



Sermon Discussion Guide: Step Into the Tension

Series: Mind the Gap: Building Peace Across Divides

Date: 07/06/2025

Scripture: *Matthew 5:1–12 (The Message)*

1-2 When Jesus saw his ministry drawing huge crowds, he climbed a hillside. Those who were apprenticed to him, the committed, climbed with him. Arriving at a quiet place, he sat down and taught his climbing companions. This is what he said:

3 “You’re blessed when you’re at the end of your rope. With less of you there is more of God and his rule.

4 “You’re blessed when you feel you’ve lost what is most dear to you. Only then can you be embraced by the One most dear to you.

5 “You’re blessed when you’re content with just who you are—no more, no less. That’s the moment you find yourselves proud owners of everything that can’t be bought.

6 “You’re blessed when you’ve worked up a good appetite for God. He’s food and drink in the best meal you’ll ever eat.

7 “You’re blessed when you care. At the moment of being ‘care-full,’ you find yourselves cared for.

8 “You’re blessed when you get your inside world—your mind and heart—put right. Then you can see God in the outside world.

9 “You’re blessed when you can show people how to cooperate instead of compete or fight. That’s when you discover who you really are, and your place in God’s family.

10 “You’re blessed when your commitment to God provokes persecution. The persecution drives you even deeper into God’s kingdom.

11-12 “Not only that—count yourselves blessed every time people put you down or throw you out or speak lies about you to discredit me. What it means is that the truth is too close for comfort and they are uncomfortable. You can be glad when that happens—give a cheer, even!—for though they don’t like it, I do! And all heaven applauds. And know that you are in good company. My prophets and witnesses have always gotten into this kind of trouble.”





Opening Prayer

God of courage and compassion, thank You for meeting us in the places we would rather avoid. As we gather, help us recognize the tensions we carry—not as threats to avoid, but as holy invitations. Open our hearts to the teaching of Jesus, and guide our steps toward peace. In Christ's name we pray, Amen.

Introduction & Context

As we continue our series *Mind the Gap*, we reflect on what it means to be peacemakers in a world full of stress, disagreement, and disconnection. In this message, Pastor Shawn invites us to recognize that peacemaking isn't about avoiding conflict—it's about stepping into tension with grace, courage, and love.

Jesus doesn't promise comfort; he promises blessing—especially for those who choose peace when others choose retreat. This week, we're challenged to name the tensions we live with and to trust that peace begins when we step toward them.

Discussion Questions

1. When Things Get Tense

- What's your natural response to tension—flight, fight, freeze, or fix?
- Why do you think Jesus begins his most famous sermon by blessing people in tense, vulnerable situations?

2. Not Just a List of Ideals

- The Beatitudes aren't just nice sayings—they describe real-life tension points. Which verse speaks to a tension you're currently holding?
- How does this reframe your view of what it means to be blessed?



3. Stepping In

- Pastor Shawn shared that peacemaking means stepping into what is broken. What might that look like in your daily life this week?
- How do *Matthew 5* and *Matthew 18* together challenge or encourage your approach to conflict?

4. The Church in the Gap

- What are some tensions the Church—locally or globally—has avoided?
- How can we be a community that builds bridges instead of hiding behind barriers?

Application & Challenge

This week, reflect on the tensions you carry and how God may be calling you to step toward them:

- **Identify** a relationship, conversation, or issue you've been avoiding. Name the tension.
- **Pray** for the courage to move toward it—not to fix, but to listen, forgive, or stay present.
- **Act** by taking one small, faithful step into that tension with humility and grace.

Closing Prayer

God, you are already present in the places we fear. Help us to see tension not as something to avoid, but as sacred ground where your peace can take root. Give us grace to move toward others with open hearts, steady steps, and your Spirit guiding the way. Make us peacemakers, one small step at a time. Amen.

Key Takeaway:

Tension isn't failure—it's invitation. When we move toward discomfort with love, we join Jesus in the work of peace.

This guide was developed from original content with the assistance of ChatGPT.