

Study Series: The Good Life

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Lesson Title: “Happy Are the Hungry, Thirsty, and Merciful”
(pp. 49-65)

Session 4

June 25, 2023

The main point of this lesson is: The good life only comes to the hungry, thirst, and merciful.

Focus on this goal: To help adults strive to make a difference in the world through the righteousness and mercy of Jesus in them

Key Bible Passage: Matthew 5:6-7

Before the Session

1. Prepare to either read or summarize the account of the expert in Jewish law and the story of the Good Samaritan from Luke 10:25-36. (Step 5)

2. Continue using “The Good Life” chart begun in Session 1. (Step 7)

During the Session

Step 1. Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

Write on a board before class: The hungriest I’ve ever been was the time. . . and The thirstiest I’ve ever been was when. . . . As learners arrive, direct them to the prompts and encourage them to consider their own experiences.

To open class, share your own personal story of hunger or thirst and allow a few volunteers to do the same.

Say: As we continue to study the teaching of the good life, we’re going to look at a different kind of hunger and thirst today.

Step 2. Happy Are the Hungry and Thirsty, Part 1

Say: We need not look far to see the immense brokenness and injustice in the world. Summarize the opening paragraphs of Day One (p. 49), pointing out the sadness, harm, violence, and mistreatment in our world.

Acknowledgemany people ask where God is in all these horrible circumstances. Read the paragraph (pp. 49-50) beginning, “The One True God. . . .” Stress God is intimately involved in our world, sending us to be His agents of redemption in a world of chaos.

Summarize the story told in “Basketball, Shoes, and Feet” in Day One (pp. 50-51). Invite testimonies of volunteers who work to help others as they themselves have been helped. Emphasize all of us have been helped, and God calls each of us to extend help in return.

Step 3. Happy Are the Hungry and Thirsty, Part 2

Invite a volunteer to read Matthew 5:3-6 (reviewing the passages from the past few weeks—vv. 3-5—and adding this week’s first verse, v. 6).

Briefly share the author’s experience in the prison (Day Two, pp. 52-53), including the story of the incarcerated murderer who became a staff member at the author’s church. Point out the man’s sin and that God forgave him, renewed his heart, and gave him a ministry. Ask: How has God given you a ministry to others based on your own past?

Call for volunteers to read Isaiah 55:1 and Psalm 106:3. Draw the parallel between Jesus’s declaration that the hungry and thirsty are blessed and God’s open invitation to receive food and water freely from Him.

Step 4. Happy Are the Merciful, Part 1

Invite a volunteer to read James 2:13. Ask what the verse means. Allow adults to explain how they might explain the verse to someone who doesn’t know the Bible or follow Jesus.

Use Day Three content (pp. 55-56) to point out that the opposite of James 2:13, that judgment trumps mercy, often seems true in our world. Read the second paragraph of Day Three (p. 55-56).

Use the section “Mercy Came to Us” (p. 56) to explain that mercy is not simply something God does but it is who He is; Jesus is the epitome of the mercy of God.

Read or summarize the word pictures the author uses to describe the mercy of Jesus. Invite learners to share their own word pictures of Jesus’s mercy (Day Three, activity 2, pp. 56-57).

Ask participants how they recognize the mercy of Jesus in their lives.

Step 5. Happy Are the Merciful, Part 2

Read or summarize the conversation between Jesus and an expert in the law (Luke 10:25-36). Point out that the expert knew all the “right” things to do, but he had not considered the full meaning of who a “neighbor” was.

Use Day Four content (pp. 58-59) to reveal how this story would have been offensive to the Jews listening to Jesus speak. Stress that God’s children should live and love across all barriers that keep people separated.

Draw out the actions of mercy as displayed by the Samaritan in the Jesus’s parable. Engage learners in considering their own active mercy.

Step 6. Happy Are the Merciful, Part 3

From the opening Day Five paragraph (p. 61), help learners understand spiritual maturity and its link to our ability to love our enemies. Read the paragraph (p. 61) that begins “When we harbor ill will . . . .” Invite a volunteer to read Romans 5:10-11 as you finish.

Ask: Whose behavior do our actions most often resemble: the priest and Levite? Or the Samaritan? Allow for discussion, but do not force the issue.

Stress that Jesus’s point was clear to His listeners then and clear to us now: we are to reach across all lines and show the mercy of Jesus.

Step 7. Practical Application – Live Out the Lesson

As a group, discuss the section “Let’s Move Beyond Tolerance” (p. 62). Emphasize that tolerating people is not the same as loving them.

Direct attention to the pull quote (p. 62). Point out that Jesus’s command was to love, not to judge.

Write Hungry, Thirsty, and Merciful on “The Good Life” chart. Examine how the list is growing and pointing us to living a Christlike life, inwardly and outwardly.

Invite a volunteer to read Luke 10:36-37. Close in prayer based on these verses.

