

2. Francis of Assisi is often misquoted as saying, “Preach the gospel at all times. Use words if necessary.” As far as we can tell Francis never said anything close, but the sentiment has woven its way into popular culture. The truth is words will always be necessary. It is true that our heart and character often speak louder than words, and that our lives should (and must) embody our message, but sooner or later we will need to speak up. Notice how Peter describes the importance for words.

*1 PETER 3:15-16 But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,<sup>16</sup> keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.*

- a. There is a lot of talk about tone these days. How does Peter describe the tone and demeanor of our response to outsiders?
  - b. What do the beatitudes teach us about the tone and demeanor of those who are called to be salt and light?
  - c. According to Peter, why is a gracious tone an absolute necessity?
3. In light of Peter’s challenge, and the heart of this study, what are some practical steps we can take to “know the gospel, embody the deep truths of the gospel, and more effectively share the gospel with those who are far from Christ?”

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One of the most striking invitations in Scripture is the invitation Jesus extends to Peter and Andrew.

Jesus doesn’t say come follow me and I will show you some wonderful truths from Scripture that will rock your world... though he does. He doesn’t say come follow me and you will experience a sense of brotherhood and community you never thought possible... though they did. He doesn’t say come follow me and you can live your best life now... which they in fact did.

They were fisherman, so Jesus’ invitation would have been both strange and familiar at the same time, “Come follow me,” he told them, “and I will make you fishers of men (Matthew 4:19 NIV84).”

They must have looked at each other and wondered, “What on earth is this guy talking about?”

It would only be a matter of time before they knew exactly what Jesus was talking about. No body had a heart for the stranger, the outsider and those who were far from God like Jesus. It was obvious he longed to see those who were estranged from their God to be reconciled to God, and enjoying a rich and meaningful life in him. He even told a story of a father who ran with arms wide open to welcome a wayward son back into the family with an extravagant celebration. They saw the heart of the father in Jesus and his scandalous reputation for being a friend of tax collectors and sinners, and even eating with them.

And while the invitation might sound a bit different for you and me, Jesus invites us to join him in “seeking and saving those who are lost (Luke 19:10).”

Missional living is very simply embodying the heart and character of Jesus in his pursuit of those who are far from God.

## THE HEART AND CHARACTER OF THE KINGDOM

*MATTHEW 5:1-10 Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, <sup>2</sup> and he began to teach them.*

*<sup>3</sup> Blessed are the poor in spirit,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

*<sup>4</sup> Blessed are those who mourn,  
for they will be comforted.*

*<sup>5</sup> Blessed are the meek,  
for they will inherit the earth.*

*<sup>6</sup> Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,  
for they will be filled.*

*<sup>7</sup> Blessed are the merciful,  
for they will be shown mercy.*

*<sup>8</sup> Blessed are the pure in heart,  
for they will see God.*

*<sup>9</sup> Blessed are the peacemakers,  
for they will be called children of God.*

*<sup>10</sup> Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

1. There are a couple of literary features that stand out in the beatitudes. Their flow and balance create a strong sense of rhythm and poetry. The verses are meant to be memorized, internalized, and recalled. The word blessed of course stands out. It is not the normal word for blessed. It is a word that speaks of true happiness. There is a strong sense of joy in these verses. Finally, the first and the final blessings are the same, “for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” When Jesus begins and ends on the same note, he is laying out his theme for his entire message. It is all about the kingdom from beginning to end. And of course we, as God’s people should be about God’s kingdom from beginning to end. In just a few verses, Jesus will challenge us “Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well (Matthew 6:33).”

How do these features underline the importance of the beatitudes in the life of a believer?

2. How does Jesus describe the heart and character of his disciples?

3. Which of these character traits are most striking to you? Why?

4. How is the character that Jesus prescribes for us different from the character that is often on display in those who claim to follow Christ?
5. How does Jesus describe the benefits of the kingdom?
6. What is the one drawback of following Jesus?
7. In Matthew 11, Jesus describes his own heart and character.

*MATTHEW 11:28-30 “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup> For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”*

How is his heart and character similar to that which he prescribes for his followers in the beatitudes?

## THE INFLUENCE OF THE KINGDOM

*MATTHEW 5:13-16 “You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.*

*<sup>14</sup> “You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup> Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. <sup>16</sup> In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.*

1. Jesus doesn’t tell us we should be “the salt of the earth” and “the light of world,” he tells us we are. But there is a potential tragedy in the passage. Salt can lose its saltiness and light can be so faint that no one recognizes it or even sees it.

In the ancient world salt could be could a preservative, a healing agent, a spice, a sign of a covenant between two people. It was considered a precious commodity. In every case salt is valued for its powerful but subtle influence.

- a. How can believers have a powerful but subtle influence on the world?
- b. How can they lose their influence?
- c. What happens when they lose their influence?