

Community Groups are used extensively as the primary vehicle for discipleship at The Gathering and run on a quarter system. There is one in the fall, one in the winter and one in the spring. During the summer weeks we don't meet in Community Groups but we still offer the Growth Guides as a tool to help you grow personally. The Growth Guides are designed to help you dig deeper into the weekly sermon on your own or with your family and are available each week along with the note sheets at church as well as online.

OUR WINTER QUARTER OF COMMUNITY GROUPS ENDS THIS WEEK. OUR SPRING QUARTER BEGINS IN APRIL.

Consider...

Use the summary and discussion below to review and apply this week's message:

Message Summary

We'll be taking 2 weeks – this Sunday and Easter – to work through Luke's account of the best sermon ever preached: the Sermon on the Mount. Luke didn't waste time or words sharing what was most important (his account is about 30% shorter than Matthew's), and then Jesus stepped into the role of a doctor and shared his "prescription" for a blessed life.

1. **I'm not sure that word means what you think it means!** It's so easy for us to read words like "beatitude" or "blessed" or "poor" and THINK we know what they mean, but what we learned is that almost all of these words that we tend to equate with external happiness actually focus more on the internal happiness that comes from receiving God's favor instead of his wrath. 3 John 1:2 sums that up perfectly when John reminds us that we prosper in others things only as far as our souls are prospering.
2. **You can pay me now or pay me later:** This means that the blessings and woes that Jesus teaches here are really value statements that reflect whether or not we value this short, temporary life over the eternal one that is waiting for us after we die. Like a doctor telling a patient that he or she will die if they keep smoking, Jesus is reminding us that gaining eternal favor and blessing is always better than any temporary blessing now. We may not have to choose, but if we do, we'd be fools to lose eternity for the temporary!

Discuss

Use the following questions to review and apply the points learned in the message.

- What takeaway – if any – did you have from the message this week?
- It's good to be AWARE of eternity, and most churches and preachers do a decent job of that (think red faced "hell-fire and brimstone" preachers!). But it's better to VALUE eternity. How do the following passages challenge us to do that? Ecclesiastes 3:11; 2 Cor. 4:7-11, 16-18; Philippians 3:7-11.
- What 4 qualities does Jesus say ought to characterize his followers (see Luke 6:20-22)? How would you define each of these? What blessing is promised for each? Are these present blessings or future ones?
- How do the values Jesus talks about here compare to the values that are sold every day on TV?
- The conventional wisdom in Jesus' day was that if you were wealthy and influential, then you were blessed by God. How is Jesus able to challenge that thinking by reversing it?
- Discuss the following quote by Rick Warren: "Living in light of eternity changes our priorities." Do you think the early church would have impacted their world as greatly if they hadn't valued eternity over temporary? Explain your answers.