



Take The Challenge School of the Bible

Roots of Character
Course Notes

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Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Theme – Being precedes Doing.....	4
Roots are required for endurance.....	4
Introduction to Beatitudes.....	4
Man like a Tree.....	6
Our spiritual life as a tree.....	6
Known by their fruits.....	6
Character – How it is Formed.....	7
Definition of character.....	7
God wants to form His character in us	7
How God forms His character within us	7
Character – How it is Developed.....	8
Things that develop the character of the Lord Jesus (Rom 12:2)	8
Conformed or Transformed?	9
Study of Matthew 5	9
Matthew 5:1-12.....	9
Other examples	9
Root System living	10
The Tree of Life vs. the Tree of Death	11
Progressive root attitudes.....	11
Tree of Life	11
Tree of Death.....	11
Attitudes of Satan’s kingdom	12
Attitudes of two kingdoms	12
Spirit of Antichrist.....	12
The spirit of self-reliance.....	13
Humility.....	14
Humility and Pride.....	14
The Attitudes of Heaven.....	15
Spirit of Competition.....	15
Understanding Authority	16
Five basic structures of authority.....	16
When can authority be violated?	17
Meekness	18
Understanding Meekness.....	18
Understanding Anger.....	18
The gift of anger	19
Meekness is strength under control	20
Results of Anger and Meekness	20
Judging Ourselves.....	22
Rights and Liberties.....	22

Unchangeable situations	22
Forgiveness	23
God's Character	23
Forgive Others As God Forgave You	23
Bitterness	23
Choosing Forgiveness.....	24
Purity – Matthew 5:8	26
Understanding Holiness.....	26
Immorality	27
Moral Impurity.....	27
Greed is a fruit of immorality	27
Sexual Immorality	28
Clear Conscience	30
Introduction.....	30
Guilty conscience.....	30
The Power of a Clear Conscience.....	31
Review and Summary –.....	32

Introduction

Theme – Being precedes Doing

- Jesus placed the emphasis on what was on the inside – on the heart – not miracles
- His first great sermon (Matt 5-7) focused on this
- Foundation of a house – under the surface – determines if the house will stand or fall
- A person's gifts and calling will take them to a place – character keeps them there
 - Great anointing to work miracles
 - To be a vessel of honor, the character of God must precede miracles
- Who you are is more important to God than what you do – **Being precedes Doing**
- “God will delay the work to work on the worker”

Roots are required for endurance

- John 15:16 – you have been chosen by Jesus to bear fruit that remains
- Mark 4:13-17
 - The soil represents the heart
 - You have received the Word immediately and have sprung up (v5)
 - What will happen when you face persecution? Will your plant wither?
 - To bear fruit in spite of persecution, you must have roots
- Isa 37:31
 - Roots grow downward **first**, then fruit comes upward
- Mark 4:15 – Satan comes to steal the Word before it can take root in us
 - God wants you to not cease from yielding no matter the environment

Introduction to Beatitudes

- The Beatitudes are a teaching on the attitudes and condition of the heart
- This teaching is the foundation for developing the root system of godly character
- Being precedes doing – be the right person before you can do the works of God
- Matthew 4:23-25 – stage for the beatitudes
 - People were following Jesus because of miracles
 - Often people want to know – what's in it for me? (e.g. after feeding 5000)
 - In Matthew 5:1, Jesus changed the subject – inside mattered most to Jesus

- Matthew 23:25-28
 - These people were acting the part, but their hearts were far from God
 - This is why Jesus always focused on the inward man – our attitudes
 - Become the right person, not performing the right actions in the flesh (like Balaam)
 - (Rom 8:29) Your destiny is to be conformed into His image → your heart first
 - (1 Sam 16:7) Man looks on outward, God looks on the heart
- Matthew 5:1-12
 - Five root attitudes
 1. (v3) Humility
 2. (v5) Meekness
 3. (v7) Forgiveness
 4. (v8) Purity
 5. (v9) Clear conscience (peacemaker)
 - Three do actions
 6. (v4) Mourning (repentant heart)
 7. (v6) Hungering
 8. (v10-11) Enduring persecution **joyfully**

Man like a Tree

Our spiritual life as a tree

- Ps 1:1-3
 - What did Jesus appoint us to do? ***Bear fruit***
 - (Mark 11:13) Jesus cursed the fig tree when it didn't bear fruit *in season*
 - (Heb 6:7-8) If the ground continues to not produce, it is in danger of being burned
 - What is the source of the fruit? ***Deep roots planted by the water (life) source***
- Isa 61:1-3 – trees of righteousness → the planting of the Lord
 - Find your place and allow the Lord to plant you there
- Ps 92:12-14
 - Quickly like the palm
 - Slowly like the cedar
 - 2 Pet 3:18 –
 - **Quickly in knowledge**
 - **Slowly in grace** (working God's Word into our experience)
- Jer 17:7-8
 - God does not want us to fear when heat (persecution) comes
 - Our leaf can stay green and we can continue to bear fruit
 - Spread out your roots by the river (washing of the water of the Word)
- Col 2:6-7 rooted in Jesus (the Word made flesh)
- Pr 12:12 – the root of the righteous yields fruit

Known by their fruits

- Matthew 7:15-20
 - We are known by our fruits (which result from our root attitudes)
 - How to spot a false prophet
 1. Talk about being a “special vessel”
 2. Eventually attack authority of the local church
 3. Bring message of doom, death and fear → with a controlling spirit
 4. Usually come from far away claiming to have a *message from God*
 5. Rebellious and unteachable spirit and will not recognize spiritual authority

6. Operate in familiar spirit to show lying signs, but no real lasting fruit
7. No accountability or covering in their lives that you can contact

Character – How it is Formed

Definition of character

- Character – moral excellence, firmness, integrity
 - Inner life of man that will reflect either the traits of the lower sin nature (influenced by the world) or the traits of the higher divine nature (influenced by the Word) [*draw this*]
- Heb 1:1-3
 - Jesus → the expressed image of God
 - God desires us to think, act and look like Him
- Bible words for character: divine nature, new nature, spirit, new man, divine image, a new creation

God wants to form His character in us

- Rom 8:29
 - Phillips “God chose us to bear the family likeness of His Son, that He might be the eldest (da gege) of family with many brothers.”
- 1 Pet 1:22-23 – born again of the same incorruptible seed as Jesus
- Gal 4:19 – until Christ be *formed in you*
- 2 Pet 1:4
 - God gave us the promises so we could experience the divine nature. It is not above us or past attaining. It is available to every Christian through the precious promises of God’s Word.

How God forms His character within us

- John 1:17
 - Law – the Old Testament way
 - Grace – God’s willingness to use His power on our behalf even though we don’t deserve it
- God accomplishes His work in us by His grace
 - Eph 2:8-9 – His grace brings us into His family
 - Eph 3:7, 4:7 – His gift of grace toward us

- Luke 2:40 - His grace at work in Jesus
- 1 Cor 15:10 – we are in a partnership with the grace of God
 - The more we do for God, the more grace we need
 - We must rely on God’s ability and stop relying on our own ability

Character – How it is Developed

- 1 Pet 1:23 – Your character is like a seed → it needs to be developed

Things that develop the character of the Lord Jesus (Rom 12:2)

1. Renew your mind with the Word (Rom 12:2) **[Food]**
 - 1 Pet 2:2-3 – God’s Word is how we grow
 - James 1:14-15 – the progression
 - Sow a thought → reap an act
 - Sow an act → reap a habit
 - Sow a habit → reap a character
 - Sow a character → reap a destiny
 - (Eph 4:22-24) – we choose to put off the old and put on the new
2. Spend time in prayer – learn to fellowship with God **[Water]**
 - (Ex 34:28-30) Moses spends time with God in prayer → face shone
 - Ps 27:4-5 – David, a man after God’s own heart (Acts 13:22)
 - Philippians 3:10 – Paul, that I might know Him...
 - Josh 5:13-15
 - Joshua didn’t say, “God bless me and destroy Jericho”
 - We need to learn to listen in prayer – then we will become like Him
3. Facing pressures – from Satan and from life **[Deepen our roots]**
 - Pressures have many sources – Satan, life, ourselves
 - James 1:2-4 Our response to pressures determines if we will grow by them
 - Examples
 - 1 Sam 17:36 – David’s response to pressure (faith) yielded blessing
 - 1 Sam 13:5-8 – Saul’s response to pressure (flesh) yielded destruction

Conformed or Transformed?

- (Rom 12:2 – don't let the world squeeze you)
 1. Media
 2. Clothes / Fashion
 3. Money
 4. Food
 5. Material possessions
 1. The Word
 2. Prayer
 3. Worship
 4. Fellowship
 5. Godly counsel
- No one can damage your character but you

Study of Matthew 5**Matthew 5:1-12**

- 5 Be-attitudes (being precedes doing)
 1. Humility (v3) – a heart with no pride (poor in spirit) – like a child (Mt 18:1-4)
 2. Meekness (v5) – gentleness, unassuming
 3. Forgiveness (v7) – heart of mercy over judgment
 4. Purity (v8) – pure in heart
 5. Clear Conscience – peacemaker (clear conscience Acts 24:16)
- 3 Do-actions
 1. Mourning (v4) – coming before God with repentant heart
 2. Hungering (v6) – for righteousness
 3. Enduring persecution joyfully (v10-11)
 - Respond w/ prayer instead of being overcome by problem Ps 25:19-21
 - Set your eyes on God and His Word and overcome the problem
 - Don't defend yourself, but let your defense be in the Lord
 - Understand that integrity and uprightness will preserve you

Other examples

- Matthew 5:13 – Salt
 - Salt – preservative, flavor, influence and value
 - Churches that have lost their passion for souls
 - Christians that have the same “flavor” as the world

- Matthew 5:14-16 – Light
 - The oil on this inside of the lamp burns brightly in the flame on the outside
 - Don't attempt to make yourself shine through the flesh, but allow the Spirit of God to shine through you (Acts 17:6 – turned the world upside down)
 - Don't be ashamed to shine through persecution or exaltation (1 Cor 1:31)
- Matthew 5:17-20 – Law
 - Gal 3:10 – even Moses could not fulfill the law
 - Gal 3:23-24
 - The law is a tutor to faith laid out by God to explain His righteousness
 - The law points out sin, but doesn't give man a help in overcoming that sin
 - A sinner is unable to keep the law – he has no God-life to motivate him
 - Jesus fulfilled the law – He did it through grace, his ability to do what we in ourselves could not do. Jesus, in fulfilling the law, gave it a root system
 - Now we can keep the law because of the root system that becomes available to us through our relationship with Jesus

Root System living

- Jesus taught people how they could fulfill the law through the development of a root system. He told them what the law said then told them how they could fulfill that law through faith in His grace, by replacing outward actions of the flesh with root attitudes of the Spirit.

Verse	Law	Fulfillment (under grace)	Root
21-22	Do not murder	Do not be angry	Meekness
27-28	Do not commit adultery	Do not lust	Purity
33-37	Do not swear falsely	Do not swear at all (do not try to impress)	Humility
38-39	An eye for an eye	Do not seek revenge	Forgiveness
43-44	Love your neighbor and hate your enemy	Bless your neighbor/enemy, do good and pray for them (1 Pet 2:15)	Clear conscience

- Matthew 5:48
 - God does not require perfect actions, but He asks for perfect attitudes
 - Through the development of a strong root system, we can replace the negative roots in our lives with attitudes of Jesus, which will produce godly character in our daily living.

The Tree of Life vs. the Tree of Death

All of our lives are always progressing – toward Christ or the world. Which root system are you fertilizing with your actions?

Progressive root attitudes

- Root attitudes are progressive (they grow on each other)
- Root attitudes of a Christian vs. root attitudes of the world [draw 2 trees]
 1. Humility
 2. Meekness
 3. Forgiveness
 4. Purity
 5. Clear Conscience
 1. Pride
 2. Anger
 3. Bitterness
 4. Immorality
 5. Guilt

Tree of Life

- (Gal 6:7-8) Tree of Life – fruit = life everlasting
- John 15:5 Our fruit doesn't come from trying, but developing healthy roots
- (Ga 5:22-23) What is the fruit healthy roots will bear?

Tree of Death

- (Ga 6:8) Tree of Death – fruit = corruption
- Gal 5:19-21 The works of the flesh are evident (easily seen)
- Eph 4:22-24 – put off the old man and put on the new man
- James 3:13-18 Evidences of the old man vs. the new man
 - Old man – sensual, envying, strife, confusion
 - New man – pure, peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy

Attitudes of Satan's kingdom

Attitudes of two kingdoms

- God's enemy has perverted the rules that God has put in place
 1. Humility
 2. Obedience
 3. Submission (Mt 8:8-10)
 1. Independent spirit
 2. Lawlessness – not submitting to any authority
 3. Spirit of resistance – I'll submit to God but not man
- Rom 13:1-2 – Resisting the authority God has set up is resisting God Himself
 - This refers to every form of government that exists on earth (church and civil)
 - God established authority from the garden of Eden
 - 1 Sam 15:23 – rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft (fear the people, not the Lord)

Spirit of Antichrist

- The Spirit of Antichrist is the sum of all the rebellious attitudes
- Definition – Any rejection of or rebellion against any divinely established authority or representative of that authority
- The spirit of antichrist is a desire for equality. It can be seen in
 - Isa 14:12 – Satan desiring to be like God
 - (1 Cor 11:3) Wives desiring to be equal (or over) their husband
 - (Eph 6:1) Children fighting for equality with their parents
 - Employees seeking equality with their employers
 - Acts 12:21-23 – Man desiring equality with God
- Six characteristics of the antichrist spirit:
 1. Pride in appearance, position or ability
 2. Ambitious spirit or lust for power
 3. Concern for temporal things more than eternal
 4. Disregard for all laws
 5. Rebellion against any authority
 6. Deceived spirit

- Attitudes of antichrist (Isa 14:12-15) vs. attitudes of Jesus (Phil 2:5-8)

1. Lowliness (no reputation)	1. Pride (I will)
2. Meekness	2. Lawlessness
3. Submission	3. Rebellion
4. Humility	4. Conceit
5. Obedience	5. Selfishness

Result: Highly exalted Result: Cut down
- The spirit of antichrist is alive in the church today
 - 1 John 2:18-19
 - Guard ourselves from being controlled by the spirit of antichrist (Heb 2:14)
 - Always deal with bad attitudes in your life immediately as God reveals it
 - Refuse to allow strife and rebellion to control rule you – don't let them in
 - Be aware that the spirit of antichrist will become stronger as the Day appr

The spirit of self-reliance

- The spirit of self-reliance is at work in the world today
 - “I can do it by myself”
 - This is an evidence of the spirit of pride
- Jer 17:5-6
- Five characteristics of trusting in oneself
 1. Tendency toward materialism and the love of money
 2. Lack of a meaningful prayer life
 3. No desire to read or study God's Word
 4. Inability to develop meaningful friendships
 5. No real commitment to God or church – staying out of church

Humility

Humility and Pride

- Matthew 5:3 – poor in spirit, recognizing our dependence on God
- James 4:6-7,10 – Humility is a choice
 - Satan will not leave simply by our resisting him – we must 1st submit to God
- 1 Pet 5:5-6 – we overcome pride by developing an attitude of humility
- Definitions:
 - Humility – not arrogant, modest, to destroy independence, power/will to bring self low before God
 - Humility is not thinking less (or lower) of yourself
 - Humility is thinking of yourself less often
 - Pride – high or inordinate opinion of one’s own dignity or importance
- Evidences of a root of pride
 1. Independent spirit – I can do it myself!
 2. Snobbish or selective in making friends
 3. Failure to admit mistakes
 4. Lack of a teachable spirit
 5. Rebellious attitude toward authorities
 6. Proud or callous countenance
 7. Self-centered conversation
 8. Blasphemous or boastful conversation
 9. Intolerant toward other’s mistakes
 10. Bossy, lordship attitude
- Four results of pride
 1. Strife (Prov 13:10)
 2. Destruction (Prov 16:18)
 3. Shame (Prov 11:2)
 4. Brought Low (Prov 29:23)
- Examples that contrast the spirit of pride vs. spirit of humility
 1. Success is doing all you want
 2. Putting down others elevates you
 3. Lowering yourself and doing what
 1. Significance is doing His will (Phil 2:3-4)
 2. Build up others and help them succeed
 3. Serving others and God shows greatness

- others want is a sign of weakness and strength
4. Telling others your great feats will gain their respect 4. If you will tell about God's great feats, God will exalt you (Pr 27:2)

The Attitudes of Heaven

- Matthew 5:3 – Blessed are those with the attitude of humility...
- Kingdom of Heaven is run by **submission, obedience, and humility**
 - Obedience is shown by action / Submission is seen in attitude
 - There is total submission, obedience and humility between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit
 - Examples
 - John 5:30 – Jesus submitted totally to the Father
 - John 15:26 – the Holy Spirit testifies of Jesus, not Himself
 - Phil 2:8 – Jesus was obedient to the point of death
 - There is no fighting for position – each knows and remains in their place
 - Eph 5:21 – this is a reflection of the heavenly kingdom: the attitude of yielding
- Matthew 20:25-28 – Your servant's heart and ability to humble yourself and serve others determines your greatness in the kingdom of God

Spirit of Competition

- Gal 5:13-15 – Walking in the attitude of humility will release you from the spirit of competition. You will become interested in the success of your brother.
 - Luke 18:9-14 – the dangers of comparing ourselves to other
 - Mark 9:33-35 – “Who is the greatest?”
 - God can exalt you when you do these things
 1. Use your faith
 2. Do not allow a spirit of competition between me and those I work with
 3. Do not attempt to exalt myself, but allow God to exalt me in His time
 4. Be happy when others are exalted
- Philippians 2:6-7 – Jesus set the example of being a servant.
 - You will never be a good leader until you learn to be a servant

Understanding Authority

Five basic structures of authority

1. God (Rom 13:1-2)
 - Be obedient to whatever God has spoken to your heart
 - All other authority derive their authority from God [*draw this*]
2. Parents (Eph 6:1-3)
 - As long as you are living in the house, you should willing and obedient to submit to the authority of the house
 - Honor is the attitude / Obey is the action
3. World Government (1 Pet 2:13-17)
 - Rebellion against civil authority reflects your attitude toward God
 - Luke 20:20-25 – we should honor God and Caesar
 - 1 Tim 2:1-2 – this is our calling as a Christian
4. Employers (Col 3:22-24, Eph 6:5-6)
 - Do your work in singleness of heart fearing God
 - Do your work as though you served the Lord
5. Church (1 Thess 5:12-13, Heb 13:7, 17)
 - You honor God by honoring the man of God
 - You should show honor and love toward your spiritual leaders
 - Stay in agreement (alignment) with your church and pastor
 - Phil 2:1-2 – in the place of unity is the place of power (Acts 2:1-2)
 - (1 Cor 8) / Gal 5:13 – we should yield our “rights” to maintain unity
 - If you cannot agree with the vision of the church you should leave
 - Acts 15:36-40 – disagreement on principle (this was not God’s best)
 - If you cannot agree with the pastor of the flock, you should leave
 - If you stay where you refuse to agree with the vision of the house, you open yourself up to develop attitudes of Satan
 - You can at the same time, be an agent of division and believe the Word of God is true
 - If after much prayer and meditation you cannot stay, go quietly.
 - (Heb 13:17) The leader will give account before God for how he led

- (James 3:1) Teachers have a stricter judgment
- Gen 9:20-23 –
 - The spirit of an armor bearer – cover weaknesses / expose strengths
 - The spirit of rebellion – cover strengths / expose weaknesses
- Num 12:1-5 not between Miriam and Moses, but Miriam and God
 - (1 Sam 24:6) Like David, let God fight your battles

When can authority be violated?

- Submission must be absolute in terms of our attitude, but relative in terms of our actions
- 1 Sam 22:17 There are times when authorities violate their position
- Questions?
 - Does a child violate the authority of his parents if he serves God when his parents are not Christians?
 - Do we violate the authority of our spiritual leader if we do not agree with his/her actions?
 - When, if ever, is it right to violate government authorities?
 - When, if ever, is it right to violate the authority of our employer?
- Rom 14:14-23 When possible, I should lay down my rights for peace
- When that authority asks us to do something in **direct violation of the commandment of God**, we must obey the higher authority
 - Acts 4:18-20 – Jesus had commanded them to go and preach
 - Acts 5:29 – God’s Word is the highest authority
 - Num 12:1-4 – don’t use this as a cloak to hide your pride

Meekness

Understanding Meekness

- We overcome anger by developing an attitude of **Meekness**
- Matthew 5:5 –
 - Meekness is trusting in a superior strength (the strength of the Lord)
- Matthew 11:29 – Meekness is a choice
 - Jesus said He was meek and lowly
 - As we learn of this we will find rest for our soul
 - As we yoke ourselves to His meekness and lowliness – peace will come
- Definitions
 - Humbly patient, gentle, kind, unassuming, calm
 - Strength under control

Understanding Anger

- Definition
 - Strong feeling of displeasure aroused by real or supposed wrong,
 - A sudden violent displeasure accompanied by an impulse to retaliate
- Types of anger: open, visible / deep-seeded and not readily apparent
 - Eph 6:4 – seething wrath – like a volcano
- Prov 16:32 Anger can be overcome → great power in self-control
- Anger begins with our sinful nature / a seed of uncontrolled passion
 - Negative reaction to life's situation which goes against our selfish nature
 - Not being able to have what we want
 - Not being able to control a situation in the way we like
- How I respond to situations is a litmus test of my spiritual life
- Practical evidences of the root of anger at work in your life
 1. Temper tantrums
 2. Angry reaction to unfairness
 - (Gen 45) Joseph
 - (Matthew 5:12) Our faith is on trial – don't defend yourself (Moses)
 3. Expressed frustration over unchangeable circumstances

- (Num 13-14) Think of Joshua and Caleb
- Chinese church not free to worship freely (noise draws attention)
- 4. Grumbling, murmuring and complaining
 - (Mark 2:6-7) Murmur – a mumble or private expression of discontent
 - (Ex 16:2-3) Complain – to express grief, resentment or dissatisfaction
- 5. Extreme sensitivity and touchiness
 - (1 Sam 18:7) Saul was sensitive about his position
 - Some people feel the message always points to them
 - Stay sensitive to the Spirit of God and remember people are human
 - Choose to not be easily offended
- The world's view about anger vs. God's Word's view

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Anger demonstrates strength 2. You need to express how you feel 3. Anger is a good release 4. It is better to express anger than to physically hurt someone 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prov 14:17 – Anger shows weakness and lack of control (a fool is hasty to be angry) 2. Prov 15:18, 15:1 – Expressed anger causes strife 3. Gal 5:13 – Anger puts you under bondage 4. (Mt 5:21-22) – the root of anger is the issue, not only the act
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The gift of anger

- Anger is a God-given emotion
 - “If anger is wrong, why did God give me this emotion?”
 - Eph 4:26 - Holy anger is to be directed at sin
 - (John 2:13-19) Jesus exhibits righteous anger at the spirit of greed (not men)
 - Holy anger will keep you from:
 - Falling into temptation (e.g. pornography)
 - Giving in to sickness and pain
 - Allowing the devil to defeat you
 - Holy anger (at the bad situation) will give you the incentive to stand on the Word for those things God has given you through His Word
 - Prov 8:13 – Anger is not wrong as long as it is directed against sin.
 - Every Christian should have a holy hatred of sin – hate sin like God does
 - God created anger as a stimulus to overcome problems

- This is why we must learn to control and direct our anger properly
- Anger is generally directed in one of three directions
 1. Other people – always direct *prayer* at other people, not anger
 2. Yourself
 3. The problem – sometimes it takes anger about a situation to give me the determination to change it.

Meekness is strength under control

- When you operate in meekness, it allows God to work on your behalf
- Num 12:1-13 – Moses experienced God working for him
 1. (v1) Unjust attack on His character
 2. (v2) Rebellion against his God-given authority
 - Moses didn't have to answer them at all → God took care of it
 - You do not have to defend your position if it is God-ordained
 3. (v2b-5) God heard it and came down
 4. (v6-8) He defended Moses and punished the offenders
 5. (v9) His presence departed
 6. (v10) Miriam became leprous but Moses prayed on her behalf
 7. Moses learned to live this way in his 40 years on the run
 - He was great, eloquent and now he stutters and can't stand before man
 - We will learn through experience and time in His presence

Results of Anger and Meekness

- The results of misdirected anger
 1. Prov 15:18 – stirs up strife
 2. Prov 19:19 – Suffer punishment
 3. Job 5:2 – Kill you
- The great benefits of walking in meekness
 - Humble patience, gentleness, calmness, unassuming peace in every situation
 1. Prov 14:29 – brings understanding
 2. Prov 16:32 – greater than the mighty (strength under control)
 3. Num 12:7-8 – position yourself for God to speak to you face-to-face
 4. Rom 12:19 – it allows God to fight your battles

5. Robs the devil of His victory
 6. Testimony to others
- James 1:20 – the wrath of man does not achieve the righteousness of God

Judging Ourselves

- Mt 7:1, 1 Cor 11:31 – we are called to judge ourselves (our attitudes), not others
 - They determine our walk w/ Him
- 1 Pet 4:17 – Judgment is to begin with God’s people judging themselves

Rights and Liberties

- First are we need to judge ourselves is the “rights” and liberties we feel we deserve as human beings
 1. Eat (Fasted 40 days)
 2. Sleep (spent all night in prayer)
 3. Privacy
 4. Marriage
 5. Home / shelter (Mt 8:20)
 6. Good reputation (Phil 2:6)
 7. Possessions
 8. Live (gave up His life)
- Are you willing to sacrifice these “rights” on the altar to the Lord?
 - The higher our position, the more we have to give up our rights

Unchangeable situations

- We must judge ourselves in response to unchangeable irritations
 - A situation that brings frustration or impatience that is out of our control
 - These come through:
 1. People – we must make allowances for others (Col 3:12-13)
 - Be quick to pray for that person or situation that irritates us
 - We must set our will to forgive people in our prayer closet in AM
 2. Circumstances beyond our control (e.g. husband not a Christian)
 - When you come up against things you cannot change in the natural, stay calm, love people and give a soft answer (Prov 15:1)
 - You will be an agent of peace
 - This will help you to roll your care upon the Lord (1 Pet 5:7)
 - Prov 22:24-25 – Stay away from people who are always standing up for their rights or you will become like them
 3. Yourself (Ps 139:13-14)
 - Give yourself some grace - you are fearfully and wonderfully made
 - Phil 4:12 – we must learn contentment

Forgiveness

God's Character

- Introduction (Matthew 5:7) – blessed are the merciful
 - It is impossible to walk through life w/o an occasion for offense (Luke 17:1)
 - A sure measure of our maturity is our attitude concerning forgiveness
- God's character is to forgive
 - Micah 7:18-19 – He takes delight in forgiving (Jesus on the cross)
 - 1 John 1:9 God will forgive if...
 - we **confess** our sins, acknowledge our guilt and our responsibility
 - God's forgiveness removes our cause for offense against Him (Ps 103:12)
 - 2 Chron 7:14 God's forgiveness insures removal of punishment due to our sin

Forgive Others As God Forgave You

- As His attitude is to forgive, so should ours be
 - Matthew 6:14-15 – God forgives us as we forgive others
 - The world – “Do unto others before they do unto you.”
 - God's attitude – “do unto others *as* they would have them do to you” – Eph 4:32
- | The way of God | The way of the World |
|---|--|
| 1. Kindness, submitting to others | 1. Self-centered, unkind |
| 2. Tenderhearted, easy to ask for forgiveness | 2. Unwilling to humble themselves by asking for forgiveness for wrongs committed |
| 3. Forgiving of others | 3. Retaliate when offended |
- Mt 18:21-35
 - When we consider God's forgiveness to us, we will forgive others

Bitterness

- (Luke 17:1-4) Offenses will come – what will you do with them?
 - Heb 12:14-15 – guard yourself from a root of bitterness
 - Bitterness spreads, making you a cause for a young one to fall away from God
 - Doctors estimate 98% of all illness is emotionally induced
 - Prov 26:27 – don't triangle (meddle in other people's arguments)
- Practical evidences that a root of bitterness has taken hold

1. Sad or sorrowful countenance
 2. Sarcastic talk
 3. Inability to trust others and God
 4. Frequent sickness
 5. Frequent depression and discouragement
 6. Critical spirit
 7. Fatigue, loss of sleep and tiredness
- Three sources of bitterness (James 3:14-15)
 - Wisdom from the earth, sensual (lower nature) and demonic (evil spirits)

The world says about forgiveness

1. To forgive someone is a sign of weakness
2. Never admit you are wrong
3. Love is never saying you're sorry
4. Sometimes you have a right to hold a grudge
5. If someone wrongs you, you have a right to get even

The Word says about forgiveness

1. Forgiveness is greatness and true love
2. Admission of guilt causes you to receive mercy and grace
3. Ask forgiveness of **anyone** you offend
4. Forgive others the way God has forgiven you
5. To overcome bitterness, you have to give up the spirit of revenge

Choosing Forgiveness

- Practical walk of forgiveness
 - Hurts can come unintentionally (through carelessness or ignorance)
 - Hurts can come intentionally (through selfish or ambitious motives)
 - Ps 55:12-14 – it is often those closest to us (fellow Christians) that cause us the most pain
 - These are harder to forgive because of the act plus the motive
 - Eventually, after continual hurt, we lose our natural love and ability to forgive
 - Only the forgiveness rooted in character and the power of God can do 70 x 7
 - Examples
 - Luke 23:34 – Jesus → forgave out of the divine character of God
 - Acts 7:60 – Stephen → demonstrated how we can connect with this nature
 - 2 Cor 2:10-11 – Unforgiveness is the bait of Satan
 - God wants us to forgive so we can be free and the offender can be free

- Story of the monkey and the “scandalon”
- Forgiveness can be... *[draw this]*
 - Received without being given and given without being received
 - But when given **and** received, it reconciles the offender to the offended
- Forgiveness is a **choice**
 - Mt 5:23-24 – Leave your gift at the altar and make it right
 - Releasing God’s forgiveness begins with a choice – confess it as you pray
 - This includes forgiving yourself and others
- Forgiveness brings healing (soul and body)
 - (James 5:16) Confess your faults, that you may be healed
 - Forgiveness will become a trophy of the grace of God in your life
 - You can get to where the offensive behavior does not affect you (peace)
 - You know that they are not fighting you, but God (e.g. Moses)
- A good judge of the maturity of God’s character in you is your ability to release His forgiveness

Purity – Matthew 5:8

Understanding Holiness

- We overcome moral impurity by developing a pure heart
 - Definition of holiness: separation from sin and consecration to God
- Misunderstandings that have hindered us from a life of holiness
 1. We are more concerned about our victory over sin than that sin grieves God
 - Rom 8:37 / 1 Cor 15:57 – It is true, we have victory in Christ
 - This makes our attempts to do right more **self**-centered than **God**-centered
 - We must see that sin hurts the heart of God (Ps 51:3-4)
 - We want to walk in victory over the flesh
 - God wants us to walk in obedience to His Word
 - Victory should be a by-product of obedience and it is His victory, not ours
 - The very victory we walk in can become sin because of pride
 - We will experience a lifestyle of victory when we obey God’s Word
 2. We have misunderstood “living by faith” and “living under grace” to mean that no effort is required on our part
 - Rom 6:14-15, 11-13
 - We have been set free from sin, but we must walk in that freedom
 - (1 Pet 1:15-16) God expects us to be holy as He is holy
 - (2 Tim 2:20-21) It is **our** job to cleanse ourselves and conform to God’s Word
 - 2 Cor 7:1 – we perfect holiness in the *fear of God*
 - It is by the Word of God that we cleanse ourselves (Eph 5:26-27)
 - (1 Cor 1:29-31) Sanctification is both immediate and progressive
 - Grace does not mean we can sin repeatedly w/o suffering consequences
 - Tit 2:11-12 Grace is designed to teach us how to live a sinless life
 3. We sometimes categorize sin and take some less seriously than others
 - Sin means missing the mark – whether by a little or a lot you have separated yourself from the holiness of God *[draw target]*
 - Songs 2:15 – the little foxes spoil our unity with Him – it s/b a lifestyle
 - God gives us a conscience to know when we have sinned and grieved God
 - Heb 5:12-14 when we eat only milk, we won’t be discerning

- When we grieve God, we can immediately be restored (1 John 2:1, 1:9)
- Cultural holiness – adapt to what others say is OK for Christians
 - E.g. broker’s fee, clothing choices, don’t say true feelings
- Ultimately, holiness is conformity to the character and nature of God
 - (Ps 17:15) - We should only be satisfied when we awake in His likeness

Immorality

Moral Impurity

- Root problem for man is our sin nature: man craves sensual fulfillment
 - 1 John 2:15-17 – This is the root
 - Gal 6:7-8 – This craving leads to destruction
- Practical evidences of a root of moral impurity
 1. Sensual conversation (Prov 18:21) – we will eat the fruit of our words
 2. Reading impure materials (Luke 11:34) – eye-gate is the window to your soul
 3. Impure actions toward the opposite sex
 - (2 Sam 11:1-2) Never be alone (in private) with the opposite sex
 4. Impure attitudes – emotional soul ties
 5. Impure habits
 6. Desire for sensual music
 7. Sensual dress and appearance
 8. Carnal curiosity for things of the world
 - 50% of pastors have viewed pornography on the Internet
 - 1 Cor 9:27 – we must discipline our flesh
 9. Greed
 10. Frequent depression (often caused by guilt)

Greed is a fruit of immorality

- 1 Tim 6:6-10
 - Money is not evil. The *love of money* is the problem
 - You don’t have to have money to love money
- Greed can cause people to do things they would never do

- (Acts 5:1-11) Lie to the Holy Spirit
- (Joshua 7) Achan
- (2 Kings 5) Gehazi
- How to fight greed
 - 1 Tim 6:11 – flee!
 - 2 Cor 7:1 – develop the fear of God

Sexual Immorality

- God’s church is called to purity in the midst of an impure world
- We live in a perverse society. The world uses sex for:
 - Power over our minds
 - Sale of products
 - Destruction of our children
- 1 Thess 4:3-8
 - God demand us to lead a moral life sexually
 - We should control our bodies, guarding from sexual lust
 - Sexual sin is usually against another and God as well as ourselves
 - God considers sexual sin seriously – we should too
- Contrasting what the world says and God says about moral purity

The world says

1. Love is sex
2. God gave you desires to fulfill
3. Worship the creature
4. Sex is OK if you love someone
5. Sexual fantasies are OK, they won’t hurt anyone

The Word says

1. Real love comes from God only
2. God gave you desires to fulfill within the guidelines of the Word
3. Worship the Creator
4. Sex is reserved for marriage
5. If you lust in your heart, you have committed adultery

- (1 Ti 4:1-2) The worlds system is growing darker and darker
- Jesus will make the church clean and holy before He comes (Eph 5:26-27)
- God requires that we each individually keep ourselves from immorality
 - 1 Cor 6:19-20 Immorality is a sin against Christ’s body
 - (Matthew 6:22-23) What we see is what we want – guard the eye-gate

- Men are visual – images are branded into their mind
- (Matthew 5:8) The more pure I keep myself, the more easily I can see God
- 2 Tim 2:22 – How we can avoid immorality
 1. Flee – run away from as from danger
 - (Prov 22:3) A fool sees trouble coming and keeps on going
 - Lust (strong craving) uncontrolled sexual desire or appetite
 - We must make a decision *before* it happens
 2. Follow righteousness – (Gal 5:16) – don't try not to sin, do righteousness
 3. Follow faith – our proper response to the revealed will of God
 4. Follow love
 - Lust takes, love gives
 - Love displays a right attitude toward others by regarding them above yourself
 - Lust can never wait to get, but love can always wait to give
 5. Follow peace – a clear conscience before God

Clear Conscience

Introduction

Our conscience is our sense of knowing what is right or wrong in our **motives** and **actions**. It is the learned moral and ethical principles on which we build our lives. A feeling of **guilt** accompanies a conscience that is impure.

- Acts 24:16
 - What do we do to have a clear conscience before God and man?
 - Operate in the root attitudes of humility, meekness, forgiveness and purity
 - This is the greatest need of the man or woman of God

Guilty conscience

- Guilt is the opposite of a clear conscience
- Guilt comes when we violate the Word of God
 - Definition: the resulting anguish of conscience that occurs after having violated a principle believed to be true.
 - 1 Cor 8:4-7 – the same activity can bring guilt to one and not to another
 - Rom 14:14 – violating your conviction will give you a guilty conscience
 - James 4:17 – not doing what you know to do also brings guilt
- Practical evidences of guilt
 1. Nervousness
 2. Fear
 3. Judgmental attitude
 4. Depression
 5. Anxiety
 6. Lack of concentration
 7. Limited friends (attitude of withdrawal)
 8. Hypocritical attitude
 9. Overly self-conscious
 10. Magnified pride
 11. Low self-image
- God will judge all men by their conscience (Rom 1:20, 32)
 - Every man on earth has a conscience and knows right from wrong
 - (Ps 32:3-4) When he violates his conscience, he feels guilt
 - This is God's mercy to bring us to Christ
 - (v5) When we repent and ask God to forgive us, He is faithful to cleanse us
 - Voices of man

- 5 physical senses – voice of the flesh
- Feelings – voice of the emotions
- Reasoning – voice of the mind
- Conscience – voice of the spirit
- 1 Tim 4:1-2 Those who ignore their conscience and willfully continue to sin become insensitive to the Holy Spirit
 - We lose feeling and become callous – our conscience becomes seared
- Steps in the progression of a guilty conscience
 - Note: This progression can be stopped at any moment through 1 John 1:9
 - 1. Grief and guilt
 - 2. Trouble, fear and anguish
 - Rom 8:1 Satan tempts you to sin then overwhelms you with condemnation
 - 3. Guilt-ridden behavior – “Everyone is against me!”
 - 4. Religious compensation – Try to do good works to hide the guilt (Pr 28:13)
 - Heb 9:9 – sacrifices can’t cleanse our conscience
 - 5. Vile behavior and wrong attitudes (Tit 1:15)
 - 6. Hypocrisy – two-faced, hard in attitude toward others
 - 7. Could lead to suicide
 - 8. Judgment (Heb 10:26-27)
 - (Matthew 27:3-5) Judas is an example of this progression
- Guilt began with sin (in the garden)
 - Gen 2:25 Before sin, Adam and Eve were guilt-free
 - Gen 3:7-10, 21 After sin, came a sense of guilt and a desire for covering
 - God covered Adam with the blood and skin of animals
 - (Heb 9:14) We are covered by the blood of Jesus

The Power of a Clear Conscience

- A clear conscience is important for the sake of our witness
 - Rom 13:5 – we should do right for our conscience sake
 - 1 Pet 3:16-17 – when you are falsely accused, your accusers will be ashamed
 - Acts 23:1 – Paul could boldly preach because he had a clear conscience
- Job is a good example of a man who kept a clear conscience before God

- Job 27:4-6 – he didn’t understand, he didn’t disobey his conscience
- Job 1:22 – the key was not blaming God for his trouble
- The blood of Jesus is the means by which we can have a clear conscience
 - Heb 9:13-14 – the blood cleanses us
 - Heb 10:19-22 – with a clear conscience, we can approach God with confidence

Review and Summary –

- The theme of the Beatitudes - Being precedes doing
 - Be the right person before you can do the works of God
- (Ps 1) If our roots are set down deep by the river, we will be ever fruit-bearing
- How do we grow quickly like the palm and slowly like the cedar?
- How is character formed?
- How is character developed?
- **Progressive** root attitudes of a Christian vs. root attitudes of the world

1. Humility	“Greatest is a servant”	1. Pride
2. Meekness	“Let the Lord fight my battles”	2. Anger
3. Forgiveness	“If I don’t forgive others, God won’t forgive me.”	3. Bitterness
4. Purity	“Without holiness, I can’t see God”	4. Immorality
5. Clear Conscience	“When my conscience is clear, I have confidence before God”	5. Guilt
- 2 Peter 1:5-8
 - As you abound in the character of Christ, you will be fruit-bearing in your knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ