



Life Group Questions

What If Jesus Was Serious?

Week 4 | Matthew 5:1-12 | Jan 28, 2024

ICEBREAKER: Dennis described his decades-long friendship with Gary Stanton and the first man he ever disciplined. Who have been the long-term investors in your life? How have they encouraged, challenged, or shaped you? [Encourage each person to take time to thank that individual. If the person is deceased, encourage them to contact a family member and share the impact their relative had on them.]

1. What stood out from Sunday's message? (Including any post-message discussion with others) What encouraged, challenged, or intrigued you?

Read Matthew 5:1-12; then read "The Unbeatitudes."

We can understand the Beatitudes by looking at them from their opposites. Some, Jesus implied, will not be blessed. Their condition could be described in this way:

- Wretched are the spiritually self-sufficient, for theirs is the kingdom of hell.
- Wretched are those who deny the tragedy of their sinfulness, for they will be troubled.
- Wretched are the self-centered, for they will be empty.
- Wretched are those who ceaselessly justify themselves, for their efforts will be in vain.
- Wretched are the merciless, for no mercy will be shown to them.
- Wretched are those with impure hearts, for they will not see God.
- Wretched are those who reject peace, for they will earn the title "sons of Satan."
- Wretched are the uncommitted for convenience's sake, for their destination is hell.¹

[Leader note: It may help to read "The Unbeatitudes" again to allow them to soak in.]

2. What are your first reactions to the contrast of the Beatitudes and the Unbeatitudes? (After each person shares, follow up with phrases like, "Tell me more about that," or "Why do you think you that is?" or "Unpack that for us.")
3. If you can make enough copies for people to share, have group members pair up and identify the Beatitude or Unbeatitudes they like the most and the one that challenges them the most. Have them share with their partner.
4. Then, as pairs, have them turn the paper over and look at the diagram Dennis taught on Sunday. Ask them to focus on the eight circles (ignore the 'stages' for now) and comment on any of the following:
 - (A) the summary Dennis gave for each circle (summary given for all except the last one)

¹ Bruce B. Barton, *Matthew*, Life Application Bible Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1996), 76.

- (B) the progression from start to finish (“plugging in” to “shining light”)
- (C) the idea that the first four are directed toward God and then the second four toward people

Have them discuss together as a pair.

5. Bring everyone back as a large group and ask for people to first share their thoughts on the Beatitudes/Unbeatitudes with the large group; when everyone has had a chance to share, ask for feedback on the diagram.
6. Highlight the four stages. Ask for feedback on what those stages teach. [Areas of growth; if we're not a humble person, we're stuck in the 'child stage' and need to first grow in our understanding of the preceding circle before being able to successfully progress; point out that we go back and forth throughout life; in some settings or seasons of life we progress faster while, in others, we struggle.]
7. How can we help you respond to/apply something from the message this week? In what other ways can we support you this week?