

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 AND OPENING THOUGHT

Use the icebreaker as a fun way to look at words in both directions and set a tone for an “upside-down” way of thinking. Open the discussion about how our culture has tried to define what a blessed person’s life may look like. Begin to discuss how this contrasts with the description that Jesus gives during the Sermon on the Mount and the beatitudes.

DISCUSSION

One mistake that is often made when reading and interpreting the beatitudes is to treat the conditions Jesus describes as virtues or something the reader is now supposed to pursue to be blessed by God. Instead, we can see Jesus’ statements as good news announcements to those who find themselves in these conditions.

In Jesus’ day, it was common for people to see those with power, influence, and wealth as “blessed by God,” but here Jesus is announcing to the crowd that the Kingdom has arrived and the first people in line weren’t who everyone expected.

QUOTATIONS FROM THE TALK

“Too often those characteristics [of the Beatitudes] are turned into ideals we must strive to attain. As ideals, they can become formulas for power rather than descriptions of the kind of people characteristic of the new age brought by Christ...” - Stanley Hauerwas

“These ‘blessings’, the ‘wonderful news’ that he’s announcing, is not saying ‘try hard to live like this.’ They are saying that people who already are like that are in good shape. They should be happy and celebrate.” - NT Wright

LIFE APPLICATION

The beatitudes can be difficult for some to understand. How do group members feel that the list of beatitudes applies to them? Are they frustrated by the list? Does it make them feel as if they’ve been striving for the wrong things in life?

A way that may be helpful for group members is to contrast the characteristics of a person of the Kingdom of Heaven vs. a person of the Kingdom of Earth. Try and get group members to focus on how very different Jesus’ description of someone who is blessed is from our culture’s thinking of who is blessed.

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.