

Fall 2025 Grow Groups: Week 3
“Better: What are you hungry for?”
Matthew 5:6-8

GOAL

Desire God and hunger for his righteousness, for he is our true satisfaction.

TO-DO LIST

- Take attendance in Planning Center, including guests and new members (please include their contact information in the meeting notes section).
- If you meet on-campus, there are Connection Cards available for you in your room for guests to fill out and give to you. Please make sure to drop them in one of our offering boxes in the Worship Center before you leave church any given Sunday.
- We are still looking for several more men and women to serve as mentors in local elementary schools with us through our new Walk With Me ministry. You and your Grow Groups are invited to register to spend 30 minutes each week mentoring a child at vrbc.net/walkwithme
- Invite everyone to register to join us for our Christmas Store Auction this Thursday, September 18 from 6:30-8:30pm.
- Remind Grow Group members our Men’s and Women’s Fall Bible Studies kicked off last week and it’s not too late to join!
 - Women’s Mondays 7-8:30pm
 - Men’s Wednesdays 6-7:30pm
- Plan your Fall 2025 Grow Group Pair-Up and email details to Meghan at mhendrickson@vrbc.net

LOOK AHEAD

- The primary Scripture for next week’s sermon is: Matthew 5:9-16
- This week’s memory verse is: Psalm 51:10

DISCUSS

PART 1: PROCESS THE SERMON

>> Read Matthew 5:6-8.

- **As we focus on listening to Jesus, what is the primary message of truth you sensed God speaking to you in our worship gathering this week?**

Leader Notes:

- *Feel free to refer to last week's leader notes for the motivation behind this, but we want to start our Grow Group sermon discussions with this question each week this year.*
- **When you consider the blessings Jesus declares in Matthew 5:6-8, which most resonates with you today and why?**

Leader Notes:

- *Depending on where people are this week, they may be having a hard time seeing God clearly, they may be struggling to find mercy, or they may be feeling empty – wherever they may be, we want to create a safe space to acknowledge that and be met with the promises of Christ that are ours for the taking as dearly loved children of God.*

>> Pastor John said, “the spiritual hunger we feel – the desire for meaning, significance, and to connect with something bigger than ourselves – is designed to motivate us to seek after God. But, the world presents us with different options to satisfy our hunger, and what we choose matters. If we try to satisfy our spiritual hunger with the world's menu, we're going to end up disappointed. But if we hunger and thirst for God and his righteousness, we will be satisfied.”

- **When do you find yourself desiring meaning, significance, or the ability to connect with something bigger than yourself?**
 - **How do you view those desires and what do you do with them when they arise?**
 - **If those desires are designed to motivate us to seek after God, what is something you could do in the face of those rising desires this week?**

Leader Notes:

- *The hope behind these questions is to help us see that many (if not all) of us have had moments where we wonder if this is all there is, if God sees us, and if there is a greater purpose for our life beyond what we can see. This is a great chance to connect over our shared humanity, but also be encouraged that what may appear as thoughts we feel guilty for having, are actually invitations for us to lean into Jesus.*
- **When was a time you bypassed what God offered and ate what the world offered, but you were left disappointed?**
 - **What are you currently tempted to believe is better than God? In other words, what seems more worth your time, affection, and attention than God lately?**

Leader Notes:

- *This is really the heart of this week's sermon. Although we would not say we believe anything is better than God, our beliefs shape our choices. The hope behind these diagnostic questions is to invite the Holy Spirit to search us and show us what we have been giving ourselves to that is not God – because often, we are not even aware we have been giving ourselves to idols until we step back in moments like these – with the help of the Holy Spirit, the word of God, and the people of God – and truly consider where our time, affection, and attention is being spent.*
 - *Like Jesus says in Matthew 16:25, “for whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it.”*
- **How are you encouraged by the truth that we do not fill ourselves up with righteousness, but God is the one who fills us with righteousness?**
(If we think we can make ourselves righteous, that is called self-righteousness and is not God's righteousness.)

>> John said, “Jesus gives us the life we want the most, but he does it in the way we expect the least.”

- **How are you challenged and encouraged by the word “want” in that statement?**
- **How have you seen God do this in your own life?**
- **Who can you pray for and encourage with this truth this week?**

Leader Notes:

- *This concept should resonate with many of us, as life rarely goes according to our own plans, but we can trust in God's better plan. It is helpful to make meaning of our own stories as we trace God's hand along the way – remembering the enduring character of God and our purpose in life. If knowing God and bringing God glory is the greatest purpose of our life, it helps us to better understand why some things in our life have gone vastly different than we envisioned.*
 - *I am personally challenged and encouraged by the word “want,” because I sincerely want to live a life that is centered on knowing God and bringing God glory, but sometimes I fall for the lies the world sells me and I think I want something else (that is truly, something less). It is dangerous when I lose sight of God's enduring character, and I believe the lie from the enemy that God has withheld something good from me because my life is not going according to my own plans. But since I have trusted in Jesus, it is no longer my own life anyway. I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me, and this life I live by faith believing in the Son*

of God who loved me and gave himself for me. Jesus gave his life for me, and I gave my life to him – and in so doing, I found (and continue to find) true life in him. I am no longer a slave to sin, but a slave to Christ – and it is for freedom Christ has set us free. The tension between the life we think we want and the life we truly want is very real in the life of a believer, but praise God, he continually offers us the truly good life in his Kingdom.

>> Read Isaiah 55:1-3.

- **What does this passage have to do with this week's sermon, *Better: What are you hungry for?***
- **What does this passage have to do with this year's theme, *Listening to Jesus?***
- **What does this passage teach us about who God is?**
- **Why do you spend money and labor on what does not satisfy?**
- **What is true satisfaction?**

Leader Notes:

- *John closed his sermon with Isaiah 55:2, but in its context, it speaks even more clearly to our focus as a church right now. Let us take time to consider God's character and what God desires for us, that we might grow in our own desire for him.*

>> Read Psalm 73:1-2, 13-14, 21-26.

- **How do you see your story in the psalmist's cries to God?**
- **Consider verse 25 in various Bible translations:**
 - **NIV:** Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I *desire besides you*.
 - **NASB:** Whom do I have in heaven but you? And with you, I *desire* nothing on earth.
 - **NLT:** Whom have I in heaven but you? I *desire* you more than anything on earth.
 - **CEB:** Do I have anyone else in heaven? There's nothing on earth I *desire except you*.
 - **GNT:** What else do I have in heaven but you? Since I have you, what else could I *want* on earth?
 - **CEV:** In heaven I have only you, and on this earth you are all I *want*.

- **MSG: You're all I want in heaven! You're all I want on earth!**

➤ **After reading the same message from verse 25 communicated 7 different ways, what message do you sense the Lord writing on your own heart?**

Leader Notes:

- *If we had time to read all of Psalm 73, it is worth your while, but hopefully these 10 verses provide sufficient context for your discussion. It would be helpful for you to read all of Psalm 73 before facilitating the discussion, though. As is standard in the Psalms, the psalmist's honesty before God is refreshing.*
- *I am bringing in different Bible translations here because language resonates with people in different ways, but the answer to our question for this week, "what are you hungry for?" is answered in this verse in a multitude of ways.*
- *Personally, God wrote the NLT verse on my heart years ago and it has been the repeated cry of my heart to God ever since. I pray regularly that I will desire God more than anything on earth. My hope in spending extra time in this verse and sharing various Bible translations here is for Grow Group members to hopefully also be led by the Spirit to make the cry of the psalmist's heart to God the cry of their own hearts to God until he carries us home.*

>> How is God inviting you to respond to what you have seen and heard from him in worship and our discussion today?

Leader Notes:

- *This is a great way to encourage Grow Group members to share any lingering thoughts, prayers, convictions, or words of encouragement the Spirit of God is stirring in their hearts before we move into a time of testimony in our Listening to Jesus journey. We want to grow more and more comfortable testifying of what we have seen and heard from God, recognizing God as the divine initiator who invites and delights in our response. This question helps us to do that in relation to our sermon discussion, but it also prepares us to consider what we can share from the last week as we Listened to Jesus in his word, through our Listening Guides and Listen Journals, in our obedience and transformation, as well as when we connected with others through encouragement and proclamation.*

PART 2: LISTENING TO JESUS TESTIMONIES

>> We invite and encourage everyone to join us on our journey of Listening to Jesus this year. If you have not yet joined our Listening Community to receive our daily Listening Guides by email or on Instagram, please do so. And please grab your Listen Journal in the lobby that is our gift to you. Plan to bring your Listen Journal with you to our Grow

Group each week as we hope it will be a space for you to keep track of all you are seeing and hearing from God along this journey.

>> For those of you who have joined us on the journey, what is something you heard from God this week that you would like to share with us?

- What is something you saw God do this week that you can share with us?**
- How has God challenged you on this Listening to Jesus journey this week?**
- How has God blessed you on this Listening to Jesus journey this week?**

>> As we seek to keep in step with the Spirit this week, how can we pray with you?

PRAY

God, teach us to hunger and thirst for you and your righteousness, that we might be filled to overflowing and pour out mercy upon others – including and especially those to whom we do not want to show mercy. Lord, help us to remember the new mercies you have for us each morning – for us and for others. Lord, it is sometimes so hard to see you as we walk through what can feel so dark. Please purify our hearts and help us to see you and your glorious light shining in the darkness. Help us to keep in step with the Spirit and stir our hearts to invite others to join us along the way.