

YOU+ | Week 3 - The Guide to a Flourishing Life**Message Big Idea**

Disciples of Jesus adopt his upside-down way of thinking as they follow him in the ways of his Kingdom.

Scripture

Matthew 5:1-12

Opening Questions and Thoughts

1. How have you been able to BLESS someone recently?
2. If you were stranded on a desert island, which three people would you most want to join you?
3. When Jesus taught, especially in the beatitudes, we see Jesus flipped people's expectations upside down. The Big Idea for today is that "disciples of Jesus adopt his upside-down way of thinking as they follow him in the ways of his Kingdom. Have you ever had a time when you thought God was calling you to live an upside-down kind of life?"

Bible Discussion

4. Read Matthew 5:1-13. Jesus isn't expounding virtues everyone should pursue to gain a blessing from God. Instead, try reading each statement as an announcement of good news to the people listening to what he was saying. Look at the supplemental page of the guide and read through the material on each beatitude. What impact do you think these statements had on the people addressed in each one? How do they strike you today?
5. The Beatitudes are a counter-intuitive announcement of the good news of the Kingdom of God that was before the people in the person of Jesus. They are good news announcements, not to-do's. In what ways are Jesus' announcements of "good news" to each group addressed?

Life Application

6. 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?
7. The beatitudes are good news announcements to those who have been left behind – those considered unimportant or overlooked. Imagine how they felt when Jesus mentioned them and their circumstance and said you are "blessed. God is on your side."
8. Whom do you know that needs to hear an announcement of good news? How can we live today in ways that announce this good news to others?

Challenge

Jesus thought and taught in an upside-down way of thinking in his world and our world today. As we approach this week, look for moments and opportunities to turn your thinking upside down and see it from the perspective of Jesus. Focus on a particular beatitude and pray daily about how the Spirit can lead you in this area. Be ready to discuss this with the group next week.

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(adapted from Dallas Willard, "The Divine Conspiracy")

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

The weeping ones have been deserted and crushed by rejection; they are the people who have lost their careers, businesses, or life savings. As they see the Kingdom in Jesus, enter it, and learn to live in it, they will 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 sin and inwardly scream to be made right. Or perhaps 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 we experience seem insignificant in the greatness of God. He restores our souls 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 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 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 open to them, and there, they will finally 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 knows.

Persecuted

And then we have those who are attacked because they 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, love, and resources are now and forever your inheritance.