

Temptations of a Christian

Overview – Matthew 5-7

Beatitudes 5:1-16

The new character implanted at new birth
Salt and Light – the resulting fruit

The outworking of that implanted newness will cause tensions *within* – struggles *without*

I. Temptations of Relationships

Anger – 5:21-26
Adultery – 5: 27-30
Divorce – 5:31-32
Vows – 5:33-37
Vengeance – 5:38-42
Love your enemies – 5:43-47

II. Temptations of Religion

Basic Temptation – 6:1
Giving – 6:2-4
Praying – 6:5-15
Fasting, spiritual self-discipline o-6:16-18

III. Temptations of Responsibilities

Treasure – 6:19-24
Anxiety – 6:25-34

IV. Temptations of Responding on the Narrow Road

Judging – 7:1-6
Asking – 7:7-11
Golden Rule – 7:12
Narrow Road – 7:13-14
False Prophets – 7:15-23

V. Summary Periscope

Wise and Foolish 7:23-27

"I came to fulfill the spirit of the Law and the Prophets"

Suggested Bibliography

Bonheoffer, *Cost of Discipleship*
Evans, *A New Joy*
Ligon, *Psychology of the Christian Personality*
Lloyd-Jones, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*
Stott, *Christian Counter-Culture*
Yoder, *Politics of Jesus*

Temptations of a Christian
Adapted from teachings of Robert Barr, Jr.

The Beatitudes – Matthew 5:1-12

Information

Not a new law – but the outline of the new personality implanted at the new birth.

Will make a person “salt” and “light”

An exercise to assist me in seeing my need (1-Dependence; 2,3,4,5- No Need)

| Beatitude | | | | | | Opposite |
|----------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|----------------------------------|
| Sense of Need before God | | | | | | Self sufficiency |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Able to empathize | | | | | | Cold heart |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Self-less gentle strength | | | | | | Selfish; undisciplined |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Desire for right | | | | | | Desire for wrong |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Merciful | | | | | | Vengeful |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Single-minded | | | | | | Conflicts inner self |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Peacemakers | | | | | | Troublemakers |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Persecuted because of the Gospel | | | | | | Fits too easily into the culture |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Joy | | | | | | Bitterness |

Goals for the “New Me”

Matthew 5::20 – for “exceed” insert “deeper than”

Matthew 5:48 – for “perfect” insert “whole, complete, lacking nothing”
(James 1:4)

Week One Group Work: Read Matthew 5:21-48

Find the “old law” and “new requirements” for new creatures in Christ.

THE “BE” ATTITUDES

Temptation of Relationships – ANGER – Matthew 5:21-26

Information:

Most murders occur between friends and family

The root of murder is a certain kind of anger

The kind of anger needs to be clearly differentiated from the anger of Eph.

4:26-27.

The ability to feel anger is normal and necessary.

All anger is dangerous – 5:22

The key to the kind of anger condemned here is 5:22 “raca: and “you fool”

Thought Starters:

I would define the anger of 5:22 as....

When must I leave my gift at the altar?

Why is that reconciliation statement in this immediate context?

What kind of anger makes quick agreement impossible?

What components of the personality of the Beatitudes will help me control my anger?

What other New Testament Scriptures speak to anger?

Temptation of Relationships – ADULTERY – Matthew 5:27-32

Information:

Biblical terminology:

Adultery involves marital unfaithfulness

Lasciviousness is open, blatant sexual immorality

Fornication is wider than adultery, less blatant than lasciviousness

Lust is a general term for anxious, self-seeking, usually an evil desire to possess

Hell – the term used here “gehenna” is the name of the public garbage dump in Jerusalem

Thought starters –

I understand “to look on to lust after” as.....

Is it possible to be brothers and sisters?

What does lust show about me? About the others?

Why is this teaching the place radical co-operation is introduced (29-30)?

What is the significance of the hand and eye in lusting?

How does the *Playboy* philosophy differ from the philosophy of Jesus regarding women?

What components of the personality of the Beatitudes will help me control my lust?

What other New Testament Scriptures speak to adultery?

Temptations of Relationships – DIVORCE – Matthew 5:21-32

Information:

Matthew 19:3-12 is the most complete account of Jesus teaching on divorce.

In the Old Testament, divorce is the right of the husband.

Hardness of heart was the reason Moses was allowed to make a place for divorce.

Thought Starters –

Why is this sermon the obvious context for the teaching on divorce? (5:27-30, 33-37)

Divorce is allowed when....

Is the last phrase of verse 32 connected with verse 31?

First part of verse 32?

Middle phrase of 32?

Can there be re-marriage without adultery?

Why is the Bible so set against divorce?

Agree or disagree – “If I divorce my spouse, I say he/she is not worthy of my love”....

What components of the personality of the Beatitudes will help me control my tendency to divorce?

What other New Testament Scriptures speak to divorce?

Temptations of Relationships – YOUR WORD – Matthew 5:33-37

Information:

The issues: not the courts where swear to tell the truth, but in everyday life where the need the reinforce truthfulness of your word with God

Invoking God's name or anything less will not deter the truth or falseness of the statements

Thought starters –

Is it necessary for me to append, "*I swear to God it's true*" or the like before people believe me?

Where is it easy for me to let my "yes" mean yes and my "no" mean no?

Where is it most difficult?

What makes it difficult for me to state the truth?

Where can I start to become more trusted to mean what I say?

What components of the personality of the Beatitudes help me control my tendency to hedge my word?

What other New Testament Scriptures speak to the issue of truthfulness and speech?

Temptations of Relationships – VENGEANCE – Matthew 5:38-42

Information:

The issue: getting even, striking back, "Eye for eye" an advance from wiping out whole family for loss of one eye

"To slap with open palm" usually more to insult or embarrass while "to hit with closed fist" usually to inflict injury.

One mile the legal limit allowed Roman soldiers in compelling civilians to carry their gear.

Thoughts Starters

Where am I most concerned about getting even?

Do I find myself keeping track of insults, slights, and injuries?

What does this tell me about myself?

Is it practical to translate this principle into life?

How is Jesus the model for living this kind of vulnerable life?

What is the "law" that these illustrations illumine?

What components of the personality of the Beatitudes help me to control my tendencies to strike back, get even?

What other New Testament Scriptures speak to the desire for vengeance?

Temptations of Relationships – LOVE ENEMIES/NON-FRIENDS- Matthew 5:43-48

Information:

The logical summary of temptations of relationships

Three kinds of love:

Eros – what you do for me

Phileo – you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours

Agape – what I do for you

Only here is the Father's attitudes and actions the explicit basis for our stance

Thought starters –

How are enemies usually treated?

If I love my enemies, I will not.....

If I love my enemy, I will....

How can I define the love expected here?

What can anybody, friend or non-friend expect to receive from me?

What components of the personality of the Beatitudes help me to develop my love in an authentic way?

What other New Testament Scriptures speak to the need of love?

Temptations of Religion – GIVING – Matthew 6:2-4

Information:

6:1 is the basic temptation to be faced in my religious life
"Alms" the second mile beyond tithes; can also mean "deeds of charity"

Thought Starters:

What might be some contemporary equivalents to "sounding the trumpet"?

How have I seen it done in different groups?

Why do I want some people to know how much I do for people in need?

What is the different between using one hand to give and two hands?

Is the focus of my giving to meet the needs of the other or to meet my needs?

Do I give so my Father can repay me?

What commitment do I have to help the needy I meet?

What components of the personality of the Beatitudes help me focus on the needy?

What other New Testament Scriptures speak to the obligation to help the needy?

Temptations of Religion – PRAYER-I – Matthew 6:1-15

Information:

6:1 The basic temptation to be faced in my religious life
Only the pantry had a door with a lock in first century Palestine

Thought Starters:

Do I ever get the urge to “show off” when praying in public?

Where is the emphasis in verse 6 on the place or on the secrecy?

If the pantry is where the food and valuable were kept, where will I find the “pantry” in my home?

Is Jesus suggesting that the busy desk is where to go to pray instead of the quiet corner?

Have I ever checked up on the meaningless phrases I use while praying?

What components of the personality of the Beatitudes help me to pray more authentically?

What other New Testament Scriptures speak to the place and practice of prayer?

Temptations of Religion – PRAYER –II – Matthew 6:5-15

Free association with the following phrases

Our
Father who art in heaven
Hallowed be Thy Name
Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done
in earth as it is in heaven
Give us this day our daily bread
Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors
Lead us not into temptation but deliver
us from the evil one
For Thine is the kingdom, and the power,
and the glory forever.

Thought starters:

What pattern for prayer is Jesus outlining?

Do my prayers follow this pattern?

Why is forgiveness singled out of the rest of the prayer?

What components of the personality of the Beatitudes help me learn how to pray?

What other New Testament Scriptures speak to the content of prayer?

Temptations of Religion – FASTING – Matthew 6:16-18

Information:

6:1 is the basic temptation to be faced in my religious life.
Translate “fasting” more broadly as “spiritual discipline”

Thoughts starters:

What are the disciplines that Christians should exercise in their spiritual lives?

What disciplines do I exercise?

What do I do to help others notice my spiritual disciplines?

How can I exercise regularly and still get the full benefit from the Father?

Summary questions:

What is the hypocrisy that is to be renounced throughout my religious life?

How can I recognize the beginning of that hypocrisy?

What components of the personality of the Beatitudes will help me keep spiritually disciplined and fit?

What other New Testament Scriptures speak to the place of fasting and other spiritual disciplines?

Temptations of Responsibilities – TREASURE – Matthew 6:19-24

Information:

Money is neutral. The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil (I Timothy 6:10)

Jesus spends an inordinate amount of time teaching us the danger of our possessions becoming idols.

Verses 22-23 speak to the darkness of not seeing the obvious.

Money's seduction is in the fact that it invests a person with a false sense of security.

Thought starters:

Are treasures wrong?

What are my most prized treasures?

What used to be in practice where my treasure is?

What used to be luxuries that now are needs?

Does this show anything about my own sense of priorities in spending money?

Are the decisions between self-indulgence and serving God with the money entrusted to me?

Within my circle of Christian friends, who is model in the use of money?

Where have I found my love of money moving me to despise, look down at or dislike God's claim?

How does verse 24 apply to my job responsibilities?

Where do I find myself trying to love/serve both God and money?

What components of the personality of the Beatitudes will help me maintain the proper perspective on money?

What other New Testament Scriptures speak to money?

Temptations of Responsibilities – ANXIETY – Matthew 6:23-34

Information:

The more feelings of responsibility, the more the door opens to anxiety. Anxiety is the undue concern over what one cannot control or change.

Verse 33 – “continually seek”

Serenity Prayer:

“Lord, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.”

Thought starters:

What about my life is worth more than food, clothes and shelter?

What possible benefits come from observing the birds and the flowers?

If the problem to be corrected is one of self-worth, how can that be done?

What does anxiety show about my treasure?

Is anxiety a legitimate option for the Christian?

What hints in these texts show me how to handle anxiety? 25, 26, 27, 30, 32, 33

Where has the assurance that *my Heavenly Father knows* relieved my anxiety?

What are my priorities?

What components of the personality of the Beatitudes will help my anxiety?

What New Testament Scriptures speak to anxiety?

Temptations of Responding to the Narrow Road – JUDGING Matthews 7:1-6

Information:

The command “judge not” is followed by at least eight examples of judging: speck/log; holy/dogs; pearls/swine; loaf/stone; fish/snake; narrow/wide; false prophets; wise/foolish.

Thought Starters:

How do I know that verse 2 is the core of this teaching, instead of verse 1?

Is it possible that your speck is a reflection of my log?

Am I to be concerned and uninvolved with the speck in the eye of another?

Where is the “good news” in this passage?

Where does my concern over the problems of others provide a smokescreen to mask my problems?

Isn't it unloving to consider others as dogs or swine?

What components of the personality of the Beatitudes help me to judge rightly?

What other New Testament Scriptures speak to the issue of judging?

Temptations of Responding to the Narrow Road – ASKING
Matthew 7:7-11

Information:

Change “ask, seek, knock: to keep on asking, keep on seeking, keep on knocking”.

If we always got what we asked for, we would sometimes find ourselves with a stone instead of bread.

What is given in answer to prayer will be good.

Thought starters:

Do we get what we ask for or what is good?

How persistent am I?

Where did I give up too soon?

Do I imagine the Father as a celestial Scrooge unwilling to give me anything good?

What are some specific “goods” that I am asking for and not receiving?

What components of the personality of the Beatitudes will direct my asking?

What other New Testament Scriptures speak to the issue of asking?

Temptations of Responding to the Narrow Road – GOLDEN RULE Matthew 7:12

Information:

Only here and in the command to love (22:36-40) do we find Jesus summarizing the whole Law and Prophets.

Thought Starters:

Looking again at Temptations of Relationships, what does the Golden Rule teach me in each area:

Anger

Adultery

Divorce

My Word

Vengeance

Loving enemies

Where do I find it easy to practice the Golden Rule?

Where do I find it difficult to practice the Golden Rule?

Why are the "difficult" areas difficult?

What components of the personality of the Beatitudes will help me to follow the Golden Rule?

What New Testament Scriptures speak to the application of the Golden Rule?

Temptations of Responding to the Narrow Road – THE TWO WAYS
Matthew 7:13-14

Information:

Choices are demanded.

There are only choices; all others are part of these two.

Thought Starters:

If all I had was the Sermon on the Mount, how would I describe the “narrow road” that leads to life?

If all I had was the Sermon on the Mount, how would I describe the “broad road” that leads to destruction?

Why is the emphasis on “*entrance*” instead of practice?

What components of the personality of the Beatitudes will help me make the right choice?

What other New Testament Scriptures speak to the need to choose the proper path?

Temptations of Responding to the Narrow Road – FALSE PROPHETS Matthew 7:15-20

Information:

Double focus:

On being careful not to be deceived by others

On the fatal blunder of self-deception

Thought Starters:

How does the distinction between the outer appearance and the inner reality help me to distinguish between true and false?

If I am what I produce, what am I?

Where am I still producing bad fruit?

Am I hiding behind saying the right words when I know there is no inward change?

Am I finding security in things I do for Jesus, when I am really doing my thing and not His will?

What components of the personality of the Beatitudes will help me make the proper distinction?

What other New Testament Scriptures speak to the issue of deception?

Temptations of Responding to the Narrow Road – WISE and FOOLISH Matthew 7:24-27

Information:

The final periscope (self-contained teaching, incident) of each of the five sermons in Matthew provides a summary of all that has been said. Most of us know and hear more than we put into practice.

Thought Starters:

What makes the difference between strong and weak foundations?

Where am I providing a solid foundation?

Where am I weakening the foundation?

Am I in the practice of acting promptly on the leading of the Holy Spirit?

Would it be better for me to keep new information to a minimum while I start doing something about what I already know?

Am I willing to ask the Father to reveal to me two areas of “doing” that He wants me to concentrate on – now?

What components of the personality of the Beatitudes will help me be more discerning?

What New Testament Scriptures speak to the need to direct my focus?