

Reading: Matthew 6:25-34

1. Whilst it is unlikely nowadays, in the West, that many of us are consumed by worry about food, drink and clothing, what sort of things do you worry about? [As opposed to just being concerned by]
2. What does this verse mean to you? - "*But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be provided to you*" [Matthew 6.33.] In particular, what do you understand by the word 'righteousness'?
3. Romans 12:2 says "*Do not conform to the pattern of this world*". How do we conform to the pattern of the world in a way that is contrary to what God wants for us?
4. Looking back through our lives, are there situations or relationships that caused us or influenced us to become habitual worriers?
5. Do you believe God is completely faithful and can be trusted in all things? If not – what are the exceptions and why?
6. 2 Corinthians 3:18 begins with "*And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory*" - what does this mean?
7. Can we identify things in our past that damaged our willingness to trust in God's provision?
8. At the end of John 16:33 it says "*But take heart! I have overcome the world*" "What do you understand by 'I have overcome the world'?"

Reading: Matthew 6:1-4

1. What does 21st century financial giving look like? Do you feel pressurised into giving through the big TV whole-evening events that are part entertainment and part income generation or charity appeals through letters, magazines, emails, junk mail. What about the appeals through the TV accompanied by heart-rending scenes of destruction, rescue and aid. Do you contribute via crowd funding and social media?
2. Should we put Grants, sponsorship, interest-free loans, committed regular giving, and spontaneous donations in the same category as the ways above? Is the motivation different?
3. What motivates generosity - a whole industry is built around social conditioning and psychological manipulation. Can you think of examples of this?
4. Blowing of trumpets: the subtle promotion of self as a reward. Is it ever right to put your name to a public gift; ie it could encourage others to give.
5. There is a culture of expecting rewards for giving. How do Reward Schemes encourage the 'getting something back in return' mentality?
6. Giving with 'strings attached' versus the accountability of the receiver to use the gift appropriately. How hard is it to let go of the gift?
7. Generosity is not always about finances. Sometimes it is about time, talents, how we treat others graciously, How does the Good Samaritan story illustrate this? (Luke 10:25-37)
8. Do you find it easier to give than to receive? Why is it important to learn to receive too? How can this be a generous act?
9. How can we balance the Joy of giving with not receiving something in return. Is "Joy" actually a reward? Are rewards wrong? Are they not just 'outcomes' – if I do this, that will happen.
10. Meditate on God's generosity. We sang the song Reckless Love at the 11am service. What does this mean to you? Is 'reckless' the right word for God's Agape love, His grace, His forgiveness?
11. How is motivation of obedience different from generosity? Is it easy to confuse the motivation.
12. (2 Corinthians 5:14-15) The love of God compels us to give – so do we have a choice?

Reading: Matthew 5:21-48

With patience, no prejudice, and without adding or removing anything read Matthew 5:21-48

1. How does this passage make you feel? What are your initial thoughts? Why do you think it makes you feel this way? (Don't spend too long – just brief initial thoughts.)

There is no doubt that this is a hard passage, it makes us feel uncomfortable. But I wonder why, and is it because of what we first think it is? For sure, the stats on Divorce in this country paint a bleak picture and our nation's attitude to adultery is weak to indifferent. But is Jesus really focussing on just these things or has he got a bigger picture in mind?

2. Jesus begins each section of this reading with, "You have heard that it was said... But I say to you" and each time Jesus doesn't loosen the letter of the law but rather tightens it. Why do you think he does this?

A: Jesus wants us to go further in our relationships than simply fulfilling the law. Jesus expects more from us than simply not murdering, not committing adultery, not swearing falsely, etc...

3. The context for this passage is given in Matthew 5:17-18 where Jesus says that he has not come to abolish the law but to fulfil it. The big topics of this passage (murder, deceit, adultery, divorce) are not what Jesus has his sights set on. Does this surprise you? What do you think Jesus is really targeting in this passage?

A: It is the attitudes of our heart from which these outward actions come. The outward actions are not the root of our damaged relationships; the root is the attitudes of our hearts.

4. Richard used an illustration of the headache medicine "Anadin" and "Anadin Extra" to show the difference between simply doing enough to fulfil the requirements of the law and Jesus' call for us to go further in transforming our relationships – allowing a deeper transformation of the attitudes of our hearts.

- a. What do you think of this illustration? Where is it helpful? Where is it limited? How might you help yourself remember Jesus' call for you to be transformed at the heart level?

5. Richard used the following statements. Take some time to consider them, which do you struggle with? Which one do you need the Holy Spirit's transformation? You don't need to share, but you can if you'd like.

- a. ...not just don't murder but don't be angry, don't be insulting, don't call each other fools.
- b. ...not just don't commit adultery but don't be driven by lust
- c. ...stop fussing about divorce as if that is the only issue in your relationships, I don't want your relationships, any of them, to be driven by fickleness, by the thoughts of impermanence.
- d. ...not just don't swear falsely but don't be driven by any falsehood, anything less than the truth.

6. Spend some time in prayer with each other, nothing specific is needed, just a prayer for us all to be open to transformation in our relationships. For our hearts to be powered by, selfless giving of ourselves, permanence, consistency, endurance, love, compassion, mercy, and truthfulness.

7. The passage ends with Jesus saying, "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect". Even at the close, Jesus does not ease up, he is desiring perfection from us. Is this possible in our relationships?

A: In this world prior to the coming of the fullness of the kingdom of God it is unlikely we will ever be perfect but as followers of Christ, we are "in Christ", and Jesus has accomplished all these things in his relationships.

8. What can we do when we have failed, where we struggled, where we hold onto our past failings?

A: We look to Jesus. We turn to God for forgiveness and restoration. We don't need to hold onto our past but instead hand them over to God for healing, restoration, and reconciliation because Jesus has done everything that is needed to heal and reconcile.

9. As you finish, you might like to read the words of one of the hymns from Sunday:

Turn your eyes upon Jesus
Look full, in his wonderful face
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of his glory and grace

Reading: Matthew 5:1-12

The Sermon on the Mount, a collection of Jesus' teachings from the start of his public ministry, is found in Matthew Chapters 5 to 7. There is value in reading the whole Sermon on the Mount in one sitting at the start of this teaching series. Please recommend to your CG they do this in their own time in the coming days.

Keith focussed his talk on introducing the Sermon on the Mount and this new teaching series, as well as the first of the Beatitudes.

**Are questions that may be best not answered publicly. Instead give everyone a few minutes to privately and prayerfully consider their response. Encourage them to write their answers as a record.*

1. What from Keith talk
 - a. Was helpful/unhelpful
 - b. Resonated/scratched an itch
 - c. Left you confused/left you with more questions
2. The Sermon on the Mount is known as the 'Manifesto of the King'/'Compendium of Christ's Doctrine'/'Jesus' Vision of the Good Life'/'The Magna Carte of the Kingdom'. Why do you think Matthew put The Beatitudes and the beginning of such a significant collection of teachings?
3. Which of the 8 blessings resonates with you the most? Why does it?
4. Share how you have been blessed in such a way that relates to one (or more) of the beatitudes.
5. Which of the blessing listed in the beatitudes are you least keen to experience in this life? Discuss.
6. In verse 11, how do you understand 'because of me'?
7. Looking at the individual beatitudes how can you see them as a blessing (not just a future blessing, but a blessing in the here and now).
8. What are the words (positive or negative) that changed you the most? How have they left their mark?*
9. What are the words of Jesus, or from the Bible, that have changed you most? How have you been transformed by these words?*
10. Consider what are the areas of your life that you long to be transformed by the words of Jesus. Read Matthew 5:1-12. Which of the Beatitudes best fits with the area of transformation you long for? Pray for God to give you the blessing that comes with the Beatitude you have identified.*