

Russell Kelfer

The Eye That Needs a Hand

551-B

Series: The Beatitudes

dtm DISCIPLESHIP TAPE MINISTRIES, INC.
INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

10602 Mossbank, San Antonio, TX 78230 • (210) 226-0000 / 1-800-375-7778 • www.dtm.org • dtm@dtm.org

Note: Russell wrote each of these lessons in a manner that would enable him to clearly communicate them to his weekly class. The grammar or punctuation you encounter may not be technically perfect, but you will certainly “hear” his unique gift for making the message applicable to the common man in everyday situations.

It’s been said of him that he was really a writer who read his stuff. And that’s a very accurate statement!

May you be richly blessed as you “hear” as you read.

The Eye That Needs a Hand

This lesson is entitled, “The Eye That Needs A Hand” and comes from Matthew 5:9,

Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God. (Matthew 5:9)

A few lessons ago we established that the process of peacemaking carries with it four basic connotations all of which in stair-step fashion make up the process of peace. We have four steps. Let’s begin by reviewing the first two steps:

1- Man must make his peace with God, or he has no basis for peace with men. Man must come to a place of realization that Christ died for him. As he receives Him into his life, he then makes his peace with God.

2- Man, having made his peace with God, must then learn to live in the peace of God. Having surrendered to God, he must learn to live in occupied territory. In the last lesson, we dealt with the entrance of that peace into the life, the expression of that peace, the enemies of that peace and the experience of peace. Jesus, in the storm of life, is our peace. We learned how we can deal with the storms of life. We remembered that Jesus in the midst of the storm rebuked it. Had the disciples had enough faith, He would not have needed to rebuke the disciples, but rather He could have given them peace in the storm rather than peace from the storm.

In this lesson, we begin a study of the third aspect of peacemaking:

3- Man living in harmony with man. This is what we think of when we think of peacemaking. This peacemaking is the harmony of relationships that defies even traumatic conflict and expresses itself in unity and peace. “Oh what bliss,” Jesus says, “for the man or the woman who lives at peace with those about him.” It is not an option for Christians to get along and live in harmony and avoid conflict and the expression of hostility. The Christian is called to be an example of peace to the world. Listen to what the Scriptures say about our attitude toward personal conflict. We

The Eye That Needs a Hand

see this in I Peter 3:8-11 in the New International Bible:

Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble.

Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but rather blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.

For, whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech.

He must turn from evil and do good. He must seek peace and pursue it. (He must go after it with a definitive effort.)

(I Peter 3:8-11 NIV)

Mark 9:50 in the Wuest translation goes like this:

Salt is good but if the salt loses its pungency, with what will you restore the saltiness to it? Be having salt in yourselves and be being at peace with one another. (Mark 9:50 Wuest)

In other words, the essence of the flavor of your spiritual life can be tasted like a cook tastes the saltiness of food. But the taste test is your ability to get along with other people. II Corinthians 13:11 in the New English Bible says,

And now my friends farewell, (this is Paul's parting remark to the Corinthians) mend your ways, appeal to the heart, agree with one another and live in peace and the God of love and peace will be with you. (II Corinthians 13:11 NEB)

In other words he said, "Goodbye, shape up, pay attention, get along with each other, and God will see that you get along well as a Christian." This is a loose translation. Let's look at Proverbs 17:1 in the Living Bible,

A dry crust eaten in peace is better than steak everyday with argument and strife. (Proverbs 17:1 TLB)

In other words, rugged circumstances and good relationships far surpass prosperity accompanied by hostility. Psalm 133:1 says,

How wonderful it is, how pleasant for God's people to live together in harmony. (Psalm 133:1 paraphrased)

So God's position is clear. His goal is peace. His people are the key, for God's man is a man of peace. God's man is the instrument that causes strife to cease. His essence is a positive spirit. The judging of others he assigns to God. He joyfully accepts abuse at the hands of others no matter how undeserved. He willingly

The Eye That Needs a Hand

submits to the authority placed over him, for he recognizes that God is his authority's authority and God cares about him. He has no problem with "rights" nor is he constantly yielding his rights, for God's man has no rights to yield. He always speaks peace and healing, for peace and healing are the essence of his life. He never argues to prove that he is right, because his being right or wrong is not the issue of his life. Like his Master, his words speak peace to the storms of life, and hearts become still amidst the storm. God's man and God's woman are peacemakers.

The outline for the study looks like this:

I- The Prelude

II- The Plan

III- The Principles

A- God's Sword: His peacemakers

B- God's Showcase of Peace

IV- The Practical: Four ways the Christian manifests peace in the world

A- To Those Who are Over Him

B- To Those Who are Alongside Him

C- To Those Who are Under Him

D- To The Circumstances God Sends His Way

V- The Purpose: What is the world looking for in a Christian?

Let's begin with the principles. As always, it is best to understand God's underlying objectives before we look at God's specific commandments, otherwise we may bow to legalism or become slaves to pacifism and lose the reality of the freshness of God's peace plan. Secondly, is it wise to deal with the questions before they become issues rather than defend the principle when God, in essence, needs no defense? We want to look at two basic concepts that underlie the study on peace as far as relationships are concerned.

1- The first task has to do with the confusion in some lines between Matthew 10:34 and the verses I just shared with you. In Matthew 10 Jesus said,

"Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword.

For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law';

The Eye That Needs a Hand

and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household.'

He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.

And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.

He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it. (Matthew 10:34-39 NKJV)

How many people have misused that passage to justify rebellion to their parents, to leave an unsaved mate, to indifference to their children, to insensitivity to God's deeper call to die to self? The Gospel divides. The conflict between God and man is divided by the Gospel. It clarifies the issue. It amplifies the difference.

For example, a man becomes a Christian and his wife is not. Suddenly, there is strife. There is the absence of common purpose. There is the presence of conflict. There is an absence of real communication. The Gospel is a sword. It has divided a home. But the Christian is the peacemaker. His goal is reconciliation. The husband does not leave his unbelieving wife, but he gives himself to her with agape love. He learns to love her as Christ loves the church. He may be abused, accused or abandoned, but his is a message of peace. The Gospel brought separation, but the Gospel-bearer brings reconciliation. The Gospel brings division; the Savior brings unity. The message brings war; the messengers bring peace.

Like the law, the entrance of the Word clarifies the issues and brings to light the hostilities. The Gospel separates with absolutes: light from darkness, heaven from hell, good from evil, purity from impurity, honesty from dishonesty. In so doing, it draws a line in many cases between brother and sister, mother and father, husband and wife. But the entrance of the King to another heart settles the issue. Hostilities cease. Christians are called to be peacemakers, although the message they bring is a declaration of war. This makes the role of peacemaking so much more important.

The Christian calls men to repentance and then loves them into it. He blows the trumpet on sin and then washes the feet of sinners. He cries out for holiness and then cries for the unholy. He points the finger of reality at sin and then reaches the rest of his hand to the sinner. He cleanses the temple and then dies on

The Eye That Needs a Hand

a cross for those who defiled it. The Gospel is Good News because it exposes the conflict only to bring men to the solution. If you are harboring hostility in the name of evangelism or of righteousness, then you have missed the point. God has called men to be strong enough warriors to make peace.

Jesus had the artillery to destroy the Roman Empire and to destroy the Jewish Sanhedrin all in one breath. His strongest shot was one of silence. His cry of victory was, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do." He won, because He was willing to lose. He survived, because He served. Jesus was our example. He is the Prince of Peace.

This is the concept, and it is vital to our study. Don't use Matthew 10:34 as a justification for rebellion to parents or separation or alienation from loved ones. That is Satan's misuse of Scripture. You are the peacemaker. Your goal is to love those from whom you are separated by the Gospel into the kingdom of peace. Give yourself to them. Serve them into the kingdom. Love them into the kingdom. Pray them into the kingdom.

There may be someone reading this lesson who has alienated themselves from their parents or their mate. You may be using this passage saying that they don't understand. Your job is to love them into understanding. The peace of God builds bridges, not walls. I urge you to go to the nearest telephone and say, "I love you. May I come see you?" Humble yourself and accept the role of a bond slave sent on a mission of peace. We must understand the difference. The Gospel brings conflict, but the Christian brings peace.

2- The second concept in God's showcase of peace is us, the church. Ours is a world at war. Sin has ravaged mankind until now, and man is on the brink of self-destruction morally, spiritually, emotionally and physically like never before. Mankind is confused, hostile and afraid. He has pulled out all of the stops scientifically. We have been to the moon, built computers for houses and calculators for grocery shopping. We can record and rerun murder, rape and other forms of godless entertainment on our VCR, but the world's most powerful nation couldn't free 50 hostages kept in custody in violation of international law. We can't stop runaway inflation. We can't stop pornography, and we have no handle on drug abuse. Crime is escalating on the city streets until once peaceful little towns have become nightmares of terror. The world has given it all its got, and it is headed down

The Eye That Needs a Hand

the wrong course.

But, tucked away in the midst of all of the impurity, all of the greed and all of the rebellion, like an island surrounded by a raging sea, is a little peaceful nation whose border is besieged by battle. This is the church of Jesus Christ. It is imperfect but indestructible. What I want us to grasp as never before is what God expects the world to see when it looks at us. Peace. The world can rant and rave. They can make it every man for himself. The church of Jesus Christ is supposed to be lost in love, surrendered in service and healed by harmony. The church has various doctrines, yes, and we should never compromise ours. It has various ministries, yes, but we must never cease to be faithful to those to which we are called. It has various denominations, yes, and on many things we will not agree; but through it all, God wants to see in it all the church of Jesus Christ bathed in peace.

What is it that God has planned to show the world? We see in Acts 2,

And all the believers met together constantly and they shared everything with each other,

Selling their possessions and dividing with those in need.

They worshipped together regularly at the temple each day, met in small groups in homes for communion and shared their meals with great joy and thankfulness

praising God. And the whole city was favorable to them and each day God added to them all who were being saved.

(Acts 2:44-47 NKJV)

That is the Gospel. That is the church that God wants to see. The early church stayed together. They shared together, and they worshipped together. They ate together, and they praised together. They were united together in spirit. The result was that the whole city was amazed and daily people turned to Christ. We can see more of this in Acts 4,

And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common.

And with great power the apostles gave witness to the

The Eye That Needs a Hand

resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all.

Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold,

and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need. (Acts 4:31-35 NKJV)

The people in the early church were filled with the Spirit, and they had a common bond. They were filled with boldness, and they had a common goal. They were filled with unity, and they had a common objective, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus. They were filled with generosity as they had common possessions. They were filled with grace as they had common power. This first century fellowship is no different in essence, though slightly different in practice today, from what God expects from the church of Jesus Christ today. He expects a unity of the Spirit in the bond of love.

In John 17, the Lord Jesus Himself was talking to the Father about us,

“I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word;

that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.

And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one:

I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.

(John 17:20-23 NKJV)

What a beautiful plea from the lips of the Savior. He said, “Father, this is what I want. I want the Christians to be unified in spirit and in objective. I want them to be just as unified Father as You and I are.” John 10:30 says,

I and My Father are one.

(John 10:30 NKJV)

Jesus continued His plea, “We may act separately, but we always reflect the heart of the other because Our objective and Our spirit is one. Father, I want them to have the same unity that You and I have—the same bond, the same commonness of spirit and of fellowship. If they do, I believe, Father, that the world will believe, based on that love, that You sent Me. They will see the

The Eye That Needs a Hand

Gospel and know that it is true. I believe that their unity will be a reflection of My glory. They will know that You, Father, love them as much as you love Me.”

This is why John echoed these thoughts when he wrote Jesus’ words,

By this shall all men know that you are My disciples if you have love one for another. (John 13:35 NKJV)

That is why petty differences are not the hallmark of the first church. Common unity was the hallmark of the first church. There wasn’t time to argue over insignificant issues because eternity depended upon unity, and it still does. To make this work, God designed a spiritual body so unique that the only way to describe it was to use the miracle of the physical body as an example. I Corinthians 1:9-13 gives us a little picture of the problem that began to develop in one church.

God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe’s household, that there are contentions among you.

Now I say this, that each of you says, “I am of Paul,” or “I am of Apollos,” or “I am of Cephas,” or “I am of Christ.”

Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? (I Corinthians 1:9-13 NKJV)

The question is, Is Christ divided? The problem here was denominational dissension. They were looking at their differences, thus dissolving the basis for their unity. You may ask, “Are you arguing for the Council of Churches or some organization like that?” My answer is, “No.” I am not talking about doctrinal compromise or organizational unity, but spiritual oneness. I am talking about the oneness that majored on the one thing we have in common, Jesus Christ.

Some of the most exciting experiences that many of you have had is being involved in experiences like the Alive Ministry, the Billy Graham Ministry, the Bill Gothard Ministry, Bible Study Fellowship, the Gideons, Youth for Christ or Child Evangelism

The Eye That Needs a Hand

Fellowship. These represent groups of Christians, that when they get together, they forget who they are and what denomination they are from and call attention to who Christ is and why they are called. What a beautiful victory there is when that kind of relationship develops into a ministry. In Ephesians 4:1-16 Paul writes this:

I beg you as a prisoner here in jail for serving the Lord, to live and act in such a way that is worthy of those who have been chosen for blessings such as these:

Be humble, be gentle, be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because you love them so much.

Try always to be led along by the Holy Spirit and so be at peace with one another

because we are all parts of one body. We have the same spirit and we have been called to the same future.

For us, there is only one Lord, one faith, one baptism,

We have all the same God and Father, who is over us all and in us all and living through every part of us.

However, He has given to each of us special abilities and gifts.

the Psalmist tells about this, for he says that when Christ returned triumphantly to heaven after His resurrection and victory over Satan, He gave generous gifts to men.

Notice that it says He returned to heaven. This means that He had first come down from the heights of heaven, far down to the lowest parts of the earth.

The same One who came down is the same One who went back up, that He might fill all things everywhere with Himself, from the very lowest to the very highest.

Some of us have been given special ability as apostles; to others He has given the gift of being able to preach well; some have special ability in winning people to Christ, helping them to trust Him as their Savior; still others have a gift for caring for God's people as a shepherd does his sheep, leading and teaching them in the ways of God.

God's people will be equipped to do better for Him, building up of the church, the body of Christ to a position of strength and maturity;

until finally we all believe about our salvation and our Savior alike, God's Son and all become full grown to the point of being filled full of Christ.

The Eye That Needs a Hand

Then we won't be like children, forever changing our minds about what we believe,

Instead we will lovingly follow the truth at all times, speaking truly, dealing truly, living truly and so become more and more in every way like Christ who is the head of His body, the church,

Under His direction, the whole body is fitted together perfectly and each part in its own special way helps the other parts so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.
(Ephesians 4:1-16 TLB)

In other words, Paul says that we make allowances with our differences without compromising our convictions. In I Corinthians 12 we get the conclusion of the essence of it all.

Now God gives us many kinds of special abilities, but it is the same Holy Spirit who is the source of them all.

There are different kinds of service to God, but it is the same Lord we are serving.
(I Corinthians 12:4,5 TLB)

In the next 3 verses he tells us of the different kinds of spiritual gifts. These gifts reflect themselves in different kinds of ministries and those ministries have different kind of manifestations. He goes on to say that they are all God's and that they all come from the same Holy Spirit who sends His power to help the whole church. He then talks about the different gifts and abilities and the different manifestations that come from the Holy Spirit. I want to continue on in verse 13:

Each of us is a part of the one body of Christ. Some of us are Jews, some are Gentiles, some are slaves, and some are free. But the Holy Spirit has fitted us all together into one body. We have been baptized into Christ's body by the one Spirit, and have all been given that same Holy Spirit.

Yes, the body has many parts, not just one part.

If the foot says, "I am not a part of the body because I am not a hand," that does not make it any less a part of the body.

And what would you think if you heard an ear say, "I am not part of the body because I am only an ear and not an eye"? Would that make it any less a part of the body?

Suppose the whole body were an eye—then how would you hear? Or if your whole body were just one big ear, how could you smell anything?

But that isn't the way God has made us. He has made many parts for our bodies and has put each part just where he wants it.

The Eye That Needs a Hand

What a strange thing a body would be if it had only one part!
So he has made many parts, but still there is only one body.

The eye can never say to the hand, "I don't need you." The
head can't say to the feet, "I don't need you."

And some of the parts that seem weakest and least important
are really the most necessary.

Yes, we are especially glad to have some parts that seem
rather odd! And we carefully protect from the eyes of others
those parts that should not be seen,

while of course the parts that may be seen do not require
this special care. So God has put the body together in such
a way that extra honor and care are given to those parts that
might otherwise seem less important.

This makes for happiness among the parts, so that the
parts have the same care for each other that they do for
themselves.

If one part suffers, all parts suffer with it, and if one part is
honored, all the parts are glad.

Now here is what I am trying to say: All of you together are
the one body of Christ, and each one of you is a separate
and necessary part of it. (I Corinthians 12:13-27 TLB)

If we were to summarize this passage, we would have to say
these things:

Paul said that there were different gifts, but only one Giver.
There are different ministries but one purpose. There are different
results, but one person is glorified. In verses 12-13 he tells us
there is only one church, but in verse 14 he says that this body
has many parts. In verse 21, he tells us that if any person or
group in that body begins to exalt itself to the exclusion of itself,
it denies the head. In verse 15 we read that if a foot says, "I am
not a hand, God cannot use me," he is not a foot, he is a fool. If an
eye says, "I don't need you hand, you don't have my vision", it will
perish. The eye has the vision but lacks the ability to reach out
and fulfill it. This is what the world needs to see when the world
sees the church of Jesus Christ. The world needs to see a unified
body with different parts.

Truly, there are many denominations, and it is true that there
are many gifts within each fellowship, but the world needs to
see a spirit of oneness. Some represent the hands in the body of
Christ. God gave them hands to reach out. Some represent the
feet of the body that God gave them to move out. Some represent

The Eye That Needs a Hand

the eyes of the body that God gave them the vision to see the goals of God. Some represent the ears of the body that God gave them the patience to listen. Some represent the fingers of the body that God designed to mold and to shape the lives of men and women. Some represent the ankles of the body that God designed to give the support necessary to keep the body from falling. Some represent the elbows of the body that are designed to bend down to meet the needs of people. Some are the knees of the body designed to bow down before God and worship. Some are the lungs of the body that are designed to learn how to breathe fresh life into the body. Some represent the arms of the body that are designed to lift up and carry the load of the weak. Some are the neck of the body with a willingness to turn from the left or to the right in order to see if they are coming or going.

What the Scripture is saying is that what the world sees when it sees us is the different parts that are animated and doing different jobs. But all need to be seen as reflecting unity and all reflecting that they belong to the same body. In verses 22-24, we have one of the most important truths of this entire passage. Paul said, "Above all else, don't judge importance by prominence." So often I have people come up and say to me, "I sure do appreciate all of the study you do." What bothers me about this is that those who are more visible are not necessarily more vital. I think that when God looks at the body of Christ, He is not at all impressed with somebody who can stand up and teach a large class. I praise God for the opportunity to do that, but this doesn't set me apart. In essence, to some degree, I already have my reward.

What about those of you who are prayer warriors? These are people who are never heard from on a day-to-day basis. There is never any flag waving, never any merit badges. But, in the quietness of your own home, you continue to pray for this church, for the world, or for the needs of people that you know who have deep needs.

What about the teachers in your children's class who week after week prepare to teach a Sunday School lesson. The rest of you go to a class where you can sit quietly and be taught. These teachers have to wrestle with discipline problems and all facets of communication or lack of it. What about the nursery workers who are right now changing diapers and cleaning up after the children? These workers are trying to love these young ones as if they were their own. It is harder to love someone else's child like

The Eye That Needs a Hand

you love your own, isn't it?

What about the people who count the money and do the accounting work for the church? What about the people in the sound room who labor Sunday after Sunday after Sunday with no notice and no reward?

High visibility does not make for high spirituality. We need to come to understand that what Paul is saying in this passage is that not only are we all separate parts of the same body, but don't judge which parts are more important by which parts are most visible. Some of you are kings and queens in the court of God, because you are faithful to that which you have been called.

Paul closes in verse 25 by saying that God's goal is that there be no schism in the body at all. He goes on into chapter 13 telling us that the whole thing that binds us together is love. This is the goal of God for the church. The goal is to take the Gospel, the Gospel that divides, and becomes ambassadors of reconciliation. To take a group of fallible, fussing saints and turn them into models of peace and harmony is God's plan. In a world where even world peace has lost its significance, God wants the church to show that peace.

The world is looking at the church of Jesus Christ, and you and I are what they see. Will they see hands calling attention to hands? Will they see feet scurrying away from the ears? Will they see eyes looking for ways to leave the knees? Or, will they see a body that is whole, full of harmony and at peace?

Some of us need to add to our prayer list the pastor of the church across the street and the pastor of the church on your way home. We need to recognize that the church across town needs help. We may need to give it. Maybe there is a church across the nation from where we came through in which we were led to Christ and we don't even pray for those people anymore. You may have come from a different church in this city. Are you praying for them? Those churches are every bit as valuable to God as this one. I believe that the long-range fruitfulness of any church is proportionate to its vision of the whole body of Christ. Where there is no vision, the people perish.

We need to learn that we need the fellowship that has a different last name than ours. We need to learn that we need that fellowship that has a different bent on worshipping than we do. We need to learn that we need that fellowship that has a different

The Eye That Needs a Hand

way of ministry. They complete the body. They need us as we need them. Every believer, regardless of his gift, regardless of his talent, regardless of his age and regardless of his maturity, is precious in the sight of God and as precious as we fancy ourselves to be. We need to give ourselves without limit to help them be successful.

This is what the world is waiting for. This is what the world is looking for. This is what God is looking for. He is looking for the church to be a haven and an example of peace in a world of strife. By God's grace, may He be seen more perfectly in our midst in these last days.

dtm DISCIPLESHIP TAPE MINISTRIES, INC.

10602 Mossbank, San Antonio, TX 78230
210-226-0000 or 1-800-375-7778

www.dtm.org • dtm@dtm.org • © Russell Kelfer

(02.01.14)