

Matthew 5:1-12 (NLT) - One day as he saw the crowds gathering, Jesus went up on the mountainside and sat down. His disciples gathered around him, ²and he began to teach them. ³“God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs. ⁴God blesses those who mourn, for they will be comforted. ⁵God blesses those who are humble, for they will inherit the whole earth. ⁶God blesses those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they will be satisfied. ⁷God blesses those who are merciful, for they will be shown mercy. ⁸God blesses those whose hearts are pure, for they will see God. ⁹God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God. ¹⁰God blesses those who are persecuted for doing right, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs. ¹¹God blesses you when people mock you and persecute you and lie about you and say all sorts of evil things against you because you are my followers. ¹²Be happy about it! Be very glad! For a great reward awaits you in heaven. And remember, the ancient prophets were persecuted in the same way.”

Matthew 5:43-48 (NLT) - “You have heard the law that says, ‘Love your neighbor’ and hate your enemy. ⁴⁴But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you! ⁴⁵In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven. For he gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and the unjust alike. ⁴⁶If you love only those who love you, what reward is there for that? Even corrupt tax collectors do that much. ⁴⁷If you are kind only to your friends, how are you different from anyone else? Even pagans do that. ⁴⁸But you are to be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.”

1. The character of a kingdom reflects the King.

John 15:1-8 (NLT) - “I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener. ²He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn’t produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more. ³You have already been pruned and purified by the message I have given you. ⁴Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me. ⁵Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶Anyone who does not remain in me is thrown away like a useless branch and withers. Such branches are gathered into a pile to be burned. ⁷But if you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted! ⁸When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples. This brings great glory to my Father.”

Galatians 5:16-26 (NLT) - “So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won’t be doing what your sinful nature craves. ¹⁷The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, so you are not free to carry out your good intentions. ¹⁸But when you are directed by the Spirit, you are not under obligation to the law of Moses. ¹⁹When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, ²⁰idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, ²¹envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God. ²²But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things! ²⁴Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there. ²⁵Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit’s leading in every part of our lives. ²⁶Let us not become conceited, or provoke one another, or be jealous of one another.”

2. Character is a consequence of connection.

Study Guide

1. This last Sunday we talked about the Character of the Kingdom. One of the things we referenced was that the character of the kingdom reflects the king, and that our character is to reflect the character of God. When we took a moment to reflect on our character, what were some areas where you feel you may not be reflecting the King?
2. We also spoke about the reality that character is a consequence of connection, and that the way we change our character is not just through hard work, but by deepening our connection with God.
3. Take a moment to read Ephesians 4:17-24
4. Take a moment to think about putting on the new nature you have been given and the restoring of our mind through salvation. What is an example from your life of how you think differently now? What is an example of how your nature or character has changed?
5. God is doing a great work in all of us, and we have the opportunity to be continually refined by staying in connection with Him.
6. Wrap up your time together by praying for each other that you would deepen your connection with God and that the Holy Spirit would continue to bear great fruit through your life as you walk with Him.