



DISCOVER WHO GOD MADE YOU TO BE 🌈

"The Upside-Down Kingdom"

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OPENING REMARKS:

The way UP is DOWN. Jesus began his public ministry with the proclamation, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is near" [Mt. 4:17].

Then he offered huge blessing [or "Beatitude"!] to crowds of sick and seeking folk. Would you like these blessings: kingdom of heaven, comfort, inherit the earth, satisfaction, mercy, see God, recognized as God's child, reward?

Who wouldn't! The way up is down.

Jesus' idea of "happy" or "blessed" doesn't start where ours does. In this well-known passage of Scripture, called the Beatitudes, Jesus does not tell us what to do in order to gain happiness. Rather, he describes the character of a person who *is* happy or blessed.

WARM IT UP:

Suppose you are eager to join an organization. Would you expect admittance based on your good points or your weaknesses?

TALK IT OVER: Read Matthew 5:1-6

[WARNING: YOU ARE GOING TO HAVE TO CHOOSE SOME, NOT ALL, OF THESE QUESTIONS TO ENGAGE AS A GROUP OR ELSE DRINK A LOT OF COFFEE AND CALL THE BABYSITTERS!]

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" [v. 3]

- 1] Why must a person acknowledge spiritual need in order to enter the kingdom of heaven? What does it mean to be poor in spirit?
- 2] What makes it difficult for people to believe that God accepts them on those terms?
- 3] What should be a person's attitude toward himself/herself? How does this differ from the emphasis our culture places on self?

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted" [v. 4]

- 4] What is our natural reaction to mourning? Why?
- 5] By declaring mourners as "blessed", what part of life is Jesus affirming?
- 6] What kinds of mourning are there?
- 7] How can mourning fit in with poverty of spirit?
- 8] What kind of comfort do such mourners receive?

"Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth." [v. 5]

- 9] Contrast what Jesus says in verse 5 with the general human concepts of power and meekness.
- 10] How does meekness work out in everyday life?
- 11] What promise is given to the meek? Do you see this happening in any way? Explain.

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled." [v. 6]

- 12] Put verse 6 into your own words.
- 13] What characterizes a person who hungers and thirsts? What is this "righteousness"?
- 14] Describe a person you know who hungers and thirsts after righteousness. What freedoms does such a person have?
- 15] How does your own personal hunger for righteousness affect your fulfillment?

"Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy." [v. 7]

- 16] What does it mean to be merciful?
- 17] How does being merciful relate to the truth? [Does a merciful person ignore wrongdoing?]
- 18] How does a personal experience of mercy affect a person's ability to be merciful to others? Can you give an example of this from your own life?

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God." [v. 8]

- 19] What does it mean to be pure in heart? Give several synonyms to help clarify its meaning.
- 20] In what ways do you think the pure in heart see God?
- 21] What hope do the pure in heart have for the future? How can this hope affect life today?

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God." [v. 9]

- 22] How would verse 9 have sounded to the Jews who were hoping Jesus would bring liberation from Roman rule?
- 23] What are the characteristics of a peacemaker?
- 24] Why are peacemakers called the children of God?

"Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." [v. 10]

- 25] How does persecution fit in with the beatitudes listed before it? [Why would a peacemaker, for instance, be persecuted?]
- 26] What is the reason for the persecution mentioned in verse 11?
- 27] What is the difference between being offensive and causing offense because we are righteous?
- 28] Why is persecution cause for rejoicing?
- 29] Are you willing to live in opposition to popular opinion? In what areas of life is this most difficult for you?

WORK IT OUT:

- 30] What can you learn about Christian growth from the spiritual progression within the Beatitudes?
- 31] Are you experiencing these blessings?
- 32] Which one has your name on it today where God's Spirit is nudging, wooing you to pursue greater blessing? What's a next step for you?

PRAY IT THROUGH:

We come poor in spirit, mourning, hungry and thirsty for righteousness, seeking meekness and mercy, wanting to be your peacemakers amid persecution. Bless us, in Jesus' name.