

SE7EN ||||| SINS ||||| BEATITUDES

People don't want a hero, they want to eat cheeseburgers, play the lotto and watch television. [Morgan Freeman's character, William Somerset, SE7EN]

In 2009, I was spending time meditating on the beatitudes and decided to take a break and read **Proverbs**. It had been a long time since I had done that, so when I came across **Proverbs 6**, I was struck by how diametrically opposed the beatitudes are from the seven sins described in **Proverbs 6:16-19**. I pray this comparing and contrasting of each enables us to better understand both.

One of the best ways to learn a concept is to study its opposite. Some concepts, like atheism, cannot even be described without explaining the opposite. Here is an example from Bible study: God's holiness is only understood when we understand our own sin.

Schedule

Sins (Proverbs 6:16-19)	&	Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12)
#1: A proud look	June 6	The poor in spirit: #1
#2: A lying tongue	June 13	Those who mourn: #2
#3: Hands that shed innocent blood	June 20	The meek: #3
#4: A heart that devises wicked plans	June 27	The pure in heart: #6
#5: Feet that are swift in running to evil	July 4	Those who hunger and thirst: #4
#6: A false witness who speaks lies	July 11	Those who are persecuted: #8
#7: One who sows discord	July 18	The peacemakers: #7

Introduction

The seven sins

The seven sins that we will be studying in our series are not the same as the Seven Deadly Sins that the Catholic Church and Brad Pitt made famous (lust, gluttony, greed, sloth, wrath, envy, and pride). The seven sins we will use for our series come from Scripture and are listed in **Proverbs 6:16-19**. Turn there now and we will read them. Side note: most people, when creating an outline of the book of Proverbs (a wonderful way to understand the big picture of a book), put the seven sins in a group of proverbs that deal with laziness.

Proverbs 6:16-19: These six things the LORD hates, Yes, seven are an abomination [disgusting thing, abominable (i.e., snowman); used of unclean food, idols, mixed marriages] to Him: A proud look, A

lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood, A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that are swift in running to evil, A false witness who speaks lies, And one who sows discord among brethren.

These verses describe a prideful, lying, murderous, wicked, evil person who wants to stir up trouble.

The Bible says the Lord hates these six things. It does not say He dislikes them. It says He hates them. Then, when you add in the seventh (sowing discord), the Bible says these sins are an abomination to Him. [Proverbs 6:16-19](#) gives us a picture of a **wicked** life; a picture of a life lived for self and not for God. Turn to [Matthew 5](#) and we will look at the other half of our study.

The Beatitudes

The beatitudes are the introductory remarks that Jesus makes when He delivered the Sermon on the **Mount**. Many feel that the Sermon on the Mount was Jesus' 'standard' sermon—the one that He would preach when He went into a new place. They feel this way because elements from the Sermon on the Mount appear in other messages Jesus delivers. The Sermon on the Mount is only 2,381 words long and Jesus could have easily preached it in 15 minutes—but crowds stayed with Him all day, which implies this is not the full text.

The beatitudes get their name from the Latin Vulgate translation of the Bible (the gold standard for over 1,000 years in Christianity). The Latin word for blessed (the word that each of the beatitudes start with)—is *beati*. [Matthew 5:3-12](#) has all of the beatitudes listed in [Matthew](#) (there is a somewhat parallel passage in Luke—the Sermon on the Plain—that has some variations of these).

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

Blessed are those who mourn, For they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth.

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

Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

The Jews of Jesus' day were looking for their Messiah. When Jesus showed up and preached the Sermon on the Mount, that was not the message they wanted to hear. The Jews wanted to hear about a real kingdom that would usher in political change to overthrow the Roman rule. They were not expecting a message of love and a sermon on living a life that starts with being poor in spirit.

The Fourfold Gospel: Most of the beatitudes are paradoxical, being the very reverse of the world's view. If you walked up to the average person on the street and told them to live according to the beatitudes, they would laugh at you. A great aspiration for Christians is to both have and to be developing these attitudes and behaviors. We will never master them all—these will take the rest of our natural lives.

Each of the beatitudes is an example of how the broken and desperate for God can be **filled with the relationship of God and His Kingdom. – Alicia Arnold's review of 'Seven'**

Blessed

To start each beatitude, Jesus gives a promise—“**Blessed.**” Much has been written and said about what *blessed* truly means, but the best translation of *blessed* is **happy**. Most of the commentators ‘spiritualize’ the word *blessed* to mean more than happy, but the reality is that a happy life is one that follows Christ. **A. T. Robertson: English has thus ennobled “blessed” to a higher rank than “happy.” But “happy” is what Jesus said. . . . It is a pity that we have not kept the word “happy” to the high and holy plane where Jesus placed it.**

Jesus does not command us to be happy, but shows us the way (through a life lived for Him). This word *blessed* also shows up in:

1 Timothy 1:11: according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust. We have a happy God.

James 1:12: Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. Revelation 22:14: Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. Luke 11:28: But He said, “More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!” John 13:17: If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. Happiness is found through **obedience**.

Matthew 5:3-12 gives us a picture of a **happy** life.

So, now that we have a good foundation of the sins and the beatitudes, our first comparison.

Week 1: A Proud Look vs The Poor in Spirit

A Proud Look (looking **high**)

Proverbs 6:17a: A proud [to be high, be set on high, to be raised, be uplifted, be exalted, to be lifted, rise] **look** [literally, eye]. A proud look is looking up

Many commentators will tell you that pride means something like this: **John Gill: having a high opinion of their own worth. Matthew Henry: conceitedness of ourselves, and contempt of others.**

However, the pride referred to in **Proverbs 6:16** is not looking down on others, but it is literally, looking up and over others. Pride is the failure to acknowledge that we are all in the same (sinking) boat. **Adam Clarke** gets it right: “**those who will not condescend to look on the rest of mankind.**”

Psalms 73:6-8: Therefore pride serves as their necklace; Violence covers them like a garment. Their eyes bulge with abundance; They have more than heart could wish. They scoff and speak wickedly concerning oppression; They speak loftily. These verses describe those that look up and over others.

Pride is looking high when we should be looking low.

The Poor in Spirit (looking **low**)

Matthew 5:3: Blessed are the poor [those so poor they are reduced to begging; helpless, powerless to accomplish an end; this word is used of Lazarus in **Luke 16:20**] **in spirit** [Greek = *pneuma*], **For theirs is** [present tense—many of the other beatitudes promise things to come, but this one says that the kingdom of heaven is now for the poor in spirit] **the kingdom of heaven.**

What does it mean to be poor in spirit? **John Wesley: Being deeply sensible of their . . . helplessness.** Understanding my own helplessness helps me to understand everyone else's helplessness. We are all in that sinking boat. I am to look low to help **others**. A few great examples: Good Samaritan, Barnabas, and of course, Jesus.

Psalm 131:1: LORD, my heart is not haughty, Nor my eyes lofty. Neither do I concern myself with great matters, Nor with things too profound for me. This man's eyes are not looking over others, but they are looking at his own situation so he can help others.

Adam Clarke: One who is deeply sensible of his spiritual poverty and wretchedness

Job 42:6: Therefore I abhor myself, And repent in dust and ashes. Job looked low in repentance.

Jamieson, Fausset, Brown: The poor in spirit are rich in the knowledge of their **real case**

Matthew Henry: To value others and **undervalue ourselves in comparison of them . . . to be willing to . . . become all things to all men.** When I truly value others, I will let God do whatever He wants with my life to reach and invest in them.

Micah 6:8: He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God? You cannot do justly and love mercy if you are looking over people. **Who are we looking over?**

Psalm 34:18: The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart, And saves such as have a contrite spirit. God cares about the orphan, the widow, and the oppressed. **Do we?** Poor in spirit is looking down to see our fellow man (who is in the same condition as we are).

@realrobbell: Blessed are those who don't have it all together.

Blessed are those who have run out of strength, ideas, will power, resolve, or energy.

Blessed are those who ache because of how severely out of whack the world is. . . .

Blessed are those who on a regular basis have a dark day in which despair seems to be a step behind them wherever they go.

Blessed are you, for God is with you, God is on your side, God meets you in that place.

The gospel is the counter-intuitive, joyous, exuberant news that Jesus has brought the unending, limitless, stunning love of God to even us.

Go share it.

SE7EH ||| ||| SINS ||| ||| beatitudes

Ernest Hemingway once wrote, “The world is a fine place and worth fighting for.” I agree with the second part. [Morgan Freeman’s character, William Somerset, SE7EN]

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Matthew 5:3-12: To start each beatitude, Jesus gives a promise—“**Blessed.**” The best translation of blessed is **happy**. **Matthew 5:3-12** gives us a picture of a **happy** life.

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Week 2: A Lying Tongue vs Those Who Mourn

A Lying Tongue (**hiding** pain)

Proverbs 6:17b: A lying [deceiving, disappointing, false, fraudulent, tricking, cheating] **tongue**

A lying tongue does not convey things as they are. A lying tongue obscures truth. A lying tongue hides the reality of the pain of the world by painting a false reality. A lying tongue uses the Christian f-word: **Fine**. It is not, “How are you?” it is, “How are you, but don’t really tell me.” **Matthew Henry: nothing more sacred than truth, nor more necessary to conversation than speaking truth.**

We are called to be **faithful** witnesses for Jesus. **Proverbs 14:5: A faithful witness does not lie, But a false witness will utter lies.**

What does it look like when a brother is lied about? **Psalm 120**

**Psalm 120: 1 In my distress I cried to the LORD, And He heard me.
2 Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips And from a deceitful tongue.
3 What shall be given to you, Or what shall be done to you, You false tongue?
4 Sharp arrows of the warrior, With coals of the broom tree!
5 Woe is me, that I dwell in Meshech, That I dwell among the tents of Kedar!
6 My soul has dwelt too long With one who hates peace.
7 I am for peace; But when I speak, they are for war.**

What was Jesus' opinion of lying? **John 8:44: You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.** There is no truth in the Devil and there is no truth in his children.

Where do liars end up? **Revelation 22:12-15: 12 "And behold, I [Jesus] am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work. . . . 14 Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. 15 But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie.**

A lying tongue hides the pain and reality of the world when we should be acknowledging pain.

Those Who Mourn (**acknowledging pain**)

Matthew 5:4: Blessed are those who mourn [present tense, implying these people are currently undergoing this; the root word means to have been afflicted, to feel, to have a sensible experience], **For they shall be** [future tense—implying that present mourning is not always met with **present** comfort? This seems harsh to me, but life experiences and Biblical examples tend to back it up—Sandy Zensen will be speaking on this topic on Sunday evening] **comforted** [Greek = *parakaleo*; meaning to call to one's side for exhortation, comfort, instruction, etc.; to console, encourage and strengthen; one of the names for the Holy Spirit—The Comforter].

What does it mean to mourn?

This Greek word is also used in **Mark 16:9-10** (to describe the mourning that Jesus' followers experienced when they thought He was **gone** forever), **1 Corinthians 5:1-2** (to describe the proper response to **sin** as opposed to the pride with which the Corinthians were responding to sin), **2 Corinthians 12:21** (used by Paul to describe his reaction to unconfessed **sin** in the lives of believers), **James 4:7-10** (to describe a proper reaction to **sin**), and three times in **Revelation** to describe those that are persecuted from the horrors found there. 'Mourn' is used to describe real responses to life's real issues—death, sin, grief.

Why should we mourn?

James Burton Coffman: It is, of course, a paradox to say, "Happy are they that grieve!" but that is exactly what this beatitude means. The ministry of grief, mourning, and sorrow as affecting the development of Christian character is set forth in detail in the New Testament. Tribulation results in patience (Romans 5:1-5). It yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness (Hebrews 12:11). Godly sorrow leads to repentance (2 Corinthians 7:10). What a generous and merciful arrangement of Almighty God that even life's sorrows shall bless and reward his servants! . . . Why should Christians mourn? They mourn for the world which lies in the darkness of sin. They mourn for the sins that mar their own lives. They mourn for loved ones and members of their families out of Christ. They mourn for the slain who have fallen in the encounter with the evil one.

Matthew Henry: The poor are accustomed to mourn. . . . They are *blessed*, for they are like the Lord Jesus, who was a man of sorrows, and of whom we never read that he laughed, but often that he wept. . . . They are armed against the many temptations that attend vain mirth, and are prepared for the comforts of a sealed pardon and a settled peace. . . . light is sown for them

Fourfold Gospel: All mourning is traced directly or indirectly to **sin**. . . . But sorrows, even apart from a sense of sin, often prove blessings to us by drawing us near unto God.

It is good and right to be mournful of the impact of the **sin** in the world and the **sin** in me. **2 Corinthians 7:9-11: 9** Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. **10** For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death. **11** For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner: What diligence it produced in you, what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication! In all things you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter.

Barnes' Notes: The gospel only can give true comfort to those in affliction, **Isaiah 61:1-3**. Jesus came for those that mourn to bring them comfort and joy (this would make good lyrics). The believer's sorrow is not **permanent**: **John 16:20**: Most assuredly, I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy.

David Guzik: God allows this grief into our lives as a path, not as a destination. A. T. Robertson: Sorrow should make us look for the heart and hand of God. God is always **working**. **2 Corinthians 1:3-4**: Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

Are acts of war the shedding of innocent blood? **No** (1 Samuel 15:3; Joshua 4:13)

Four types of killing in the Old Testament:

1. Justifiable homicide (**Exodus 22: 2-3**): If a thief broken in during the night and the homeowner killed the thief, the homeowner was justified. We know God does not want any to perish (**2 Peter 3:9**), and this includes thieves.
2. Accidental deaths (**Numbers 35:22-28**): We read about some deadly accidents. **Numbers 35:22** speaks of pushing someone; perhaps the idea is two people rough housing.
3. Judicial homicide: This means a person is guilty of murder and they need to be removed from society.
4. Premeditated homicide (**Deuteronomy 19:11-13**): Premeditated murder was a crime where God said mercy and pity were not deserved.

God made provisions for killing in the dealing of **capital crimes**. (**Genesis 9:6; Exodus 21:12; Romans 13:4**)

First murder was when Cain killed Abel; why? **1 John 3:12**: Abel was **innocent**.

Possibly the greatest case of shedding innocent blood in our generation is **abortion**. The only time killing is justified is when it is based on someone's actions—not even thought will get you killed.

Example of power out of control = electrocution. This is lack of self-control.

The Meek, for they shall Inherit the Earth (strength/power **under control**)

Matthew 5:5: Blessed are the meek, [the Greek word is *praus*, translated 'gentle' in its three other usages in the New Testament (**Matthew 11:29; 21:5; 1 Peter 3:4**) **For they shall** [future tense—implying that present meekness will produce a future result] **inherit the earth**.

Context: The beatitudes were given at the Sermon on the Mount. The prevailing thought of Jesus' Jewish audience was that the Messiah was coming with an army to conquer their oppressors (allowing the Jews to inherit lands and free them from the Romans). We interpret Scripture through the lens of our culture and Christ instead informed them that the journey to inheriting the earth starts within each believer.

A correct view of meekness:

Meekness is not weakness: The Greek word *praus* does not suggest weakness; rather, it denotes strength brought under control. The ancient Greeks employed the term to describe a wild horse tamed to the bridle. In the biblical sense, therefore, it describes one who has channeled his strengths into the service of God. This is not, "I am lying on the ground, kick me again."

Meekness is strength controlled (focused) by the Holy Spirit: It is good and right to be meek, it is a primary attribute of **Jesus** and demonstrates the **control** over one's life, and a life **controlled** by the Holy Spirit. Even a gift out of control is dangerous.

What is so important about meekness that believers would “inherit the earth”?

We are not deprived of our abilities, strength, vision, or spirit. All of our God-given talents and energies are directed by the **Holy Spirit**.

- The meek are those who have been tamed by God.
- They are devoted to service in the Kingdom of God, meek before the Master but bold in their proclamation of the Gospel to the world.
- We are called to be the, “meek of God,” serving our Master with all our passions, energies, intelligence, and spirit all under the mastery of Jesus Christ.

Strength focused (meekness) creates **peace**: **Psalm 37:11: But the meek shall inherit the earth, And shall delight** [enjoy] **themselves in the abundance** [a great deal] **of peace**. Peace is enjoyable.

We are **commanded** to be meek: **Ephesians 4:1-2: I** [Paul], **therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech** [beg] **you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness** [meekness], **with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love**. Meekness is connected with patience—perhaps this is why it is so rare in the world.

Illustration: breaking of concrete—with focus (strength under control) is great impact.

True meekness is power under control. We can see that in light of the different ways the Greek *praus* was used. Medicine taken in the proper dosage can be helpful, but an overdose may kill; a domesticated horse is useful but an undomesticated one is destructive; and a gentle breeze cools and soothes, but a hurricane kills.

Thought: Rome conquered the world but the Christians conquered the Roman Empire. Nero tossed and turned in his bed in the royal palace while the Christians slept peacefully in their prison cells. They found the victory in their redemption and their courage was a result of their conviction.

African-American scientist George Washington Carver was standing on a street in Alabama when a white woman came up and asked if he would like to paint her picket fence. He said, “Sure, I’d be happy to.” A few hours later, the woman’s friend came by and recognized the great scientist. She went inside and asked her friend if she knew who was painting her fence. When the homeowner found out who it was, she rushed out in embarrassment and said, “Dr. Carver, I’m so sorry! I thought you were a poor man looking for an odd job! Please forgive me!” The meek inventor replied, “That’s okay, I didn’t have much to do today. I’m very happy to paint your fence.”

None of us is, ‘all that,’ so use what you have for God. **However, are we OK painting fences for God?**

Example of power under control = power outlet. This is self-control.

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Who knows? So many freaks out there doin' their little evil deeds they don't wanna do: "The voices made me do it. My dog made me do it. Jodie Foster told me to do it." [Brad Pitt's character, David Mills, SE7EN]

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Week 4: A Heart That Devises Wicked Plans vs The Pure in Heart

Throughout this lesson, be on the lookout for which of these descriptions best fits your behavior.

A Heart That Devises Wicked Plans (**corrupt heart**)

Proverbs 6:18a: A heart [center of life] that devises [**ploughs**, prepares] **wicked** [troublesome, sorrowful—the root word means to tire because of panting that does not accomplish anything (i.e., running in place)] **plans** [thoughts, devices, intentions, purposes]

“**Devises**” does not imply spontaneity. This is not being presented with an evil option and seizing it. This is premeditated. This is planned. This is thought out in advance. This person is the **brains** behind the evil scheme. The verse does not say this person does wicked things, it says this person plans wicked things. If we were in a comic book, this would be the archenemy—not the street thug. This person is ploughing a field in which wicked seeds will be planted.

What are you preparing for—evil or good? What fields are you preparing to harvest? Some of us sow wild oats and then pray for crop failure, but **Galatians 6:7b** states, “**whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.**”

Now, turn to **Matthew 5** and we will look at the opposite of a corrupt heart.

A Pure Heart (clean heart)

Matthew 5:8: Blessed are the pure [clean—used physically (taking a bath), ethically (doing the right thing), and Levitically (able to fulfill the Mosaic Law)] **in heart** [center of life], **For they shall see God.**

Purity is rewarded with intimacy with God (**they shall see God**). **David Guzik: Ultimately, this intimate relationship with God must become our greatest motivation for purity, greater than a fear of getting caught or a fear of consequences.**

This type of heart must come from God, as we are inherently evil (**Isaiah 64:6: But we are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags**).

This person thinks pure thoughts. **What is pure?** Is 90% pure? Is 99% pure? Is 99.99% pure? Rat poison is 99.99 regular food and 0.001% poison.

Psalm 12:6: The words of the LORD are pure words, Like silver tried in a furnace of earth, Purified seven times.

Psalm 19:8: The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes

Psalm 119:40: Your word is very pure; Therefore Your servant loves it.

Scripture is pure.

How does purity affect our lives?

Titus 1:15: To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled. Your heart will interpret how you perceive **reality**. A corrupt heart sees corruption. A pure/clean heart sees purity.

James 1:27: Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world. Purity is **active**—it is not avoiding life to stay clean, it is engaging life in a clean way.

We have all encountered things that are not pure—things that are ruined when the center (heart) is not pure: a box of assorted **chocolates**; jelly filled donuts; *Holmes on Homes'* houses; spam email; grapes; inner tube on a bike tire; our hearts when we ask the Holy Spirit to reveal every sin.

Jesus' take on the 'outside is great and the inside is not: **Matthew 23:25-28: 25 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence.** [Does your dishwasher ever do this to you? Our kids do the dishes at our house and sometimes they will put cups or bowls in right-side up and the dishes will not be clean and have to be rewashed] **26 Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also.** [Focus on the heart change first and then the outside] **27 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. 28 Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.**

A clean mirror provides an accurate view of reality. A fogged up mirror will not provide an accurate view of reality. When we look into the perfect law of liberty (the Scriptures), we see ourselves for what we really are: either a corrupt heart or a clean heart.

So what is the fundamental thought of this lesson? **Psalm 24:4-5: He who has clean hands and a pure heart, Who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, Nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive blessing from the LORD, And righteousness from the God of his salvation.** The connection between purity and blessing are not a New Testament concept—like so many other things, Jesus pulls out the heart of the Old Testament message of God and makes it plain in His New Testament teachings.

How do you get a clean heart? Ask for it

A prayer for those who want a clean heart: **Psalm 51:10: Create in me a clean heart, O God** [this covers the 'now'], **And renew a steadfast spirit within me** [this covers the 'next'].

There is hope for us as God has done this before in **Ezekiel 36:25-27: 25 Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. 26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.**

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What sick ridiculous puppets we are / and what gross little stage we dance on / Not a care in the world / Not knowing that we are nothing / We are not what was intended. [Kevin Spacey's character, John Doe, SE7EN]

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#3: Hands that shed innocent blood	June 20	The meek: #3
#4: A heart that devises wicked plans	June 27	The pure in heart: #6
#5: Feet that are swift in running to evil	July 4	Those who hunger and thirst: #4
#6: A false witness who speaks lies	July 11	Those who are persecuted: #8
#7: One who sows discord	July 18	The peacemakers: #7

Week 5: Feet That Are Swift in Running to Evil vs Those Who Hunger & Thirst

What are you passionate about? (Table time)

Today's lesson is about passion—it's about the choice that Moses put before the Israelites when he stood on the edge of the promised land and asked them to choose to either follow God or to not follow God. Today's lesson is about looking inside our hearts to see what we are pursuing.

Throughout this lesson, be on the lookout for which of these descriptions best fits your behavior.

Feet That Are Swift in Running to Evil (passion for **evil**)

Proverbs 6:18b: Feet that are swift [make haste, do/prepare quickly] **in running to evil** [bad, evil; anything unpleasant, giving pain or misery, sad, causing injury/calamity/adversity/distress]

Do you know someone who is always quick to run to evil?

John Gill: Those who commit sin . . . with greediness. (sin²)

Matthew Henry: The policy and vigilance, the eagerness and industry, of sinners, in their sinful pursuits, may shame us who go about that which is good so awkwardly and so coldly.

It is a shame that pagans can put Christians to shame with their passion for evil.

What is the result of this passion for evil? **Death** (**Genesis 5:5: So all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years; and he died.**)

The opposite of the passion for evil, is passion for right.

Those Who Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness (passion for **right**)

Matthew 5:6: Blessed are those who hunger [hunger, need, **crave**, seek with eager desire] **and thirst** [to suffer from thirst, to painfully feel their want of something, eager longing] **for righteousness** [the condition acceptable to God—the way man is supposed to be: integrity, virtue, purity, correctly thinking and correctly acting; **How do we know what is right?**], **For they shall be filled** [fed, filled, satisfied—the root word refers to fattening cattle].

David Guzik: We see Christians hungering for many things: power, authority, success, comfort, happiness - but how many hunger and thirst for righteousness?

Hunger and thirst can be felt. We know we are hungry when we feel it. We know we are thirsty when we feel it. **Has anyone ever been hungry for lack of food?**

People who hunger and thirst for food and water are people who are hurting, lacking, and empty. God's design is not for us to hurt. God's design is not for us to lack. God's design is not for us to be empty. There is no mention of hunger or thirst in the Garden of Eden before The Fall. God's design is for us to experience joy and fullness:

Nehemiah 8:10c: the joy of the LORD is your strength.

John 15:11: These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.

John 16:24: Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.

Psalms 16:11: You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Romans 15:13: Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

For me, the underlying theme throughout the beatitudes is this theme of **hope**. We have a hope that things will be made right one day. We have a hope today, as well, though. **Romans 15:13** talks about this power of the Holy Spirit that is available now—this power sustains us when we are hungry and thirsty for righteousness. This is the filling that Jesus promised.

Jesus is the Good Shepherd, right? One of the jobs of the shepherd was to bring the sheep to a place of fullness—to a place where they could be filled. Nobody wants skinny sheep. The shepherd's job was not a one-time assignment, though. It was the shepherd's job **every day** to bring the sheep to a place where they could have their hunger and thirst quenched.

Matthew Henry: The quickened soul calls for constant meals of righteousness, grace to do the work of every day in its day, as duly as the living body calls for food.

What did Jesus say about the water that He offered?

John 4:14: but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.

John 6:35: And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst."

And it is not just that we will be filled, we will be overflowing: **John 7:37-38: On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."** This type of thirst quencher will affect others.

Pursuing righteousness affects others for good. Pursuing evil affects others for bad. The choice is yours.

What is the result of this passion for right? **Life** (**Proverbs 11:19: As righteousness leads to life, So he who pursues evil pursues it to his own death.**)

SE7EN ||| ||| SINS ||| ||| BEATITUDES

I sympathize completely. Apathy is the solution. I mean, it's easier to lose yourself in drugs than it is to cope with life. It's easier to steal what you want than it is to earn it. It's easier to beat a child than it is to raise it. . . . love costs: it takes effort and work. [Morgan Freeman's character, William Somerset, SE7EN]

Introduction

The seven sins

Proverbs 6:16-19: These verses describe a prideful, lying, murderous, wicked, evil person who wants to stir up trouble. **Proverbs 6:16-19** gives us a picture of a **wicked** life.

The Beatitudes

Matthew 5:3-12: To start each beatitude, Jesus gives a promise—“**Blessed.**” The best translation of blessed is happy. **Matthew 5:3-12** gives us a picture of a **happy** life. Current actions create future results.

Schedule

Sins (Proverbs 6:16-19)	&	Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12)
#1: A proud look	June 6	The poor in spirit: #1
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Week 6: A False Witness Who Speaks Lies vs Those Who Are Persecuted

What was the last thing that you lied about? (Table time)

Today's lesson is about telling the truth when it matters—staying true to what God has called us to do when it is not comfortable. One side of this lesson is about lying down into a lie and one side is about standing up for the truth. Throughout this lesson, be on the lookout for which of these descriptions best fits your behavior—do you stand up for truth or do you lie down when it gets hard?

A False Witness Who Speaks Lies (lying down)

Proverbs 6:19a: A false [lie, deception, disappointment, falsehood] witness [witness in court, testimony, evidence] who speaks [breathes, exhales, blows—implying this is a behavior that is constant as breathing] lies [untruth, falsehood, deceptive thing]

Do you know someone who is always quick to shy away from speaking the truth? Someone, who when called on, gives the easy answer or the answer that denies Christ?

The opposite of shying away from the truth when it matters (lying down) is standing up for the cause of Christ. There are a few guarantees in the real Christian life, and persecution is one of them.

Those Who Are Persecuted (standing up)

Rhetorical: Have you ever been persecuted for your faith?

Matthew 5:10-12: Blessed are those who are persecuted [made to run or flee, to drive away, to pursue in a hostile manner, to harass, to trouble] for righteousness' sake [the same word used in **Matthew 5:6** in last week's lesson; the condition acceptable to God—the way man is supposed to be: integrity, virtue, purity, correctly thinking and correctly acting], For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. **11** "Blessed are you when they revile [upbraid, the root word means to shame] and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil [literally, speech that causes pain] against you falsely [lying deliberately to deceive] for My sake [account, cause]. **12** Rejoice [an imperative meaning to be glad, to be happy, to thrive] and be exceedingly glad [literally, leap much], for great [large] is your reward [wages, payment] in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. The result of obedience is persecution.

Terry Bolden

It is interesting to note that the other beatitudes are one verse long, but this concept stretches over three verses. Is this an accident? No, but perhaps this beatitude requires more reassurance than the others because it is so personal—it is such an assault on Christ Himself and on us directly.

Merriam-Webster's dictionary definition of persecution: to harass or punish in a manner designed to injure, grieve, or afflict; specifically: to cause to suffer because of belief

Happy when we are persecuted? Really? You might think, "I don't want that kind of happiness. After all, God wants me to be joyful and bless me with a life of comfort and ease—that's real happiness.

Psalm 37:4 says, "Delight yourself also in the LORD, And He shall give you the desires of your heart." The focus on Christ and His way comes first.

In all of the previous beatitudes, behavior and action are involved or produced in order for us to be more like Christ. In the last beatitude, an action is performed against us because of this righteousness. The attitudes and actions in all the previous beatitudes are contrary to what the world believes and the way they act. We do not always see or experience that because we are predominantly isolated and insulated here in Chattanooga (baseball parents from Wisconsin). I really believe God is saying here, if you act/ behave this way, you will be persecuted. Why would I say that?

Who suffers persecution? Matthew 10:22: And you will be hated by all for My name's sake

2 Timothy 3:10-12: But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, 11 persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured [This persecution was during Paul's first missionary journey—in Antioch, they were run out; in Iconium, they were nearly stoned and then run out; in Lystra, they were stoned and dragged out of the city as dead]. **And out of them all the Lord delivered me. 12 Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus** [not, 'all pastors,' 'all missionaries,' 'all who live godly'] **will suffer persecution.** Nevertheless, in **Acts 14:21-22**, they returned to these cities because Jesus is worth it and the Gospel is that important.

John 15:20-21: Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also. 21 But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me. Persecution is part of the Christian life—it is not optional (i.e., no 'opting out').

Response to the trip to Israel

Bad parents, grandma, danger, offense at us asking for money to fund our vacation, go somewhere safer, etc.

How would you have responded to that? I went through the gamut of emotions (hurt, anger, revenge, hurt, eventually joy). What should our response be? At the time, we were told to file the letters and count it as joy that we were being persecuted for Christ's name. They had clearly hurt or bruised us. We did this, but while studying for this lesson I realized we forgot one thing: **Romans 12:14: Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.** Therefore, before I could continue I had to write the following letter.

My letter

This took many hours and help from those I greatly respect to complete. I had to go over the letter a good dozen times, writing and re-writing.

Thank you for your concern for my family and me this past summer. I apologize for not writing sooner, but do not want to delay this any longer. Your concern for our well-being and safety, as well as your concern that we do the right thing was very moving. I wanted to share what happened because of our obedience to God's command to "Go!"

First, I wanted to apologize for making it sound like I wanted your money. In hindsight, I should have done multiple letters. I sent only one version out, for some because I knew they would want to help us to go, but for most (especially family) just to know our plans and in the hope that they would pray for us and for our trip.

God did some pretty amazing things last summer. We took your concerns for Grandma to heart and had many people from our church constantly looking in on Grandma and attend to her needs.

Several still look in on her today (almost one year later) and one sweet lady calls daily and visits twice a week. That has been a real blessing and we want to thank you for pushing us on this matter.

God also did great works with our kids. They helped us on many aspects of getting food and blankets to the poor. Israel has the highest percentage of poor of any modern nation. Many of their people give up everything to return to their homeland. The kids also got to study the Bible in the land where it took place. This has and will continue to put roots to their beliefs. They had lots of fun and made several new friends, too. Many have requested that we (including the kids) return soon. Most of these experiences will never be forgotten. A special highlight was that all of us received the blessing of taking part in a Burmese wedding. Kristen, specifically, played the piano for a Philippine ladies quartet, during this Burmese wedding, in the land of Israel. How cool is that?

God also provided many opportunities to teach, preach, and share the Word of God through many avenues. We were so honored that He would use us in such a manner and that many responses are still being heard of today. Everyone in the family has stated they would like to go back, and if God permits and provides we would be humbled to go, so that He would be honored.

I want to close thanking you again for your interest, concern, and prayers. Please pray that God will again choose to show us great favor, by using us as He wishes and for His glory. You will continue to be on our prayer list for your financial needs and that God will bless you as much as He has us!

My prayer is that, **The LORD bless you and keep you; The LORD make His face shine upon you, And be gracious to you; The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, And give you peace.** ([Numbers 6:24-26](#))

With all of our love,

Terry, Trish, Kristen, Jonathon, Simone, Stephen

Conclusion

An interesting point about this beatitude is that we are guaranteed joy in the midst of the persecution and after the persecution is over—future and present joy.

Peter and John rejoiced in having suffered for the name of Christ ([Acts 5:41](#)). Paul and Silas, bleeding and shackled in the Philippian prison, sang praises ([Acts 16:25](#)). There are multiple stories of this same response. It seems like it should be the farthest thing from us when we suffer persecution, but I happily can contest that it is not. Why? **1 Peter 4:13-14: but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. 14 If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified.** God's Spirit was upon us and our trip last year. He did a great work and I believe we were fortunate enough to be there to see and experience it. It was not at all about us.

2 Corinthians 4:5-18: For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake. 6 For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness,

who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. 8 We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed— 10 always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. 11 For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. 12 So then death is working in us, but life in you.

13 And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I believed and therefore I spoke," we also believe and therefore speak, 14 knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present us with you. 15 For all things are for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God.

16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. 17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, 18 while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

These verses did not really resonate with me until this past year. It was at the beginning of this trip we experienced the blessing of persecution and looking back we really did (and still do) recognize it as a blessing as well as a source of joy that we were able to suffer persecution, albeit small, for His name. This as well as all of the beatitudes allows us to deal with the now, all the while recognizing a guaranteed hope. We have a bright and glorious future in Christ.

This would have sounded so strange to me if it had been said by anyone more than a year ago, but I do wish the **blessing** of persecution upon all of you.

SE7EN ||| ||| SINS ||| ||| BEATITUDES

I just don't think I can continue to live in a place that embraces and nurtures apathy as if it was virtue. [Morgan Freeman's character, William Somerset, SE7EN]

Introduction

The seven sins

Proverbs 6:16-19: These verses describe a prideful, lying, murderous, wicked, evil person who wants to stir up trouble. **Proverbs 6:16-19** gives us a picture of a **wicked** life.

The Beatitudes

Matthew 5:3-12: To start each beatitude, Jesus gives a promise—"Blessed." The best translation of blessed is happy. **Matthew 5:3-12** gives us a picture of a **happy** life. Current actions create future results. Current engagement brings future hope.

Schedule

Sins (Proverbs 6:16-19)	&	Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12)
#1: A proud look (looking high)	June 6	The poor in spirit: #1 (looking low)
#2: A lying tongue (hiding pain)	June 13	Those who mourn: #2 (acknowledging pain)
#3: Hands that shed innocent blood (strength out of control)	June 20	The meek: #3 (strength under control)
#4: A heart that devises wicked plans (corrupt heart)	June 27	The pure in heart: #6 (clean heart)
#5: Feet that are swift in running to evil (passion for evil)	July 4	Those who hunger and thirst: #4 (passion for right)
#6: A false witness who speaks lies (lying down)	July 11	Those who are persecuted: #8 (standing up)
#7: One who sows discord (making enemies)	July 18	The peacemakers: #7 (making peace)

David Guzik: The character traits described in the Beatitudes are not valued by our modern culture. We don't recognize or give awards to the "Most Pure in Heart" or "Most Poor in Spirit."

Week 7: One Who Sows Discord Among Brethren vs The Peacemakers

When was the last time you saw a physical fight between two adults? (Table time)

Today's lesson is about how we engage others. It is about the purposeful (or accidental) way that we approach relationship and community. Relationship is vital to the spreading of the Gospel. Without Christians banding together, community is impossible and relationships are nonexistent. When we are working for peace instead of against it, much more is accomplished for the cause of Christ.

Rhetorical: So, which side are you on? Is your goal to foster unity or division? Today's passages give us two roads that diverge to two different destinations. Which one will you choose?

One Who Sows Discord Among Brethren (making enemies)

Proverbs 6:19b: One who sows [sends out, casts out, lets go, shoot out—used of sowing seeds since this was written to an agrarian society] **discord** [strife, contention, the root word means pleading your case before a judge—implying two **opposing** sides] **among brethren** [brothers, relatives].

The clearest and simplest application of this verse is someone in your family who stirs up trouble and tries to set brother against brother. Most of us have someone in our family that likes to set relative against relative. This discord sower is generally the person you try to avoid at family reunions. This person is the opposite of **Hebrews 10:24: And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works.**

This person does not accidentally get the facts wrong. This person's **goal** is contention. Anybody can mix things up and erroneously cause a problem—that is called being human. The discord sower turns brother against brother. The discord sower plants something small hoping that it will grow into something large. When a farmer plants a seed in the ground, the farmer does not want the seed to get smaller and die—he wants the seed to get bigger and grow and produce fruit. The same is true with the discord sower—this is an intentional (and personal) attempt to grow discord.

Sadly, you would think that this only happens outside the church in the pagan world, but it happens all too often with Christian brothers and sisters as well. So, what should we be doing, you ask?

The Peacemakers (making peace)

Matthew 5:9: Blessed are the peacemakers [people who make peace—one of the root words means to make or to do—implying intentional **action** toward a desired outcome], **For they shall be called** [called, named—the idea is branded—this is the only beatitude where the outcome is labeling or branding] **the sons of God** [part of the family of God].

What peacemaking is not

Peacemaking is not hoping for peace. Peacemaking is not wishing for peace. Peacemaking is not praying for peace. Do not get me wrong, hoping for peace, wishing for peace, and praying for peace are good things (we are even commanded to pray for the peace of Jerusalem in **Psalms 122:6a**).

Specifically, we are **not** called to reconcile God and man—Jesus did that (**Isaiah 9:6f** says He is the, “**Prince of Peace,**” and **Ephesians 2:14** says that Jesus, “**Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation**”). We are called to point men to that reconciliation through a proclamation of the Gospel. However, that is not peacemaking.

What peacemaking is

Peacemaking is working for peace. Peacemaking in **Matthew 5:9** is reconciling **man** to **man**.

David Guzik: [Peacemakers] **share His passion for peace and reconciliation, the breaking down of walls between people. 2 Corinthians 5:18: Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation.** People ask me all the time, “Jim, what ministry can I get involved in at SHBC?” I think I am going to start answering, “the ministry of knocking down walls.” Are you aware of a wall? Go work on tearing it apart. Peacemakers work to tear apart **walls**.

Do not be confused, though—this is not an easy ministry. It is difficult. **A. T. Robertson: It is hard enough to keep the peace. It is still more difficult to bring peace where it is not.**

The greatest resource that we have in this ministry of reconciliation is the fact that God is a God of peace. **Romans 15:33: Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen. 2 Corinthians 13:11b: Be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.**

When the United Nations sends in troops to an area, they are typically called, ‘peacekeepers’ (perhaps the worst definition in the history of mankind). Troops are not required to keep peace. Peace is binary—it exists or it does not exist. If you are not sure it exists, then it does not exist.

Rhetorical: What are we actively doing to make peace exist where it does not right now?

Peacemakers act. Peacemakers get involved. Peacemakers recognize with Donald Miller in *Blue Like Jazz*, that, “**Something was broken in the world and we were supposed to hold our palms against the wound.**” Peacemaking is messy. Peacemaking can get ugly. Peacemaking is personal because it involves people. Peacemaking is caring enough about humanity to **stop** sowing discord and **start** sowing peace. If a relationship has come to your mind that you need to work on, then go to work.

However, peacemaking is also very enjoyable. If you have ever been on the other side of peacemaking when it was successful, then you know there is a deep satisfaction that comes from knowing that God used you to further His cause on the earth. Peacemakers are happy people. Bringing people together that were at odds and working towards peace is invigorating and exciting.

Rhetorical: What are we actively doing to make peace exist where it does not right now?

Conclusion

The great theme of these lessons on the sins and the beatitudes for me is one of active, current engagement that results in a present happiness and future hope. God wants to use us to make a difference today that will last for an eternity and the choice is ours.