

Growing in Christ
through the
Beatitudes

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*“Come to me,
all you who are weary and burdened,
and I will give you rest.
Take my yoke upon you and learn from me,
for I am gentle and humble in heart,
and you will find rest for your souls.
For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”
Matthew 11:28-30*

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How to use this book

Two ways:

1) For personal reading alone with God.

For those who use it alone, this book is written **for daily meditation over a 31 day period.**

- Don't forget to **look up each scripture in parentheses** and take time to think about what you have read.
- Use it as a guide for prayer for personal growth.
- **Write your thoughts in the last section** entitled "Suggestion for Meditation and Writing". You can go back to these notes in future years.

2) For small group study. Read with a friend, or study together in a house fellowship or Bible study group.

Principles for effective group study:

- As you begin each time, ask the Lord to teach you His ways.
- You may want to read 2 or 3 devotions each time you meet together, depending on the time you have.
- Take time to look up each scripture in parentheses.
- **Discuss what you read.** The power of a small group is group participation, not passive listening.
- The group leader shouldn't "preach" the lesson but rather should help everyone to participate. They can take turns reading, asking questions and discussing what they are learning.
- **To encourage deeper thinking of what has been read, the leader may ask questions like:** Who can paraphrase what this paragraph is saying to us? OR... Look over the reading quietly for a minute. What is the Lord saying to you through it? OR... Why is this difficult for us to do?
- Use the "Suggestion for Meditation and Writing" for a group discussion question, or group members may decide to do the assignment at home.

- **At the end, take time to pray together** that the Lord would help you apply the lesson to your lives.
- It is best that **each person (not just the leader) have a book in hand** (a physical book or digital copy). That way all can read along together.
- Encourage group members to go home and read the study again. They may also want to **read the same readings with family members or friends between your meetings.**

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I. Introduction

Day 1 – What do we need in order to get well?

Meditate: *“Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.” (Mark 2:17)*

When we first came to Jesus we knew to some degree that our lives were a mess. As we all grow in the faith each year, we begin to notice (if we are honest) that our sickness is actually much deeper than we realized. Yes, Jesus has done a wonderful work in our lives, but there is still much work he needs to do.

We realize that we did not get broken overnight. If we did not become broken overnight, we will not be fixed overnight. If our spiritual sickness developed over time, our healing will likely manifest itself over time, too.

The following daily meditations are based upon Matthew 5:3-12 which we call the Beatitudes. When Jesus says, *“Blessed are...”* he is referring to an inner state of happiness and calm. It is a state of being where we feel whole, complete, and at rest.

As the character of Christ is formed within us we will grow in spiritual health. That healing is not just personal, however. It also shows up in healed relationships. As we let that happen more each year, our Christian communities will become more authentic and more filled with His power. In that way we truly become the light of the world. (Matthew 5:14-16)

Get ready for the days ahead by meditating on Matthew 5:2-12 on the following page. Can you say these verses from memory?

The Beatitudes

²And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:

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

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

⁵Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

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

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

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

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

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

¹¹Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

¹²Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

(Matthew 5:2-12)

II. Blessed are the poor in spirit

Day 2 – Who wants to be poor?

Meditate: *“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 5:3)*

The first Beatitude asks us to consider that something we think of as bad may actually be good. Jesus says, in essence, “The happiest and most fortunate people are those who are desperately needy.”

At first glance, this does not make sense. Since our spirit is the part of us that is most like God, it seems it would be best to be rich in spirit. But while our human spirit is the part most like God, it is also the part of us that is capable of trying to play god. God gave us free will. We can choose to do things our own way.

Often those who are successful can go for long periods of time seeming to have everything under control. They manage their own lives, their “kingdoms”, pretty well. And because they are satisfied with what the world has to offer, that is what they get. They have the cars, the houses, the good life, and sometimes it is difficult not to envy them. However, if our hearts belong to heaven, we will never find happiness in material things.

Jesus says the ones who are broken and those of us who can't hold things together are the best candidates for His kingdom. The good news is, God is happy to receive us:

The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. (Psalm 34:18)

Admitting powerlessness to God opens us to Him in a whole new way. We learn more fully the meaning of grace.

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not of yourself, it is the gift of God—not by works, so no one can boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

Day 3 – Jesus brings His kingdom to earth

Meditate: *“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 5:3)*

Jesus promises the “kingdom of heaven” to those who are poor in spirit. Does he simply mean that they will go to heaven?

When we carefully read the gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John), we notice that Jesus spoke often of the kingdom of heaven, which he sometimes called the kingdom of God. When he began preaching, Jesus said:

“The time has come. The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!” (Mark 1:15)

With Jesus’ coming, God’s kingdom arrived on earth. And everything started changing!

For too long the people had lived under the rule of oppressive earthly kingdoms and also under the bondage of Satan and sin. Jesus announced that God’s kingdom had arrived, through himself, the King. And all other kingdoms will bow to his reign. (See Revelation 17:14.)

Jesus demonstrated his authority on earth by healing the sick, casting out demons, commanding storms to cease, multiplying food for thousands, even raising the dead. At the cross and resurrection, he defeated Satan, sin and death. Even the grave could not defeat Jesus.

When you admit you are spiritually poor and lost, and you trust in Jesus as your Savior and Lord, you come into his kingdom at that moment, not when you die. You belong to the King! And just like the changes that happened in the gospels, your life also begins to change! The Holy Spirit begins to transform your life. These devotionals will help prepare you for some of those changes.

Day 4 – Pride hinders God’s work in our lives

Meditate: *“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 5:3)*

Although Jesus used his kingly authority in healing, delivering people from demons, and in doing other miracles, he did not force the unwilling to learn from him. He did, however, warn the proud religious leaders of his day:

“Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you.” (Matthew 21:31)

The religious leaders despised such “sinners” and judged Jesus for eating with them. Yet these were the ones who were confessing their sinful ways. They were the poor in spirit who admitted their need for God and came to sit at Jesus’ feet. These people, Jesus said, would be exalted by God, rather than the self-righteous scribes and Pharisees. He taught that self-righteousness before God and others does not result in being exalted by God. Instead, it would result in being humbled (Luke 18:9-14).

If you think you can manage your life well without humility before God and others, your attitude is opposite to being poor in spirit. You are holding on to your own kingdom, not looking for God’s way. However, when we think we have all things under control, we are living in an illusion. Yes, God gives us a certain amount of control and responsibility. But Jesus made it clear, *“...apart from Me you can do nothing”* (John 15:5).

Transformation in our lives begins as we learn to rest in Christ. The poor in spirit admit their own righteousness is “filthy rags” before God’s holiness (Isaiah 64:6). They realize that they need him in everything – both for salvation and for daily change in their lives. As we rest in faith, change begins to happen. When we reach the point of powerlessness, God is ready to empower us.

III. Blessed are those who mourn

Day 5 – Is there such a thing as “good grief”?

Meditate: *“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.” (Matthew 5:4)*

Sounds strange, doesn't it? Once again, it seems as though Jesus is asking us to think positively about something that activates negative feelings. We often think of mourning as only related to funerals. But until Jesus returns, mourning is a part of life, not just death.

We live in a fallen world. We are imperfect beings in an imperfect place. Therefore, we will encounter failure and pain. That is the truth and Jesus never avoids truth. He knows that if we are to live our lives in a meaningful way, we are bound to experience loss and heartache. Jesus encourages us to face it directly. He knows there is great gain in facing our losses honestly.

The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of pleasure. (Ecclesiastes 7:4)

But the house of mourning is not an attractive place. We want to run, and so we often distract ourselves with temporary pleasures to avoid pain. Mourning, however, is our best response to pain. Grief shows that we recognize that we have lost something valuable to us. Sometimes this loss is through our own sin or through sins done against us.

Mourning moves us from disbelief – *“How could that have happened to me?”* – through sadness, hurt, anger and disappointment, to calm. It takes time, but it keeps us from living forever in the past, burdened with sadness and regret. It allows us to move forward.

Day 6 – Where do you look for comfort?

Meditate: *“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.” (Matthew 5:4)*

A man was greatly saddened by wounds caused by a family member. A friend asked, “Do you allow yourself to cry?” The friend saw that the man was carrying the pain deep within, not releasing it to Christ.

On a regular basis, do you stop to think about what you are feeling inside?

Many of us received messages in childhood that shut down grief. “Stop your crying or I’ll give you something to really make you cry!” Especially for those deeply traumatized as children, pain is often pushed down inside, with hopes it will be forgotten.

But without God’s healing process found through mourning, the painful wounds remain into adulthood. We want relief, so we often develop sinful habits to numb the pain. For some it is alcohol or drug abuse. For others it is pornography.

Some find comfort in overeating or uncontrolled spending. Some ignore their wounded souls by spending endless hours watching television or playing video games. Some bury their sadness by years of overworking. But the pain remains in every case. And these addictions put roots down into our minds. We lose touch with what a healthy life is.

God is displaced by an idol of the mind. We think we must have it for a happy life. Idols do give us temporary relief from pain if we surrender to them. Thus, they compete with surrender to God. But the Lord wants us to deal with our pain at its source. What is really bothering us and what do we do with the pain?

Cast your cares upon him for he cares for you. (1 Peter 5:7)

As we turn to the Lord for deep healing and comfort, we find strength to say no to our “idols.”

“And I will ask the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth...” (John 14:16-17)

Day 7 – Will you go to the Great Physician?

Meditate: *“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.” (Matthew 5:4)*

A doctor once had a football player visit him in terrible pain. He had a huge infected boil on his back. It was bright red with a white center.

The doctor tells the story: “I knew it needed to be cut open and cleaned, but I also knew the pain would be excruciating. But the young man was so ready to be done with the pain that he closed his eyes and prepared himself for what I had to do. Within a few days, his back was healed.”

None of us like pain. We either deny we have a problem, or we put off facing it. But like the football player, we have a choice. We can let Jesus, the Great Physician, open and heal our wounds, or we can continue to numb the pain with sinful habits.

“Mourning” is expressed in different ways. But it always comes with acknowledging our feelings deep down inside, and that will cause, in some way, grieving over what was lost. Some people are afraid if they start crying, they will never stop.

Others don’t want to get in touch with their anger over sins done against them for fear that they will do something terrible. But as said in Day 5, Jesus wants us to face reality.

It’s important to grieve over sins we have done, and we must not deny where others have sinned against us and the terrible pain it has caused.

Remember... Jesus says it is a good thing to mourn, and that it will lead to comfort. Can you trust Him enough to begin?

IV. Blessed are the meek

Day 8 – Give God control of your life

Meditate: *“Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.” (Matthew 5:5)*

We all desire to live our lives with freedom. But what is true freedom? It is hard for us to understand that limits assist us in being free! For example, the tracks of a railroad limit where the train can go, yet they make it safe for the train and for others.

When we are meek we submit to appropriate limits and even rejoice in them. We don't have to have everything our own way. One way to translate Psalm 119:32 is:

“I run in the pathway of your commands for you have set my heart free.”

Submission to God's way brings freedom and energy!

The Greek word for meek in this passage is PRAUTES, meaning “power under control.” When a horse is gentled and broken, it becomes responsive to the rider. *Prautes* describes this gentle and responsive state.

Meekness means we turn from our own way of thinking, believing and behaving to God's way. His way is that we learn to be led by His Spirit. (See Romans 8:12-14.) Some of us want God on our side, but we don't really want to change. It is as if we pray, “I want your will, my way.” We are not yet ready to give up our independent spirit.

An independent spirit has no part in building God's kingdom. God is fully committed to our well-being, but He can't do much with our lives until we commit them fully to Him.

And he said to all, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.” (Luke 9:23)

Day 9 – Trust God’s ministry to you through others

Meditate: *“Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.” (Matthew 5:5)*

Meekness does not only mean trusting our lives to God. One of the most difficult aspects of trusting God may be trusting Him to use another person to assist us in our journey. If in the past we were disappointed, betrayed, or wounded by others, why should we trust anyone now?

Trusting others to help us on our journey through life is not always easy, but it is God’s way. He often chooses to minister to us through others and asks us to bear each other’s burdens (Galatians 6:2). He will use those who are further along the path to lift us up and show us the way. Even younger believers can help us.

Meekness produces a good effect in us. Receiving direction from others shows that we know we need outside help. We don’t submit to others because they are smarter or more spiritual. We do it because we trust God to work in our lives through them. No part of the body can say to the other, “I don’t need you” (1 Corinthians 12:21).

If we allow this beautiful truth to take root in our souls, something wonderful can happen in the body of Christ. We will live in this world in a totally different way than the world does. The world will see our happy submission to God *and* our genuine, humble submission to each other. We will be a healthy society! Many will be drawn to Christ when they see it.

Day 10 – Change is often slow, but God works deeply

Meditate: *“Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.” (Matthew 5:5)*

In the last two days we’ve looked at what meekness is. But how does meekness become part of our character? We may be aware of our strong wills that resist God’s way, like a wild horse that doesn’t want to be directed by anyone. So how do we change? Living out “God’s power under His control” (another way to define meekness) is not easy. But in our frustration, let’s not forget – Jesus was meek. He always did what pleased His Father. We want to be like Him, don’t we? (See John 8:29.)

In Galatians 5, the Apostle Paul lists meekness as a fruit of the Spirit. (See Galatians 5:22-23.) How important to remember this: the character of Christ is formed in us by the Holy Spirit who lives in us. Does this mean that we do nothing, that we just wait passively for Jesus to change us? Both Jesus and the apostles in the New Testament make clear that we play a very active part, but it is God who builds it into us.

We sometimes wish Jesus would change us in a moment, but the character of Christ is formed in us year by year, as we remain in Jesus. (See John 15:1-8.) He has much to teach us, so we stay responsive to His Spirit, learning to control that wild horse within. Little by little the meekness of Christ begins to feel good to us. We are glad we are His. We look back and thank God for the new place He has brought us to.

Remember Jesus’ promise: it will not be the strong-willed and violent people who inherit the earth. A day is coming when God will give the earth to the meek. Hallelujah! The meek patiently wait for that day to come, and they pray earnestly for it (Matthew 6:10).

V. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness

Day 11 – What does Jesus really want from us?

Meditate: *“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied.” (Matthew 5:6)*

John 4 tells of a conversation that Jesus had with a woman whom He met at the well in Samaria. As He spoke, His words gave her hope. He knew her past, He knew how desperate she had been, how she had gone from one relationship to another and found nothing that satisfied. But Jesus said to her:

“If you only knew the gift God has for you and who you are speaking to, you would ask me, and I would give you living water.” (John 4:10)

This fourth Beatitude takes us from being submitted and surrendered to a place where we come to know Jesus in a more personal way; we thirst for the living water that He gives. As we look to Jesus, we internalize God’s character. Our focus shifts from avoiding doing wrong to sincerely wanting to do right.

We move beyond just trying to keep our sin under control and focus more on being like Jesus, moved by love and not by guilt or fear. This is a true hunger for righteousness. We become deeply satisfied with Christ Himself.

When we come to God in brokenness and give Him our pain, He welcomes us (Matthew 5:3-4). It pleases Him when we turn our lives over to Him and submit to His direction. (Matthew 5:5) But when our deepest desire is for Christ’s character to be formed in us and to walk in friendship with Him daily, the Lord rejoices greatly! (Matthew 5:6) Do you hunger and thirst for that?

Day 12 – What does hungering for righteousness really mean?

Meditate: *“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied.” (Matthew 5:6)*

Saul of Tarsus was transformed from a life of legalistic religion and persecuting Christians to a life of joy, freedom and peace. He discovered the life of faith in Jesus. He trusted completely in the cross of Christ as his sin sacrifice. He knew he was completely forgiven and accepted by God through faith, not because of his religious efforts of trying to please God or man. Saul, whom we now call the Apostle Paul, wrote,

I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose. (Galatians 2:21)

In today’s Beatitude, Jesus is not speaking about hungering for a righteousness that comes from climbing a religious ladder to find God. Our search for God in our own strength always leaves us frustrated and spiritually empty. Jesus wants us spiritually full. We must look to Him for true life (John 6:35).

In Philippians 3, Paul speaks of how, in the past, he had put confidence in his religious heritage and efforts. He thought it gave him a special status with God. Then he writes,

But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord... (Philippians 3:7-8)

When Paul understood the free gift of grace through Christ, he abandoned his focus on keeping the law in order to find God. He began to drink deeply of the living water which Christ gives freely. He wanted more and more of Jesus. He knew he couldn’t hold onto religious self-effort while at the same time learning to rest in Christ. He turned away from “religion” and with all his heart sought only to know Christ.

Day 13 – The power of the Holy Spirit within us

Meditate: *“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied.” (Matthew 5:6)*

Jesus promises that those who hunger and thirst for righteousness *will* be satisfied. But how do we hunger for Him when our hearts are divided? Sometimes we return to the dry bread of our past. Our old way of life can pull on us so strongly. Jesus and the apostles taught that we are engaged in a battle of flesh against spirit and we must not be passive in the battle (Galatians 5:17 & Ephesians 4:22-24).

This daily battle involves being aware of sins that we frequently struggle with, and cutting off opportunities that tempt us (Matthew 5:29). But it’s not enough to get rid of bad habits and influences, we need to establish healthy habits to replace destructive ones (Colossians 3:9-10).

The warfare is often intense and sometimes we fall, so we must return to foundational truths. The gospel is the power of God for salvation (Romans 1:16-17). We cannot save ourselves, nor can we change our ways in our own power. Jesus came into the world to save helpless sinners, not the righteous (Mark 2:17; Romans 7:14 & 8:2). Salvation is a deep work. We must look to the cross, our only way to be justified before God. And we need the Holy Spirit’s power to change our desires and behavior. That’s why Paul tells believers who were born of the Spirit to “be filled with the Holy Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18-20). Christ’s life, Christ’s joy, Christ’s victory is our daily strength.

Have you ever asked others to pray with you for the fullness of God’s Spirit? Do you stay in God’s word to daily renew your mind?

Day 14 – To defeat Satan’s lies, speak the truth!

Meditate: *“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied.” (Matthew 5:6)*

This Beatitude propels us forward to acquire the character of Christ. We have not obtained it fully yet, but we have a God who *“calls into existence the things that do not exist”* (Romans 4:17). Our faith that Christ’s righteousness is given freely to us is what transforms us. It is the power that produces His character in us.

We live by faith, not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:6-7). The life of faith allows us to affirm the reality of God’s promises even before we see it all worked out. Our focus changes from the seen to the unseen. We believe that God will complete His work in us, and a vision for our new life appears.

When we begin to reject condemnation (Romans 8:1), we become more aware of the voice of Satan in our thoughts. The Bible calls him *“the accuser”* (Revelation 12:10). Day and night he accuses us before God. You can be sure that one of his most powerful tactics is to fill your mind with negativity.

How do we resist his lies? We do it in the same way that Jesus did in the wilderness (Luke 4:1-13). Jesus spoke the truths of God’s word each time Satan attacked him. Learning from Jesus, believers also memorize and personalize God’s truths to renew their minds.

Just as Satan questioned Jesus’ identity in the wilderness, he also hates who we are in Christ. He doesn’t want us to believe what God has done for us. Staying in God’s word will protect us.

The appendix at the back of the book has truths that you can memorize and personalize. (See pages 70-71.) You will find many more as you read the scriptures. Learn them, claim them for yourself, stand firm on them. God’s truths will change your life (John 8:31-32).

VI. Blessed are the merciful

Day 15 – Becoming More Merciful People

Meditate: *“Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.” (Matthew 5:7)*

Having found comfort and hope through the kindness of our Savior, we share it with those God puts in our path. We reach out to fellow strugglers, and as we share the little we have, God gives us more.

He knows that the more we give to others, the more we will find for ourselves. Of course, our capacity to receive God’s goodness is like the capacity of a cup to contain the ocean. However, as we let His goodness flow out from us, we become more like a pipe than a cup. So as you release the outflow of grace to others, the inflow to you increases as well. You get to enjoy God’s goodness as it flows through you to others. In fact, Jesus says the pleasure is greater when you give than when you receive (Acts 20:35).

The more we know our own souls, the more we are able to understand the sins and failings of others. As we listen to their stories, we see more and more what drives people to desperation and isolation and why some resort to addiction and abuse. We are not “less than” or “better than” they are. Our judgments and prejudices break down as we open our hearts to the flow of mercy. We see that we are all alike.

For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus... (Romans 3:22-24)

Day 16 – Are your childhood wounds healed?

Meditate: *“Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.” (Matthew 5:7)*

Forgiveness is the road to healing wounds from sins done against us. Those sins sometimes go way back into our childhood.

Our family members or schoolmates may have continually ridiculed us. Arguing in the home, divorce, physical violence against us – all of these things contribute to damaged emotions. Also shameful “family secrets” such as drug addiction and alcoholism, criminal behavior, etc, make us feel unworthy of love.

Our sexuality may also be damaged. God made sex beautiful, a gift to enable husband and wife to share themselves most intimately. However, when it is used to molest children, they become psychologically and emotionally broken. It affects the way they relate to God and others. Were you abused sexually as a child?

Children often accept wrong behavior and brokenness in the home as normal. They may also wrongly blame themselves for sins done against them. But as we move into adulthood, it’s important that we understand how these things have contributed to who we are today.

It is easy to become bitter when our lives have been damaged by the actions of others. However, resentment keeps us bound to the person who sinned against us throughout our lives. Forgiveness sets us free from those heavy chains.

As we affirm the goodness of God and His love for us, we can come to peace with what happened in the past.

See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! (1 John 3:1)

We can choose to forgive. We were once small, weak and treated wrongly. Now, through Christ, we find strength to choose His way. Seeing those who sinned against us as broken human beings like we are makes forgiveness easier.

Day 17 – The deep pain of forgiveness

Meditate: “*Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.*” (Matthew 5:7)

Forgiveness is painful. It touches the deepest part of our souls. Our heart screams, “I can’t do it!”

It may help you to ask, “Has God experienced what I am going through? Has he been abused, hated or betrayed the way I have?” A more important question: “Have I offended Him? How?”

If you have a spouse who is unfaithful, ask yourself: “Have I been unfaithful to God?” If your child is ungrateful and self-centered, have you ever had that attitude toward God? Has your parent ignored your needs? Ask yourself, “Do I ignore God and close my ears to His voice?”

When he was on earth Jesus was abused. He was despised and rejected (Isaiah 53:3). A friend sold him for money and then betrayed him with a kiss! His close friends ran away from Him at his time of greatest need. The nation that he served and healed for three years turned against Him and killed Him.

Our heavenly Father wants us to become like Jesus and forgive those who sin against us. We can go to God on their behalf, as Jesus did while suffering terribly on the cross – “*Father, forgive them...*” (Luke 23:34). Jesus shows that even when we are still feeling the pain and shame of evil deeds done against us, we can choose forgiveness.

Stephen, the first Christian martyr, followed Jesus’ example. While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed,

“Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” Then he fell on his knees and cried out, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” When he had said this, he fell asleep. (Acts 7:59-60)

Yes, forgiveness is painful because it is a sacrifice of love. Our heavenly Father’s forgiveness to us was very costly for Him, too. He gave His Son! And now He wants to change our hearts to receive Christ’s mercy toward others.

Day 18 – Take time to forgive and bless others

Meditate: *“Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.” (Matthew 5:7)*

Now is the time to put into practice what you have been learning in the previous days on forgiveness. Make a list of all who have wronged you. Write down each name as it comes to you. This process may occur over a period of days or even weeks.

Think through each period of your life and ask the Holy Spirit to show you pain and bitterness held in your heart toward anyone. Write names down of people you need to release to God.

Now, go over the names one by one, considering this teaching from Jesus:

“But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.” (Luke 6:27-28)

Take a name from your list and lift up that person to God. In the presence of God, forgive them. Remember that forgiveness is a choice not to hold the sin against them. You may not feel any love for that person now. This is difficult in the same way that cleansing a deep wound is painful. We need God’s help to forgive, and sometimes it is a process. We may need to ask a Christian brother or sister to help us with very difficult ones.

Then, as Jesus teaches in the verse above, pray for that person. You may want to pray for them to find the grace of Jesus Christ and the joy of knowing Him. That is the greatest blessing we all can receive. Can you imagine God blessing that person and you feeling glad about it?

Continue down the list. Ask God for help every step of the way. Your willingness to follow Jesus, even in this painful time, shows Him that you love Him. The result is friendship with God.

VII. Blessed are the pure in heart

Day 19 – Take a brave step forward to freedom

Meditate: *“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.” (Matthew 5:8)*

Our readings in the last few days related to our learning to forgive the sins that others did against us. Today’s Beatitude inspires us to do a thorough housecleaning of our own hearts. Opening our own hearts to the searching light of Jesus is sometimes even more difficult than forgiving others. But Christ calls us into His light that we might find greater freedom.

“If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” (John 8:31-32)

Are you ready to take a big step toward truth, to bring everything to the light? This is necessary throughout our Christian lives, not just at the beginning. Even as older believers we can let the “trash” in our home pile up. The mess we see in our lives becomes overwhelming. We may exclaim like the apostle Paul:

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners – of whom I am the worst. (1 Timothy 1:15)

Paul wrote that about 30 years after he became a follower of Jesus. God had been doing a deep work within him over the years. However, as Paul grew closer to Jesus each year, he was more aware of his heart, as the prophet Jeremiah had written 600 years before:

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it? (Jeremiah 17:9)

Sometimes we think as we get older and more mature in Jesus we should be able, in our own strength and righteousness, to continue on our own. But the apostle Paul knew he needed the saving power of Christ as much in his later years as he did in the earlier years. In the light of Jesus’ perfect holiness, we see our own dark hearts. We always look to our gracious Savior, not our own righteousness.

Day 20 – Faith in the grace of Christ

Meditate: *“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.” (Matthew 5:8)*

When we obey Christ’s command to walk in the light, we reject hypocrisy, the sin of the religious leaders in Jesus’ day. Jesus told his disciples:

“Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known.” (Luke 12:1-2)

But at every step of the painful process of bringing our sin into the light, let us not lose the truth of Hebrews 4:14-16:

Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Take time now to read it several times. We have a merciful high priest who understands our weaknesses. Faith in his grace every day of our lives is the only way forward. Only Christ can cleanse our dirty hearts. Our job of “cleaning house” is to bring our dark hearts into the light and then turn to Him.

Before He found Christ’s freedom, Martin Luther (the father of the Protestant Reformation), felt he must pay for his sins by hours and hours of repentance every day. He never found peace that way.

When we understand that Jesus was *“bruised for our transgressions”* (Isaiah 53:5), we begin to see how sad it is when we beat ourselves up. Can we add anything to His sacrifice? Was it not enough? Our attempts to atone for our own sins may be more offensive to God than the sin we feel guilty about.

Day 21 – Allow God to search your heart - Part 1

Meditate: *“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.” Matthew 5:8*

The pure in heart know the value of bringing sins into the light. We do this with the help of the Holy Spirit:

Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. (Psalm 139:23-24)

In this Psalm we see that we don't do the searching alone. We look to God to help us. Sometimes it is helpful to review the things that scripture clearly teaches are offensive to Him. The following scriptures and questions may help you as you open up to the Lord's light. He may also speak to you about other sins not listed below.

You may have already dealt with the most painful areas of your life and this will not be so difficult. Or it may be that you want to run from facing the darkness inside. Don't run! Take courage by praying the Psalm above and then let the Holy Spirit speak.

As you go through this list (today and tomorrow), write down briefly and specifically the dark areas of your life that the Lord shines His light on.

Dishonoring Parents (Deuteronomy 5:16; Proverbs 23:22; Matthew 15:3-9)

- How have you dishonored your parents (with your tongue, your attitude, your possessions, your time)?

Sins of the tongue (James 3:2-12; Matthew 5:21-22; Exodus 20:7):

- Is lying a habit in your life? What kind of lies do you tell?
- Do you gossip about others? Do you boast about yourself and put others down?
- Do you use your words to wound, mock or criticize others?
- Do you use God's name in vain? Is your language dirty?
- Do you find yourself often complaining about your life? Do you have an ungrateful attitude (and tongue) towards God for what He gives you?

Day 22 – Allow God to search your heart - Part 2

Meditate: *“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.” (Matthew 5:8)*

As you did yesterday, continue reading the list below. Write down briefly and specifically areas of your life that the Lord shines His light on.

Sins of the mind and eyes (Matthew 5:27-29; Matthew 7:1-5; Exodus 20:17; Genesis 6:5):

- Is your mind impure before God? Do your eyes lust after others?
- Are you judgmental towards others? Do you keep negative attitudes growing like weeds in your mind?
- Do you have an “evil eye,” coveting what others have? Do you covet other people’s material things, their position, their physical appearance, their children? What do you want that other people have?

Violence (Exodus 20:13; Genesis 6:11-13; Matthew 5:21-22; Jeremiah 1:5):

- Are you physically violent towards others? Have you, in anger, wished you could kill someone or wished they were dead?
- Have you had an abortion or encouraged someone else to have one?
- What have you done that is harmful to your own body? (Examples: attempting suicide, cutting yourself, banging your head violently, eating disorder)

Sexual impurity and addictions (Exodus 20:3-5&14; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5; Galatians 5:19-21):

- How have you used your body that was dishonoring to God?
- Have you committed adultery, had sex outside of marriage, or engaged in looking at pornography?
- What things or behaviors have you used to replace God in your life? In other words, where do you turn for comfort, security, or

Day 23 – Cutting the root of shame

Meditate: *“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.” (Matthew 5:8)*

Though we confess our sins to Christ, we know there are some sins we need to tell to others and ask for their prayers. (See James 5:16.) Opening our hearts up to a trusted believer is part of Christian maturity. You may be surprised to find people actually value you more as a person when they know you have been through pain and failure. They see that you are sincere and not wearing a religious mask.

As a new creation in Christ, your past is your history; it is not your identity. When you share your brokenness with others, often they will begin to see you as someone they can trust, and they may share their weaknesses and sins with you as well. If they do, you must remember they are trusting you. Don't talk about it with others.

Being known fully by someone who will neither excuse nor condemn you is one of the greatest things you can ever experience. It happened to a woman Jesus met. If you don't know the story, read it now in John 4:1-42.

She was a Samaritan, of mixed race and despised by the Jews. She came to draw water at Jacob's well and found Jesus sitting alone. She came in the middle of the day when none of the other women were there. Probably they shunned her, and she avoided them.

Jesus brought to light things about her life that she wished she could hide. She had been married five times and now lived with a man who was not her husband. These things brought her shame, yet she saw in Christ's eyes complete acceptance. She felt valuable, perhaps for the first time in her life. Soon, she left the well and encouraged others to come out and meet Jesus, saying, *“He told me everything I ever did”* (John 4:29).

The encounter was so transformational that this outcast woman went back boldly to the village that rejected her. She brought the whole town out to meet the Savior. She no longer felt the need to hide. When she found Jesus, she found worth, and that set her free to connect with her community. That is the power of grace. It is released every time we come to God just as we are, in poverty of spirit.

VIII. Blessed are the peacemakers

Day 24 – Our God is a peacemaker

Meditate: *“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.” (Matthew 5:9)*

Peacemaking is found in many stories throughout the Bible. The greatest story is of our heavenly Father who sent His only Son to make peace with us. The sacrifice to accomplish this was greater than we can imagine. Now millions around the world enjoy reconciliation with God because of what He did (Romans 5:10-11).

Another amazing story is about Joseph in the book of Genesis, who was sold into slavery by his brothers. He suffered deeply for many years from their evil actions. In Egypt, after their father died, Joseph’s brothers came to him and asked for his mercy. They offered to be his servants. In these verses we see the beautiful way that Joseph showed them mercy:

But Joseph said to them, “Don’t be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. So then, don’t be afraid. I will provide for you and your children.” And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them. (Genesis 50:19-21)

God is a peacemaker, and His people are peacemakers, too. When we understand the heart of God for reconciliation, we can become bearers of peace, even when we suffer for it.

Day 25 – Honesty with others whom we have hurt

Meditate: *“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.” (Matthew 5:9)*

In the previous two Beatitudes (Matthew 5:7-8), we brought before God sins done against us and sins that we committed. Let us not forget, however, that sin is usually not simply between us and God; it affects our relationships. Sin involves deception, selfishness, and dishonoring of others. After Cain murdered his brother Abel, God asked him where his brother was. Cain replied: *“I don’t know. Am I my brother’s keeper?”* (Genesis 4:9). Sadly, that is sometimes our attitude.

In truth, God does want us to be our brother’s keeper. We were created to have good relationships with all people. In a sinful world, this takes effort, but if we don’t work for peace, serious problems result. Sins between individuals sometimes even escalate over time to wars between countries.

What we did in the past few days – confessing our sins to God – was a step forward toward peacemaking in our world. But do we stop there? Do we say nothing to those whom we have sinned against? Do we not care about the pain they feel because of what we did to them? Our pride makes it painful to face these things, but another step of walking in the light is needed. See what the Apostle John said:

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. (1 John 1:7)

Real relationship (fellowship and peace with others) requires humility and honesty. This honesty is not just confessing sin to God. Peacemaking involves admitting to others the sinful role we played in the broken relationship. It is not always possible to do this. In some cases it might cause more harm to that person. But as we pray and receive God’s wisdom in the matter, we can work to restore many relationships.

If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. (Romans 12:18)

Day 26 – How Jesus changes the world

Meditate: *“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.” (Matthew 5:9)*

People changed by Jesus become peacemakers, and peacemakers bring beautiful changes to their world. One example in the New Testament is Zacchaeus, a tax collector in Israel. Take time to read his story now in Luke 19:1-10.

The people hated Zacchaeus because he worked for Rome and made lots of money by cheating his fellow Israelites. His passion to make money had made his heart hard. But even hard-hearted people, deep down inside, know their own sin. Something was going on inside Zacchaeus’ heart the day he climbed the tree to see Jesus. When Jesus passed the tree, he looked up at the tax collector, and he called him by name!

“Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today.” (Luke 19:5)

Jesus had never met Zacchaeus before this, so it was surely a shock that Jesus knew his name. Some of us are like him; we can’t imagine that the Savior has time for us. But how sweet it is that Jesus knows each of us by name! And how great for Him to invite Himself to spend time with us— especially when we feel so unworthy.

Letting Jesus into our lives makes all the difference. Zacchaeus’ one encounter with Jesus transformed him. Here was a moment of true repentance!

Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount." (Luke 19:8)

Jesus commended Zacchaeus because his immediate response to salvation was a desire to make things right. God wants to cultivate in all of us a soft heart that desires restoration.

IX. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake

Day 27 – Walking with Christ in persecution

Meditate: *“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” (Matthew 5:10-12)*

When trouble comes because of our faith, we may wish we could retire from serving Christ. But we remember how much we have been helped by others who brought Him to us. God asks us to give freely, just as we have received. Jesus gave *everything* for us. We know also that millions of unnamed believers over the centuries have sacrificed for us to receive the gospel. Some even gave up their lives. And so we learn to sacrifice daily.

And he said to all, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.” (Luke 9:23)

We let our light shine wherever we go, especially in dark places. And it is in dark places where we are opposed by angry people blinded by Satan. Jesus knew this opposition well (John 15:18-25).

In times of persecution, we discover our weaknesses and run back to Jesus as beggars. In poverty of spirit, we call out for Him to empower us to not be ashamed of Him, and to continue to love those who hate the light.

We could run from the pain of persecution as the disciples did when Jesus was arrested (Mark 14:50). But if we focus on saving our lives, we will be denying all that Jesus has done in us so far. As we experience Jesus’ healing in our lives, we find power to choose hardship, loss or pain when it lies in the path of righteousness. We’ve grown to love God’s kingdom and we keep our eyes on Jesus in the suffering. In losing our own kingdoms, we enter fully into His (1 Peter 4:1-2).

Day 28 – Will we stand with Christ?

Meditate: *“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” (Matthew 5:10-12)*

Jesus continues this serious theme throughout the gospels. (See Matthew 24, for example.) Jesus knows persecution is what we would most wish to avoid. And often we can avoid it if we choose. We can denounce our faith or ignore this part of Jesus’ teachings. We can say just what we need to say in the moment to make everyone happy. But a voice inside asks: “Can you turn your back on Christ who has brought you into such freedom and hope? Will you stand for truth?”

Martin Luther stood with Christ. The Roman Church in his day had almost lost the good news of salvation by grace through faith. The church was selling forgiveness of sins to people and using the money to build cathedrals. The Church was getting rich and top leaders were living in luxury. Christ’s sacrifice, given freely for the sins of all people, was ignored.

Martin read the Apostle Paul’s book of Romans in the New Testament and saw how the simple beauty of the gospel message was not being preached. Though he knew he could be killed, he spoke out and wrote boldly for the truth. His books, including his translation of the Bible into German, went throughout Europe. In 1521 Luther was accused of heresy and ordered in court to retract his teachings. Although he knew it might cost him his life, he would not back down: “My conscience is captive to God’s Word,” he said. “I cannot and will not recant anything. It is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. May God help me. Amen. Here I stand, I can do no other.”

Many joined Luther, working tirelessly throughout Europe to spread the truth of the gospel. The Bible was translated and taught in the languages of the common people. Some were killed, others were imprisoned; some lost jobs, others were rejected by family members. But the fear of persecution did not stop them. They suffered that we might hear the gospel today.

Day 29 – Praying for deliverance; submitting to God’s will

Meditate: *“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” (Matthew 5:10-12)*

We all live in societies which worship idols. These “false gods” may be money, power, sex, or other things, and Christians who don’t bow their knee in worship face various types of persecution. But some of us are in cultures which demand obedience to a single religion. Those who live out their faith as Jesus taught face harassment, heavy fines, imprisonment or even death.

In the Old Testament, three young Hebrew men were captives in Babylon. The king demanded all to bow down to an image he had constructed. Those who did not bow down would be burned alive. See Daniel 3 in the Old Testament for the full story.

The Hebrews refused to bow down and the king was furious. He ordered the fire stoked seven times hotter than usual. But the three men said:

“King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty’s hand. But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.” (Daniel 3:16-18)

These men believed in God’s power to save them, but they were prepared to die if God did not send deliverance. In this story, they were miraculously rescued. The fire burned only the ropes that bound them, and someone appeared with them in the fire who looked “like a son of the gods”!

X. Final Words

Day 30 – Finding the *Bread* that feeds us forever

Meditate: *“Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give some of the hidden manna...” (Revelation 2:17)*

We have brought our broken, hungry hearts to Jesus in the light of the Beatitudes, Jesus’ first teaching. The scripture above is from some of the last words of Jesus. He speaks of *“hidden manna.”*

Manna was the miraculous bread from God for His people as they journeyed in the desert. Jesus promises to sustain us, too, as we travel with Him through our personal wilderness. He shows us the true manna:

“I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which anyone may eat and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.” (John 6:48-51)

Jesus is our *“hidden manna”* satisfying us in a way that nothing else can. But why is it hidden? Why would God hide something good? As we have seen walking through the Beatitudes, God’s best is reserved for those who press in, for those who ask, seek and knock. Yes, God wants us to be hungry – hungry enough that we seek Him wholeheartedly.

“You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.” (Jeremiah 29:13)

It was awareness of our need that started us on our journey through the Beatitudes and it is desire to know God that takes us home. This world is not our home; we are pilgrims. Our hearts belong to heaven. We are made to love God and to be loved by Him. Holding on to the following words of Jesus will guard us from the error of religious men who don’t really know God. It will help us keep our eyes on the true goal:

Day 31 – Cultivate a grateful heart

Meditate: *“The one who offers thanksgiving as his sacrifice glorifies me; to one who orders his way rightly I will show the salvation of God!” (Psalm 50:23)*

As we have learned the Beatitudes, we have discovered that facing the painful realities of our lives brings freedom and healing. It is true: How blessed are those who walk in Jesus’ way!

On day 5 you wrote a prayer to God expressing negative emotions, as David sometimes did. Now on this last day, write a prayer of heartfelt thanks to the Lord. Throughout scripture the Lord told the Israelites to remember all that He had done for them. Even though He had miraculously delivered them from Egypt, they quickly moved to complaining and fear. They only saw each day’s problems, not God’s blessings. They forgot the past miracles, and thus, they had no faith that God would deliver them today.

Their experiences and complaining hearts can be like a mirror that shows us our own hearts. Giving thanks to God can help to transform the unbelief and ingratitude in our hearts to faith and joy.

What can we thank Jesus for? Here are a few ideas:

- Thank Him for using everything in our experience to bless us by making us more like Him.
- Thank Him for revealing the destructive nature of sin and helping us hate it like He does (Proverbs 8:13).
- Thank Him for using difficult circumstances to strengthen us and for using pain to make us more tender and compassionate.
- Thank Him for all He has in mind for the future. Express your confidence that He can and will continue working out everything for your good (Romans 8:28). Remind Him of your love and commitment to Him.
- Give Him permission to do whatever is needed to make you more like Jesus. Let Him know how much you appreciate His patient persistence with you.
- Let gratitude flow. Every day look for things to thank the Lord for. Be quick to share with God and others just how thankful you are.

Appendix

Affirmations of Faith

Putting the Truth of God's Word Into Your Heart

What we focus our thoughts on begins to change us. The Apostle Paul understood this when he wrote:

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. (Philippians 4:8)

Jesus wants us to dwell on the good, to love what He loves, and to believe what He has done for us. The following affirmations are just a few examples of how you can take the truths of God's word and make them your personal truths to defeat the lies of Satan against you. **It is powerful when we read affirmations of faith out loud, speaking them to ourselves. Be sure to look up the scripture verses, and you may want to memorize them.**

GOD RECEIVES ME THROUGH CHRIST:

- My sins are completely forgiven and cleansed when I confess them and look to Christ for forgiveness (1 John 1:8-10).
- All condemnation against me is defeated because I am now in Christ (Romans 8:1).
- I have peace (reconciliation) with God because I have been justified by faith in Christ's sacrifice for me (Romans 5:1).
- I have bold confidence in Christ to come into God's presence to find His mercy and grace to help me in my needs (Hebrews 4:14-16).

GOD CHANGES ME and MAKES ME FRUITFUL TO GLORIFY HIM

- I will abide in Christ, in order to walk in freedom and to produce much fruit to glorify my Father (John 15:1-8 & John 8:31-32).

GOD'S COMFORT and REFRESHMENT IS AVAILABLE TO ME:

- Jesus is a good shepherd who takes care of me, one of his sheep (Psalm 23 & John 10:14-15).
- I find rest for my soul when I take on Christ's yoke. I come to Him when I am weary and burdened (Matthew 11:28-30).

THE PRESENCE AND POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IS IN ME:

- I am not an orphan because the Holy Spirit of Christ lives in me and is with me forever (John 14:15-18).
- I can be a witness for Christ in this world because the Holy Spirit empowers me (Acts 1:8 & 2 Timothy 1:6-8).

I DO NOT NEED TO SPEND MY DAYS WORRYING:

- My heavenly Father feeds the birds and clothes the lilies of the field. He will take care of me, too. I will seek first God's kingdom and His righteousness and trust His daily provision (Matthew 6:25-34).
- I will ask my Father for my daily bread, for wisdom and for all things that I need to glorify Him in this world. He gives graciously and does not rebuke me for asking (Matthew 6:11 & 7:7-11; James 1:5 & Philippians 4:4-7).

I WILL NOT PANIC WHEN I AM PERSECUTED:

- I will not look at persecution as unusual, but I will seek to live a godly life in Christ. I will remember that the world first hated Christ, my Savior (2 Timothy 3:12; John 15:18 & 1 Peter 4:12-16).
- I remember that Jesus is always with me and gives a great reward to those persecuted in His name. I also will pray for those who persecute me, as Jesus did (Matthew 28:20; Matthew 5:11-12; Matthew 5:43-48 & Luke 23:34).

Has this book helped you?

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Here are guidelines to follow in translating:

1. Who is the best translator?

Usually it is best that the translator is a native speaker of the target language (the language you are translating into). He or she should also be fluent in English. The translation should be done from the English version, which is the original language of this book.

2. Make it easy to read.

As you translate, please avoid formal language that is difficult for the average person to read. Write in a relaxed, conversational style, as if the author of the book is talking around the table with others. Don't use "high" language that is only understood in very educated, academic circles. The translation should be easy and enjoyable to read.

3. Say it in a native way.

Avoid translating word for word from the English into your language. That will make it sound strange in the target language. Instead of word for word, look at the entire sentence (and the other sentences in context) and then write in a way that a native speaker would say it.

4. Don't change the meaning.

Keep the basic meaning that is in each English sentence. Don't change it to say something different from what the English is saying.

5. Use the Bible of your target language.

Whenever a Bible verse is given, don't translate the English Bible verse into your target language. Find that verse in the target language Bible. If there are several versions of the Bible in the target language, use an easy to understand and commonly used Bible in that language.

There is one exception to this rule –

On Day 8, it says:

One way to translate Psalm 119:32 is: *“I run in the pathway of your commands for you have set my heart free.”*

With this verse, translate it from the English.

6. Words to use for “Bible,” “Christian,” “God,” and “Christ.”

In some countries (especially Muslim countries), using these words or some form of these words can cause unnecessary anger and offense. Some people still think about religious wars when they hear these words, and they associate them with their enemies. Therefore, in your translating please think carefully about the words that you use. For the word “Bible,” use words from your language for “Holy Book,” “The Word,” “God’s Word,” or “Old or New Testament.” In many Muslim countries, “Injil” is a good word to use for “New Testament.”

For the word “God,” you should choose the word that is most commonly used by believers in your country. Some Muslim countries use the word “Allah,” other countries have other words that they prefer.

For “Christ,” it’s best to use the word in your language for “Messiah,” or “Anointed One.” This is the meaning of the word “Christ.” For “Christian,” use words from your language for “follower of Jesus the Messiah,” “follower of Jesus,” or “believer”-- or whatever words are most commonly used and accepted by believers in your country.

If you are translating into a language with a Christian heritage, obviously you should use the words they are familiar with. In general, please try to choose words for these terms that are familiar, easily understood for their true meaning, and least likely to cause unnecessary offense.

7. Have someone check the translation.

The checker should be someone who is fluent in both English and the target language. They should use the guidelines written above, and should also check for spelling and other typing errors. In the final step, the original translator and the English checker should discuss any questions in the translation and come to an agreement on the best wording.

8. Do you have any questions?

As you work on the translation, if there is anything in the daily meditations that is unclear, feel free to contact us through our website. (www.learnhisways.com)

9. Make the translation available to many others.

When you finish the translation, contact us at the same website. We may put your translation on the website so that many people can download it for free.

God bless you as you translate. We pray that the Lord will use this book to strengthen the Body of Christ in many different languages around the world.