



## Sermon Discussion Guide

### THE REALITY CHOICE

Life's Healing Choices: The Beatitudes – Part 1

“I don't understand what I do. For what I want to do I don't do, but what I hate to do, I do! ...I know that nothing good lives in my sinful nature. I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.” Romans 7:15,18 (NIV)

In life it seems that once we solve one problem another one pops up. The same is true for our temptations and sins. They just keep popping up. Even if we have been a follower of Christ for a long time, when we think we have an issue settled Satan attacks us in another area. Self-help books and tapes tell us how to solve problems faster. God's Word tells us how to cut off the power source of the problems. We all have a sin nature. Even the Apostle Paul acknowledged the struggle, as we see in the verse at the top. All of us can relate to what Paul wrote. The list below gives some of the problem areas that keep popping up in peoples' lives. Take a moment to circle the areas that are in your life now. Keep these in mind as you work through the study and how you can address these problems based on your discussions with the group.

<i>Stress</i>	<i>Diet</i>	<i>Finances</i>
<i>Fears</i>	<i>Worry</i>	<i>Relationships</i>
<i>My overwork</i>	<i>Bad habits</i>	<i>Painful memories</i>
<i>Attractions</i>	<i>Anger</i>	<i>Perfectionism</i>
<i>Addiction</i>	<i>Dishonesty</i>	<i>Resentment</i>
<i>Regrets</i>	<i>Need to control</i>	<i>Compulsive thoughts</i>

This series will spend the next eight weeks looking at the Beatitudes, Jesus' solutions for the problems that affect our lives. This week, we will look at the problem of us wanting to play God, and the choices we need to make to face the reality that we are not God.

**OPEN YOUR GROUP WITH A PRAYER. THIS IS ONLY A GUIDE – SELECT THE POINTS YOU WANT TO DISCUSS.**

### THE CAUSE: PLAYING GOD

According to Ezekiel 28:2, what does the pride of our heart cause us to say?

- Why do you think it is important for believers to acknowledge the truth about themselves?
- How is it harder for us to accept wisdom from God when we think we are “as wise as a god”?

What does God give to those who are poor in spirit according to Matthew 5:3?

- To be blessed is to receive real happiness, bliss and divine reward from God. Why is it important for believers to seek God's blessing?
- Poor in spirit is defined as “spiritually helpless”; how does the following statement from Celebrate Recovery speak to this truth about our spiritual condition?

I ADMIT I need help; that I'm powerless to control my tendency to do the wrong things and that my life is unmanageable.

**Worship** – Proverbs 29:23 says “A man's pride brings him low, but a man of lowly spirit gains honor.” We all try to play God by attempting to control our image, other people, our problems, and our pain. Why do you feel the need to be in control? What are some ways you try to control your image, your problems, your pain, or other people?



### 1. HUMBLY ADMIT I NEED HELP.

According to James 4:6, who does it say God opposes? Who does God give grace to?

- If we recognize that we exist in a broken world, why is it so hard for people to give up their pride and admit they need help?
- Humble people receive God's special blessing of grace. What does it look like if one humbles himself before God?
- Why does growth begin with admitting you are not in control?

Read Proverbs 28:13. What does this verse say about people who try to hide their sins and about those that confess them?

- I'm broken: How can we recognize that in a broken world, I can be broken too?
- My secrets make me sick: When you hide a hurt, sin, or fear, why would the Bible state you will never succeed?
- I must admit it to defeat it: What burdens are removed when you admit your sin?
- My pride and my fear keep me stuck: Describe how people never progress because of their need to be in control. What ultimately do they need to do to fix their pain?

**Fellowship** – We have learned that to be poor in spirit is to admit humbly my failures in order to defeat them. Spend a moment to privately write down any areas you need help with. Think of a few people in your life this week who you can begin sharing honestly and humbly with.

### 2. HUMBLY ASK GOD FOR HELP.

What is good about a person's powerlessness in 2 Corinthians 1:9?

- List a variety of ways Paul could be referring to his own powerlessness to help himself.
- What are our usual reactions when we are faced with a difficult situation we don't have the resources to deal with?
- What do you think Paul means, that powerlessness was “good”?

Read Matthew 5:3 and observe when there is more of God's rule.

- When does a person experience blessing according to this verse?
- Why does the verse indicate less is more when it comes to God's rule?

**Worship** – He is the God of resurrection, and he can raise a marriage up from the dead. He can do the same for a career, or your relationship with your kids. What is it in your life that you are powerless to change? What is keeping you from humbly asking God for help in the out of control areas of your life?

### 3. HUMBLY ACCEPT HELP FROM OTHERS.

After you read Ecclesiastes 4:9-10, discuss why it says two are better than one.

- In what ways does God show us that working together is important?
- What gets in the way of people getting along and working together?

What are the steps to healing listed in James 5:16?

- God could heal us if he wanted to. Why do you think he makes us so that we need each other?
- What is the benefit of confessing to one another for healing?

**Fellowship** – When we hold in our issues we let them fester inside, but when we confess them God can begin the healing process. We all have a longing for belonging, so this is one way to stand beside each other on the road to spiritual wellness. Pride is a big road block that can keep us from opening up to one another, but healing is more important than being alone in your problems. Agree to meet with someone in your small group and have a weekly time of accountability.



Take a moment to review any assignments/challenges made during the personal application and commitment section of your previous meeting. Seeing God at work in the lives of those who commit to Him is essential for growth.

#### PERSONAL APPLICATION AND COMMITMENT:

*“When we were unable to help ourselves, at the moment of our need, Christ died for us...”  
Romans 5:6 (NCV)*

How bad does it have to get before you get help? Are you ready to admit you need help, ask God for help, and accept help from others? Jesus died on the cross to provide what we can't, the grace to be able to change. Spend some time reading God's Word to help you face your problems this week. Then choose at least one person whom you trust to share your hurts, habits, and hang-ups. Healing can begin when you share your feelings with another person.



### Sermon Discussion Guide Leader Notes

#### Ground Rules for the Life's Healing Choices Series

- Consider splitting up into gender-specific groups for your discussion time. Save the purpose questions (i.e., Mission, Worship, Fellowship, Discipleship, and Ministry) and selected bullet points (at the discretion of the group leader) to answer during this time. After splitting into gender-specific groups, review the following guidelines:
  1. Keep your sharing focused on your own thoughts and feelings.
  2. Each person is free to express feelings without interruption.
  3. We are here to support one another. We will not attempt to fix one another.
  4. Privacy and confidentiality are basic requirements. What is shared in the group stays in the group. The only exception is when someone threatens to harm themselves or others.

#### Goals for this Week's Study

- Icebreaker question to begin your group: Name things you know you shouldn't do, but end up doing anyway (i.e., Stay up late when you know you need sleep, exercise but don't, etc.)
- Today's goal is to admit our powerlessness before God, our tendency to do wrong and that we need help.
- Closing prayer: Heavenly Father, we live in a fallen world in which we are fallen and sinful. Help us to recognize humbly before you that we are not God and really are powerless. Help us to know through your grace as we admit our sin that we can begin to grow in you and shed control of our image, our need to control others, and our need to control our problems and pain. Help us each day to admit our weakness and through a humble heart receive the full strength of your grace.

#### Preparing to Lead Your Group

- ✓ **PRAY** for insight as you begin to prepare for leading your group. Ask for God's wisdom, that the Holy Spirit will be the teacher and that you will be God's instrument to lead the group to greater understanding and a willingness to commit to becoming more like God. Prayer should be your primary source of personal preparation for leading your group.
- ✓ **PLAN** where you want to take your group in the next 60-90 days. Is your group strong in some areas and weak in others? How can you challenge the members to live more balanced Christian lives? Consider God's five purposes for the church: Fellowship, Discipleship, Ministry, Mission and Worship, and make a plan to encourage your group members to growth and commitment in their weak areas.
- ✓ **PONDER YOUR PROGRESS** after each session and at the end of a series. Reflect on what went well and what didn't. Re-evaluation is key to your growth as a leader. Consider whether your plan is being effective in moving the group to greater understanding and commitment. How are you doing with leading the discussion: is it stimulating, challenging, and meaningful? Are you able to keep the group on track? Do you need to make some changes?

#### Using This Sermon Discussion Guide

- This Sermon Discussion Guide is only a tool to aid you in meeting the needs of your group. For most groups there are too many questions to answer in one session together. After considering the needs of your group you may choose one of the following options:
  - One section of questions
  - One or two questions from each section
- Feel free to adapt the format to meet the needs of your group. If your group is mature and wants to dig deeper, add Scripture and ask suitable questions. Remember that this is only a guide.
- The questions relating to the five purposes are helpful to develop balance and spiritual maturity in our lives. You can bring your group to an awareness of their needs in these areas by using these questions as a regular part of each discussion.
- Personal application is key to everyone's growth and should be included in every discussion. When asked how he or she intends to apply a certain principle, a group member may say, "I need to spend more time in the Bible and in prayer." It is important for you to help group members make applications that are more specific and commit to a specific plan of action by asking, for example, "How are you going to begin?" An example is to get up 30 minutes earlier each morning, spending 15 minutes reading the Bible and 10 minutes in prayer. Encourage each group member to be accountable to the group for personal progress at the next meeting.
- As the leader your goal is to help bring the group into a stimulating discussion that helps the members recognize their need for personal life change. Ultimately you want them to be willing to commit to change with accountability to the group. Accountability helps us to persevere in our commitments and achieve the blessings of success.