

## Wisdom of the Bible ~ The Beatitudes ~ Discussion Questions

1. In the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7), Jesus opens with nine brief statements in simple words that carry profound meanings. To understand the meanings, we must first understand that the word “blessed” is NOT used in the sense to invoke a blessing but to *affirm a quality of spirituality that is already present*. We pronounce it bless-ed. It refers to a state that already exists, and it makes a HUGE difference in the way we understand the beatitudes. Given this definition, does a beatitude mean a) Blessed are the people who do X because they will receive Y or does it mean b) Look at the spirituality and joy of people who already have (or will receive) both X and Y.
2. 1<sup>st</sup> Beatitude. What does Jesus mean by “poor in spirit?” (Matt 5:3, Isaiah 66:2)
3. 2<sup>nd</sup> Beatitude. If there is mourning, some kind of suffering lies behind it. Does this Beatitude mean that Christians should seek out suffering? Should we rejoice in sickness, disasters, persecution, pain, and death? (Matt 5:4, Ecclesiastes 7:2-4)
4. 3<sup>rd</sup> Beatitude. Who are the meek? (Matt 5:5, Psalm 37:11, Zephaniah 3:12)
5. 4<sup>th</sup> Beatitude. Righteousness itself is like a diamond with many facets and we could spend weeks discussing its meaning. But our narrower question today is: why does Jesus focus on those who *seek* righteousness rather than those who *are* righteous or who *live* righteously? (Matt 5:6, Matt 13:44-46)
6. 5<sup>th</sup> Beatitude. “Showing mercy” has two basic meanings. They are \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. (Matt 5:7, 9:36, Luke 11:4)
7. 6<sup>th</sup> Beatitude. Does “pure in heart” mean having a) one single focus and motive, i.e., no hidden agenda, b) internal purity, i.e., clean thoughts, no hate, no smut, or c) open transparency to God and others, i.e., what you see is what you get?
8. 7<sup>th</sup> Beatitude. Are the “peacemakers” those who a) are peaceful, b) are pacifists, c) are mediators, d) don’t understand God’s peace. (Philippians 4:7)
9. 8<sup>th</sup> Beatitude. Does this verse mean (Matt 5:10) being persecuted for: a) doing what is right, b) standing up for justice, c) striving for ethical perfection, d) promoting God’s word, e) something else \_\_\_\_\_ ?
10. 9<sup>th</sup> Beatitude. This is the first Beatitude in which Jesus has inserted himself (*on my account, because of me*) and added some explanation. Why did he do this?

## The Beatitudes ~ Additional Questions for Groups of 3 or 4

1. Matthew records the first Beatitude as “Blessed are the poor in spirit...” whereas Luke records it as “Blessed are the poor...” (Luke 6:20). Is there a difference or do they mean the same thing? Explain.

2. Life has lots of ups and downs. At times, you have joy and happiness and at other times you experience sorrow, pain, and suffering. The second Beatitude promises comfort when you mourn. Does this mean you will be comforted if you mourn for your own pain but are insensitive to the pain of others? Is it easier to appreciate someone else’s pain when you are suffering yourself? Or when you have suffered a similar pain?

3. Is it easier to mourn for someone else when you’re happy or when you yourself are suffering? Is it easier to comfort someone when you’re happy or when you’re in pain? Don’t be too fast to jump to an answer on this.

4. In the third Beatitude, Jesus says the meek will inherit the land (or the earth). “Land” refers to what: a) land in general, b) the promised land (Israel), c) the inhabited earth, d) something else \_\_\_\_\_. (Psalm 37:9, 11, 29, Romans 4:13). Did “land” mean something different to Jesus’ listeners than to us today?

5. Have you ever been intensely hungry or thirsty? When? Under what circumstances? What would you have paid or done for something to eat or drink? With this illustration can you understand what Jesus was saying in the fourth Beatitude about having an all-consuming passion for righteousness?

6. Righteousness has four meanings in the Bible. Look up the passages.  
a) Mighty acts of God in history to save. (Micah 6:3-5, see end of vs 5)  
b) Being declared righteous. (Isaiah 54:10-17, especially vs 10, 14, 17)  
c) Human response in showing mercy, justice, and compassion. (Job 29:14-16, Psalm 37, 21, Proverbs 29:7, Micah 6:8)  
d) Connected with and creating peace. (Psalm 85:10, Isaiah 32:17-18)

7. Forgiveness is part of the fifth Beatitude. Does this mean: a) we forgive others as God forgives us (Matt 6:9-13), b) we forgive others first so God will then forgive us (Luke 11:4), or c) God forgives us and then we are able to forgive others (parable in Matt 18:23-35, 1 John 4:19)?

8. In the sixth Beatitude, how is it that we “shall see God?” Does this mean the physical sight of God? (John 1:18) What do you think this actually means?