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Second Baytown Small Groups

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# WEEK 5



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# WEEK 5: PEACE IN RELATIONSHIPS, NOT TROUBLE

**Looking Back:** What did God teach you this past week as you read the daily devotions? What opportunities did you have to apply what you learned?

**Looking Up:** Play the video and go through the discussion questions.

Is “peace in relationships, not trouble” something we have to intentionally work at in every relationship, or does it just come naturally with some people? Explain.

Read Matthew 5:7, 9. There is an expectation for every child of God to carry on the work of the heavenly Father. How would you describe that expectation, based on these two verses?

How are people who carry out the work of the Father’s mercy and peacemaking blessed?

Read John 3:6-7. Why do we struggle to show mercy and be peacemakers? How does your relationship with Christ impact your relationships with other people? Give an example if appropriate.



Read Matthew 18:21-35. Can you relate to Peter's question in verse 21? How does Jesus's answer and accompanying parable make you feel (challenged, hopeless, confused, troubled, etc.)? Explain.

Does this mean God expects us to let people walk all over us? How do you reconcile this passage with your expectation and desire for justice and fairness?

Why does God's mercy and peace toward us necessitate our own mercy and peace toward others?

Read Ephesians 2:13-17. How have you been blessed by Christ's mercy and peacemaking? Is there a situation where you are struggling to receive this gift? How does today's study challenge or encourage you in that?

**Looking Forward:** How will you take what you learned today and apply it to your life this week? Take a few minutes to plan your next meeting and spend some time in prayer together.

## WEEK 5: PEACE IN RELATIONSHIPS, NOT TROUBLE

### DAY 1—READ MATTHEW 5:7

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

Some might approach this verse with an, “I scratch your back, you scratch mine” type of understanding. After all, if we believe our standing before God depends on our good works, we might think the way to please God is to follow God’s rules. Others might view this verse as confirmation of the idea of karma.

But none of this is what Jesus meant.

We don’t give mercy to receive mercy. We are merciful because God is merciful, and we want to be like Him.

Followers of Christ should want to be like Christ. We work for the object of our faith, not the reward of our faith—even though the two are interconnected. Mercy flows through the merciful, and they receive the blessing of God’s mercy.

This is a natural result of knowing God and being known by Him. When we receive God’s mercy, we walk with Him in the security of His love and forgiveness. Jesus removes the eternal effect of sin’s trouble and exchanges it with everlasting peace.

It is important to remember that these Beatitudes are meant to be descriptors of all Christians. You don’t get a pass because “mercy” was your lowest score on a spiritual gifts survey once. All followers of Jesus are called to be merciful, not just a select few who are gifted in that way. Mercy comes to us through Christ as a product of our relationship with Him.



**Why is mercy a characteristic of a true follower of Christ?**

**In what sense have we all been shown mercy?**

**In what situation or to what person do you need to show a merciful attitude? A merciful act?**

**Thank Jesus for the mercy He has given you and continues to give you each and every day. Ask Him to help you show others the mercy you have received.**

### DAY 2—READ MATTHEW 5:9

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

When hearing the word *peace*, our culture usually envisions the absence of any type of struggle. We imagine peace as a stand against war. We imagine it as everyone getting along well. We hum an “Imagine all the people livin’ for today” type of tune in our hearts.

No offense to The Beatles, but the biblical ideal—the peace to which Jesus calls us—is different, and it is much better. Peace does not mean the absence of disagreement. In fact, some disagreements are good to engage in because they bring clarity.

Consider Jesus. He embraced conflict with the goal of resolving it. Jesus held firm to truth, at His own expense. He modeled that a peacemaker is one who looks to God as the authority of peace (1 Corinthians 14:33; 1 Thessalonians 5:23), has made it a goal to establish peace among men (Romans 12:18; Hebrews 12:14), proclaims the gospel of peace (Ephesians 6:15), and models his or her life on the Prince of Peace (Matthew 10:8; Luke 19:10; John 13:12-15).

This beatitude, like the others, works circularly. Jesus makes us sons of God, and all sons of God walk in the peace that relationship brings. As we walk in the peace that relationship brings, we engage with Him in the same principles and pursuits of peacemaking—so that they might also trust in Christ and be called sons of God. Because we are blessed, we actively seek to bless others in all types of relationships and circumstances.



**Based on this verse, what evidence should we expect to see that a person is a child of God?**

**Do you long for the peace Jesus brings? How are you pursuing it?**

**Why is it important to realize that sometimes seeking peace means embracing conflict (with an end in mind)? How might this relate to a current situation in your life?**

**Thank God for His peace, given to you in Christ. Pray that God would use you to spread the true and lasting peace you have received.**

## DAY 3—READ MATTHEW 18:32-35

*Then his master summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me.’<sup>33</sup> And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?’<sup>34</sup> And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt.<sup>35</sup> So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.”*

These verses come at the end of a longer parable on the nature of mercy and forgiveness. The story features two servants, each with a debt he cannot pay. Both plead for mercy. The first is forgiven by his master. After being forgiven, that blessed servant went to another servant who owed him a much lesser amount and began to assault him.

When the second servant fell on the ground and pleaded with the same words the first servant had spoken before the king, he was not forgiven or shown mercy. Instead, he was thrown in jail.

You might be thinking, “That’s crazy! Who would do that?” But the fact is, this is exactly what we do anytime we withhold mercy and forgiveness from others. Like the first servant, we have been forgiven by the King, and we must guard against our natural inclination to respond to that gift in the worst possible way.

We show mercy and forgive because we have been shown mercy and forgiven. Forgiveness is not often easy. It is not often our desire. But when we take a step back and see how hard it is for us to forgive someone, we gain a beautiful understanding of the blessing we have ourselves received. It helps us see what God had to give up and take on Himself in order to forgive us of our sins against Him. That’s why Jesus states our call to show mercy as a necessity. The blessing of receiving mercy compels gratitude that expresses itself in mercy toward others.



**How does our mercy toward others show that we take the gospel seriously?**

**What leads us to act like the first servant, withholding mercy and forgiveness? Do you think the king's punishment was fair? Why or why not?**

**Is there anyone in your life you need to forgive right now? What is keeping you from giving forgiveness?**

**Thank God for His extravagant mercy in your life. Ask Him if there is any merciless unforgiveness in your heart. Ask Him to help you show extravagant mercy to others.**

## DAY 4—READ EPHESIANS 2:14-17

*For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility <sup>15</sup> by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, <sup>16</sup> and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. <sup>17</sup> And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near.*

People naturally create divisions because we want to know we belong somewhere. When Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus, the divide between the Jews and Gentiles was one of the most prominent in history. Just because Jesus included Gentiles didn't mean the Jewish people were quickly on board. With the constant tension of the two groups trying to coexist as new Christians, Paul wanted to make sure they knew the foundation on which they stood.

Because Christ is our peace, we are exceedingly blessed! In fact, there is no hope or possibility for true peace and unity apart from Christ. So, as a group, we at Second Baytown who trust in Jesus and follow Him inherently possess something the world longs for and will continue to seek. And if Christ's peace reigns in our hearts, then our relationships here and with other congregations of believers in our town and around the world will be peaceful. If we are working, instead, to build back up the walls Christ broke down, then we are not doing His kingdom work.

This does not mean we should just accept every idea or whim. There are critical issues we should absolutely draw lines in the sand over. All roads don't lead to God. However, even in the distinctions, believers in Christ can and should be unified in Christ. Because He is our peace now and throughout eternity, we should live in the ever-present reality of that peace.

What does it mean practically that Jesus “is our peace”?

What are some of the dividing walls of hostility you see in churches or between churches today? What are some of the repercussions of those divisions?

How do those divisions inhibit us from carrying out the Great Commission and, in effect, being peacemakers? How do they inhibit you personally?

Thank God for breaking down the dividing wall between His people. Thank Him for creating peace with you in Christ. Repent of any dividing walls you might be tempted to keep in place with certain people or groups.

### DAY 5—READ ROMANS 12:18-21

*If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.*

*<sup>19</sup> Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord."<sup>20</sup> To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head."<sup>21</sup> Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

To live as merciful peacemakers, we must remember the humanity of everyone around us. The one who persecutes, the one who suffers, the one who rejoices, the one who does evil, and even the one society has tossed to the side—all are human. All are men and women created in God's image. And all are men and women Jesus died to bring mercy and peace.

Part of the blessing that comes to those who show mercy and make peace is the freedom that comes in trusting the Father's righteousness. When we are offended, it is natural to want to return the offense. When we are hurt, we want to hurt back. But we are God's children, and He alone rightly administers justice.

Jesus shows us the way to live as God's children. Evil cannot be overcome with evil and hatred. Jesus overcame evil the only way possible—through the greatest act of love the world has ever known. He gave His very life, even for those who despised Him. Nothing about this kind of self-sacrificial living comes naturally to our flesh. We need the supernatural power and love of Christ compelling us every day.



What instruction do you find in this passage for those who are blessed to be “called sons of God” (Matthew 5:9)?

Is your heart prone toward judgment or mercy? Why does it matter?

Who is God calling you to bless, even though they’ve shown they don’t have your best in mind? Who do you have an opportunity to value and bless, even though their views are different than yours?

Pray for the person or people who are most difficult for you to pray for. Ask the Lord to reorient your heart to see them the way He does.



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