



***Culture Shock:***  
***Countercultural Living through the Sermon on the Mount***  
**Kelli Wommack**  
**“Right Way Up”**  
**April 21, 2024**

**Key Verses:** Matthew 5:9-12

**Key Thought:** “Seeking first God’s kingdom” (cf. Matthew 6:33) enables peacemaking and ensures persecution.

**Points to Consider:**

- While the beatitudes might at first seem nonsensical (or “upside down”), we can begin to recognize the truth of them more and more as our thinking becomes renewed by the Holy Spirit.
- The prior verse— 5:8— appears to be a prerequisite for peacemaking. ← You cannot “do” peace unless you have peace in your heart. E.g., You are loving and forgiving instead of hateful and bitter. You are content and generous instead of envious and greedy.
- Moreover, we must be willing even to sacrifice in order to make peace because peacemaking necessitates that we enter into the heart of a conflict so as to work towards resolution and reconciliation.
- Rather than a human-centered view of conflicts (which can often devolve into a matter of who wins and who loses), the primary goal of a peacemaker is for God’s will to be done in conflicts.
- Therefore, view conflicts in light of God’s kingdom and sacrifice yourself to promote God’s will.
- Peacemakers will be recognized as “chips off the old block,” children who resemble their Father in heaven.
- Scripture seems to suggest that adult persecutors are often religious people who hold different convictions than true followers of Jesus. That said, American youths are often persecuted by their non-religious peers.
- The more we follow Jesus, the less we ought to be surprised by persecution. (See 2 Timothy 3:12.) However, Jesus implies that— in those moments— we need to remember what we are to receive from Him, which will have the effect of strengthening our resolve to follow Christ. Jesus even says that we can celebrate our persecution as an act of faith and hope in God and His promises!
- “The beatitudes are a summons to live in the present in the way that will make sense in God’s promised future, because that future has arrived in the present in Jesus of Nazareth. It may seem upside down, but we are called to believe, with great daring, that it is in fact the right way up” (N.T. Wright).

**Discussion Prompts:**

- Contrast popular conceptions of peacemaking with a true, biblical view of peacemaking.
- True peacemaking is hard. What are the main obstacles that hinder you from true peacemaking?
- What are some keys to true peacemaking?
- How can God’s wisdom help you to make peace in a conflict you are currently experiencing?
- How does “righteousness” provoke persecution? Give some examples.
- What enables Christians to endure persecution— even unto death!?
- Pray for personal and global conflicts, and for our youths and all those who are persecuted.