



GROUP GUIDE: WEEK 2

CONVERSATION STARTER

Finish this sentence: “Life would be good if...”

BLESSED ARE THOSE

How did you fill in the blank above? What does the “good life” look like to you? For many of us the good life revolves around having more or being more—more success, more money, more recognition, relationships, achievement, etc.

And this is important because, as Pastor Pete Hughes says, “The story you live in is the story you live out. By that I mean that the stories that surround us subtly shape us. They begin to shape our longings and hopes, how we see the world, and how we engage with the world.”

But with the Beatitudes at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus offers a starkly different portrait of the good life. Jesus gathers a crowd of sick, disenfranchised, outcasts, and fishermen around him. And to this group, Jesus pronounces nine *blessings*. The Greek word for blessing is *makarios*, which can be translated as “happy” or, better yet, “how good is life for...” *Makarios* refers to someone who is experiencing God’s favor or abundance. Jesus says:

How good is life for the poor in spirit (the powerless).

How good is life for those who mourn (those who grieve).

How good is life for the meek (someone who needs to be rescued).

In God’s eyes, these are the people who are living the good life. Can you imagine? These are the *last* people we would label as experiencing God’s blessing and favor—the unimportant, social outcasts, the ones who are taken advantage of, who have nothing. Jesus pronounces God’s favor on people who were eager to hear that God loved them and was for them.

This is the Upside-Down Kingdom of God at work. Jesus comes to the unimportant, powerless, and disenfranchised first, because they are precisely the ones primed to recognize their need for God and to experience what God has to offer—new life and salvation.

And Jesus doesn't just talk the talk, he walks the walk. He lives out the Upside-Down Kingdom ethic. Jesus wasn't powerful in the eyes of his community. He mourned over the state of the world. He wasn't arrogant. He didn't take advantage of others. Check out our [Visual Guide to Beatitudes](#) for more on how Jesus modeled this version of the Good Life, even as he inspired others to do the same.

N.T. Wright says, “The Beatitudes are not simply a list of behaviors that, if possessed, will grant you a spot in heaven when you die. **They are how Jesus’s followers are being shaped to participate in bringing God’s kingdom on earth, as in heaven.**”

Jesus is creating a new kingdom, filled with people who live by a different definition of what's good. The Beatitudes are his way of calling out to us, saying *come and see how good life is in God's kingdom! Will you come be part of making this world on earth as it is in heaven?*

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What stuck out to you about the reading from this week? Was there a verse or idea that was particularly meaningful or challenging for you?
2. What are some visions of the “good life” on offer today? Why do you think people tend to gravitate towards them?
3. If Jesus gave the Beatitudes in the midst of our city today, who do you think he would want to gather around him? In other words, who do you think is most in need of hearing that God is with them and for them?
4. Take a moment to read through our [Visual Guide to Beatitudes](#). Which of these blessings surprises you most? Are there any you relate to in this season of your life?
5. Read Matthew 5:13-16 together. What does it look like for us practically to be salt and light today?

WEEKLY PRACTICE

Breath Prayers are a way to meditate on truths from Scripture, using the natural rhythm of our breathing in and out. They are a particularly powerful form of prayer when you're feeling anxious or overwhelmed, or are simply not sure what to pray. You can pray them out loud in the quiet of your home, or silently when you need to ground yourself in the chaos of your day.

Here's how it works: Take a deep breath in as you say, *Lord, I am Yours*. Then release your breath slowly as you repeat, *Your Kingdom come*.

Do it again, slowly and deliberately. Repeat the process over the course of a minute as you invite the Spirit to do its work within you. Inhale slowly, exhale slowly, over and over again, as you allow these words to soak into your soul.

Lord, I am Yours.

Your Kingdom come.

Spend at least one minute each day this week with this breath prayer. Be sure to linger a moment in prayerful silence before you resume your normal activity. Ask God to show you how you can partner with God in making your city on earth as it is in heaven.