



### MESSAGE BIG IDEA

The way of Jesus involves an upside-down way of thinking about who is really blessed.

### SCRIPTURE

Matthew 5:3-12

### ICEBREAKER

How many palindromes can you name as a group? (words that are the same read frontwards and backwards)

### OPENING THOUGHT

Blessed is a term we may use to describe our good fortune in certain circumstances or when we've attained something we have wanted. What typically comes to mind when we think about what it may look like for someone to be blessed?

As we look closely at the Way of Jesus, we will see that Jesus says the things that are often given value in the kingdoms of the earth are flipped upside down in the Kingdom of heaven, and what has no apparent value here on earth has immense value in the Kingdom of heaven. In a great reversal of status, the not-so-blessed here on earth really are blessed in the Kingdom of heaven.

### BIBLE DISCUSSION

1. Read Matthew 5:3-12 together. Which of the beatitudes stands out most to you? Why?
2. Spend a moment reading through the supplementary material in the guide on the beatitudes. What thoughts or feelings do you have about this material?
3. The beatitudes are good news, not to do's. In what ways are Jesus' announcements good news to each group?

### LIFE APPLICATION

4. As you read the list of beatitudes, how does it make you feel? Are there any that you disagree with or don't understand why Jesus used?
5. The beatitudes are good news announcements to the left behind, those considered unimportant or overlooked. How can you live out these good news announcements to the people around you?
6. How would you describe the Kingdom of Heaven to someone who is just learning about Christ?

### CHALLENGE

As we consider what it means to follow Jesus as The Way, we begin to reshape our thinking and turn it upside down. What our culture views as valuable does not hold the same worth in the eyes of a Christ-follower. As we approach this week, look for opportunities to turn it upside down by thinking how Jesus thinks. Focus on a particular beatitude and pray daily about how the Spirit can lead you in this area this week. Be ready to discuss this with the group next week.



### **POOR IN SPIRIT**

Jesus says, “Blessed are the nobodies—the spiritually bankrupt and deficient. Those without a wisp of ‘religion’—when the Kingdom comes upon them.” For the grace of Jesus is moving in and through them.

### **THE WEeping ONES**

Jesus says those who weep are the people who have been deserted, leaving them crushed by rejection; people who have lost their careers or businesses or life savings. As they see the Kingdom in Jesus, enter it, and learn to live in it, they find comfort and healing.

### **THE MEEK**

Then there are the meek. The shy ones, the intimidated, the unassertive. They step off the sidewalk to let others pass, always. If something goes wrong, they automatically feel it must have something to do with them. When others step forward and speak up, they shrink back. As the Kingdom of the heavens enfolds them, the whole earth is their Father’s—and theirs as they need it.

### **THOSE WHO HUNGER AND THIRST**

Next are those who burn with desire for things to be made right. Maybe they cringe before their own sin and inwardly scream to be made right. Or maybe they have suffered some terrible injustice, and they are consumed with longing to see the injury set right. Yet the Kingdom of God can make the terrible losses that we experience seem insignificant in the greatness of God. He restores our soul and fills us with his presence.

### **THE MERCIFUL**

Then the merciful. Many will say, “Woe to the merciful, for they shall be taken advantage of.” The merciful are often looked down upon by those who know how to “take care of business.” But, by the power of the Holy Spirit, they themselves find mercy to meet their needs, far beyond any “claim” they might have on God.

### **PURE IN HEART**

And then there are the pure in heart. These are the perfectionists. They can be a pain to everyone, themselves most of all. They endlessly pick over their own motivations. Their food is never cooked right; their clothes are always unsatisfactory; they can tell you what is wrong with everything. And yet the Kingdom is even open to them, and there, at last, they will find something that satisfies their heart. When they do, they will find what they have been looking for, someone who is truly good enough.

### **PEACEMAKERS**

The peacemakers are here too. They are often in the middle. Neither side trusts you. Because they know that you are looking at both sides, you can’t possibly be on their side. But under God’s rule, there is the recognition that in bringing good to people who are in the wrong, you show the divine family resemblance. The peacemaker deals precisely with the ungrateful and undeserving, as anyone who has tried it well knows.

### **PERSECUTED**

And then we have those who are attacked because of their stand for what is right. Yet these, too, can be possessed by the Kingdom of the heavens, and when they are, that is enough to allow them to enjoy a blessed life. They experience an unshakable security in which they cannot be harmed.

### **FALSELY ACCUSED**

Finally, we see those insulted, persecuted, and lied about because they’re one of those “Jesus freaks.” That is certainly how his disciples were viewed at the time. “They actually think this carpenter from Nowheresville is the one sent to save the world!” Yet, Jesus says, rejoice when this happens, from the knowledge that even now you have a great and enduring reward in God’s world. Your reputation stands high before God the Father and his eternal family, whose companionship and love and resources are now and forever your inheritance.

*Adapted from Dallas Willard’s book, “The Divine Conspiracy.”*