

Lesson 4

Blessed are Those Who Hunger and Thirst After Righteousness

The fourth Beatitude is the first Beatitude that not only lists the quality we are to have, but also the passion with which we are to desire that quality and the promise that we will be blessed, or happy, if we do so. It is important to remember: we are not to hunger and thirst after happiness but after righteousness, and we will be blessed and happy as a result of our pursuing the character God desires of us.

1. Read Matthew 5:1-12 then record Matthew 5:6.

2. Read and record Luke 6:21a.

3. Make note of any differences or similarities between these two verses.

In order to truly understand this Beatitude, we must understand what *righteousness is and how we are to achieve it*.

4. Use a standard dictionary to look up and record the definition of the word *righteous*.

Vines Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words defines *righteousness* as: “whatever is right or just in itself, whatever conforms to the revealed will of God.” The biblical definition given in the *Strong’s Concordance* is: “integrity, virtue, purity of life, rightness, correctness of thinking, feeling, and acting.”

5. What is the difference between these two definitions (standard dictionary and Vines) and the biblical one (*Strong’s Concordance*)?

6. Describe how you think the previous three Beatitudes lead to this fourth one?

7. Record any differences you notice about this Beatitude in comparison to the first three.

The others (Beatitudes) have been causing us to look at ourselves and to examine ourselves; here we begin to look for a solution... for the deliverance from self for which we long.

- Dr. Martyn Lloyd Jones

8. Read Matthew 16:24. What is the first step to being delivered from self? Is this an easy thing to do?

9. Would being poor in spirit, mournful, and meek be helpful in self-denial? Explain why.

When we deny ourselves, we can then pursue the things of God.

10. Read Romans 3:10 and record the verse.

This is very sobering. We are told that **no one** is righteous.

11. Read 1 John 1:9. What must we do to be cleansed from our unrighteousness?

12. Read Ezra 9:15, Psalm 11:7, and Zephaniah 3:5. Who is truly righteous?

13. Read Philippians 3:9. How can we attain righteousness?

14. Read Deuteronomy 6:24-25. What did God require from His people as evidence of true faith and submission to Him? Describe how this requires denial of self.

15. Read Romans 4:3. What made Abraham righteous?

If one was able to keep the law perfectly in thought and action, then righteousness could be obtained. However, our ability to keep the law perfectly is impossible. Therefore, we need the perfect sacrifice of Jesus and true faith in Him that is made evident by obedience to be counted as righteous.

16. Read Romans 3:28 and use *blueletterbible.org* to look up the word *justified*. Record the definition(s).

17. Using what we learn of Abraham in Romans 4, write out the process of being counted as righteous. Personalize the process with your own story.

When we simply believe, we are counted righteous; and we are justified! Justification is a one-time event. The next step is sanctification. Jesus didn't say, "Blessed are those who *are* righteous." He said, "Blessed are those who *hunger and thirst* for righteousness." Jesus' statement urges us that the **pursuit** of righteousness is what will result in blessedness.

We are justified at the time of salvation when we first believe. Sanctification, however, is a continual process; it is the process of becoming holy through spiritual growth and maturity.

18. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:23. Who is it that completes the work of sanctification in us?

19. Read John 17:17 and Hebrews 10:10. Through what are we sanctified?

20. Read Colossians 3:5 and 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8. What are the things listed in these verses that we should avoid in order to be sanctified?

21. Read Colossians 1:10 and 2 Peter 3:18. What do these verses teach us about our role and cooperation in the sanctification process?

22. How do we grow? How do we attain holiness? How do we find the strength to live in obedience? Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17 and record the answer to these questions.

This is sanctification: Growth. Obedience. Holiness.

But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.

- 1 Timothy 6:11

23. Read 1 Timothy 6:9-10. From what things we are supposed to flee?

24. Now read Ephesians 4:31 and list the traits we are called to put away.

25. Think about these traits. Do any of these have a hold on you?

26. If so, how can you apply Matthew 16:24 to these struggles? How can you apply 1 Timothy 6:11?

Jesus is telling us in Matthew 5:6 that we will find true happiness when we continue in righteousness; and to continue, is to hunger and thirst after it.

27. What does it mean, in a practical sense, to hunger and thirst?

28. Use *blueletterbible.org* to look up the word *hunger* from Matthew 5:6 and record the last definition (this can be found in the 'Outline of Biblical Usage' box).

29. Now use *blueletterbible.org* to look up the word *thirst* from Matthew 5:6 and record the last definition (this can be found in the 'Outline of Biblical Usage' box).

We learn from these definitions that to *hunger and thirst* in Matthew 5:6 is figurative and metaphoric. To hunger and thirst shows evidence of life, it shows an appetite.

All people have appetites for things they value. People can crave just one more “like” on social media, pets, sports, politics, or exercising. We all know people who love to work out. These are the people who talk about the gym, take pictures at the gym, and plan their lives around their gym schedule. When we meet them, they are memorable because we know what is important to them: they love to break a sweat. Shouldn't we as Christians also stand out? People should know us and know what we are passionate about. Wanting to stand out in this world begins by looking deeper at our appetites. Do we crave the things of God or the things of this world?

Our appetites are a predictor of our health. We have all read the articles, seen the news stories, even heard from our own doctors that the food we eat affects our health. If we eat things that are good for us, we will stay healthy. If we eat food with poor nutritional values, it can lead to serious health issues and even death. The same is true in our spiritual walk. The unsaved have an appetite for sin, for things that will ultimately lead to spiritual death. As Christians we should have an appetite for righteousness, for obedience, for holiness; and we should have a desire to grow. If we crave the things of God, we keep our spirits healthy!

Is being hungry and thirsty a one-time event? Of course not! Neither is hungering and thirsting for righteousness.

A Character Study - David

David was the youngest son of Jesse. He grew up during the reign of Israel's king, Saul. When he was still quite young, he was anointed to be the next king of Israel. His rise to the throne, however, would take fifteen plus years. David is often referred to as “a man

after God's own heart" because of his hunger and thirst for righteousness. Let's take a deeper look at some of the moments where his hunger and thirst were clearly displayed. In 1 Samuel 17, the Philistines had gathered their armies for battle against the men of Israel. However, rather than risk both armies in a massive battle, they agreed it was better to have the battle decided by a fight to the death by one man from each side. For the past 40 days, the Philistines had sent forth their champion, a giant, who was waiting for someone to come forward and fight him. Jesse sent David to the front lines to bring his brothers food and to get a report of the battle.

30. Read 1 Samuel 17:20-32. Contrast David's reaction to Goliath with that of his own brothers.

31. Read 1 Samuel 17:45-47. What was David's motive in offering to fight Goliath?

David hungered and thirsted for God's might and worth to be known. Knowing David had been anointed as the next king of Israel, the current King, Saul, vowed to kill David to protect his own throne. After having been on the run for many years, David had an opportunity to kill Saul. He could have justified it by stating that he was to be the next king and Saul was not following after God, but David chose differently.

32. Read 1 Samuel 24:1-7. What did David do instead of taking Saul's life?

33. How did David feel about what he had done?

34. What reason does David give for his feelings? (v. 6)

David demonstrated his hunger and thirst for righteousness in his recognition of God's sovereignty by waiting on God to decide when to remove one and raise up another. David, however, was far from perfect. After becoming king, he sins grievously when he takes another man's wife and tries to cover it up by having her husband killed in battle. David is confronted with his sin by the prophet, Nathan. Psalm 51 records the prayer of David following his sin with Bathsheba.

35. Read Psalm 51 and record the phrases that reflect his hunger and thirst for righteousness.

Take a moment to read Psalm 63:1-8 out loud as your personal prayer to God.

36. Read Psalm 42:1-2a and describe the fervency we should have for the Lord.

37. Read Philippians 4:8 and record on what we should meditate on. Whom do these verses describe?

38. If this is on what we are supposed to meditate on, on what should we **not** meditate on?

To hunger and thirst for righteous, is to pursue the things of God. It is to continue in the things of God.

39. Today, what do you hunger and thirst for most (metaphorically speaking)? Be honest.

40. What should we hunger and thirst for? (Be specific, don't just answer *righteousness* 😊)

41. Read Psalm 15 and record the outcome of a sanctified life.

42. Read the following verses and record more results of a righteous life:

Proverbs 21:3

Isaiah 32:17

Matthew 6:33

43. In Matthew 5:6, Jesus tells us the benefits of righteousness in Matthew 5:6. What does He promise to those who pursue sanctification and hunger and thirst after righteousness?

The word *filled* is also a figurative word. It means to fulfill or satisfy the desire of anyone.

If God creates a hunger and thirst in the soul, it is that He may satisfy it.
- Arthur W. Pink

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.

~ John 6:35

44. Read Psalm 37:4. What must we do?

Deny yourself and delight in Him, in who He is, in His Holiness, and in His great sacrifice for you, then your desires will be satisfied. The most amazing thing will happen when we surrender our life in obedience to Him. When we pursue holiness, what He delights in becomes what we delight in!

Oh, how happy and blessed we will be when we are filled with the goodness of God!

Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

~ 1 Peter 1:8-9 ESV

Happy is the one who hungers and thirsts for righteousness!

45. Spend some time reviewing this week's material and then summarize what have you learned about *hungering and thirsting after righteousness*.

46. Are there any changes you will make as a result of this study?
