

The Beatitudes

Characteristics of God's Kingdom

Three Week Small Group Series on the Beatitudes



“Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 5:3



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Introduction

A Bible study based on a book of the Bible is a great discipleship tool. This Bible Study has been designed to have two main components each week. We recommend that you complete one session per week, but feel free to adapt as needed.

1. Personal Study at Home
2. Small Group Session (optional)

The Personal study at home allows the participant to reflect on the Bible passage at home and work through personal application questions on their own. Then, the person comes to the small group meeting ready to share what God has already been showing them.

The small group conversations and discussions are useful in diving deeper into the topic and seeing things from a different perspective or helping you see something that you may have missed when reading the chapter on your own.

Doing a Bible study can be very simple. Just follow the template given for each chapter and make sure that each member of your group has a copy of this booklet so they can journal their responses and come to the small group meeting ready to share. This helps the small group time stay focused and gives everyone an opportunity to think through what they would like to share, adding value to the small group time.

If you have any questions about facilitating this Bible Study, give the church office a call. Someone from Cell Ministry would be happy to speak to you.

Session One: Beatitudes 1-3

Part One: Personal Bible Study

To do on your own before the small group meeting

1. Prepare Your Heart

- Take a moment to prepare your heart and mind for what God has for you today.

2. Read: Matthew 5:3-5 and the Session 1 Study Notes

- Write down 1-3 things that stand out to you and why. You can write down more but highlight 1 for sharing with your small group.

3. Questions to Consider

- Does “blessed are the poor in spirit” seem counterintuitive to you? Why or why not?
- Why is mourning over our sin a significant step in walking with Jesus and living in His Kingdom?
- How does the meekness spoken of in Matthew 5:5 differ from the way that our culture would define meek?
- When you look at your own life, which of these three characteristics do you desire to grow in and why?

4. Obedience/Action Step

- What is one practical step that you can take this week to put this passage into practice in your life?
- What is your plan to follow through on this step? (who will hold you accountable, consider texting your small group for accountability).

5. Repentance

- Ask Jesus if there is any sin you need to confess. Confess as necessary and take the necessary steps towards obedience.

6. Prayer

- Spend some time thanking Jesus for who He is and what He has revealed to you.
- Ask Him if there is anything else He wants to speak to you about.
- Pray and intercede for what He lays on your heart (marriage, kids, ministry, friends, etc.)

7. Optional: Pick a verse(s) from this week’s Bible passage and memorize it.

Part Two: Small Group Plan

Do this section with a small group.

1. Open in Prayer

2. Weekly Connect

- Have each person share 1-2 things that they are thankful for from the past week.
- What was a struggle from the past week?

3. Scripture

- Read Matthew 5:3-5 out loud with your small group.

4. Sharing

- Share something from the study notes and the personal bible study that stood out to you and why.

5. Obedience/Action Step

- As part of the Personal Bible study, you were asked:
 - What is one practical step that you can take this week to put this passage into practice in your life?
 - What is your plan to follow through on this step? (who will hold you accountable, consider texting your table group for accountability).
- Share with your group how this went for you this past week.

6. Prayer

- Share a personal prayer request and pray for each other.
- Pray for churchwide prayer requests as well as our region, province, and nation.

Session Two Beatitudes 4-6

Part One: Personal Bible Study

To do on your own before the small group meeting

1. Prepare Your Heart

- Take a moment to prepare your heart and mind for what God has for you today.

2. Read: Matthew 5:6-8 and the Session 2 Study Notes

- Write down 1-3 things that stand out to you and why. You can write down more but highlight 1 for sharing with your small group.

3. Questions to Consider

- What would you say is the current level of your spiritual hunger? What are things that grow your hunger? What are things that distract or lessen your hunger?
- In what ways has God been merciful to you? In what ways do you show mercy to others?
- Pure in heart refers to an undivided heart. Ask Jesus to show you steps you can take in grow in being more fully pure in heart.
- When you look at your own life, which of these three characteristics do you desire to grow in and why?

4. Obedience/Action Step

- What is one practical step that you can take this week to put this passage into practice in your life?
- What is your plan to follow through on this step? (who will hold you accountable, consider texting your small group for accountability).

5. Repentance

- Ask Jesus if there is any sin you need to confess. Confess as necessary and take the necessary steps towards obedience.

6. Prayer

- Spend some time thanking Jesus for who He is and what He has revealed to you.
- Ask Him if there is anything else He wants to speak to you about.
- Pray and intercede for what He lays on your heart (marriage, kids, ministry, friends, etc.)

7. Optional: Pick a verse(s) from this week's Bible passage and memorize it.

Part Two: Small Group Plan

Do this section with a small group.

1. Open in Prayer

2. Weekly Connect

- Have each person share 1-2 things that they are thankful for from the past week.
- What was a struggle from the past week?

3. Scripture

- Read Matthew 5:6-8 out loud with your small group.

4. Sharing

- Share something from the study notes and the personal bible study that stood out to you and why.

5. Obedience/Action Step

- As part of the Personal Bible study, you were asked:
 - What is one practical step that you can take this week to put this passage into practice in your life?
 - What is your plan to follow through on this step? (who will hold you accountable, consider texting your table group for accountability).
- Share with your group how this went for you this past week.

6. Prayer

- Share a personal prayer request and pray for each other.
- Pray for churchwide prayer requests as well as our region, province, and nation.

Session Three: Beatitudes 7-8

Part One: Personal Bible Study

To do on your own before the small group meeting

1. Prepare Your Heart

- Take a moment to prepare your heart and mind for what God has for you today.

2. Read: Matthew 5:9-12 and the Session 3 Study Notes

- Write down 1-3 things that stand out to you and why. You can write down more but highlight 1 for sharing with your small group.

3. Questions to Consider

- Is there a relationship in your life where you can take a step towards peace? For example, forgiveness, inner healing, restoration, etc.
- Have you ever experienced persecution because of your faith in Jesus? Ask Jesus to give you a word of encouragement from that experience.
- Ask Jesus if there is anything else that He wants to reveal to you from today's verses.

4. Obedience/Action Step

- What is one practical step that you can take this week to put this passage into practice in your life?
- What is your plan to follow through on this step? (who will hold you accountable, consider texting your small group for accountability).

5. Repentance

- Ask Jesus if there is any sin you need to confess. Confess as necessary and take the necessary steps towards obedience.

6. Prayer

- Spend some time thanking Jesus for who He is and what He has revealed to you.
- Ask Him if there is anything else He wants to speak to you about.
- Pray and intercede for what He lays on your heart (marriage, kids, ministry, friends, etc.)

7. Optional: Pick a verse(s) from this week's Bible passage and memorize it.

Part Two: Small Group Plan

Do this section with a small group.

1. Open in Prayer

2. Weekly Connect

- Have each person share 1-2 things that they are thankful for from the past week.
- What was a struggle from the past week?

3. Scripture

- Read Matthew 5:9-12 out loud with your small group.

4. Sharing

- Share something from the study notes and the personal bible study that stood out to you and why.

5. Obedience/Action Step

- As part of the Personal Bible study, you were asked:
 - What is one practical step that you can take this week to put this passage into practice in your life?
 - What is your plan to follow through on this step? (who will hold you accountable, consider texting your table group for accountability).
- Share with your group how this went for you this past week.

6. Prayer

- Share a personal prayer request and pray for each other.
- Pray for churchwide prayer requests as well as our region, province, and nation.

Study Notes

Study Notes for Beatitudes 1-3

- The Beatitudes are part of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus's teaching on how to live.
- This Sermon is sometimes thought of as Jesus's "Declaration of the Kingdom."
- It presents a radically different approach to life than what the nation of Israel expected from the coming Messiah.
- The content describes how we will live when Jesus is Lord of our lives and expresses the spiritual implications of the rule of Jesus in our lives.
- The Beatitudes focus on the character of kingdom citizens.
- Beatitude simply means "the blessings" but can also be understood as what believers' attitudes should be.
- These are the very attributes that walking with Jesus should produce in the believer.
- If you meet someone who claims to be a Christian but displays and desires none of these traits, you may rightly wonder about their salvation.

TRAIT 1: Poor in Spirit

- **Matthew 5:3** *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* (NIV)
- Jesus promises that the poor in spirit are blessed.
- The idea behind the Greek word for blessed is happy, but in the truest, godly sense of the word – not in our modern sense of being comfortable or entertained.
- Poor in spirit does not mean that a person has low self-esteem, feels insignificant, or without value.
- That would be untrue in the kingdom of God as being His creation each person has intrinsic worth.
- Instead, it is a confession that he is sinful and rebellious and utterly without moral virtues adequate to commend him to God.
- The poor in spirit recognize that they have no spiritual assets. They know they are spiritually bankrupt and fully dependent on Jesus.
- Those who are poor in spirit are rewarded by receiving the kingdom of heaven.
- Spiritual poverty is an absolute prerequisite for receiving the kingdom of heaven, as long as we harbor illusions about our own spiritual resources, we will never receive from God what we absolutely need to be saved.
- The call to be poor in spirit is placed first for a reason, because it cannot be fulfilled by one's own strength but only on reliance on God's power.

TRAIT 2: Mourning

- **Matthew 5:4** *Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.* (NIV)
- The Greek word used here is the strongest word for mourning in the Greek language. It is not a casual sorrow for the consequence of our sin but a deep grief before God over our fallen state.
- The weeping is for the low and needy condition of both the individual and society, with an awareness that this is because of sin.

- It is a mourning over sin and its effects, a godly sorrow that produces repentance to salvation (2 Cor. 7:10).
- Those who mourn over their sin and their sinful condition are promised comfort. God allows this grief into our lives as a path, not a destination.
- Those who mourn can know something special of God; the fellowship of His sufferings (Phil 3:10), a closeness to the Man of Sorrows who was acquainted with grief (Isa. 53:3).

TRAIT 3: Meekness

- **Matthew 5:5** *Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.* (NIV)
- The Greek word translated as meek in this verse is *praus*, according to Vine's Expository Dictionary:
 - Its use in Scripture consists not in a person's outward behaviour only; nor in his relations to his fellow man but rather it is an wrought grace of the soul; and the exercises of it are first and chiefly towards God.
 - It is the inner temper of spirit in which we accept His dealings with us as good, without disputing or resisting.
 - It is closely linked to humility – it is only the humble heart which does not fight against God or contend with Him.
 - This meekness is first of all a meekness before God, but is also in the face of men, even of evil men, out of a sense that these, with the insults and injuries which they may inflict, are permitted by Him for the chastening and purifying of the believer.
 - The word is not readily expressed in English for the term meekness suggests weakness where *praus* is nothing of the kind.
 - It must be clearly understood that the meekness manifested by the Lord and commended to the believer is the fruit of power.
 - The common assumption is that when a man is meek it is because he cannot help himself.
 - But Christ was meek because he had the infinite resource of God at His command.
 - Described negatively meekness is the opposite to self-assertiveness and self-interest; it is not occupied with self at all.
- The main idea behind the word "meek" was strength under control, like a strong stallion that was trained to do the job instead of running wild.
- To be meek means to show willingness to submit and work under proper authority. It also shows a willingness to disregard one's own "rights" and privileges.
- It is one thing for me to admit my own spiritual bankruptcy, but what if someone else does it for me? Do I react meekly? This blessed one is meek.
- The meek submit to God and His will and conform to His Word.
- They are meek before men, in that they are strong – yet also humble, gentle, patient, and longsuffering.
- We can only be meek, willing to control our desire for our rights and privileges because we are confident God watches out for us, that He will protect our cause.
- The promise to inherit the earth proves that God will not allow His meek ones to end up on the short end of the deal.

Study Notes for Beatitudes 4-6

TRAIT 4: Righteousness

- **Matthew 5:6** *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.* (NIV)
- The hunger spoken of here describes a profound hunger that cannot be satisfied by a snack. This is a longing that endures and is never completely satisfied on this side of eternity.
- People can hunger for many things – power, authority, success, comfort, happiness...but how many hunger for righteousness?
- How does this hunger and thirst for righteousness express itself?
 - Longing to have a righteous nature
 - Wanting to be sanctified, to be made more holy
 - Longs to continue in God's righteousness
 - Longs to see righteousness promoted in the world
- Jesus promises to fill the hungry, to fill them as much as they could eat. This is a strange filling in that it both satisfies and keeps us longing for more.

TRAIT 5: Merciful

- **Matthew 5:7** *Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.* (NIV)
- When this beatitude addresses those who will show mercy, it speaks to those who have already received mercy.
- The Greek word translated as merciful in this verse is *eleēmōn*, according to Vine's Expository Dictionary:
 - Merciful is not simply a person who feels pity for someone but rather someone who actively is compassionate.
 - This word is used of Christ as our High Priest, (Heb 2:17).
- The one who has been shown mercy is expected to show mercy to others.
 - The merciful one will show it to those who are weaker and poorer.
 - The merciful one will always look for those who weep and mourn.
 - The merciful one will be forgiving to others, and always look to restore broken relationships.
 - The merciful one will choose to think the best of others whenever possible.
 - The merciful one will not expect too much from others.
 - The merciful one will be compassionate to those who are outwardly sinful.
 - The merciful one will have a care for the souls of all men.
- If you want mercy from others, especially God, then you should take care to be merciful to others.

TRAIT 6: Pure in Heart

- **Matthew 5:8** *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.* (NIV)
- In the ancient Greek, the phrase "pure of heart" has the idea of straightness, honesty, and clarity.
- This speaks of inner moral purity, not just sexual purity but the idea of an undivided heart – those who are utterly sincere and not divided in their devotion or commitment to God.
- The pure of heart receive the most wonderful reward – they shall enjoy greater intimacy with God than they could have ever imagined.

- The pollution of sin has a blinding effect upon a person; and the one of pure heart is freer from this pollution.
- These people can see and comprehend God, enjoy Him and walk in fellowship with Him in an intimate way.
- Ultimately, this intimate relationship with God must become our greatest motivation for purity, greater than a fear of getting caught or a fear of the consequences of sin.

Study Notes for Beatitudes 7-8

TRAIT 7: Peacemakers

- **Matthew 5:9** *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.* (NIV)
- This does not describe those who live in peace but those who actually bring about peace, overcoming evil with good.
- One way to accomplish this is by the spreading of the Gospel, because God has entrusted to us the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18).
- In evangelism we make peace between man and the God whom they have rejected and offended.
- Our peaceableness is never to be in alliance with that which is evil. We must set our faces against everything which is contrary to God and His holiness.
- We often think of peacemaking as being the job of one person who stands between two fighting parties. This may be one way this is fulfilled but one can also be a peacemaker when they are the injured or offending party.
- The reward of peacemakers is that they are recognized as true children of God. They share His passion for peace and reconciliation, the breakdown of walls between people.

TRAIT 8: Persecuted

- **Matthew 5:10** *Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.* (NIV)
- Suffering may come to people for reasons other than their faithfulness to Christ (1 Peter 4:15-16) but this is not what Jesus is addressing. These verses speak of those who are persecuted for Jesus’s sake, not for their own stupidity or fanaticism.
- This final beatitude is for those, because of their loyalty to Jesus, endure suffering.
- Jesus speaks of insults and spoken malice as part of the persecution. We cannot limit our idea of persecution to only physical opposition or torture.
- Jesus expected that His followers live righteous lives, after His example, and to honor Him.
- This teaching tells us to rejoice and be exceedingly glad. Why? Because the persecuted will have great reward in Heaven and because the persecuted are in great company. The prophets before them were also persecuted.
- The world persecutes good people because the values and character expressed in these beatitudes are so opposite to the world’s manner of thinking.

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