

Life Group Notes

These notes are to serve you as you lead your group.

*Please feel free to select the passages and **only use the questions which are most relevant to your group** and for the way you want to lead the session. (There are more questions here than you'll need)*

- *Please choose (or adapt) the questions which you believe will **bring about the most honest, faith-building and life changing conversations**, and add others if you want to.*
- *The readings and questions develop from one section to the next. Please **take time to move through the ones you want to use, giving time for discussion and sharing - ideally leading to a response to God's word.***

Life Group Notes

Theme: #Blessed

Who is blessed?

Last week we saw that God provides for the world through his general blessing on humanity. As a result of God's blessing, all human life still experiences God's provision.

This week we saw that as well as providing for everyone, God chooses to bless some, so that through them the whole world might be blessed. We also noticed some of the surprising people that God chose to bless first.

In this session we will be following up on the sermon from Sunday, and looking more closely at who God chooses to carry his blessing.

The people God chooses to bless

Through the Old Testament, we see that God often chose the last, and the least, to be first recipients of his blessing for the world. Arriving at the New Testament, we see that this pattern continued.

Read **Matthew 4:23-5:12**

- 1. As you read this passage, what stands out to you about:**
 - a. Jesus**
 - b. Those who are listening to Jesus speak?**

- 2. In our society, many of the experiences highlighted in the beatitudes are viewed as weakness. Why might God view them very differently?**

- 3. Which of these descriptions of the blessed are most present in your life now? Which are not present at all?**

- 4. Which of these descriptions do you find the most difficult or challenging to think about or experience?**

- 5. Which of the promises of Jesus do you find the most encouraging or exciting? Why?**

- 6. Thinking of those in desperate need (e.g. in Ukraine, Afghanistan, Yemen etc), how might these verses be a source of deep hope, and give courage to readers?**

Read **Brian Zahnd's paraphrase of the Beatitudes**, (provided on a separate page in case you want to print it out)

7. Which rephrasing do you find most / least impactful? Why?

Extension questions

Read Ephesians 1:1-14

Verses 3-14 are one long sentence in the original Greek text. In it Paul encouraged his readers to think about the blessing of God for those who are "in Christ" (a favourite term of his to speak about those who are Christians.)

8. Paul writes in verse 3: "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ."

Do you believe this is true for you? Why, or why not?

9. How might we live differently if we more fully believed this were true?

10. As you read through the rest of the passage, and let the words wash over you, **what is your overwhelming impression of God's provision for you?**

11. How do you feel now about identifying as someone that God has 'blessed'?

12. From looking at these passages today, what do you believe God is prompting you to do, or do differently?

Application

It may be that a time of worship, reflection, or response is appropriate for your group, thanking God for all that he has given, for his deep and life changing blessing, and for his calling for us to be those who carry his blessing to others.

Brian Zahnd's paraphrase of the Beatitudes, (from Beauty Will Save the World)

- Blessed are those who are poor at being spiritual, for the Kingdom of heaven is well suited for ordinary people.
- Blessed are the depressed who mourn and grieve, for they create space to encounter comfort from another.
- Blessed are the quiet and content, the humble and unassuming, the gentle and trusting who are not grasping and clutching, for God will personally guarantee their share when heaven and earth become one.
- Blessed are those who ache for the world to be made right, for them the government of God is a dream come true.
- Blessed are those who give mercy, for they will get it back when they need it the most.
- Blessed are those who have a clean window into their soul, for they will perceive God when and where others don't.
- Blessed are the peaceful bridge builders in a war-torn world, for they are God's children working in the family business.
- Blessed are those who are mocked and misunderstood for the right reasons, for the kingdom of heaven comes to heart amidst such persecution.