

SERMON-BASED STUDY GUIDE

SERMON ON THE MOUNT – Week 2 – *The Beatitudes, Part 1* – Aaron Bjorklund
Sept 17, 2023. [Leader tips in red]

DIGGING IN:

1. “Words can create worlds!” Think about a time, either in history, or in your own life, where words changed the world or your own world.
2. The Sermon on the Mount changed the world, not only at the time it was spoken. It continues to change the world! Stop and pray (in groups of 3 or as a whole group) that God would *do it again!* That He would use these words over the next six months to change South Fellowship and the world around us.

MAKING IT REAL:

3. [Have some extra paper or index cards available]. Have each person *write* a prayer, asking God to use the Sermon on the Mount to change *their* world and *their* hearts. Suggest keeping this prayer in a visible place (car dash, bathroom mirror, etc), where they will pray it each day.
4. Read Matthew 5:1-10 out loud. [Consider having each person read one verse, so there is a different voice for each Beatitude]
5. [Read the following out loud, then discuss the question at the end]
As Aaron explained, the Greek word used for “Blessed” means “One who is *recognized* to be favored, blessed, happy, fortunate, or privileged.” And the word used for “for” is closer to “because, or since.”

So we see that these statements are descriptive, rather than prescribing behavior to aspire to in order to get blessing. For example, we might say that “People who mourn are recognized to be fortunate, because of the comfort they will receive from God.” This is a little different than most of us have been taught in the past, but the original language clearly supports this interpretation.

Aaron also explained how, to the people and culture of Jesus’ time, these statements would have been radical and shocking. These were not people who would have been considered “in,” rather, they would have been considered as negative or disqualifying traits! Take turns reading the interpretive translations of the Beatitudes, below.

- Blessed are the spiritually inferior people, because theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.
- People who have had really bad things happen to them are blessed, because in my Kingdom they will find comfort.

- People who are shy and unassertive with low self-esteem are blessed because they inherit their Father's world.
- The person who craves justice but never seems to find it is blessed because God's justice is full and complete.
- People who are always giving of themselves and get taken advantage of are blessed because, in Jesus' economy they will receive more than they could ever give.
- The perfectionists who are never satisfied with themselves or anyone else are blessed because their craving for perfection is satisfied when they see God.
- The peacemakers who always feel slightly on the outside because they see both sides of an argument are blessed because they are on the inside of God's family.

Respond to these interpretations. How is this different from the way you have thought of the Beatitudes before? How does this interpretation hit you?

6. Which of these statements do you most closely relate with? (There may be more than one). Write it down. Share it with the group if you feel comfortable doing so, feeling free to add additional description.

- I feel spiritually inferior in some way.
- I carry a lot of grief.
- I am shy and unassertive.
- I have an overdeveloped sense of justice.
- I am merciful and kind to others to the point that I have difficulty setting boundaries and often get taken advantage of.
- I crave perfection; want everything to be done right, by me and everyone else.
- I often see both sides of an argument. I can bring people together but still feel like an outsider myself.

7. Take turns reading the sentences out loud, each person reading one of the ones they personally identified with. **[The reason we do this is that speaking truth *out loud* helps it to sink into our hearts. This is similar to what we did last week. While not every group study will include this practice, repetition helps cement the truth in our lives]:**

- I feel spiritually inferior in some way. (I am fortunate because the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to me).
- I carry a lot of grief. (I am fortunate because I will be comforted)
- I am shy and unassertive. (I am fortunate because I will inherit the earth)
- I have an overdeveloped sense of justice. (I am fortunate because God's justice is full and complete).

- I am merciful and kind to others to the point that I have difficulty setting boundaries and often get taken advantage of. (I am fortunate because I will be shown mercy).
- I crave perfection; want everything to be done right, by me and everyone else. (I am fortunate because my craving for perfection is satisfied when I see God).
- I often see both sides of an argument. I can bring people together but still feel like an outsider myself. (I am fortunate because the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to me).

8. The bottom line is that people are invited to the Kingdom even if they appear to be a misfit. You are “in”! Transformation will come in time. Who do you know who appears to not fit in the Kingdom of God? Write down their names. What might it look like to extend them the invitation to the Kingdom”? (You’ll pray for opportunities during the prayer time).

9. [If you have time, discuss any additional thoughts and questions that group members have about the Beatitudes].

PRAYER IDEAS

- Thank God for inviting you to His Kingdom and for giving you what you need to feel like you belong.
- Pray for those you know outside the Kingdom who need to be invited (From question 8). Pray for opportunities to extend the invitation.
- If you have time, share individual prayer requests and pray for one another.

WANT TO DIG A LITTLE DEEPER? (Extra Bible Study Ideas)

If you want to take a look at the Greek words used in the Beatitudes, you can go to www.blueletterbible.com (or download the Blue Letter Bible App on your phone). When you look up a verse, it will give you the option to look at the Greek words and their definitions.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Red Couch Theology Podcast

If you or group members have questions around parts of the sermon that are not included in the discussion guide, it’s always helpful to listen to *Red Couch Theology*, where Alex and Aaron talk about the sermon and answer questions that come in from people in the congregation. <https://guysdrinkingtea.podbean.com/>

The Divine Conspiracy by Dallas Willard