Our world is absent of peace because it is absent of Jesus. Jesus is the Prince of peace. He invites us to join Him in bringing peace.

The announcement of His birth spoke of peace on earth and goodwill towards men. The prophecy of Isaiah called His Name Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6).

God blesses the peacemakers.

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God."

Jesus values the one who brings peace. We live in a world where we have a lot more trouble makers than peacemakers. Some thrive in conflict. Jesus calls for peace and unity among His people. Jesus was never afraid of a fight or a necessary confrontation or a difficult conversation. This call to be a peacemaker is not a call to weakness and compromise. It is just the opposite.

The peacemaker must possess great self-control. He must have keen insight and understanding. He must display phenomenal people skills. You see, a peacemaker is an incredible man. He has unique skills and abilities. He has the hand of God on him and the Holy Spirit filling him.

Peace is difficult and comes at a great price. The ultimate price for peace was paid on the cross by Jesus Christ. The chastisement of our peace is upon Him. Jesus provides the pathway to peace. Men are without peace because men are without God.

Peace is not divorced from the holiness and righteousness of God. Peace is not a passive indifference to holiness. Jesus aggressively attacked our sinfulness with His cross to reconcile us to Himself. Reconciliation is required so there might be peace between God and man.

2 Corinthians 5:18-21 *"Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."*

Justification is required to provide peace with God.

Romans 5:1 *"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God."*

The portrait of a peacemaker is found in Philemon. Onesimus, the slave, had run away from his master Philemon. Paul served as a peacemaker between Onesimus and Philemon. Onesimus had become a follower of Jesus at some point. Paul dealt with the facts of Onesimus' plight. He shared the good news of his salvation. He gave his personal expectations of Philemon. It was Paul's expectation that Philemon would receive Onesimus back not as a slave but as a brother in Christ.

What a person says and the way he says it contributes to peace or conflict.

Proverbs 15:1 *"A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger."*

Proverbs 16:24 *"Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones."*

Some principles for peacemaking:

Strive for peace in your personal relationships.

Search God's Word for wisdom and clarity.

Seek to be Christ's ambassador and peacemaker.

Soften your words with kindness and respect.

Solve problems instead of causing problems.

Discuss how Jesus was a peacemaker.

Read John 17:20-21. Discuss the importance of maintaining peace within the church.

Read Philemon. Discuss Paul's role of peacemaker between Onesimus and Philemon.

The final beatitude has to do with persecution. In many ways, those of us who live in Northwest Arkansas cannot connect completely with the persecution many of our brothers and sisters have experienced and are experiencing. Even today, multitudes of our Nigerian brothers and sisters are being callously murdered because of their Christian faith. Much of the world sits in silence. Much of the information is squelched by mainstream media.

But for our brothers and sisters who are experiencing persecution, you are truly blessed.

God blesses the persecuted.

"Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

"Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me."

"Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

These persecuted ones are persecuted for the sake of righteousness and connectedness to Jesus. They were not persecuted for being annoying or hard to get along with. They were not persecuted for being obnoxious and arrogant. They were not being persecuted for being offensive and loud. They were persecuted for doing the right thing and following Jesus.

Few of us know anything of this kind of persecution. We have been programmed or brainwashed to get along at all costs resulting in a world of compromise and silence from many believers.

Pink gives us some insight of the paradoxes surrounding this beatitude along with others.

The Christian life is one that is full of strange paradoxes which are quite insoluble to human reason, but which are easily understood by the spiritual mind. God's saints rejoice with joy unspeakable, yet do they mourn with a lamentation to which the worldling is an utter stranger. The believer in Christ has been brought into contact with a source of vital satisfaction which is capable of meeting every longing, yet does he pant with a yearning like unto that of the thirsty hart. He sings and makes melody in his heart to the Lord, yet does he groan deeply and daily. His experience is often painful and perplexing, yet would he not part with it for all the gold in the world. These puzzling paradoxes are among the evidences which he possesses that he is indeed blessed of God. But who by mere reasoning would ever conclude that the persecuted and reviled are "blessed!" Genuine felicity, then, is not only compatible with but is actually accompanied by manifold miseries in this life.

"It is a strong proof of human depravity that men's curses and Christ's blessings should meet on the same persons. Who would have thought that a man could be persecuted and reviled, and have all manner of evil said of him for righteousness' sake? And do wicked men really hate justice and love those who defraud and wrong their neighbours? No; they do not dislike righteousness as it respects themselves: it is only that species of it which respects God and religion that excites their hatred. If Christians were content with doing justly and loving mercy, and would cease walking humbly with God, they might go through the world, not only in peace, but with applause; but he that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution (2 Tim. 3:12). Such a life reproves the ungodliness of men and provokes their resentment" (Andrew Fuller). It is the enmity of the Serpent—active ever since the days of Abel (1 John 3:12)—against the holy seed.²⁴

What is even more tragic is when one Christian persecutes another, allegedly "because of righteousness," when the persecution actually stems from too narrow a definition of Christian belief or behavior.²⁵

The privileges of heaven are available immediately to the persecuted for righteousness' sake.

"Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me."

Another statement is made to expand this beatitude. You are blessed if you are insulted and slandered because of Jesus. Certainly, this would be included in the previous beatitude. Physical persecution and now verbal assault and slander are included.

²⁴ Pink, A. W. (2005). *An exposition of the Sermon on the Mount* (p. 39). Logos Bible Software.

²⁵ Blomberg, C. (1992). *Matthew* (Vol. 22, p. 101). Broadman & Holman Publishers.

In verse 10 the Lord enunciates the general principle; here He makes special application of it to His servants.²⁶ These verses repeat, amplify, and personalize v. 10 by shifting from third-person to second-person address.²⁷

"Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

The joy commanded here, as elsewhere in Scripture (especially James 1:2), is not an emotion but an attitude. The capacity to rejoice while being persecuted is supernatural and provided by the Holy Spirit.

"Reward" (more literally "wages") is more a promise of "future recompense for a present condition of persecution and reproach" than a reward for piety. The persecuted especially must look to a future reward. Without the future reward, all of these beatitudes would be worthless. As Paul expressed in 1 Corinthians 15, *"if Christ be not raised from the dead, we are of all men, most pitiable..."*

We live for a future reward. Our reward is not here. Our heavenly reward is greater than all the earthly blessings.

Saints from previous times have also experienced persecution. You are not alone in your persecution.

Discuss some people you know from history or current times who have suffered for Christ's sake.

Discuss the rewards of the persecuted.

How can someone rejoice when they are being persecuted?

What kind of persecution do you see today globally, nationally, and locally?

This concludes Semester 10: The Man God Blesses. My prayer is you have taken another step in your sanctification and your pursuit of biblical manhood. I encourage you to continue to study God's Word and meet in small groups with other men to discuss God's Word and apply God's Word to your daily life.

²⁶ Pink, A. W. (2005). *An exposition of the Sermon on the Mount* (p. 41). Logos Bible Software.

²⁷ ^Blomberg, C. (1992). *Matthew* (Vol. 22, p. 101). Broadman & Holman Publishers.