

## **Small Group Notes 5th Februar 2016. Theme: 'Be Blameless, Live with a Beautiful Heart'**

Key Words: Salt of the Earth, Light of the world, Righteousness, Anger, Contempt, Adultery, Lust, Divorce, etc.

### **Welcome**

- What personality traits characterise the person who has matured in the image of Christ?  
(If appropriate name someone in whom you see these qualities)

### **Worship**

#### **Read Psalm 37:1-11**

Read the following verses again and then spend a few minutes in silence pondering them.

*Quiet down before God, be prayerful before him.*

*Don't bother with those who climb the ladder,  
who elbow their way to the top.*

*Bridle your anger, trash your wrath,  
cool your pipes—it only makes things worse. (Ps 37:7–8, The Message).*

Open in prayer. A song may be sung.

### **Word**

- Spend a few moment sharing how God challenged you or encouraged you on Sunday?

**Read Matthew 5:21-37** (The focus below is on mainly on anger. There are notes attached should you wish to discuss the themes of marriage and divorce)

- What questions or difficulties do you have in the reading? (simply list them without feeling the need to resolve them)
- Do you think Christians take this teaching as a blessing from Christ? (It is easy to forget that the same Jesus who has pronounced heavens blessing on the spiritually poor says these words – they are meant to bless us).
- When someone is angry with you how do you feel? Why does lust dehumanise both the perpetrator and the victim.
- Discuss these words *"Find a person who has embraced anger, and you find a person with a wounded ego"*<sup>1</sup>.
- What do think of this statement. *Anger embraced is, accordingly, inherently disintegrative of human personality and life. It does not have to be specifically "acted out" to poison the world*
- Jesus is calling for a righteousness that exceeds that of the pharisees, i.e. a righteousness of heart. He is not giving another list of things not to do. Why do you think we so quickly want to make his words into another set of laws?
- How are we set free from anger, contempt, lust etc.

### **Works**

- Say the covenant prayer together (Attached).
- Pray for DMC – especially for the appointment of new Society Stewards.
- Practise for the week – Affirmative prayer. Before you get out of bed say these words *"Abba, I belong to you."* Repeat the phrase a few times and to affirm this powerful truth.
- Accountability: Compassionately hold one another accountable (see last weeks guide)

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<sup>1</sup> The Divine Conspiracy, Dallas Willard

## Notes on Mt 5:21-37

Your group may ask question about divorce and remarriage. Note the following:

1. *"In the Jewish society of Jesus' day, as for most times and places in human history, the consequences of divorce were devastating for the woman. Except for some highly unlikely circumstances, her life was, simply, ruined. No harm was done to the man, by contrast, except from time to time a small financial loss and perhaps bitter relationships with the ex-wife's family members. For the woman, however, there were only three realistic possibilities in Jesus' day. She might find a place in the home of a generous relative, but usually on grudging terms and as little more than a servant. She might find a man who would marry her, but always as "damaged goods" and sustained in a degraded relationship. Or she might, finally, make a place in the community as a prostitute"* (Dallas Willard). Jesus words were thus a blessing to the vulnerable state of woman in the first century.
2. If one continues the trajectory of the Beatitudes we can easily hear Jesus say *"Blessed are the divorced"* – God draws near to their brokenness and pain.
3. Jesus is not giving laws as much as pointing to changed hearts. Under the perfect rule of Heaven people are blessed with soft hearts and enabled to pursue life-long marriage. Better though to divorce than for life to be unbearable. The church is required to take the narrow path of upholding God's intention in marriage and dealing compassionately with those who are broken.

If you struggled to answer the last question in the notes: Anger is not quelled by trying not to be angry (just try it!). Rather the room for anger in our souls is displaced when we are filled with God's blessing and love. A soul disciplined to continually ponder God's beauty, God's love and God's grace has less and less space for anger, contempt, lust etc.

## Covenant Prayer

A version written by **Morag Venter** (our Sunday School Superintendent) for use by our Sunday School:

*I realise that I belong to you, God  
so show me what you want me to do  
whether it means I become important or not.  
In everything I do or have to endure,  
when I work and when I have nothing to do,  
when I am successful and when I fail,  
when I am full of joy and when I am sad,  
when life is going well and when things are in a mess,  
I willingly offer myself and everything I have to serve you  
-wherever you want to use me.  
I am your child and you are my Father.  
May it be so for ever and ever.  
I am promising this, but it is only with your powerful help that I shall be able to keep this promise.  
Amen*