

## SERIES TITLE

Upstream

## SERIES OVERVIEW

Jesus was certainly anything but a go-with-the-flow kind of guy. He taught and modeled an against-the-flow lifestyle. He taught things like: “If you want to be great, SERVE others.” “If you want to be rich, GIVE more away.” “If you want to be known for love, LOVE your enemies.” But perhaps the most countercultural teaching Jesus ever taught was: “If you want to be truly happy, you have to turn around and move UPSTREAM toward God, our true source of life.”

## SERMON TITLE

Blessed Are the Thermostats

## WEEKEND IN REVIEW

Gene explores the Beatitudes, examining why the peacemakers and the persecuted are blessed.

## WARM UP

*Begin with some conversation, checking in on how people are doing. You can talk about whatever you'd like, but here is a potential question to get the conversation going.*

- How do you typically respond when someone insults you? Do you insult them back? Call them on it? Cry? Walk away? Laugh it off? Something else? Why?

## DISCUSSION

*Select 5-6 questions from the list below to guide your discussion time.*

- Read [Matthew 5:9](#). When you think of peacemakers, who comes to mind as particularly skilled in this?
- Gene asked us to fill in this equation: YOU + (WHO?) = CONFLICT. Jesus knew we would never be happy in life unless we learn how to work through conflict, yet for many of us this is quite a struggle. We often respond to conflicts with others by choosing to avoid them, fight them, or cancel them. Which is your first response?

- Read [Ephesians 2:14-16](#). Peace with God equips us to make peace with others. Can you see yourself doing the will of God as a peacemaker in your relationships? What does that awareness and behavior look like to you?
- Read [Matthew 5:23-24](#). For us to reconcile means to make things right. Gene gave three steps: go directly, go immediately, and go humbly. Which of the three is the easiest for you? Which is the hardest? Do you have a story of success in this to share?
- Read [Matthew 5:10-12](#). How do a blessing and enduring persecution seem to contradict one another? Why does Jesus say we're blessed and that we should rejoice when this happens?
- Gene pointed out some reasons followers of Jesus may find ourselves being persecuted: a clash of value systems, unfair stereotypes, and unintentional irritation due to differing morals and values. Have you experienced insults or persecution for your faith in Jesus?
- Read [2 Corinthians 4:17](#). How often do you think about heaven? If you think about how long forever really is and what that means for all people, do you feel more motivated to risk more to be a light to the people in your life who don't know Jesus?
- Read [1 Corinthians 15:58](#). This letter was written to ordinary people like you and me. With God, ordinary people can do extraordinary things, being a light as we truly love those around us. Sometimes we may feel we don't matter, but that is not true with God. Where do you need to stand firm?

## APPLICATION

- Read [Romans 12:18](#). Think back to the person you would insert in the equation in the first discussion question on this list. What could you do to live at peace with that person? Pray for that person and ask God to show you what you could do to be a peacemaker in that relationship.
- Gene challenged us to risk more. What could you risk in order to help your friends come to know and be transformed by Jesus?

## WRAP UP & PRAYER

*Share prayer requests and spend time praying for each other*

Pray together that God would help each of us to see ourselves as peacemakers that make a difference. Pray for him to strengthen us, that we would love enough to **RISK MORE** in Jesus' name. Amen.