



2023 Bible Classes & Devotionals

Introduction

I know it's been a while since we sang *Away in a Manger*; but have you ever just sat and thought of the splendor, grandeur and royalty of Jesus...to the end that one day every knee will bow and every day should bow? {Take a minute or ten and explore this thought.}

And yet. Jesus said, *"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."* (Matthew 20:20-28 and Mark 10:35-45). Every aspect of Jesus, who, remember, is the exact representation of God, displays, dare I say, spews, humility: his birth, his questions, his obedience, his wait, his sufferings, his interactions, his teachings, his posture before the Father, his attitude towards the Law, to name just a few. {Can you make your own list?} And yet. Nowhere in scripture or secular writings has Jesus ever displayed the loss of humility (pride)—be sure not to confuse confidence with pride; if you do, you may want to define confidence as a proportion of humility and reconsider. Nor has he ever displayed feelings or thoughts of inferiority or unworthiness—be sure not to equate nothingness with value.

How is it, then, that Jesus could think, feel and act in such a way? Is his life the very essence of this one aspect of love? Can we love in the same way with the absence of pride in all its self-serving manifestations? What must our mind and heart be filled with in order to love this consistently and deeply? How does making comparisons with other people affect our ability to love? Jesus is the author and perfecter of our faith; he is our

example. What in his character leads us to the answers to these questions? Answer: nothing.

Yes. Nothing. He left the heavenly palace and became nothing (Philippians 2). He spoke about nothing: just reflect on his words, the 'nothing' and 'not' statements, in the book of John (5:19, 5:30, 5:41, 6:38, 7:16, 7:28, 8:28, 8:42, 8:50, 14:10, 14:24). His simple consent to let God be all led to a humble existence. He lost nothing by giving all to God; therefore, he could love sincerely unencumbered by comparison, inferiority, worry, fear, or the desire for the praise of men and his material belongings. And since Jesus humbled himself this completely, he was free to love as completely. And God honored his trust by meeting all his needs.

I am by nature deeply insecure and daily face my fears of failing; with men I strive not to compare and with women not to disappoint. The little boy in me never felt he got enough (is that possible?)...not enough material things, mind you, but enough affirmation and value. These are impediments to my ability to love sincerely and serve others; to allow others to receive the honors. Lao Tzu, the founder of Taoism said, *"A leader [read servant] is best when people barely know he exists, when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will say: 'we did it ourselves.'"* Jesus paves the way with his love and humility. He believes in you and me to carry on his work (Philippians 1:6). He chose you and me (Ephesians 1:3-14) to do more than he did (John 14:12) and to be more than conquerors (Romans 8:37). Amazing! Are you kidding me?! So what's the key not to turn that into a worldly pursuit of power and prestige? Nothingness. The kind that comes from complete humility (Ephesians 4:2). It is mine and your one need. It is the heart of Jesus as seen when the disciples argued who should be the greatest, when he saw how much the Pharisees loved the chief seats, and when he washed the disciples feet. It's what

Paul, who learned it from Jesus, wrote to the disciples in Rome (Romans 12:10,16), in Corinth (Corinthians 13:4-5), in Galatia (Galatians 5:26), in Ephesus (Ephesians 4:1-3), in Philippi (Philippians 2:3-8) and in Colosse (Colossians 3:12-13).

Andrew Murray in his book, Humility: The Beauty of Holiness, stated, *“Our humility before God only has value inasmuch as it prepares us to reveal the humility [love] of Jesus to our fellow man.”* So it is within the interactions of my fellow man, the ways I express love to brothers and sisters, that my humbleness can be observed and measured. And within this portal lies the extent of my love and God-likeness; the perceptible space by which I am a royal priesthood, an ambassador of love, and an emissary of the Father. Nothing leads me to something which eventually leads me to everything. Per Murray, therefore, the humble, loving person “feels no jealousy or envy, praises God when others are favored, bears with the failings of others, values death of self, poverty of spirit, meekness, humility, and lowliness and asks himself, other believers, and the world: Do you recognize in me the likeness of the original?” If so, then all will see God and claim “He is not proud!” If not, then they will turn their back on him. I, for one, want to continue to explore the depths of this quality of love that I might reach the frontiers of nothingness and so become like Jesus who loved humbly and without end. Hmmm....maybe this year I will simply ask for nothing for Christmas.

But prior to Santa Claus comes summer camp. Our theme this year is “Beumble.” (a combinational play on words with the word ‘Beatitude’, which the younger campers will study, and the silent ‘h’ pronunciation of the word ‘humble.’) We chose humble (versus humility) because the word conveys a conceptual state of the heart, a focus of the mind, a calling to the soul which has the power to define a life and mold it in the likeness of Jesus; unlike the word humility, which can

metallically ring out to our intellect or jingle in our pocket like something we could own and give away or let others borrow.

Humble, say it out loud, humble: something in this word, in this quality has the power to change you and me and, therefore, the world. Do you sense it? Yes, we need to understand humility dissecting it inside and out, up and down, but if we stop there and don't allow this understanding to permeate our very nature, we will miss out on the deepest defining quality of Jesus and, thus, real Christianity, that is sorely missing in this world: the quality of being humble. It can and will change the world; let's begin by teaching about it this week.

When you prepare to teach, keep the following two questions in mind:

1. Does the content of my lesson and the passion infused in my teaching have a natural tendency to cause a listener to become a full-time student of the Word?
2. Would a listener, who believes my message, be interested in following Jesus as a natural "next step?"

Have a great time preparing and teaching the lesson you choose; thanks for your willingness to do so. Much love.

Some Helpful Hints:

1. Scriptures in [brackets] are to be read out loud.
2. Text and scriptures in { } are for reference and context.
3. Questions, led by 'Q', are to be asked out loud.
4. Questions with no 'Q' are rhetorical and food for thought.
5. Be prepared to have the end in mind when teaching: What is the overall message this lesson is trying to get across to

a listener? What can I put in their pocket that they can retrieve later as needed or wanted?

6. Questions are meant to keep things moving and get the listener engaged; use them and keep answers on target.
7. Don't be afraid to use the "pregnant pause," a few moments of silence, to generate engagement; nature abhors a vacuum and it conveys expectation for an answer.
8. **HAVE FUN!**

Middle / Older Bible Classes & Devotionals

Sunday Opening Devotional

"May I have your attention. Your attention, please. The One Thing That Changes Everything For Everyone. Come hear all about it." [shout this like you are on a street corner trying to get everyone's attention]

Q) What do you think is the one thing?

Q) How does the world evaluate you?

Q) What are the world's values? Are they seen or unseen?

Q) What are some scenarios you witness in which tension, strife, and fear are the result?

So what is the one quality if developed in every person that would give credence to your life, invert the way you are evaluated, and bring resolution to every issue among us?

Being Humble. Humility. The essence of Jesus. I put before you: It is the one thing to fix all things. Thus our theme: "Beumble!" {explain how the word came together}

For some time, I have been conducting a thought experiment: every headline, tv show, personal circumstance or story shared by a friend where tension, strife, fear, isolation, hurt feelings, misunderstandings and the like took place, I added a drop of humility and deduced the outcome. In each and every instance, the outcome was positive leading to a more stable and secure situation and in most cases complete resolution. Imagine adding a bucket full of humility. Imagine the effect with the insertion of one humble person.

So what does it mean to "Beumble."

What is humility? In what context is humility most often brought up? Is it not most often presented in the context of pride and sin, as if it is a defensive measure when sin rears its ugly head, doesn't this say "use me when things get bad, otherwise leave me in storage."

What if humbleness were something we actively pursued before sin showed up? What would happen to pride? Retaliation? Threats? Fear and isolation? Hurt feelings and misunderstandings? What impact would this new pursuit have on our world? (Go back to the research examples or use your own examples.) What impact would it have on your heart? Your view of Jesus and the heart and mind of God? Your view

of modern, post-modern Christianity versus biblical, Jesus Christianity? Your view of church versus the body of Christ?

What are misconceptions about being humble? Does it mean you are a door-mat and let everyone walk all over you? Does it mean you no longer can be yourself? Do you lose self-respect, confidence or power by being humble? Does it mean you can't think for yourself or can't be yourself? What is humility?!

This week we will answer these questions. You will learn that being humble is not what you think: it is always victorious; it is more than regret or staying in some apologetic, sorrowful state; it is a nothing that leads to something that leads to everything; it is the participation in the life of Jesus. This week you will gain the following about humility:

- A deeper understanding of its definition,
- The revealing secret of its association with redemption,
- A richer tie-in to how we treat others,
- A greater connection to self-confidence,
- An increasing conviction to stop comparisons, and
- The profound effect it has on daily life.

Get ready for a journey into nothingness...many of you will find something helpful; some of you just might find everything you've been needing.

Monday — The Humble Meaning

Open Activity: Break up into teams of 4-6 people. Create a quick theatrical depiction of your definition of humility. The point of this exercise is to get campers to discuss their meaning of the word. Have teams perform their “definitions.”

Q) Based on what you just saw, what is humility? {don't try to correct, just listen and see what they give you.}

Humility is the following:

- Something deeper than regret. What does that mean?
- The participation in the life of Jesus. How so?
- A state of nothingness so God can be all. Explain?
- The root of all good qualities. Agree or disagree?

Q) What context do you most often see humility brought up? In the context of sinfulness, mostly pride. It's a reaction instead of a state of being.

Q) What is pride? Definition => the loss of humility. Seems like humility is brought into the scene as a defensive measure after something has happened, after pride shows up, a salve after the wound is created; instead of armor to prevent the wound.

In this context, what does this leave you to think about humility? Do you desire it more? Is it only for the religious? Is it something you want to openly pursue? Does it sit inactive like a dusty Bible sitting on the shelf or rusting barbells?

Q) What would happen to sin if we pursued humility before sin ever showed up? If we intentionally incorporated it into our daily spiritual workouts?

[Psalm 45:4]

Q) How is humility, along with truth and justice, presented here? As a cause

Q) What impact would this have on our society if people were to pursue humility as a cause?

Q) What impact would this cause have on your life? Let's discuss a few:

How would it effect your view of God and Jesus?

How would it effect your relationships?

How would it effect what you say and do to others?

How would it effect your approach to the Bible?

Consider the following verses:

- [Proverbs 11:2] Nothing (humble state) turns to something (wisdom).
- [Proverbs 22:4] a proper fear greater than the anxieties that modern day ushers in.
- [Philippians 2:3] only in a humble state can you do this.
- [Colossians 2] Read whole chapter. Point: getting into our Bibles and getting to know Jesus the Christ will keep us from all the wayward, full-of-promise-and-failing-powerfully teachings of the world. JESUS IS HUMBLENESS. He is leading the cause. He can take us to a place of great change. He is the definition of humility. He is the state of being humble.

Monday Devotional – The Humble Mission (Boys/Girls)

Counselors answer the question: How has the state of being humble—as opposed to the momentary reaction of humility to the presence of pride—served you and impacted others?

Tuesday – The Humble Mirror

Open Activity: Have a mirror to show the group.

Q) How many of you do **not** have one of these in your house?

Q) Why is it we all have one?

Since we learned yesterday that Jesus is humility, today we will look at his words and teachings to get a reflection and deeper understanding of humility.

Q) Was Jesus the man capable of being Jesus the Christ?

Q) *“Jesus lost nothing by giving all to God.”* What do you think this means?

Q) What did Jesus intentionally do in order to be all that is recorded about him?

Get different people to read one of the following scriptures in the book of John: 5:19, 5:30, 5:41, 6:38, 7:16, 7:28, 8:28, 8:42, 8:50, 14:10, 14:24.

Q) What is common among all that Jesus said in those passages? Nothing & Not. Jesus gave his consent to allow God to be all and took no credit. He became nothing in order to become something that would be everything for you and me.

Q) How does this kind of thinking come out in Jesus' life?

Q) What would be different in your life if you thought this way?

Q) Does this mean you are worthless? NO! this is not a value statement. Do you think Jesus was worthless to God?

Q) What impact do you think this line of thinking had on Jesus' confidence and self-respect? Where did his confidence and self-respect come from?

Q) How many of you thought about leaving the cabin naked today? Yeah, none of us (although somebody thought of it and we are grateful you didn't.)

[1 Peter 5:5] Jesus clothed himself with humility every day.

Q) How can you tell if you are humble-naked or humble-clothed? Ask Your Daily Life. Ask Jesus in your Bible study, prayer and meditation time. Ask your friends. Ask the world. Look into the mirror: is there tension, strife, worry, fear, isolation, hurts, etc.? Then there is likely nakedness.

Q) What would be different about your relationship with the Bible and Jesus if you would clothe yourself with humility?

[James 1:19-26]

Q) What's the danger mentioned in this scripture? What happens when we forget?

How many of you have heard of Muhammed Ali? Great boxer who used to brag "I float like a butterfly, sting like a bee," while dancing around in an attempt to psyche out his

opponents. One time on a flight, Ali describes in his book, The Soul of a Butterfly, that a flight attendant asked him to put on his seat belt. He said to her, "Superman don't need no seat belt." She smiled and said, "Superman don't need no plane, either."

Without friends and people who love you to be a mirror in your life, you can lose humility and forget who you are and can be.

Waking from his sleep, the donkey still savored the afterglow of the best day of his life. He had never felt so happy and proud. Wandering into the village, he found some people buying a cart. "I'll reveal myself to them," he thought. "They'll be so surprised." But they continued haggling and paid no attention. "Throw your garments down," he said angrily. "Don't you know who I am?" But the people barely registered that he was there, and someone slapped him on the backside, ordering him to move. "Miserable pagans!" muttered the donkey to himself. "The people at the markets will surely remember me." But when he got there the same thing happened. He strutted down the street, but no one paid any attention. "Where are the palm branches? Yesterday you threw palm branches in front of me!" Upset and angry, the little donkey galloped home to his mother. "You foolish child," she chided gently. "Don't you understand that without Him, you are just an ordinary donkey?"

Without parents and Jesus to be a mirror in your life, you can

lose humility or miss out on the chance to gain it. Hold up your own mirror by allowing others to help you and then do something to gain humility. The more you become nothing the less you will compare yourself to others and gain more confidence and self-respect; in this day and age of seeking for “the authentic self,” people are grasping at something, which, in fact, is nothing, when, if grabbing nothing, they would only realize it is not only something, but everything.

Tuesday - Taboo Tuesday Devotional

Q) What does taboo mean?

Q) What does cancel culture mean? Mass shaming

Q) Can you provide an example?

Q) Why is this happening?

Q) In light of a “cancel culture” society, what concept is becoming, if it not already, taboo? GRACE

Q) Why would I say grace is taboo?

Q) If you were God and Jesus’ enemy, what would motivate you to make grace taboo?

Q) What is grace?

Q) What impact does the removal of grace have community? Individuals? Interactions? Where does the removal of grace lead? Isn’t that what we are seeing today.

Q) How many of you would like it if God told you exactly what is required of you? Actually, he does. Let’s read...

[Micah 6:8]

To act justly, to love mercy and walk humbly with your God.

Q) If this instruction was accepted and followed by everyone in

your school, what would be the outcome?

Q) Why is mercy powerful?

Q) How do you see the need for grace to be reinserted into everyday life?

Close by summarizing the impact grace, mercy, love...all flowing from humility can and will impact our lives and therefore our world.

Wednesday – The Humble Meter

Open Activity: Place a thermometer and a thermostat in front of the group. Break up into smaller groups and have each group discuss the following questions:

Q) What is the purpose of each item?

Q) How might they relate to humility and being humble?

Have the groups share some of their answers.

Which one are you when it comes to being humble? Can you be both depending on the need at the moment? We are going to look at a story in the Bible and see how the state of being humble, impacted a situation, the lives of those involved, and the course of history. As we read, take note of instances of humility and who is being a thermometer and/or a thermostat and what the situation entails.

[1 Samuel 25]

Q) What instances of humility did you see in this story? Was this person being a thermometer or a thermostat?

{Allow this to go on for a bit to give campers time to explore all the expressions of humbleness.}

Q) How and for whom can you be a thermometer? Start with self, then be so for others (cabin, youth group, family, school)

Q) When do you need to be a thermostat? When the temperature changes or needs to be changed, i.e. when there is a loss of humility.

Q) When are you at your best in being a thermometer or a thermostat? When you decide to “beumble” and realize you can influence the outcome of a situation...you are not powerless. Look at Abigail. Wow! What a bold & confident (say, humble) move for a woman of that day. No wonder David asked her to be his wife...smart guy!

Cultures are built and changed on those who are willing to be thermometers and thermostats. Think about your house and how comfortable it is because of these two instruments. Is your environment more comfortable with less tension, strife, fear, isolation, hurt feelings, misunderstandings and the like? If not, perhaps you need to check the batteries in your thermostat.

Wednesday Starlight Devotional – The Humble Maker – 12+

The goal of this devotional is to allow the vastness of God’s creation to reveal the smallness of mankind, the true nothingness we are amidst the all that he has made (Psalm 8:4). This is not about value, for we are his greatest creation (Genesis 1), the apple of his eye (Psalm 17:1, Zechariah 2:8); it is about

understanding what Jesus made himself into...nothing (Philippians 2:7) by becoming like us. Show a video or pictures that convey the size of man versus the size of creation. We must be taken to this healthy perspective if we are ever to put our trust in God's sovereignty in order to be nothing and "beumble."

Thursday – The Humble Message – 13+

[Matthew 24: 1-14] Wow. Sounds a bit like today, huh?

Q) What is the gospel? Means good news.

Q) What is the good news? Redemption

1st Century society was not unaware of gospel messages. Listen to this one unearthed by archeologists on the front of a small temple in Priene (modern day Turkey) concerning the rise of the new Roman emperor after Julius Caesar.

Citizens of Priene: Since Divine Providence has brought to life the most perfect good in Augustus, whom she filled with virtues for the benefit of all mankind, bestowing on us Augustus Caesar as Savior of the World, for he has put an end to war and brought perfect peace. By the epiphany of his birth, he brought the gospel of peace to all mankind. For that reason, the Greeks of Asia have on this day declared that the New Year should begin from now on, on the 23rd of September, the day of the birth of this god. Never will another gospel surpass the gospel that was announced at his birth. He is not only Lord of the Empire, but Lord of the Earth and of the calendar and of time itself.

What makes the gospel concerning Jesus different? This is why you must be convinced Jesus is the Son of God and why it was so important he be accompanied by miracles and live a sin-free life. (Things no self-appointed man-god could do!) You also must understand why redemption is necessary and what we are being redeemed from. Do you remember from last year's Bible Classes what happened when Adam & Eve were challenged by the snake? What did Adam & Eve do; better yet, what didn't they do? They did not go back to God and say this snake asked a question and we need help. They decided to answer it without God. Where did that lead? To shame and hiding. Once they decided to entertain the snake's question on their own, they ushered in the removal of humility in earthly existence. And what is the loss of humility: pride. Your awareness of the need for redemption will largely depend on your knowledge of the terrible nature of the power of pride that has entered our being.

Compare this with the words of Mary, mother of Jesus, when she learned she was going to be his mother. Read Luke 1:46-55. You can see the humble state of Mary by the words that reflect her heart and posture of receiving this news. Vastly different than the message of Priene with all its self-appointed grandeur.

Remember the experiment of adding a drop of humility? Reverse that experiment: remove a drop of humility.

Q) What is the outcome? {discuss this}

Do you hear the result? Do you think redemption is necessary? If there is no redemption, we are still hiding in shame and shame disintegrates humility and ushers in all kinds of evil.

So God created a plan and it goes like this:

- God gives man free choice.
- Man chooses disobedience, ushers in pride.
- Man lives with choices, creates evil environment.
- God protects man with flood; starts anew.
- God gives law to protect man and see his nature.
- God establishes system of sacrifice and atonement.
- Man legalizes system and annuls grace and mercy.
- God sends Messiah—Jesus—full of grace and truth.
- Jesus dies once and for all.

Imagine being 12-year-old Jesus and figuring out you are Yahweh's son. Then some time in your teens you deduce you are the messiah because all the prophecies are coming true in you and your life. Then you realize the prophecies that speak of your death and all its gruesomeness and gore is going to happen to you. Imagine realizing that you have to live a sin-free life (nothing against the law or anything in the heart against Yahweh); the pressure! What would you feel? What would you do? How did Jesus live during his 20's as a mere man thwarting the temptations of young adulthood, being the head of the household, living a common life? How did he undergo the pressures of a three-year ministry that upended a religious institution and countered an established culture? How did he

resolutely go to the cross and endure the flogging, crucifixion and horrific death {describe each}? He did it this way:

[Philippians 2:5-11]

Q) This passage oozes humbleness. How so? {Walk through each aspect of this verse so Jesus and his choice and character become tangible and palpable.}

- Jesus' nature = God, but he did not consider it so.
- Jesus did not misuse his power.
- "He made himself nothing..." Jesus became like you.
- Jesus made choices he didn't want to make.
- Jesus obeyed even to the point of death
- Even death on a cross!

So the gospel is really a message about humility. The grace that you and I receive, the redemption granted us so that we can stand anew, blameless and without fault, before God and man is a message born of humility. Now do you see why the enemy would want grace to be taboo. {referring to Taboo Tuesday Devotional} Jesus was "beumble" on your behalf! Take some time and sit and think about the power of nothing, the power of love, the humility of Jesus. Can you grasp why this is called the gospel, the good news? Most of you have tried everything except nothing. Give nothing a chance. What will you choose in the face of such good news: the everything of the world or the nothingness of Jesus that led to his death...even death on a cross!. You know in your heart of hearts which one works. I hope you will choose that one.

Friday – The Humble Measure

Q) What are your thoughts about being humble thus far this week?

Today is about the practical side of “beumble.”

{Hold up a ruler or tape measure.}

Q) What is this? What do we use it for? How was it invented? Funny how we use something as a standard (think about anything built uses this standard) and don't even know how it came to be. {Look up History of the Ruler and possible explain a little.}

We are going to use humility as our “beumble” ruler in the areas of comparisons & confidence, treatment of others, holiness, self, and praise.

Comparisons & Confidence

Q) Why do we compare ourselves to other people?

Q) Why does humility help our confidence?

[Galatians 6:3-5] {Discuss this verse and its effect.}

“The truly humble person feels no jealousy or envy, praises God when others are favored; bears with the failings of others; values poverty of spirit, meekness and lowliness; and asks ‘do I truly understand how people suffer, especially the body of Christ, because of the loss of humility?’” - Andrew Murray

Attitude Towards Others

Q) How does humility effect your view of other people?
[1 John 4:20] Remember the mirror. Discuss the practicalities of this verse.

“The only humility that is really ours is not the humility we try to show before God in prayer, but that which we actively live in our ordinary conduct; this includes how we treat others”. – Andrew Murray

Holiness

Some of you are truly searching for holiness – a deep and pervasive state of Godliness. A great test of this aspiration is our state of humbleness.

[Job 1:6] Even in the presence of God, pride can show up. It is ever present in our nature. Sort of like two dogs who show up at your doorstep: which one will always come back? The one you feed. Feed humbleness and pride goes away; holiness is nourished and thus flourishes.

“There is none holy but God. We can only have as much holiness as we have of God. In complete humbleness, the presence of God is no longer a thing that changes with circumstances, but is a shelter where the soul lives forever.” – Andrew Murray

Self

Q) What do you think about this quote?

“Being occupied with self, even to the point of hating yourself, can never free us from self.”

- Andrew Murray

Q) How does humbleness free you from self? If you are in a

state of nothingness then any and everything you receive is a gift...and that is grace. Humility's power comes from a focus on grace not on sin; sin focuses on self.

[Romans 3:19-26] If you focus on the law (sin) then you will never live up...if you focus on grace (humility) you be lifted up.

Praise (Exaltation)

Q) Is humbleness and praise contradictory?

Q) Can humbleness and praise coincide?

Q) Could humbleness and praise cancel each other?

Answers depend on point of view: God's or Man's

Q) Why do we want praise so much?

[Luke 14:11], [James 4:10], [1 Peter 5:6]

If we focus on the work of humbling, God will do the work of exalting. Quit trying to play God! It is above your paygrade.

"Be sure to do the one thing God asks, and make yourself humble. He is faithful and will do the one he promised, and lift you up." - Andrew Murray

Can you imagine if the ruler had not been invented? Before the ruler, body parts were used (hand, foot, head). Wow! Think of the variation among different people. The ruler gave a standard by which all things could be measured. Let humbleness (Jesus) be your standard and you will grow in your confidence, get closer with others, deepen your holiness, free the self (self not yourself), and please your maker.

Friday Closing Devotional – The Humble Match

Go back to the place where the Starlight Devotional was held. Remind everyone of the majesty of the Creator and that we are his handiwork, his greatest creation made in His image.

I hope after this week you have a much deeper and broader understanding of humility and this knowledge will inspire you to pursue Jesus' state of being: that of being humble, "Beumble!"

Many of you want to know what God requires of you. Micah 6:8 answers by telling us that He wants us "to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly" with Him.

I also believe with all my heart that many of you want to change the world and wonder how you can. Walking humbly with God ushers in this possibility. Why? Because God is looking for partners, just like he found in Abraham, Moses, Ruth, David, Abigail, Mary, Joseph, and Jesus. What was their secret? Being Humble.

You know who King David is right? Of course.

Who was king prior to David? Saul How was David treated by Saul? How did David treat him? Let's read about it...

[1 Samuel 24] This is after King Saul put a bounty on David.

See David's humility...see how much God was in the picture and because of this, see how he treated the king.

Let's compare David's reaction to his son Absalom's and how he treated the king, his own father. {Before teaching read 2 Samuel 13-18 and be able to paraphrase story.} It is a story deplete of humility involving incest, rape, isolation, shame, animosity, resentments, murder, revenge and eventually an attempted coup. Loss of humbleness led to disobedience, bitterness, cowardice, conflict avoidance, and disunity until the point that Absalom attempted to replace his father as king.

In the midst of this, David had a soft spot for Absalom. Everyone tried to convince David to capture Absalom; in fact, Joab, one of his generals, devised an elaborate plan to trap David in his own words and make a decree in order to get Absalom captured. I have often wondered why David had so much grace towards Absalom despite the way he treated him. Until I learned what Absalom's name means: 'Ab' means father, 'salom' comes from the word 'shalom' which means peace or to complete or make whole. So, Absalom means The Father of Peace, and yet...

Remember that in Eastern, Hebraic, way of thinking names were important and people actually lived out the meaning of their name or they didn't, i.e. Cain. Why didn't Absalom become 'the father of peace' or complete the image of his own father the king? Because of the loss of humility. Imagine if a drop of humility were added to each circumstance, how different the outcome in Absalom's life. Could David's delay in dealing with his son been the deep desire and longing for his son to live up to his name and carry on his legacy? Hmmm...

Look up! Look at the stars. He named each one (Psalm 147:4). What is it that God can't do? He could make all of us do his bidding but he wants people who make a choice; he longs for you like David longed for Absalom in hopes that you will live up to your name: after all you were born in the image of God...you bear his name (Isaiah 43:1-7).

He wants people who love him and choose to obey him...and that takes humility. He wants you! He wants you to live up to the image, the name, to which you have been called. What will make that happen: your humbleness. Beumble! Make humility your cause and walk humbly with your God and He will respond with all the power it took to create what you are gazing at. Listen. {let's some silence happen} Do you hear the Father calling you? Do you hear him calling you to be a partner with Him to change the world? Can the world change? Yes, if only you and me will humble ourselves, become nothing and partner with the Creator. You and humility make the perfect match. Leave here this week and "beumble" and you will see amazing things happen!!

Younger Bible Classes & Devotionals

Monday: The Way of Trust

Icebreaker game: Blindfolded maze with paper and pencil. This game will require partners. Supplies include: bandanas for

blindfolds, paper with two different maze puzzles, and pencils/pens. Have the teams divide up and one partner blindfolded. Pass out the maze papers and the partners will work together to guide the blindfolded partner through the maze on paper with the pencil, trying to stay within the lines, using only the voice and direction (no touching or nudging the pencil). Take turns.

Q) In the game, What were you lacking? (the ability to see, to independently complete the maze)

Q) How hard was it to stay within the maze when you could not see where you were drawing?

Q) What did it require from your partner? What did it require from you?

Q) In real life, what kinds of things are you lacking?

Q) Is there anywhere in your life that you think you don't have enough – like the game – where you feel like you are trying to get something you need but you don't have it?

Remind the campers of making the group a safe place to share.

{This is my expectation: that we will respectfully listen to what others write down and not laugh or make negative comments about each other or what is shared. Even if there are no names on the papers, I will know what I wrote and will feel shamed and less likely to share honestly next times if others laugh or ridicule what I wrote. Remember, everyone has things they are good at and everyone has things they struggle with. There is no shame in something being hard for me – that just means that I must work harder on that thing. (Share a relatable example of something that was hard for me at their age and something I was good at.)}

Exercise: Write down worries on strips of paper, turn them in and then read them out loud (include extra ones that would cover a wide range of experiences/needs/worries/lacking) (deep friendships, friends who will be there no matter what.

Q) When you don't have what you need, how do you feel? Good/bad/anxious/fearful/jealous/competitive/angry/possessive?

We are going to read from a famous lesson that Jesus taught, recorded in Matthew. The beginning of the lesson is commonly called "the beatitudes" and they start out with this unusual phrase – Blessed are...

Q) What does blessed mean? it is a religious word that might feel confusing. Here are other ways to say it: you have favor from God, happy, God is with you

He starts of the lesson with these beatitudes and we are going to study a few of them this week. The beatitudes help us understand ourselves better, and tell us how to look at things we are experiencing in life. That might sound confusing, but hopefully it will make more sense as we walk through this sermon and discuss one each day. Today we are starting with the very first one listed. And it will tie in with what we were talking about at the beginning of our time together.

Let's read [Matthew 5:3]

Q) What does it mean to be poor?

Q) What does it mean to be poor in spirit?

Q) Do you feel like God is with you when you don't have something you need?

Q) Do you ever wonder if God is mad at you because something is hard right now?

Q) How can we feel blessed or happy or good when we don't have what we need or we are worried? What in the world do you think Jesus means with this statement?

The cool thing about the beatitudes that we are studying this week (Matthew 5:3-9) is that Jesus tells us more about these sayings later in his sermon. Jesus tells us what it means and how to respond when we don't have what we need.

So let's read [Matthew 7:7-12]

Q) What does God want us to do when we need something?

- Express what we need to God – and be willing to let go of your own expectations of how your needs shall be cared for – God may be helping you with what you need but you may have a slanted view of how God should do it

Q) What stops us from doing this? From asking, seeking, knocking?

Q) See the story about fathers and children – how does God describe himself?

Q) What does that tell you about how God meets our needs?

Q) What a funny ending – why does it say that here?

Q) Could it be that when we trust that God will give us what we need that we are more willing to share and be kind?

Q) What are ways that you have seen God take care of you?

-Practice gratitude – write down ways you have seen God take care of you

Exercise: Write down God's care for you on strips of paper, turn them in and then read them out loud (include extra ones that would cover a wide range of experiences/needs)

Tuesday: The Way of humility

(the challenge of comparing ourselves to others)

Icebreaker game: Divide into teams and give each team the same combination of different length strings. Supplies: pre-cut strings from the teaching supplies and a fun pack of M&M's. The goal will be to measure the strings and figure out how long the strings are without any proper measuring implements.

As you pass out the strings, ask the teams these questions: What would you use to figure out how long this is? Why do you use that? If you did not have a ruler or tape measure, what else could you use? (compare it to something you do know the size of that is not a ruler...like a notebook or the size of your hand or the size of your foot, or your height. Break into teams and work together to see if you can guess the size – the team that is closest wins a small prize – fun pack of M&Ms.

Comparisons are helpful if you are trying to measure something for a game, to win some candy, but comparisons and competition in real life are not always that helpful.

Q) Where do you struggle with competition or comparisons? What are ways we compare ourselves to other people? To what we see on Instagram or TikTok?

Remind the campers of making the group a safe place to share.

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*that just means that I must work harder on that thing.
(Share a relatable example of something that was hard
for me at their age and something I was good at.)}*

Exercise: Write down examples to read aloud and have some extra pieces in there they are great additions to say what people might not say.

Q) How do you feel when you decide that you are better or more important than someone else?

Q) How do you feel when you decide that you are lesser/not as good/not as important than someone else?

Q) How does it feel to always be in competition with others? Sometimes with social media, with someone you don't even know? (tiring, stressful, burden)

Q) The message we hear is that only the best/strongest/winner will get the best things – but is that true?

Q) Imagine if your view of yourself could be completely separate from how you stack up with another person? What if your confidence is no longer dependent on winning or being the best? What would that be like?

What does Jesus say? Remember the beatitudes in Matthew 5, let's start there.

[Read Matthew 5:5]

Blessed are the meek for they will inherit the earth

Q) Remember from yesterday, what does blessed mean?

Q) What does meek mean? It sure sounds like weak...it sounds like a little mouse squeak, squeak.

It means strength under control – other words for it are humble and gentle – an example of it would be a wild horse being

tamed so that a person can ride it – it's called meeking the horse.

Q) What are your thoughts on this idea: God says that the humble and gentle will inherit the earth? Is that what you have been told, when it comes to the comparison game?

It means that you don't have to be on-top/the best/the coolest/the smartest to be valuable to God and to others. It means recognizing you are enough because you were made by God and are made in His image. – and Jesus says that the humble and gentle – they are the real winners – not the strongest/fastest/coolest/smartest/most-talented/richest person

Let's read [Matthew 11:28-30]

Q) How did Jesus describe himself?

Q) What does it mean to take his yoke upon us?

Q) What is a yoke?

A yoke is a wooden bar or frame to join draft animals at the heads or necks to enable them to pull together on a load when working in pairs – to enable them to carry more than they could do individually and to balance the burden and make it easier to manage. It would be wise to pair an experienced ox who has been trained and knows how to plow and follow directions from the master, with a younger inexperienced ox so that the young ox can learn how to do his job. If the young ox does not follow the lead of the seasoned ox, he could hurt himself.

Q) Have you ever tried to move something heavy or bulky and needed someone else to help you carry it? Has your mom or dad ever asked you to help furniture at home? Or some other heavy thing that required two or more people to lift?

Q) What does Jesus want us to do?

There is a power in humility – rest from being weary and burdened – he calls us to learn from him. Imagine rest and peace from the areas where you find yourself competing and comparing.

Wednesday: The Way of Justice

Icebreaker game: Play fruit/veggie boggle: give everyone a piece of paper and pens. With a timer set for 90 seconds, have the campers work in teams and make a list of all the fruits and vegetables they can name. When the timer goes off, compare the lists to eliminate fruits and vegetables named by other teams. See which team had the most unique fruits and vegetables.

Q) Of all the fruits and vegetables we just named, which are your favorite?

Today, we are talking about a different kind of hunger, not related to fruits and vegetables or other favorite foods, not related to our physical appetite.

Q) What hunger for justice is inside of you?

Q) What do you wish was different in the world?

Remind the campers of making the group a safe place to share.

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(Share a relatable example of something that was hard for me at their age and something I was good at.)}

Exercise: Write down examples to read aloud and have some extra pieces in there they are great additions to say what people might not say.

- Q) How do you feel when you listen to this list of things?
- Q) Does it feel overwhelming? How could I possibly make a difference with my one small effort? Do you feel discouraged?
- Q) What happens in your life when you feel overwhelmed or discouraged? Do you take action or do you give up?

Let's look at the beatitudes again. Remember what we said blessed means...

Read [Matthew 5:6]

- Q) What does Jesus say? If you hunger and thirst for righteousness, you will be filled.
- Q) Is this about physical hunger and thirst? What do you think it means?
- Q) What does righteousness mean? Other words for it are justice, living in right relationship with each other and God
- Q) What do you do when you are hungry and thirsty in real life?

What does Jesus want us to do when we ache for change in the world?

Read [Matthew 6:5-14]

One of the best steps we can take when we want to see change in the world, things improve that would bring justice, right the situation – is prayer

- Q) What about this prayer stands out to you?

An important part of prayer is using our access to God to gain God's heart about injustice. Through prayer, we can see the world as God sees it. If we are not careful, our efforts to "bring justice" might not actually bring true justice as God desires. We need to pray for wisdom, we need to pray for people's hearts to change so that there can be real change – laws don't change men's hearts...We need to pray for our own hearts when we interact in hard situations.

There are different ways to remember this prayer. Here is another version.

Loving God, in whom is heaven, may Your name be honored everywhere.

May Your kingdom come.

May the desire of Your heart for the world be done, in us, by us and through us.

Give us the bread we need for each day.

Forgive us.

Enable us to forgive others.

Keep us from all anxiety and fear.

For You reign in the power that comes from love which is Your glory forever and ever.

Amen.

Exercise: Break into groups and rewrite the Lord's prayer together in words that make sense to you.

Thursday: The Way of Compassion

Today we are going to have a little drama, to act out a parable Jesus taught his disciples. I need some volunteers to help read and act out this story. (Choose volunteers to be the king, the first man, the first man's family, the second man, the jailers, the other servants. Depending on how many campers are present, decide how you want to do the reading.)

Let's read [Matthew 18:21-35].

Think about the parable we just acted out – what was happening here?

Q) What is your first instinct when someone hurts your feelings? Does something that is unfair? Does something that is rude? Does something that is disrespectful to your family culture or values?

First instinct is to judge them and show contempt for them – think cancel culture – to want to take revenge or punish someone or hurt them back – it is not our first instinct to show mercy or compassion.

Let's see what Jesus says.

Read [Matthew 5:7] Blessed are the merciful for they will be shown mercy.

Q) What is mercy? *Compassion or forgiveness shown toward someone whom it is within one's power to punish or harm; kind, gentle or compassionate treatment especially towards someone who is undeserving of it*

Q) What in your life do you need mercy for?

Q) What does forgiveness mean?

Q) Does it mean I condone what they have done?

Q) Does it mean that it has not damaged our relationship or my trust?

Q) Does it mean that all the consequences of actions are gone? You can forgive someone even if they don't apologize or show remorse or acknowledge their wrong – you decide that your heart won't be polluted by their actions and further damaged by their mistake

Let's read what else Jesus says about mercy.

Read [Matthew 5:38-48]

Q) What else does Jesus say about mercy?

Q) What is Jesus saying about an eye for an eye?

Q) Do you know the origin of this concept? Explain the ideas from Exodus 21:24 – these laws were written to prevent people from taking disproportionate revenge on their neighbor when their neighbor had wronged them. Because our first instinct is to escalate the damage we inflict back on our neighbor, if your neighbor did something that injured your eye and you wanted “Justice” you could only damage their eye back.

Q) What is he saying about revenge or exacting punishment on the offender? In v 43 – how is he challenging us to show mercy?

Q) Who do we consider enemies?

Q) What are ways we can show mercy/love our enemies?

Practice positive speech – consider how we talk about others...

Q) What are the challenges of not gossiping or running their name down with my friends when someone has hurt me?

Friday: The Way of Peacemaking

Icebreaker game: Play human bingo (to see what they have in common when they think they are really different). Campers will have a few minutes to mingle and find other campers who will help them complete their bingo cards. Supplies: bingo sheets from the teaching supplies and pens.

After we finish the game, start with this icebreaker question: did you learn anything about your fellow campers? Were you more different than you realized? Did you have more things in common than you initially thought? What we just played is called a cooperative game – a game where we work together to finish the task. Sometimes when we are with a group of people, it feels easier to cooperate and sometimes it feels almost impossible to cooperate. Think about a setting where it is easy to cooperate and work together with those around you. Name some of those times. Now think of a setting where it is harder to cooperate and work together to complete a task. Name some of those times.

Q) Even though we ask for peace on earth every Christmas, why does it seem like that is impossible? Why do people divide into different groups and argues/fight/threaten/kill those on the other side?

Q) Who do you tend to place on the other side of the us vs them spectrum? Who do you consider your enemies? Write down examples to read aloud and have some extra pieces in there they are great additions to say what people might not say.

What Jesus calls us to be?

Let's read [Matthew 5:9] and remember what blessed means. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God – so it sounds like making peace is really important to God

Q) What does it mean to make peace or bring peace to a situation?

Q) How would you know that peace was there?

Q) what is the difference between a peacekeeper and peace maker? Peacekeepers avoid hard conversations and situations and just goes along and peace makers are actively trying to

understand and find common ground, as a way to extend kindness and love.

Let's read in the sermon on the mount to see what else Jesus wants to say about it.

Read [Matthew 5:21-26] (Jesus wants us to deal with our conflict, our anger, our disrespect, our disdain – and to work towards reconciliation)

Q) if this expression is a term of contempt, what does it mean to show “contempt” towards someone? (feeling that a person or thing is worthless or deserves scorn? – another word is to disrespect someone or act disrespectfully towards them, feeling that someone is not worth consideration or respect, another definition is to ridicule them, to mock them)

Q) Why does Jesus talk about all this stuff while he is talking about murder? (This is the beginning of the murder – when we don't deal with this stuff, that is what leads people to hurt and kill others)

Q) What does it look like to bring reconciliation? What does Jesus challenge us to do in this passage?

(Reach past differences – connect with people different than you – maybe someone that you have put in the “them” category in the past...)

Questions to ask yourself: Am I willing to reconcile if I have a relationship that is unresolved? Am I willing to take responsibility for my own actions that may have damaged the friendship? Am I willing to say out loud to the wronged party that I see how I have hurt them and I want to make it right? Am I willing to listen to someone who wants to reconcile with me? Am I willing to accept an apology and show mercy and be a peacemaker?