

LEADER'S GUIDE

Discussion Questions: The Beatitudes

Both Matthew 5:3-12 and Luke 6:20-23 describe the beatitudes. There are many similarities and differences in the account recorded by Matthew and Luke. Bible scholars are indecisive in their views. Some state that these are different recordings of the same sermon. Other scholars state that there were two different sermons with similar content. In either case, having two separate records by two different people (Matthew and Luke) with highly similar content adds strong evidence and validity that the event and teachings did take place.

Reading Matthew's version each beatitude states a characteristic Jesus describes, and then Jesus tells them what their blessing will be. There are eight blessings Jesus describes to his disciples through Matthew. Matthew is recording the sermon primarily for a Jewish audience.

Reading Luke's version Jesus lists only four characteristics and then tells them what their blessings will be. Luke is recording the sermon primarily for a Gentile audience. Luke also includes four woes Jesus pronounces. The list of woes is the opposite condition of the blessings provided by Luke. Jesus makes a point to call out the woes. Only a few bible studies review Matthew and Luke's versions of the beatitudes side-by-side. Even fewer bible studies include the blessings with the woes. We will discuss Matthew's version, Luke's version, and the specific woes mirroring them with the appropriate blessings.

In many translations, "Blessed" properly means "happy." The mistake people make attempting to interpret the "Beatitudes" is they have the misconception that Jesus is only speaking to a specific group of people for each blessing. While doing these, many people look for the blessing that best pertains to their own life to find out what blessing will be blessed to them. The better way to interpret the "Beatitudes" is that Jesus is listing characteristics that true believers share.

1. **Introduction to the Sermon:** (Read the outlined in black Matthew 5:1-2 and Luke 6:17-20a): **In Matthews's version, what is this sermon commonly called? And why?** "The Sermon on the Mount." In verse 5:1, Matthew states that Jesus went up to a mountain. It was probably a steep hill. Galilee contains many such hills.

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2. **In Luke's version, what is the sermon commonly called? And why?** The Sermon on the plain. Luke states that Jesus went down with them and stood on a level place.
3. **Who was the primary audience Jesus was teaching?** The disciples. Notice that Matthew states that the disciples came to Jesus, and then Jesus opened His mouth and taught them. In Luke, Jesus "lifted up his eyes toward His disciples and said:" The crowd around the disciples was merely the listening audience while His disciples were the students.
#1. The poor and poor in spirit. (Read the verses outlined in red: Matthew 5:3, Luke 6:20b, and Luke 6:24) Most scholars lean toward only Matthew's version, which states, "the poor in spirit." Both have different meanings. While Luke only mentions "you poor." Luke includes "woe to you who are rich" in Luke 6:24 when Jesus pronounces the "woes." This would be consistent with Luke's interpretation of Jesus' blessing to the poor monetarily and a warning to those who are rich. We will observe both paths.
4. Matthew 5:3: **Blessed are the poor in spirit. Who are the "poor in spirit?"** The Greek word "poor" is ptochos, which means to cower or couch, having nothing, and being reduced to begging, like a beggar, totally broke. Very representative of the poor, in this case, the poor who beg. However, Matthew clearly states that those who are "poor in spirit." Those poor in spirit know this because they know they cannot save themselves by their righteousness. They do this because they recognize they do not have the necessary resources to get into heaven, so they humble themselves and have a humble posture. They require an outside source. Something strong in spirit to help them, Jesus/God.
5. **How are they poor spiritually?** In essence, the spiritually poor one is spiritually bankrupt. They constantly need God's forgiveness for the sins they have committed over their lifetime. To be spiritually poor is to have a humble belief in ourselves. It is not the feeling to complete helplessness, but to be willing to be saved by the mercy of God; Those who are aware of their spiritual poverty.

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6. If the word blessed is supposed to mean happy, **how are the poor happy in spirit?** They are happy in spirit because their humility renders them teachable. They are submissive, patient, and content. They are happy since “theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” They are happy in spirit because they have peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. The poor in spirit are enhanced with the fulness of Jesus Christ and the kingdom of heaven.
7. Luke 6:20b: Blessed are you poor. **Why does Jesus bless the poor?** The poor do not covet high-valued things in the world but are content with what God provides. Some scholars Jesus is speaking about the poor or the needy in the world, who tend to be more godly than the rich, who prosper and tend to be ungodly.
8. **Is the blessing for everyone who is poor?** The blessing is not for everyone who is poor. If Luke 6:20b were read alone, it would mean “Blessed everyone who is poor,” including the ones who love God and those who despise God. Read together with Matthew 5:3 to be poor, spiritually poor, or physically or spiritually bankrupt is to humble oneself at God’s feet and ask for his forgiveness. Those who are poor and despise God do not look to Him for forgiveness.
9. Luke 6:24: **Woe to the rich.** **What is the warning to the rich?** This is a warning to the rich; they have all the comforts they will experience. There is no absolute condemnation about being rich. Some of the wealthiest men in the world were blessed by God. Abraham, Job, Solomon, Joseph of Arimathea. Wealth carries with it a peculiar danger. When someone becomes wealthy, it is easy to focus on the power of one’s wealth and independence, thinking they can live without God. Jesus is not saying that if you are wealthy, you are doomed. Jesus is saying how hard it is for a rich man to get into the Kingdom of God. Read Matthew 19:24. That said, when the rich find comfort in the world’s goods and products and do not seek or receive consolation from the gospel, they continually try to fill the longing for happiness.
10. **What is the reward for the poor in spirit or the poor?** Theirs is the kingdom of heaven or God. Seeking and obtaining the kingdom of God needs to be our “first,” not chronologically, but first in importance, goal to

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be with the Lord. Read Matthew 6:33. **The kingdom of heaven/God is the most important of all blessings.** One could achieve all of the other blessings, but without the kingdom of heaven, one will never spend eternity with God.

11. **#2 Those who mourn or weep.** (Read the verses outlined in green: Matthew 5:4; Luke 6:21b and Luke 25b) **Who are the people that mourn or weep? Or, more importantly, why do we mourn or weep?** People mourn for many different reasons—sickness, disease, sin, mistakes, or failures. The key is how people react during their time of mourning. The word mourn is associated with intense sorrow or grief. To mourn is different from feeling guilty about doing something that is morally, ethically, legally, or spiritually wrong. Those who mourn acknowledge to themselves or others that some sin has been committed. The lack of mourning for a committed sin ignores the spiritual implications. Those who mourn while repenting their sins are blessed.
12. **What are the different ways people react when they are mourning?** Some run away from their problems. Other people escape to a previous bad habit of comfort, such as alcohol or drugs. Some try to replace the suffering with worldly comforts or possessions such as jewelry, cars, or homes. Others try to use time as a solution, saying “time heals all wounds.” Few turn to God. Read Matthew 11:28-30.
13. **What does it mean to be comforted?** Comfort comes from the word “Comfort.” “Fort” means strength or fortress. “Com” is Latin meaning “with.” The translations, therefore, “with a fort, or with strength, or fortified. What a great emotion. To provide relief for those who were in mourning. The blessing of comfort does not mean that all mourners will be comforted—only those who testify their sins for repentance. To be forgiven of sin is only something Jesus can do. God provides people with a pathway through Jesus to wash away our sins. In Luke’s version, he uses the phrase, “you will laugh.” This is the only instance in the New Testament where “laughter” is the symbol of spiritual joy.
14. Luke 6:25b: **Woe to those who laugh. What is the warning to those who laugh? What does it mean if we laugh now, you will mourn and weep**

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later? Is it wrong to be happy and be laugh about things? (Read again Luke 25b) Life is not a game; the cynics who make fun of the things of God open themselves up to the curse of God. Jesus is not saying you cannot laugh at a joke, but if you laugh at the things of God, you will forever mourn and weep. Weeping and gnashing of teeth are mentioned several times in the New Testament. Matthew 8:12, Matthew 13:41-42, Matthew 22:11-13, Matthew 24:44-51, and Matthew 25:14-30.

15. **#3 The meek.** (Read the verse outlined in orange: Matthew 5:5) **Who are the meek? Or what does it mean to be meek?** The common misconception of meek is those who are seen as demonstrating weakness, being tame lacking courage, but in essence, it is just the opposite. The meek in the bible are commonly known as those who are humble, peaceful, clear-minded, and have gentle hearts. In Greek, meek is the breaking-in of horses or power under control. The Greeks also looked at meek as harnessing the fire and passion one has and keeping it under control. Jordon B Peterson provides a good example “Those who have swords and know how to use them but keep them sheathed shall inherit the earth.” What a great visual example he provided.
16. **What does it mean that the meek will inherit the earth?** Many people believe that when we pass from this life to the next, we will be in the kingdom of heaven—a place with clouds, golden streets, gates of pearl, and a mansion for everyone. However, John makes it clear in Revelation 21:1. that God promises the kingdom is a new heaven and earth. Those who relinquish their power to God will inherit the new earth, a perfect kingdom God has provided.
17. **#4 The hungry and thirst for righteousness** (Read the verses outlined in purple: Matthew 5:6, Luke 6:21a, and Luke 6:25a). Matthew’s version states those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. Luke’s version mentions who hunger “now.” **What does Jesus mean to “hunger and thirst for righteousness?”** They are strong words, such as famished, starved, or parched. To hunger and thirst for righteousness means to be at the most extreme of hunger and thirst. When hungering and thirsting for righteousness, it is not seeking self-righteousness. Do not expect

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everything that has happened over your lifetime to be reconciled and made right by God. Just because one seeks and hungers for something that was wronged in their lives does not mean God will make restitution and make it right to you. The standard of God's law will judge righteousness.

18. **How are those who hunger for righteousness filled?** God is the one doing the filling. Note that it is more meaningful from the perception of being on a journey with hunger and thirst then finally receiving the blessing of being fulfilled. Particularly with joy and peace, they will be abundantly satisfied.
19. Luke 6:25a: **Woe to those who are full. What is the warning to those who are full? Moreover, what are they full of?** It does not mean their stomachs are full of food. The warning is to those satisfied with their wealth, pride, vanity, righteousness, or worldly possessions. Their desire has been nothing but wealth. They have no appetite for God or spiritual things. They do not feel hunger or thirst for Jesus or the Holy Spirit. For their reward will be to hunger and thirst for something to satisfy the craving of a dying, empty, sinful soul. Could you imagine hungering for eternity?
20. **#5 The merciful** (Read the verse outlined in gray: Matthew 5:7) **Who are the merciful?** One with a tender heart who cares and acts for the good of others. Demonstrating mercy is an act of choice. It is emotionally based. To be merciful to someone means to have genuine compassion for another person's circumstances. To feel and suffer along with another person. Showing mercy is not being sympathetic to another person. The one providing mercy is intensely aware of another person's pain and is the yearning to be healed. Mercy is the character of God. The Lord is gracious, merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in love. Those who demonstrate mercy regularly move closer to God's character. When someone displays an act of mercy, it is the closest act of acting like God. A person who shows compassion or forgiveness, especially toward someone who has offended them. Those that have genuinely been saved have received the mercy of God.
21. **How will they obtain mercy?** The one word here that gets missed is "they." It is an emphatic position in the sentence structure. He is telling us

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that they who were merciful, and they alone shall obtain mercy. Those who have experienced mercy and forgiveness from God are more apt to forgive others. When we receive the complete mercy of God in all its glory and compassion, we are fully restored into the divine image of God's purity.

22. **#6 The pure in heart.** (Read the verse outlined in dark red: Matthew 5:8)

Who are the pure in heart? The word “pure” is an absolute term, one hundred percent. Pure means it has not been polluted or mixed with any impurities—the heart is implied as a person’s moral character or nature. In the physical state, the heart is the most powerful muscle in the human body. It will beat over 3 billion times in a person’s life. Emotions and feelings have been tied to a person’s heart for centuries. We now know the brain and the heart is in constant two-way communication. When we experience emotions such as anger, fear, anxiety, and frustration, our heart’s rhythmic patterns become more erratic. The heart rate and blood pressure both increases. We also know that when we experience heart-felt emotions such as love, compassion, appreciation, and attraction, the heart produces a very different rhythm. Man is more interested in people’s outward appearance. They judge people by their words and their actions. Only God can see our true hearts. Our most profound feelings, thoughts, and secrets. Only by His judgment will he decide whose heart is pure by His standards. However, how is that possible? With every minute of every day, not have a single sin enter a person’s mind. Or a single sinful action? Jesus is the only one who can wash our hearts of our sins. Another trait has been one of integrity. A person with a pure heart has unwavering integrity in words and actions.

23. **Whom will see God?** Pure people in heart receive a promise. The promise is that they will see God. In order to see God, one must know Him and appear in his presence. There will be a time mentioned in, read: Revelation 1:7 when we all will see God. But not as a friend, as a judge. It is also mentioned in read: Revelation 22:4. “And they shall see his face.” Where they will see the face of God, Jesus promises that when the new kingdom arrives, those who are uncontaminated and unadulterated in heart will see God. God wants us to see his face when we enter and dwell in his kingdom.

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24. **#7 The peacemakers.** (Read the verse outlined in yellow: Matthew 5:9)
Who are the peacemakers? Someone who is actively seeking to reconcile with God and one another. Peacemaker is a compound word, peace, and maker. The word “peace” in Greek is “eirini.” It is translated from the Hebrew word shalom. Shalom has several meanings, depending on the content, such as serenity, prosperity, perfect welfare, and happiness. It is a wish to another to have everything good. From God’s perspective, it means “perfect peace,” or profound psychological and emotional peace. The second word is “maker.” These people are the makers of peace. Notice he did not use “peacekeepers or peace lovers.” Making peace requires one to be Christ-like, resourceful, and a creator of positive good. They have a peaceful temper. Study to be quiet. They strive to prevent contention, strife, or war. Any time there are opposing parties, an opportunity is created to reconcile the two parties. An old English proverb is, “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” This means a little intervention might initially prevent most long and deadly disagreements.
25. **Why will they be called the sons of God?** When someone commits to making peace their priority or job, especially by their sacrifice, they imitate what Jesus has done. The result of two or more people in conflict resolution is peace. Such a person is called a “son of God.” Read 1 John 3:1-2 and John 1:12. The peacemakers receive a unique reward. They will be called the sons of God.
26. **#8 The persecuted** (Read the verse outlined in brown: Matthew 5:10)
Describe someone who is persecuted for righteousness. This is different from prosecution. Jesus states he identifies those persecuted for righteousness’ sake. To persecute means literally to pursue. However, in this context, it means to oppress, abuse, mistreat, punish or victimize. Further towards the extreme would be to torment, torture, or martyr someone. The righteous are those who are righteous or friends with God. Alternatively, with the subject or topic being righteous in God’s eyes. To persecute righteousness is to oppress, abuse, mistreat, punish or victimize those who are virtuous, ethical, moral, honest, innocent, and decent people.

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27. **What is the reward of the kingdom of heaven?** This is the same reward provided to the poor in spirit. Theirs is the kingdom of heaven or God. Seeking and obtaining the kingdom of God needs to be our “first,” not chronologically, but first in importance, goal to be with the Lord. Read Matthew 6:33. **The kingdom of heaven/God is the most important of all blessings.** One could achieve all of the other blessings; They could inherit the earth, be given mercy, and see God, but without being in the kingdom of heaven, they will never spend eternity with God.
28. **Jesus' Blessing to you** (Read the verse outlined in blue: Matthew 5:11-12 and Luke 6:22-23) This is similar to Matthew 5:10 of the blessing for the persecuted. As Jesus is teaching the disciples, Jesus is designating this blessing directly to the disciples. Notice that he states the word “when” they revile, hate, and persecute them. He accurately foretells acts that will happen to the disciples in the future when they spread the Gospel in Jesus' name.
29. **Their reward** – Their reward will be enormous in heaven. It will be a great reward in the future world, not of debt, but of grace. God himself will be their reward. The reward is promised to those who only suffer for the righteousness of Jesus. The prophets were holy men and predicted future events. They were religious teachers of the Jewish community.
30. Luke 6:26: **Woe to those who speak well of you. What is the warning to those who speak well of you? Moreover, what did their fathers say to the false prophets?** The warning to believers is when the world speaks well of you by spreading a message that contradicts God's Word, trying to make people feel better about themselves and the world. Read Jeremiah 14:13-16. As the time of Jesus' second coming draws near, more false prophets and teachers will exploit you with deceptive words. Read 2 Peter 2:1-3. For their judgment will be harsh to spend eternity in hell.