



The Upside-Down Kingdom: Living the Beatitudes

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This exploration of the Beatitudes invites us into one of Jesus' most countercultural teachings, where he turns worldly values completely upside down. As we journey through these nine blessings from the Sermon on the Mount, we discover that God's kingdom operates on principles that challenge everything our culture tells us about success, strength, and happiness. The poor in spirit, the mourning, the humble, those who hunger for justice, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, and even the persecuted—all receive divine blessing. What makes this teaching so powerful is its recognition that spiritual growth often comes through uncomfortable circumstances. We're reminded that God doesn't promise to shield us from hardship, but rather to be present with us through it, like a father walking beside his child through a dark alley. The message challenges us to examine where we're seeking comfort and validation—are we chasing worldly success or embracing the transformative discomfort that shapes us into Christ's image? Just as fondant must be pushed, pulled, and molded before it becomes a beautiful creation, we too must allow God to shape us through these blessed experiences, trusting that he sees the masterpiece we're becoming even when we only see the struggle.

1.	How does Jesus' definition of blessing in the Beatitudes challenge our modern understanding of success and happiness?	2.	What does it mean to be 'poor in spirit' in a culture that values self-sufficiency and independence? How can we cultivate this dependence on God in our daily lives?
3.	The sermon mentions that mourning is inevitable, but comfort is promised. How have you experienced God's comfort during a season of grief or loss?	4.	In what ways does our society reward strength and power over humility? How can we practically embrace humility while still being effective in our work and relationships?
5.	What is the difference between hungering for personal righteousness and hungering for justice in the world? How should Christians balance both pursuits?	6.	The sermon distinguishes between peacekeeping and peacemaking. Can you think of a situation where you were tempted to keep peace rather than make peace, and what would true peacemaking have looked like?
7.	Jesus was harshest with religious leaders who appeared pure externally but lacked heart purity. What are some ways we might focus on external religious behavior while neglecting the condition of our hearts?	8.	How do we discern between healthy opposition that guides us and persecution that comes from following Jesus? What are the markers of each?
9.	The sermon compares spiritual growth to sculpting fondant, where uncomfortable shaping leads to beauty. What uncomfortable shaping process might God be doing in your life right now?	10.	Which of the Beatitudes feels most challenging or relevant to your current season of life, and what would it look like to embrace that blessing this week?

Remember...

“We start out as this raw material, raw material that he loves very much. Then he shapes and he pushes and he stretches. And he cuts away things that need to be cut away until slowly we become more and more like him.”