

The 1st Edition in 2021 of the
The Disciple Times

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Serving God's People since 2012



From the desk of Pastor Dennis

Dear Heavenly Father, I come before your altar today, kneeling at the foot of the cross that Jesus was nailed to for my sins. His precious blood freed us from our sins. He died, was buried and raised from the dead to sit at the right hand of your throne. You assure me that if I believe in His death and Resurrection that I will live in eternity with you, that you have laid out my path and know me by name, created in your likeness, called a child of God.

Father God, we need you, in our lives and as a part of our community, to open up the hearts of our leaders so that they will once again call upon your wisdom. Open their eyes so we can live where the color of a person's skin does not determine their worth. That we are created in your image and, in your eyes, you do not judge the color of skin only what is in our hearts.

Father God, I ask that you open the heart of those whose hands you placed this newsletter in. So they can hear your words being spoken to them. That they too can receive the same hope and love that I found in the Beatitudes. Help them see your presence as they walk alongside their peers regardless of the color of their skin. Let them be the church, sharing the peace and joy of knowing that they are loved by You - not lost or forgotten.

We pray this in your Son Jesus' precious and Holy name. Amen.

Well, here we are again – it is time for our first Newsletter of 2021. I hope this issue finds you in good health and in a

well-spirited place. Wow, what a year 2020 was with COVID taking over our lives and causing havoc in our daily routines. The total injustice we have seen played out across the United States in our streets and neighborhoods!

Government closed down our churches, schools, and public events due to the spread of COVID-19. Then when things started to open back up we were faced with occupancy limits on the number of people allowed in places. We are coming up on a year now since COVID took it grip on this world. I know many of you are affected by this pandemic much more behind the wall than us on the outside.

I must admit I have grumbled a lot this past year about how life has changed with all the restrictions, wearing a mask, and keeping social distance from other people. Attending church online, Zoom meetings replacing in person meetings, and the inability to have that personal touch of being together, all feeling so impersonal. But then many of you do not even have these things as an option where you are.

I hear stories from some of you of how the institution has cut off outside volunteers from bringing church services, Bible Studies, and other activities to you; having COVID-19 run rampant in your units leaving some to fall victim to the pandemic. I hope that they accepted Christ in their lives before they passed from COVID.

While thinking about putting this newsletter together, with everything

going on in the world, I felt God tugging on my heart, reminding me about being powerless over things in life. So let us look at The Beatitudes in Matthew 5:3-12 and see the blessing they have.

When I entered into the House of Correction back in April of 2008, I was not in a good way and angry at the world. I was totally in denial that I had a problem with drinking, gambling, and many bad habits. I thought I was done and had no future in life. I was a broken man, only calling out to God to take my life, as I no longer wanted to live.

Somehow, God found a way of placing a Bible in my hands - not any Bible, a "Celebrate Recovery" Bible. That is when I found the message of blessings God had for me through "The Beatitudes" and a road to my recovery in eight simple principles. So I want to share with you the message Jesus gave through the Beatitudes.

The Beatitudes, taught by Jesus to all his disciples, are so simple yet so meaningful that we need to take time to sit and reflect upon them.

We need to take the time to ponder their essence and how they work in our own lives. We need to reflect on how important each is and pray over them in our day. We need to lead by example and display them in our own way in our own lives.

There is so much to be learned and lived by living these somewhat simple but monumental words that Jesus gave us. Jesus was our example and we as

his disciples can, in our own way, take heed of his journey, his words and his love, and spread the goodness around us—to the lost, sick, poor, ungrateful and our enemies as well.

When Jesus sat down on a mountainside overlooking the Sea of Galilee to deliver what would come to be known as “The Sermon on the Mount,” I imagine that the women and men and children who gathered around him leaned forward, straining to hear his provocative words. The opening passage of this sermon is called “The Beatitudes” – a list of blessings. Jesus’ litany of those who are blessed is somewhat surprising. For example, how can those who are mourning be considered to be blessed? And yet, upon closer inspection, we can see a pattern in Jesus’ words.

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

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

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

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

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:3-10)

The poor in spirit are those who have learned that they must rely on God in all circumstances. Those who mourn depend on God to sustain them as they move forward into a future without the companionship of their dearly departed ones. The meek are not people who are weak; they are those who approach God and others with humility. Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness trust God to guide their lives, to direct their paths. Those who are merciful demonstrate Christ-like compassion for

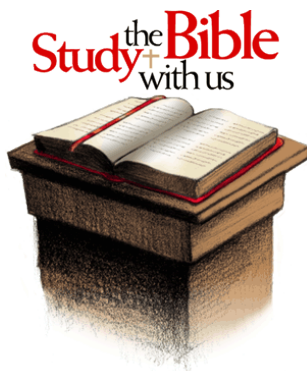
others. Those who are pure in heart manifest integrity – there is no differentiation between their public life and their private one. Those who are peacemakers desire to live in harmony with God and others. Those who are persecuted for doing what is right take comfort in knowing that they do not walk alone on the path of righteousness.

Do you see the connection – the thread running through all of the blessings? Jesus does not equate blessing with fame or fortune. Blessing flows from an individual’s intimate relationship with God, from an individual’s dependence on God.

When I entered into the House of Correction back in April of 2008, I was not in a good way, thinking I was done and had no future in life. Even God did not want me, so I thought!

Jesus’ words remind me to look for blessings in unexpected places, in unanticipated ways. May you experience the blessing of God this New Year and many more to come.

As I come to a close with this letter, I want to ask the individual in whose hands this letter lands. To take time to lament and seek Christ as we prepare for **Resurrection Sunday** on April 4. May you find the many blessings God has given you and still has for you. *I know it’s been a hard time dealing with COVID-19 and social injustice!* However, we must give thanks for all the things God has provided for you during the past year. The many Blessings!



A study on the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12)

BEATITUDES The group of “blessed are” statements that open the [Sermon on the Mount](#) in [Matt 5:3–12](#). The term also refers to the four “blessed are” statements that open the Sermon on the Plain in [Luke 6:20–23](#). The word “beatitude” originates from the Latin word *beatitudo* (Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 92). They are also called “macarisms,” a label that corresponds to the Greek word usually translated “blessed” (μακάριος, *makarios*) that begins each of the beatitudes.

Mt 5:1–12. The Beatitudes and Their Bearing upon the World.

(Taken from: Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the whole Bible)

And seeing the multitudes—those mentioned in Mt 4:25.

he went up into a mountain—one of the dozen mountains which Robinson says there are in the vicinity of the Sea of Galilee, any one of them answering about equally well to the occasion. So charming is the whole landscape that the descriptions of it, from Josephus downwards [*Wars of the Jews*, 3.10.8], are apt to be thought a little colored.

and when he was set—had sat or seated Himself.

his disciples came unto him—already a large circle, more or less attracted and subdued by His preaching and miracles, in addition to the smaller band of devoted adherents. Though the latter only answered to the subjects of His kingdom, described in this discourse, there were drawn from time to time into this inner circle souls from the outer one, who, by the power of His matchless word, were constrained to forsake their all for the Lord Jesus.

2. And he opened his mouth—a solemn way of arousing the reader’s attention, and preparing him for something weighty. (Job 9:1; Ac 8:35; 10:34).

and taught them, saying—as follows

Blessed—Of the two words which our translators render “blessed,” the one here used points more to what is *inward*, and so might be rendered “happy,” in a lofty sense; while the other denotes rather what comes to us *from without* (as Mt 25:34). But the distinction is not always clearly carried out. One *Hebrew* word expresses both. On these precious Beatitudes, observe that though eight in number, there are here but *seven* distinct features of character. The eighth one—the “persecuted for righteousness’ sake”—denotes merely the possessors of the seven preceding features, on account of which it is that they are persecuted (2 Ti 3:12). Accordingly, instead of any distinct promise to this class, we have merely a repetition of the first promise. This has been noticed by several critics, who by the *sevenfold* character thus set forth have rightly observed that a *complete* character is meant to be depicted, and by the *sevenfold* blessedness attached to it, a *perfect* blessedness is intended. Observe, again, that the language in which these Beatitudes are couched is purposely fetched from the Old Testament, to show that the new kingdom is but the old in a new form; while the characters described are but the varied forms of that *spirituality* which was the essence of real religion all along, but had well-nigh disappeared under corrupt teaching. Further, the things here promised, far from being mere arbitrary rewards, will be found in each case to grow out of the characters to which they are attached, and in their completed form are but the appropriate coronation of them. Once more, as “the kingdom of heaven,” which is the first and the last thing here promised, has two stages—a present and a future, an initial and a consummate stage—so the fulfilment of each of these promises has two stages—a present and a future, a partial and a perfect stage.

3. Blessed are the poor in spirit—All familiar with Old Testament phraseology know how frequently God’s true people are styled “the poor” (the “oppressed,” “afflicted,”

“miserable”) or “the needy”—or both together (as in Ps 40:17; Is 41:17). The explanation of this lies in the fact that it is generally “the poor of this world” who are “rich in faith” (Jam 2:5; compare 2 Co 6:10; Rev 2:9); while it is often “the ungodly” who “prosper in the world” (Ps 73:12). Accordingly, in Lu 6:20, 21, it seems to be this class—the literally “poor” and “hungry”—that are specially addressed. But since God’s people are in so many places styled “the poor” and “the needy,” with no evident reference to their temporal circumstances (as in Ps 68:10; 69:29–33; 132:15; Is 61:1; 66:2), it is plainly a *frame of mind* which those terms are meant to express. Accordingly, our translators sometimes render such words “the humble” (Ps 10:12, 17), “the meek” (Ps 22:26), “the lowly” (Pr 3:34), as having no reference to outward circumstances. But here the explanatory words, “in spirit,” fix the sense to “those who in their deepest consciousness realize their entire need” (compare the *Greek* of Lu 10:21; Jn 11:33; 13:21; Ac 20:22; Ro 12:11; 1 Co 5:3; Php 3:3). This self-emptying conviction, that “before God we are void of everything,” lies at the foundation of all spiritual excellence, according to the teaching of Scripture. Without it we are inaccessible to the riches of Christ; with it we are in the fitting state for receiving all spiritual supplies (Rev 3:17, 18; Mt 9:12, 13). **for theirs is the kingdom of heaven**—(See on Mt 3:2). The poor in spirit not only shall have—they already have—the kingdom. The very sense of their poverty is begun riches. While others “walk in a vain show”—“in a shadow,” “an image”—in an unreal world, taking a false view of themselves and all around them—the poor in spirit are rich in the knowledge of their real case. Having courage to look this in the face, and own it guilelessly, they feel strong in the assurance that “unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness” (Ps 112:4); and soon it breaks forth as the morning. God wants nothing from us as the price of His saving gifts; we have but to feel our universal destitution, and cast ourselves upon His

compassion (Job 33:27, 28; 1 Jn 1:9). So the poor in spirit are enriched with the fulness of Christ, which is the kingdom in substance; and when He shall say to them from His great white throne, “Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom *prepared for you*,” He will invite them merely to the full enjoyment of an already possessed inheritance.

4. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted—This “mourning” must not be taken loosely for that feeling which is wrung from men under pressure of the ills of life, nor yet strictly for sorrow on account of committed sins. Evidently it is that entire feeling which the sense of our spiritual poverty begets; and so the second beatitude is but the complement of the first. The one is the intellectual, the other the emotional aspect of the same thing. It is poverty of spirit that says, “I am undone”; and it is the mourning which this causes that makes it break forth in the form of a lamentation—“Woe is me! for I am undone.” Hence this class are termed “mourners *in Zion*,” or, as we might express it, religious mourners, in sharp contrast with all other sorts (Is 61:1–3; 66:2). Religion, according to the Bible, is neither a set of intellectual convictions nor a bundle of emotional feelings, but a compound of both, the former giving birth to the latter. Thus closely do the first two beatitudes cohere. The mourners shall be “comforted.” Even now they get beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Sowing in tears, they reap even here in joy. Still, all present comfort, even the best, is partial, interrupted, short-lived. But the days of our mourning shall soon be ended, and then God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes. Then, in the fullest sense, shall the mourners be “comforted.”

5. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth—This promise to the meek is but a repetition of Ps 37:11; only the word which our

Evangelist renders “the meek,” after the *Septuagint*, is the same which we have found so often translated “the poor,” showing how closely allied these two features of character are. It is impossible, indeed, that “the poor in spirit” and “the mourners” in Zion should not at the same time be “meek”; that is to say, persons of a lowly and gentle carriage. How fitting, at least, it is that they should be so, may be seen by the following touching appeal: “Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, to speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, *but gentle, showing all meekness unto all men*: for we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures ... But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared ...: according to His mercy He saved us,” &c. (Tit 3:1–7). But He who had no such affecting reasons for manifesting this beautiful carriage, said, nevertheless, of Himself, “Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls” (Mt 11:29); and the apostle besought one of the churches by “the meekness and gentleness of Christ” (2 Co 10:1). In what esteem this is held by Him who seeth not as man seeth, we may learn from 1 Pe 3:4, where the true adorning is said to be that of “a meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price.” Towards men this disposition is the opposite of high-mindedness, and a quarrelsome and revengeful spirit; it “rather takes wrong, and suffers itself to be defrauded” (1 Co 6:7); it “avenges not itself, but rather gives place unto wrath” (Ro 12:19); like the meek One, “when reviled, it reviles not again; when it suffers, it threatens not: but commits itself to Him that judgeth righteously” (1 Pe 2:19–22). “The earth” which the meek are to inherit might be rendered “the land”—bringing out the more immediate reference to Canaan as the promised land, the secure possession of which was to the Old Testament saints the

evidence and manifestation of God’s favor resting on them, and the ideal of all true and abiding blessedness. Even in the Psalm from which these words are taken the promise to the meek is not held forth as an arbitrary reward, but as having a kind of natural fulfilment. When they delight themselves in the Lord, He gives them the desires of their heart: when they commit their way to Him, He brings it to pass; bringing forth their righteousness as the light, and their judgment as the noonday: the little that they have, even when despoiled of their rights, is better than the riches of many wicked (Ps 37:1–24). All things, in short, are theirs—in the possession of that favor which is life, and of those rights which belong to them as the children of God—whether the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are theirs (1 Co 3:21, 22); and at length, overcoming, they “inherit all things” (Rev 21:7). Thus are the meek the only rightful occupants of a foot of ground or a crust of bread here, and heirs of all coming things.

6. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled—“shall be saturated.” “From this verse,” says Tholuck, “the reference to the Old Testament background ceases.” Surprising! On the contrary, none of these beatitudes is more manifestly dug out of the rich mine of the Old Testament. Indeed, how could any one who found in the Old Testament “the poor in spirit,” and “the mourners in Zion,” doubt that he would also find those same characters also *craving* that righteousness which they feel and mourn their want of? But what is the precise meaning of “righteousness” here? Lutheran expositors, and some of our own, seem to have a hankering after that more restricted sense of the term in which it is used with reference to the sinner’s justification before God. (See Je 23:6; Is 45:24; Ro 4:6; 2 Co 5:21). But, in so comprehensive a saying as this, it is clearly to be taken—as in Mt 5:10 also—in a much

wider sense, as denoting that spiritual and entire conformity to the law of God, under the want of which the saints groan, and the possession of which constitutes the only true saintship. The Old Testament dwells much on this righteousness, as that which alone God regards with approbation (Ps 11:7; 23:3; 106:3; Pr 12:28; 16:31; Is 64:5, &c.). As hunger and thirst are the keenest of our appetites, our Lord, by employing this figure here, plainly means “those whose deepest cravings are after spiritual blessings.” And in the Old Testament we find this craving variously expressed: “Hearken unto Me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the Lord” (Is 51:1); “I have waited for Thy salvation, O Lord,” exclaimed dying Jacob (Ge 49:18); “My soul,” says the sweet Psalmist, “breaketh for the longing that it hath unto Thy judgments at all times” (Ps 119:20): and in similar breathings does he give vent to his deepest longings in that and other Psalms. Well, our Lord just takes up here—this blessed frame of mind, representing it as—the surest pledge of the coveted supplies, as it is the best preparative, and indeed itself the beginning of them. “They shall be saturated,” He says; they shall not only have what they so highly value and long to possess, but they shall have their fill of it. Not here, however. Even in the Old Testament this was well understood. “Deliver me,” says the Psalmist, in language which, beyond all doubt, stretches beyond the present scene, “from men of the world, which have their portion in this life: as for me, I shall behold Thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness” (Ps 17:13–15). The foregoing beatitudes—the first four—represent the saints rather as *conscious of their need of salvation*, and acting suitably to that character, than as possessed of it. The next three are of a different kind—representing the saints as *having now found salvation*, and conducting themselves accordingly.

7. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy—Beautiful is the connection between this and the preceding beatitude. The one has a natural tendency to beget the other. As for the words, they seem directly fetched from Ps 18:25, “With the merciful Thou wilt show Thyself merciful.” Not that our mercifulness comes absolutely first. On the contrary, our Lord Himself expressly teaches us that God’s method is to awaken in us compassion towards our fellow men by His own exercise of it, in so stupendous a way and measure, towards ourselves. In the parable of the unmerciful debtor, the servant to whom his lord forgave ten thousand talents was naturally expected to exercise the small measure of the same compassion required for forgiving his fellow servant’s debt of a hundred pence; and it is only when, instead of this, he relentlessly imprisoned him till he should pay it up, that his lord’s indignation was roused, and he who was designed for a vessel of mercy is treated as a vessel of wrath (Mt 18:23–35; and see Mt 5:23, 24; 6:15; Jam 2:13). “According to the view given in Scripture,” says Trench most justly, “the Christian stands in a middle point, between a mercy received and a mercy yet needed.” Sometimes the first is urged upon him as an argument for showing mercy—“forgiving one another, as Christ forgave you” (Col 3:13; Eph 4:32): sometimes the last—“Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy”; “Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven” (Lu 6:37; Jam 5:9). And thus, while he is ever to look back on the mercy received as the source and motive of the mercy which he shows, he also looks forward to the mercy which he yet needs, and which he is assured that the merciful—according to what Bengel beautifully calls the *benigna talio* (“the gracious requital”) of the kingdom of God—shall receive, as a new provocation to its abundant exercise. The foretastes and beginnings of this judicial recompense are richly experienced here below: its perfection is reserved for that day when, from His great white

throne, the King shall say, “Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was an hungered, and thirsty, and a stranger, and naked, and sick, and in prison, and ye ministered unto Me.” Yes, thus He



acted towards us while on earth, even laying down His life for us; and He will not, He cannot disown, in the merciful, the image of Himself.

8. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God—Here, too, we are on Old Testament ground. There the difference between outward and inward purity, and the acceptableness of the latter only in the sight of God, are everywhere taught. Nor is the “vision of God” strange to the Old Testament; and though it was an understood thing that this was not possible in the present life (Ex 33:20; and compare Job 19:26, 27; Is 6:5), yet spiritually it was known and felt to be the privilege of the saints even here (Ge 5:24; 6:9; 17:1; 48:15; Ps 27:4; 36:9; 63:2; Is 38:3, 11, &c.). But oh, with what grand simplicity, brevity, and power is this great fundamental truth here expressed! And in what striking contrast would such teaching appear to that which was then current, in which exclusive attention was paid to ceremonial purification and external morality! This heart purity begins in a “heart sprinkled from an evil conscience,” or a “conscience purged from dead works” (Heb 10:22; 9:14; and see Ac 15:9); and this also is taught in the Old Testament (Ps 32:1, 2; compare Ro 4:5–8; Is 6:5–8). The conscience thus purged—the heart thus sprinkled—there is light within wherewith to see God. “If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not [Speak?] the truth: but if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have

fellowship one with the other”—He with us and we with Him—“and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us”—us who have this fellowship, and who, without such continual cleansing, would soon lose it again—“from all sin” (1 Jn 1:6, 7). “Whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known Him” (1 Jn 3:6); “He that doeth evil hath not seen God” (3 Jn 1:11). The inward vision thus clarified, and the whole inner man in sympathy with God, each looks upon the other with complacency and joy, and we are “changed into the same image from glory to glory.” But the full and beatific vision of God is reserved for that time to which the Psalmist stretches his views—“As for me, I shall behold Thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness” (Ps 17:15). Then shall His servants serve Him: and they shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads (Rev 22:3, 4). They shall see Him as He is (1 Jn 3:2). But, says the apostle, expressing the converse of this beatitude—“Follow holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord” (Heb 12:14).

9. Blessed are the peacemakers—who not only study peace, but diffuse it. **for they shall be called the children of God**—shall be called sons of God. Of all these beatitudes this is the only one which could hardly be expected to find its definite ground in the Old Testament; for that most glorious character of God, the likeness of which appears in the peacemakers, had yet to be revealed. His glorious name, indeed—as “The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin”—had been proclaimed in a very imposing manner (Ex 34:6), and manifested in action with affecting frequency and variety in the long course of the ancient economy. And we have undeniable evidence that the saints of that economy felt its transforming and ennobling influence on their own character. But it was not

till Christ “made peace by the blood of the cross” that God could manifest Himself as “the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant” (Heb 13:20)—could reveal Himself as “in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them,” and hold Himself forth in the astonishing attitude of beseeching men to be “reconciled to Himself” (2 Co 5:19, 20). When this reconciliation actually takes place, and one has “peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ”—even “the peace of God which passeth all understanding”—the peace-receivers become transformed into peace-diffusers. God is thus seen reflected in them; and by the family likeness these peacemakers are recognized as the children of God. In now coming to the eighth, or supplementary beatitude, it will be seen that all that the saints are *in themselves* has been already described, in seven features of character; that number indicating *completeness* of delineation. The last feature, accordingly, is a passive one, representing the treatment that the characters already described may expect from the world. He who shall one day fix the destiny of all men here pronounces certain characters “blessed”; but He ends by forewarning them that the world’s estimation and treatment of them will be the reserve of His.

10. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, &c.—How entirely this final beatitude has its ground in the Old Testament, is evident from the concluding words, where the encouragement held out to endure such persecutions consists in its being but a continuation of what was experienced by the Old Testament servants of God. But how, it may be asked, could such beautiful features of character provoke persecution? To this the following answers should suffice: “Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.” “The

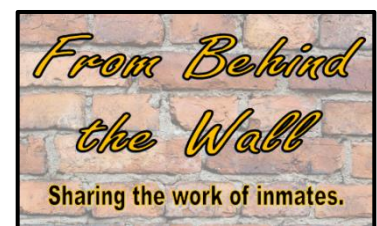
world cannot hate you; but Me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil.” “If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.” “There is yet one man (said wicked Ahab to good Jehoshaphat) by whom we may inquire of the Lord: but I hate him; for he never prophesied good unto me, but always evil” (Jn 3:20; 7:7; 15:19; 2 Ch 18:7). But more particularly, the seven characters here described are all in the teeth of the spirit of the world, insomuch that such hearers of this discourse as breathed that spirit must have been startled, and had their whole system of thought and action rudely dashed. Poverty of spirit runs counter to the pride of men’s heart; a pensive disposition, in the view of one’s universal deficiencies before God, is ill relished by the callous, indifferent, laughing, self-satisfied world; a meek and quiet spirit, taking wrong, is regarded as pusillanimous, and rasps against the proud, resentful spirit of the world; that craving after spiritual blessings rebukes but too unpleasantly the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life; so does a merciful spirit the hard-heartedness of the world; purity of heart contrasts painfully with painted hypocrisy; and the peacemaker cannot easily be endured by the contentious, quarrelsome world. Thus does “righteousness” come to be “persecuted.” But blessed are they who, in spite of this, dare to be righteous.

for theirs is the kingdom of heaven—As this was the reward promised to the poor in spirit—the leading one of these seven beatitudes—of course it is the proper portion of such as are persecuted for exemplifying them.

11. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you—or abuse you to your face, in opposition to backbiting. (See Mk 15:32). and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you, falsely, for my sake—Observe this. He had

before said, “for righteousness’ sake.” Here He identifies Himself and His cause with that of righteousness, binding up the cause of righteousness \in the world with the reception of Himself. Would Moses, or David, or Isaiah, or Paul have so expressed themselves? Never. Doubtless they suffered for righteousness’ sake. But to have called this “their sake,” would, as every one feels, have been very unbecoming. Whereas He that speaks, being Righteousness incarnate (see Mk 1:24; Ac 3:14; Rev 3:7), when He so speaks, speaks only like Himself.

12. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad—“exult.” In the corresponding passage of Luke (Lu 6:22, 23), where every indignity trying to flesh and blood is held forth as the probable lot of such as were faithful to Him, the word is even stronger than here: “leap,” as if He would have their inward transport to overpower and absorb the sense of all these affronts and sufferings; nor will anything else do it. **for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you:**—that is, “You do but serve yourselves heirs to their character and sufferings, and the reward will be common.”



Letters of thanks and gratitude for the work of this ministry.

From Uri Small

“Now without faith it is impossible to please God, since the one who draws near to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him”. (Hebrews 11:6)

Thank you so much for the Christmas card. I received it on my 42nd Birthday. So I believe your message and the reminder to

celebrate the birth of Christ was right on time. Praise God and Amen!

I'm praying for your ministry. I pray that Christ continues to pour into your life with His restoration power to protect and heal. Your ministry is a blessing to so many of us in prison during times. So I pray Christ continually fills your Spirit and rewards you, for the fellowship you share with the Christians who are incarcerated.

From Angella

Pastor Dennis

Thank you for the Christmas card. I liked it a lot, so do my friends. I hope you have a good Christmas and a happy New Years.

Yes my Christmas was filled with all that our Lord Jesus has given and that is my kids, Mom, Dad, sister, brother and Himself in my life. Once again, thank you and have a good day.

From D. Edward Nelson

Dear pastor Dennis

This evening marks a special event in my life. I received my first Christmas card courtesy of you and Disciple of Christ ministries. I am not sure what to write on the prayer request because there are a number of things that need praying for... Some self-motivated others out of concern for my fellow man.

I have been on my own since 1987 and I have never held out much hope in finding a connection. As I enter my 33rd year of incarceration, not even a glimmer of hope has sparked an interest. At 60 years old, vitality is in never ending trait in my life and I think that is just having someone to talk to easy my weary soul.

Ten days ago on December 19 some uncaring medical personnel subject everyone in our unit to COVID testing and proclaimed a lot of us to be positive for the COVID virus, even though we have not been in contact with anyone and we have zero symptoms.

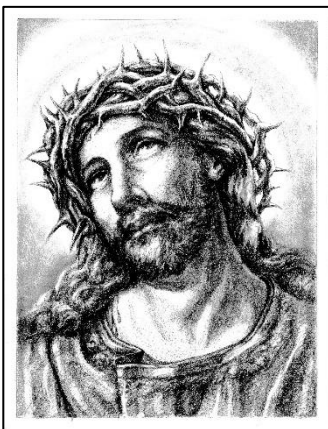
So we were expeditiously quarantined in an isolated unit without a chance to get

our own personal effects collected to take with us. I was put into a cell that was wanting of a working toilet and sink, not to mention the need for warm bedding. It is incredibly cold in this cell the only word that comes to mind to describe these conditions are draconian. I was given a single thin blanket, that smell like it was in a dog kennel in a sin torn she. The need for warmth overtook the stench, but I still shiver at night anyhow, it is a difficult prospect celebrating the holidays behind bars despite the fact that I know there are thousands who will not celebrated all.

For all you back east for dedicating your time for the discipleship, may God bless and keep everyone of you in his love and care.

Thank you Justin T

For this wonderful piece of art you drew for one of our Volunteers "Neelia" She really loved this drawing!



Thank you all who made our 7th Annual Christmas Card Outreach a success We were able to send out 320 cards

Thanks to all who have made this newsletter possible with your continued support to this ministry! May God continue to bless our work in reaching the lost and forgotten souls through your financial support!

To all the inmates in the state of Texas. My deepest apologies for not receiving your Christmas card, as I was not aware you could not receive greeting cards and they were all sent back to us.

"The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few." Matthew 9:37.

We are constantly in need of more pen pal volunteers. At this moment, we have over 300 applications from inmates waiting in our office for volunteers to begin writing them. Some of our volunteers are writing more than one inmate because we just do not have enough help. God is truly bringing in a harvest through this ministry and we need workers to help bring in the harvest!

If you think, you might be interested in helping in this area of our ministry, please contact me at 617-237-9607 or send us an

Email:

office@DiscipleofChristMinistries.org

***** (NO Phone Calls from Inmates Please.) *****

We cannot accept collect calls!

I want to share with any inmate who is being released soon a program that I have join forces with called S.O.S. Surviving Out-Side. Currently meeting on Zoom Monday's @ 7:30PM



S.O.S.
Surviving Out-Side
A formerly incarcerated support group for men

We are a support group for men out of incarceration supporting them in a weekly group format meeting. We are Christian men who have all struggled with the challenges re-building a life out of the rubble of destruction our addictions and mistakes have caused us and others. No judgements. No pre-requisites other than having done any amount of time behind bars and a willingness to be accountable to change. We are under the umbrella of Full Gospel Businessmen Fellowship in America, Greater Boston Chapter. Currently, and for some time to come, we will be online. If you are being released, please take our email down for contact information to join our virtual group.

Fgbmfa.matteo@gmail.com.

You can also look us up on meetup.com under FGBMFA Greater Boston. Or simply google us. We look forward to being one tool to help you in re-building your life with a Christ focused group. Be blessed. We CAN do this together!!!



Answering the call to serve God's People no matter where they are located!

My Road to Recovery
The Eight Principles of Celebrate Recovery
Based on the Beatitudes

Principle 1

Realize I am not God; I admitted that I am powerless to control my tendency to do the wrong things and my life is unmanageable. **“Blessed are those who know they are spiritual poor”** (Matthew 5:3)

Principle 2

Earnestly believe that God exist, that I matter to Him, and that He has the power to help me recover. **“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted”** (Matthew 5: 4)

Principle 3

Consciously choose to commit all my life and will to Christ's care and control. **“Blessed are the meek”** (Matthew 5:5)

Principle 4

Openly examine and confess my faults to myself, to God, and someone I trust. **“Blessed are the pure in heart”** (Matthew 5:8)

Principle 5

Voluntarily submit to every change God wants to make in my life and humbly ask Him to remove my character defects. **“Blessed are those whose greatest desire is to do what God requires.”** (Matthew 5:6)

Principle 6

Evaluate all my relationships, offer forgiveness to those who have hurt me and make amends for harm I have done to others except when to do so would harm them or others. **“Blessed are the merciful.”** (Matthew 5:7) **“Blessed are the peacemakers.”** (Matthew 5:9)

Principle 7

Reserve a daily time with God for self-examination, Bible reading, and prayer in order to know God and His will for my life and gain the power to follow His will.

Principle 8

Yield myself to God to be used to bring this Good News to others, both by my example and by my words. **“Blessed are those who are persecuted because they do what God requires.”** (Matthew 5:10)