**INTERACTIVE TEACHING/LEARNING GUIDE**

**Kingdom Living**

**A Study in the Beatitudes**

**Week 2**

**Session Title: *Happy are the Hopeless***

**Focal Passage: Matthew 5:3; Psalm 131:1-3**

**Central Teaching/Learning Aim:** The learner will be challenged to surrender everything to Christ and live in His grace in order to experience His eternal glory.

1. **Hook**
2. **Display the covers of self-help books. (You can utilize the power point or bring actual books)**

**Next –** Share the following:

**The Growth of the Self-Help Industry**

An article in New York magazine reports that the self-help movement has mushroomed into an "$11 billion industry dedicated to telling us how to improve our lives." The article observed:

Today, there are at least 45,000 [books] in print of the optimize-everything cult we now call "self-help" …. Twenty years ago, when Chicken Soup for the Soul was published, everyone knew where to find it and what it was for. Whatever you thought of self-help—godsend, guilty pleasure, snake oil—the genre was safely contained on one … bookstore shelf. Today, every section of the store (or web page) overflows with instructions, anecdotes, and homilies [from self-help books] …. [Self-help books] replaced doctors, priests, and therapists (and maybe even parents, senators, and teachers) with public personalities who gave names to the problems of millions.

Boris Kachka, "The Power of Positive Publishing: How Self-Help Ate America," *New York* magazine (1-6-13)

**Read (Matthew 5:3).**

“The word poor is from the Greek ‘ptokas,’ a noun that means poor in this world’s goods; it describes a beggar, desperately ashamed even to allow his identity to be known.” –John MacArthur

**State –** To be “poor in spirit” is the exact opposite of self-help books. It is realizing your utter dependence on God as your only hope for this world and the world to come.

1. **Optional Method – Share the following information:**

**Columnist David Brooks Reflects on Overconfidence**

"We're an overconfident species," contends New York Times columnist David Brooks. Brooks calls it a "magnification of the self," and he believes this glut of self-esteem is especially rampant in the United States. To back up these claims, Brooks cites an array of statistics, studies, and observations:

* When pollsters ask people from around the world to rate themselves on different traits, Americans usually supply the most positive self-ratings.
* Although American students do not perform well on global math tests, they are among the world leaders in having self-confidence about their math abilities.
* Compared to college students from 30 years ago, today's college students are much more likely to agree with statements such as "I am easy to like."
* 94 percent of college professors believe they have above-average teaching skills.
* 70 percent of high school students surveyed claim they have above-average leadership skills, and only 2 percent are below average.
* Brooks observes that a few decades ago it would have been unthinkable for a baseball player to celebrate *himself* in the batter's box after hitting a home run. Today it is routine.
* Similarly, pop singers wouldn't have composed songs about their own greatness; now those songs dominate the charts.
* The number of high school seniors who believed that they were "a very important person": in the 1950s—12 percent; in the 1990s—80 percent.
* According to Brooks, American men are especially susceptible to the perils of overconfidence. Men unintentionally drown twice as often as women (because men have great faith in their swimming ability, especially after drinking).

"In short," Brooks concludes, "there's abundant evidence to suggest that we have shifted a bit from a culture that emphasized self-effacement—I'm not better than anybody else, but nobody is better than me—to a culture that emphasizes self-expansion."

*David Brooks, "The Modesty Manifesto," The New York Times (3-21-11)*

Ask members to react to this information. Is our society overconfident? Are we self-expounders?

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1. **Optional Method – Movie Clip – “Soul Surfer”**

**Location:** <http://www.wingclips.com/movie-clips/soul-surfer/why-did-this-happen>

**Length: 3:04**

**Synopsis:** Bethany Hamilton was born to surf. A natural talent who took to the waves at a young age, she was leading an idyllic, sun-drenched, surfer girl’s life on the Kauai Coast and competing in national competitions when everything changed in a heartbeat. On Halloween morning, Bethany was on a typical ocean outing when a 14-foot tiger shark came out of nowhere and seemed to shatter all her dreams. In the wake of this life-changing event that took her arm and nearly her life, Bethany’s feisty determination and steadfast faith spur her toward an adventurous comeback that gives her the grit to turn her loss into a gift for others.

In this clip, Bethany has a heart-felt discussion with her dad about her future. She has reached the bottom and then must look up. She becomes “poor in spirit” and reliant on God.

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1. **Book**

1. **Utilize** the discussion guide to examine the Scripture passages.
2. **Look**
3. **Place** members into groups and have them discuss the handout “Characteristics of the Poor in Spirit.”
4. **Took**
5. **Share** the following information. Although the author was talking about the poor (materially) these same advantages can be applied to the poor in spirit.

**Spiritual Advantages of Poverty**

Why would God single out the poor for special attention over any other group? I used to wonder. What makes the poor deserving of God's concern? I received help on this issue from a writer named Monika Hellwig, who lists the following "advantages" to being poor:

1. The poor know they are in urgent need of redemption.
2. The poor know not only their dependence on God and on powerful people but also their interdependence with one another.
3. The poor rest their security not on things but on people.
4. The poor have no exaggerated sense of their own importance, and no exaggerated need of privacy.
5. The poor expect little from competition and much from cooperation.
6. The poor can distinguish between necessities and luxuries.
7. The poor can wait, because they have acquired a kind of dogged patience.
8. The fears of the poor are more realistic and less exaggerated, because they already know that one can survive great suffering and want.
9. When the poor have the gospel preached to them, it sounds like good news and not like a threat or scolding.
10. The poor can respond to the call of the gospel with a certain abandonment and uncomplicated totality because they have so little to lose and are ready for anything.

*Philip Yancey, The Jesus I Never Knew (Zondervan, 2001, p. 115); submitted by David Bartlett, Rochester, Minnesota*

**Challenge** members to surrender every area of their lives to God each day this week.

1. **Optional Method – Place** members into groups and ask each of them to share one principle of being poor in spirit that they will incorporate into their lives this week. Have them close in prayer.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Teacher Copy

1. How does Jesus’ statement in (Matthew 5:3) contradict our usual idea of blessedness?

**[Our society does not promote being poor in anything as a blessing or a cause of happiness.]**

1. Identify some circumstances in your life which have helped you realize you were “poor in spirit.”
2. Look up the following verses and complete the chart below:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Bible Character** | **Verse** | **Evidence of being poor in spirit** |
| Jacob | (Genesis 32:29) | Wrestled with God and submitted and was blessed |
| Isaiah | (Isaiah 6:5) | Humbled himself and was blessed |
| Gideon | (Judges 6:15) | God called him a mighty man of valor |
| David | (2 Samuel 7:18) | Gave God all of the credit |
| Peter | (Luke 5:8) | Confessed his sinfulness |

1. In your own life, how have you been blessed by acknowledging your spiritual poverty?
2. In what areas of your life are you striving to make it on your own apart from God?
3. What did Matthew mean when he referenced the Kingdom of Heaven in (v. 3)?

**[The grace and glory of God. We enjoy the grace to live now and will enjoy the glory of God in the future.]**

1. In (Psalm 131:1-3) David confesses his humility before God. Why is it more difficult to be humble than it is to be prideful?
2. When David said “I do not have great aspirations or concern myself things that are beyond me” is he saying that we can have no vision and no drive for our future?

**[No, he is saying his present and his future are completely in God’s hands. He is “poor in spirit.”]**

1. When does, ambition cross the line and become obsession?
2. In (Psalm 131:2) David said he was “composed and quiet.” When was the last time you have experienced total surrender to God?
3. David’s hope was in the Lord now and forever (v. 3). How can your life rest in the hope of the Lord?

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Student Copy

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**CHARACTERISTICS OF THE POOR IN SPIRIT**

**The poor in spirit are…**

* **Weaned from themselves**

Is our society more self-centered than ever before?

What are the most effective ways to take our focus off of ourselves?

* **Lost in the wonder of Christ**

Share adorations about Christ.

What are the best ways to stay focused on Him?

* **Not complainers**

What are things that people constantly complain about?

If you are totally surrendered to God how does this eliminate complaining?

* **Prayer Warriors**

How often do you pray in any given day, not counting meal-times?

Share ways to increase/enhance your prayer lives.

* **Grace receivers and grace givers**

Share what you are grateful for.

How can you extend God’s grace to others?

**THEE WORD FOR THE WEEK**

**Happy are the Heartbroken**

**Matthew 5:4 and Isaiah 61:1-3**

**Monday:** Read Matthew 5:4

This is a big paradox. Jesus in essence is saying that happy are the sad or that sorrow is good.

* Do you think that Jesus is talking about all mourning or all sorrow?
* If not, what kind of sorrow do you think He is talking about?

**Tuesday:** Read 2 Corinthians 7:10

* What are the two kinds of sorrow mentioned?
* What is that sorrow that leads towards salvation?
* Therefore, is there a proper and also an improper sorrow?

**Wednesday:** Read Matthew 5:4

We can conclude that Jesus is referring to sorrow or a mourning over sin. It is the kind of sorrow that produces regret over our sin.

* Do you feel a mourning over your sin?
* What needs to change as to produce more of this mourning in your life?

**Thursday:** Read Matthew 5:4

* How do you think there will be comfort for those who mourn over their sin?
* How have you seen that in your own experience?

**Friday:** Read Isaiah 61:1-3

* What do you see in these verses about comfort to those who mourn?
* Is there reference to something given instead of mourning?

**EXEGETICAL ~ THEOLOGICAL ~ PEDAGOGICAL**

**Note**: In Matthew 5-7 Jesus taught the way of true righteousness (see 5:20 with 7:13-14). True righteousness (how to be “right” before the holy God) is not a man centered, works-generated product of following “religious rules” (5:20). Rather, true righteousness requires a change of attitude and behavior that results from God doing a supernatural work in the character of a true believer. And only those in whom God “works out” His supernatural work of salvation can know what it means to be blessed/happy. With God’s help we can reflect His righteous character in our thinking and doing so as to enjoy the blessings He intends for His Kingdom subjects.

Here is Jesus’ party platform, His administrative insights, His Kingdom manifesto. When we accept His rule, we can be 100% sure of our salvation/deliverance into His Kingdom – not because we can justify ourselves, but because we realize we can’t; not because we are well, but because we realize we are sick; not because we are rich (materially or spiritually), but because we realize we are spiritually impoverished.

Today, in Matthew 5:3, Jesus teaches that until you are flat on your back like Jacob (Gen 32), cowering in a wine vat like Gideon (Judg 6), in awesome wonder like David (2 Sam 7), on your face like Isaiah (Isa 6), at the end of your hope like the lepers (2 Kgs 7), in total shame like Peter (Lk 5), in blindness like Paul (Acts 9) . . . you are not qualified to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

(**Exegetical**: What it meant to the Jewish believers back **THEN**)

**THE INSTRUCTION OF BOTH JESUS AND DAVID REGARDING HOW TO LIVE BEFORE THE LORD – AS A BLESSED/HAPPY SUBJECT OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN** . . . **WAS IN A CONSTANT STATE OF SPIRITUAL HOPELESSNESS WITH LEARNED CONTENTMENT**,

(Matthew 5:3 and Psalm 131:1-3).

I. **The reason the poor in spirit/hopeless/spiritually bankrupt would be blessed/happy/completely whole according to King Jesus’ instruction regarding the character of His kingdom subjects** . . . **was because the kingdom of Heaven would be theirs**, (Matthew 5:3).

A. **King Jesus’ claim regarding those who were poor in spirit/hopeless/ spiritually bankrupt** . . . **was that they would be blessed/happy/ completely whole**.

**Note**:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **“Blessed”**  **(*Markarious* – truly Happy)** | **“Lucky”**  **(Chance – Fate)** |
| 1. Depends on God 2. Internal 3. Positional 4. Spiritual 5. Complete fulfillment and satisfaction 6. Most concerned with relationship with God | 1. Depends on Circumstances 2. External 3. Conditional 4. Physical 5. Incomplete and unsatisfied 6. Most concerned with relationship with others |

B. **The character trait demonstrated in the lives of Jesus’ kingdom subjects** . . . **was spiritual poverty/hopelessness/spiritual bankruptcy**.

**Note**: *The poor in spirit* in the sense of this beatitude are those who recognize that they are completely and utterly destitute in the realm of the spirit. They recognize their lack of spiritual resources and therefore their complete dependence on God . . . It is the opposite of the Pharisaic pride in one’s own virtue with which Jesus was so often confronted (and which has all too often made its appearance in later times). ‘This is the man to whom I will look,’ the Lord says, ‘he that is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word’ (Isa. 66:2). These are the poor in spirit” (Morris, L. [*The Gospel According to Matthew*](https://ref.ly/logosres/pntcmatt;ref=Bible.Mt5.3;off=712;ctx=ing_nothing_to_God._~The_poor_in_spirit_i), 95).

C. **The reason Jesus’ kingdom subjects, being poor in spirit/hopeless/ spiritually bankrupt, would be blessed** . . . **was because the kingdom of Heaven would be theirs**.

**Note**: “Of these lowly people Jesus says, *theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* We should understand this in the sense of consequence rather than reward. In no sense do they merit the kingdom, but being what they are they possess it. We should understand this in the sense, ‘theirs alone.’ Those who are not poor in spirit can never have membership in the kingdom. In the basic sense, of course, the kingdom belongs to God, and it is often said to be his. But in another sense membership in the kingdom belongs to all the people of God, and it is something like this that is in mind here. Jesus is saying that the lowly are especially characteristic of the kingdom. The riches of the kingdom belong to them in the fullest measure” (Morris, 96–97).

Jesus spoke truth here. Truth that demanded spiritual surgery. The spiritual leaders of Israel were telling the people, “Let’s just touch up your x-rays – it will cost you a couple hundred shekels,” whereas Jesus was saying, “You need radical surgery – it will cost you everything.”

“The only way to come to God is to confess unrighteousness, confess inability to meet God’s standard, confess that you can’t do it. You enter with a sense of helplessness and desperation to receive divine blessing, and you maintain that sense in order to know continual happiness as you live in Christ” (J. MacArthur, *The Beatitudes*, 56).

II. **The content of David's emphatic command to the Israelites, based on his renunciation of arrogant ambition and his contrasting, affirmation of learned contentment** . . . **was "always hope (wait in a state of contentment) in the LORD,"** (Psalm 131:1-3).

[The Source of The Pilgrimage Song of Trust (131) was David (superscription).

The Genre of The Psalm was a Song (of Trust).

The Context of The Psalm was a Pilgrimage (of Ascent to Worship).

The Source of The Psalm was David.]

**Note**: “The name of David at the head of this psalm exposes his character to comparison with the profession he makes. This has its ironies in the light of his middle and later years, but it also wakens memories of his early modesty, simplicity and lack of rancour, among the qualities which helped to make him great. The demure little psalm anticipates the object lesson of Matthew 18:1–4, where Jesus called a child to him in answer to the question, ‘Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?’” (Kidner, D. [*Psalms 73–150: An Introduction and Commentary*](https://ref.ly/logosres/totc19psbus;ref=Bible.Ps131;off=32;ctx=he_childlike_spirit$0A~The_name_of_David_at), (Vol. 16, p. 483).

1. **David's synonymous testimony to the LORD** . . . **renounced arrogant ambition**, (1).

**Note**: “It would be easy to make this verse an excuse to avoid the challenges of life. But the sin rejected in 1a is pride (cf. the little portrait of the supercilious in Prov. 30:13), while the sin of 1b is presumption. By the first of these, one undervalues other people (unless they seem worth cultivating); by the second, one overestimates and overreaches oneself, forgetting, e.g., Deuteronomy 29:29. In Philippians 2 we are shown the constructive answer to the first of these temptations, in the honour of being a servant; and in Philippians 3, 1 Corinthians 2, the answer to the second, not by stifling adventurousness but by rightly directing it” (Kidner, 483–484).

1. **David's testimony to the LORD** . . . **renounced a prideful attitude**.

2. **David's testimony to the LORD** . . . **renounced a prideful appearance**.

3. **David's testimony to the LORD** . . . **renounced presumptuous aspirations**.

4. **David's testimony to the LORD** . . . **renounced presumptuous advancement**.

B. **David's contrasting, emblematic** [metaphorical] **testimony** . . . **affirmed learned contentment**, (2).

**Note**: “The point of this verse is blunted by rsv, which pictures a baby pacified at its mother’s breast; whereas the psalm emphasizes the word ‘weaned’, thereby drawing an analogy between the child which no longer frets for what it used to find indispensable, and the soul which has learnt a comparable lesson. The rv translates it most faithfully: ‘Like a weaned child with his mother, My soul is with me like a weaned child.’ It is freedom (in the light of verse 1) from the nagging of self-seeking, and, as verse 3 would add, from the bondage of delusive frets and fears. In terms of the New Testament again, it embodies the lessons of both Philippians 2:3ff. (‘Do nothing from selfishness or conceit’) and 4:11ff. (‘I have learned … to be content’)” (Kidner, 484).

1. **David's contrasting testimony** . . . **affirmed his calm   
 contentment**.

2. **David's contrasting testimony** . . . **affirmed his quiet   
 contentment**.

3. **The emblem** [metaphor] **of David's inner contentment** . . . **was learned contentment**.

a. **The emblem of David's inner contentment** . . . **was like the learned response of a weaned child with its mother**.

b. **The emblem of David's inner contentment** . . . **was like the learned response of a weaned child in his soul**.

C. **The content of David's emphatic command to the Israelites** . . . **was "Always hope in the LORD,"** (3).

**Note**: The last verse rouses us from contemplating David to following his example and that of his greater Son: not through introspection but through being weaned from insubstantial ambitions to the only solid fare that can be ours” (Kidner, 484).

1. **The content of David's emphatic command** . . . **was "Hope."**

["Hope" = "To wait in a state of contentment."]

2. **The recipients of David's command** . . . **were the Israelites**.

3. **The source of Israel's hope** . . . **was the LORD**.

4. **The extent of Israel's hope** . . . **was "Always."**

**Note**: “A proud mind finds expression in haughty looks and ambitious schemes. David has determined to renounce such schemes. His soul is no longer disturbed by the storms of passion and the clamors of ambition. He compares himself to a child who has been through the troublesome process of weaning. He now can lie contentedly in his mother’s arms without fretting or craving for the breast. The psalmist’s soul has been weaned from worldly ambition. He can enjoy contentment in the absence of what was once considered indispensable.

“David urges the entire nation to follow his example, to place their hope in Yahweh. In the spirit of resignation and contentment let Israel patiently wait for the further development of God’s purposes” (Smith, J. E. [*The Wisdom Literature and Psalms*](https://ref.ly/logosres/ots-wsdm;ref=Bible.Ps131.1-2;off=9;ctx=pe_(v._3).$0A131:1$E2$80$932._~A_proud_mind_finds_e), Ps 131:1–3).

(**Theological**: What it means for God’s people **ALWAYS**)

**THE HOPELESS, CONTENTED SUBJECTS OF**

**THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN** . . .

**KNOW TRUE HAPPINESS/JOYFUL WHOLENESS**,

(Matthew 5:3; Psalm 131:1-3).

(**Pedagogical**: What it means for us **TODAY**)

**ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR HOPELESSNESS.**

The path to true happiness (blessedness) . . .

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **“Blessed”**  **(*Markarious* – truly Happy)** | **“Lucky”**  **(Chance – Fate)** |
| 1. Depends on God 2. Internal 3. Positional 4. Spiritual 5. Complete fulfillment and satisfaction 6. Most concerned with relationship with God | 1. Depends on Circumstances 2. External 3. Conditional 4. Physical 5. Incomplete and unsatisfied 6. Most concerned with relationship with others |

Pharisees: “Go BACK” to Legalism vs. Liberty

Sadducees: “Go FORWARD” to Liberalism vs. Orthodoxy

Herodians: “Go WITH” to Compromise vs. Ministry

Zealots: “Go AGAINST” to Revolution vs. Surrender

Essens: “Go AWAY” to Isolation vs. Insulation

Gnostics: “Go AHEAD” to Sensualism vs. Purity

Jesus: “Go WITHIN” to the Heart of The Problem

“Happiness is not a goal, but rather the BY-PRODUCT of Kingdom living.”

1. Enter the Kingdom in a state of spiritual hopelessness, (Matthew 5:3).
2. CLAIM: Kingdom subjects are blessed, happy, whole.
3. CHARACTER: Happy Kingdom subjects know they are hopeless (the “poor in spirit” recognize their spiritual poverty).
4. CAUSE: The Kingdom of Heaven belongs to the hopeless.
5. CHARGE: Enter the Kingdom of Heaven in a state of spiritual hopelessness.

II. Wait for God to promote you.

A. You could try to promote yourself, (1).

1. You could pride yourself in your preparation.

2. You could presume a promotion of significance.

3. You could try to advance yourself (through any means).

or, you can . . .

B. Wait for God to promote you, (2-3).

1. Reject arrogant ambition, (1).

2. Learn inner contentment, (2).

3. Wait for God to promote you, (3).

a. Withdraw your agenda for means, time, place, and position.

b. Substitute God's agenda for means, time, place, and position.

c. Learn to wait for God.

**Note**: “Thomas Hooker, a respected Puritan preacher and theologian, considered by many in New England to be the father of constitutional liberty, lay upon his bed mortally sick in Hartford, Connecticut, as the members of his church gathered around his bend and sought to comfort him before he slipped into eternity. ‘Brother Thomas,’ they said, ‘yours has been a life of great achievement and piety; now you go to claim your reward.’ He replied, ‘I go to claim mercy.’ That is what it means to be poor in spirit, and it is from this poverty that one reaches royalty” (S. L. Johnson. Sermon on Matthew 5:3).