

Your Name: _____

H O P E

C O M F O R T

G R A C E

J U S T I C E

F O R G I V E N E S S

I N T E G R I T Y

S H A L O M

C O N S I S T E N C Y

A Seat at the Table

Carolina Cross Convention 2019

Let's Define Terms:

CMG: Christian Mission Group. This is the team of people you will be serving with from camp.

Morning Watch: Morning Devotionals that you do on your own after breakfast.

Small Groups: You will meet with the group from your church to go through the questions provided in this book.

Home Repair: Sunday-Saturday camp week in Western North Carolina. The main goals during the week are to connect with people in the community and serve with them to repair their homes.

Urban Ministry: Sunday-Saturday camp week in Asheville or Charlotte, North Carolina. The main goals during the week are to connect with people experiencing homelessness and serve with them throughout the week.

Overseas: Monday-Monday camp week in orphanages in Honduras. The main goals of the week are to connect Children's Homes and partner with them to meet physical and educational needs.

The beatitudes

Jesus gives a sermon in Matthew 5 that begins with what we call the beatitudes. It consists of eight blessings. This week we are going to look at how these blessings show the character of God. You are invited to understand God more clearly.
You have a seat at the table.



Sunday Night Small Group

Read Luke 14: 15-23

1. Does your family have a big meal around holidays? What are some things that happen at that meal? What kind of food is served?

2. Have you ever been invited to a party or meal that you made up excuses so that you wouldn't have to attend? What was your excuse?

3. God has invited you to His table this week. If you weren't pumped about coming or you were nervous what were some of the excuses you thought of to get out of coming here?

4. You might be anxious or skeptical about saying yes to God's invitation like the people in the scripture, that's totally ok. We just ask you to be open to learning more. Did anything from the scripture passage stick out to you?

5. If you're open to saying yes to God's invitation to the week, what are some things you hope to learn about Him, the people you're working with and serving this week?

M O N D A Y Morning Watch

Matthew 5: 3-4

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted."

We take the word poor and find a way to make it not define us. For instance, you might have thought that today you were going to go serve the poor and it is a nice thought that those people will receive the kingdom of heaven. But we're not poor, so how do we fit in? Or you might look around and realize that so many people have more than you do, and you find great comfort in the kingdom of heaven belonging to you, but what about them?

The great thing about this passage is it eliminates that us and them mentality. It is not talking about money or stuff, but instead what is happening inside of us. How can we be happy and hopeless or happy and grieving? That seems ridiculous. But what Jesus is trying to do here is actually flipping our idea of success on its head. See he's not talking about the kind of happy we feel when we win a game or get an A. He's talking about the kind of happiness that sneaks up on you when you are feeling depressed or anxious. The kind that when all seems hopeless or terrible, finds its way in to the depths of who we are.

There is a really good chance you're going to meet someone this week that by your standards shouldn't be happy but will have a joy that only comes from Jesus. They might "have nothing" but offer you everything. This is the kind of happiness Jesus is talking about in this passage. He puts words to situations we think don't make sense. It's the kind of happy that when you come in today tired and uncomfortable, will show itself in this community around the dinner table. You see we are not promised that things will be easy, but through community and the table we are promised a happiness that outweighs how we feel and comes out of who God is in us.

Look for this today. When you sit on someone's couch or corner, listen for this kind of happiness. The kind that expels hopeless and grieving and instead sounds like two of the characteristics of God we are studying this week: HOPE and COMFORT.

Monday Night Small Group

READ MATTHEW 5: 3-4

1. What are some things that make you happy?

2. How do you define the word happy? Does it mean the same thing as the word blessed? "The way Jesus is using the word happy here doesn't mean human happiness, but instead an unexpected happiness, encountered in situations and attitudes not normally associated with happiness—a happiness that is not a human production but a "surprise from God" granted precisely when and where we thought it impossible." (The Eight Doors of the Kingdom by Jacques Philippe, pg. 4). Does this change how we read Matthew 5:3-4? How?

3. How do you define the words hopeless and grieve? How do you think you can find happiness in those feelings?

4. Did you see God provide anyone HOPE or COMFORT today?

T U E S D A Y *Morning Watch*

Matthew 5:5-6

"Happy are people who are humble, because they will inherit the earth.
"Happy are people who are hungry and thirsty for righteousness, because they will be fed until they are full."

When people are humble, how would you describe them?

When you're hungry, what do you crave?

When you're thirsty, what quenches your thirst?

Each time I sit at a table for a meal, I'm praying to better understand the gift of God's GRACE and JUSTICE in my life and to be reminded that I am a child of God. It's not easy. Honestly, when I'm hungry, I just want food. When I'm thirsty, I want water (really I want Diet Coke). Maybe there's a difference between craving and hunger or thirst. I don't know that I crave God's grace and justice but maybe I need it, maybe I'm desperate for it.

"The primary aspect of the hunger and thirst for justices is then simply a true desire for holiness expressed as an inseparable love of God and of neighbor: "I don't want to be a saint by halves!" St. Therese of Lisieux said."
(The Eight Doors of the Kingdom by Jacques Philippe, pg. 127).

Can you think of a moment where you knew God was there? A moment when all other distractions were gone and God's presence was clear (enough).

Take a minute to write down those memories.

Could God's heart for grace and justice be a deep longing for all people to see/experience their seat at the table?

Maybe Jesus' life was an example for me to understand grace is always extended, a seat is always open, and at this table I'll truly be full.

"Lord, it's not just for me to love you so little while you deserve to be loved so much, or to love my neighbor so little when he has such a need for love. Do me justice! Convert me and transform my heart, filling it with love for you and others."

(The Eight Doors of the Kingdom by Jacques Philippe, pg. 132).

Tuesday Night Small Group

READ MATTHEW 5: 5-6

1. What is your favorite kind of ice cream? When is the last time you were able to eat some?

2. How do you define humble? If humility can be defined as flexibility (in the terms of being flexible with your schedule or expectations) why do you think God values it?

3. Righteousness sounds like a "churchy" word. How would you define it? How about the word justice? Why do you think Jesus relates our need for justice to our need for food?

4. Did you see God provide anyone GRACE or JUSTICE today?

WEDNESDAY

Morning Watch

Matthew 5: 7-8

THE ONLY RULE IS LOVE

7 "Happy are people who show mercy, because they will receive mercy.

8 "Happy are people who have pure hearts, because they will see God.

What if you and I were playing a game? Let' call it cops and robbers. You are the law enforcement officer, I am the robber, and I rob a bank. I have done something morally wrong, taken money that is not mine. You as the cop are then supposed to arrest me and take me to jail, to pay for my mistake. We have all played some version of this game as a kid. However, let's put it into a bigger perspective of real life.

We are all making mistakes and playing the role of robber every day. The beautiful reality of our relationship with God is that it is different than the pretend game. God isn't counting all our mistakes. In God's game of real life, in the Kingdom of Heaven . . . the only rule is love (The Eight Doors of the Kingdom by Jacques Philippe, pg. 159). Let's dissect this rule just a bit. This doesn't mean we get to go around being a robber all the time. On the contrary, God wants us to play the game of real life in the same way he does, loving everyone. It sounds simple, right? But let's dive deeper and bring forgiveness into the mix. What does mean to forgive? Is it as easy as the common phrase, forgive and forget? Or does forgiveness require a little bit more?

When God forgave us, and sent his son to die on the cross, absorbing all our sin. His FORGIVENESS of our wrongdoing required incredible sacrifice on his part. He gave of himself and expected nothing in return from us. I often find that when I think I have forgiven someone, or even myself, the next time that person hurts me, or I mess up, I bring back all the wrongdoing from the past. That's not how forgiveness or mercy was designed to function. In showing mercy and forgiving ourselves or someone else, we are humbling ourselves and saying, "I chose to love anyway, and I expect nothing in return." We will never be able to do this perfectly. But God can, and did, and does every single day.

Now you are thinking, but what about verse 8? What about being pure in heart? I think verse 7 and 8 blend perfectly. To be pure in heart is to desire God and his Kingdom above all else. When that is our focus, we see him everywhere. We desire to love and show mercy, because in mercy there is freedom. In this freedom, we experience the Kingdom of Heaven and the unexpected happiness that comes alongside.

Wednesday Night Small Group

Read Matthew 5: 9-10

1. You are halfway through the week! What is the name of one person you've met this week that you want to remember? Why that person?

2. Why do you think it is hard to show mercy or forgiveness to someone else? Why do you think verse 7's promise is the same as the action? Meaning, people who show mercy/forgiveness receive mercy/forgiveness.

3. How do you define the word integrity? Why do you think having integrity allows a person to see God?

4. Did you see God provide FORGIVENESS or see someone have INTEGRITY today?

THURSDAY

Morning Watch

Matthew 5: 9-10

Happy are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.

10 Happy are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

We have come to the seventh characteristic of God. In the Hebrew tradition (the tradition of Jesus), the number seven is significant. When Joshua takes over Jericho, he is commanded to march around the city seven times (Joshua 6: 3-4). Jesus tells us to forgive seventy times seven (Matthew 18:22) and there are so many more references to this number. When we read Genesis' account of creation, God rests on the seventh day and therefore Sabbath in that tradition is the seventh day and requires everyone rest. On the Sabbath everyone greets one another by saying Shabbat Shalom, which is offering one another peace. Sometimes at churches we tell people to pass the peace during the service, which is where we go around and greet one another with the peace of Christ. Jesus, of course, knew what he was doing here, putting peacemakers seventh. The kind of peace Jesus is talking about here is completeness or feeling whole. The opposite of this kind of peace is not war, instead it is emptiness or anxiety. We might think that this is impossible. The world around us is divided and sometimes we might even feel divided within our own selves. But just like the characteristics of hope, comfort, grace, justice, forgiveness, and integrity, God offers SHALOM in the midst of chaos. So much so that even when we are persecuted or wronged, we can find a peace that settles our feelings and allows us to mirror the characteristics of God back to other people. God is offering us peace, and through that peace we are called his children.

Can you imagine if we lived like we were God's children? How would today be different if you believed that you were 100% God's child? How would it be different if you looked at everyone you met today as God's child?

Give it a try today and talk about it tonight at sharing. We are loving our brothers and sisters today, in and out of camp. Go out there and offer the peace God is offering you!

F R I D A Y Morning Watch

Matthew 5: 11-12

11 "Happy are you when people insult you and harass you and speak all kinds of bad and false things about you, all because of me. 12 Be full of joy and be glad, because you have a great reward in heaven. In the same way, people harassed the prophets who came before you."

Jesus was,
Jesus is,
Jesus always will be,

The same.

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." (Hebrews 13:8)

Do you know that feeling when a friend pushes you hard one too many times on the swing? The quick rise and rapid fall. The almost pushed off the swing rush. Or maybe you're one who feels comfortable enough to flip off of the swing, land on the ground in front of you... hopefully, on your feet. No matter which person you are, those quick changes can be scary and exciting and nerve wracking and maybe even make us feel out of control.

Maybe that's what happens in life, school, family, and friend groups. Something changes quickly and all of a sudden everything seems to be out of control. One thing we were certain of before now looks so different. One moment you were looking at the sky and the next the ground beneath you. It's hard for me to relate to persecutions and insults. And how are you supposed to be full of joy when you're being harassed? I don't know. But I'm thankful to know that these characteristics of God we are learning are never changing, always CONSISTENT, and waiting for me at the table to discover.

So could it be that remembering the kingdom of Heaven is the reward, is also remembering that the characteristics of God will always be the same?

Did you ever learn something about Jesus and think to yourself, "Huh, I never knew that!" Does that change the character of God? I don't think so. As my understanding of the character of God shifts and changes, I'm reminded and comforted by the idea that the character of God is consistent.

Today at the table, I pray for _____.
Thank you God for being consistent and always hearing my prayers.

Friday Night Small Group

Read Matthew 5: 11-12

1. We are wrapping up our week together. Name a person you want to remember from the week (a different person than you picked on Wednesday)? Why do you want to remember them?

2. Think back to Sunday night's scripture passage. Now that you have said yes to God's invitation to His table, do you think it is important to invite other people to the table? How do you think you can do that at home?

3. Did you experience God being CONSISTENT this week? Is it possible to be consistent in your love for other people when you get home? How?

4. Is there anything else you want to share about what God taught you this week?

S A T U R D A Y

Morning Watch

Read Matthew 5:13-16

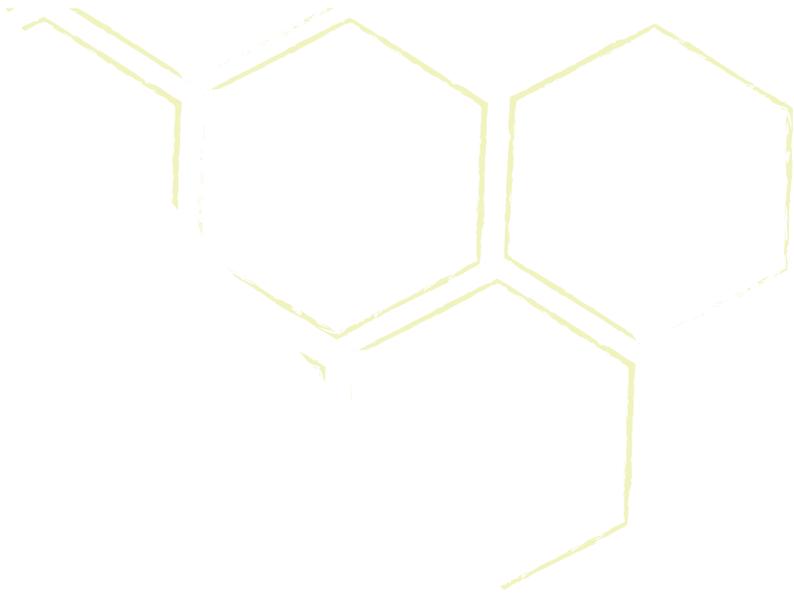
We have reached the end of our week. There have been so many moments, some awesome, others mundane, and still more that you would probably rather forget. However, I want to encourage you to view each moment this week as important. Both the mountain top experience you had maybe during worship, or maybe with a homeowner or friend and the time when you were sweaty and gross exhausted from working are valuable. Even that time you brushed your teeth this morning (I hope) was important. Because all the moments together created the cumulative experience of camp and mission.

We read in Matthew that we are meant to share the light and salt of the goodness of the Kingdom. Now that you know you are invited; you get to be the person to help other people understand that they are invited too. You are sharing the space at the table with so many people. People who have incredible stories and experiences of mountain tops, sweaty gross days, and tooth brushing adventures. We are all part of the story. God has invited each one of us.

However, in October or November, or maybe even next week, we will probably forget how important it is to choose to accept the invitation. We might forget about the unexpected happiness that comes with the characteristics of God we get to interact with at the table. So we are going to do an activity. On the piece of paper, the staff gave you, write yourself a letter. You are the only person who is going to read this letter. In the letter tell the story of this week. Maybe you want to write down names of people you met or served. Maybe you want to write about the coolest moment of camp, or maybe you want to write about the most frustrating moment. Maybe you want to write about brushing your teeth. Either way, write something to help you remember this week.

Next, **AND THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT**, write your name and home address on the back of the envelope, put the letter in the envelope and seal it. Then give it back to the staff. We will mail you this letter later in the Fall to help you remember. Never forget you are invited to the table. In your seat at the table you will see the face of God.

NOTES/MEMORIES



Want a Jump Start on Summer 2020?

Each Group Leader will be given a pre-registration form towards the end of the week. Make sure you fill it out and turn it back in to the Camp Director!

HOME REPAIR *(3 options! Camp, School, or Coast)*

June 14-20

June 21- 27

June 28- July 4

July 5-11

July 12-18

July 19-25

URBAN *(Asheville)*

June 14-20

June 21- 27

June 28- July 4

July 5-11

July 12-18

July 19-25

OVERSEAS *(Honduras)*

June 15 - 22

June 29 - July 6

July 13 - 20

July 27 - August 3

A Seat At The Table
CCC Summer 2019

PO Box 731
Gastonia, NC 28053