

## BEATITUDES

Through a class activity, the student should recognize the characteristics of a person living the Beatitudes and the consequences of living their high standard in the world today.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught his disciples how they were to live if they followed His call. In teaching the Eight Beatitudes, Jesus called his disciples and calls people today to a life of openness, humility, service, and courage. This continual movement and growth in the Beatitudes for the follower of Jesus will cost the lack of worldly success, but will open the way to the Kingdom of God.

### Procedure:

1. Have each group report on the meaning of the attitudes of the Blessed Person. List the meaning on the chalkboard. Lead students in the listing to go beyond the superficial meaning of each Beatitude. Prompt students to deal with each Beatitude in depth.
  - a. Poor in Spirit -- an openness to God; a recognition of my dependency on Him and others; a realization that I am not perfect nor always right; that the most important things in life are not material things.
  - b. Meek -- gentleness; a sense of humility; recognizing your own self-worth and that of others; the ability to make choices in favor of others rather than yourself continually; a willingness to tolerate the imperfections and personality quirks of others.
  - c. Mourn -- sensitivity to suffering and pain in life; ability to recognize the dependency on others and thus to appreciate their loss, as in death; empathy for the situation of others.
  - d. Hunger and Thirst for What is Right -- seeking justice for others, whether it be in small things as respect for one's name or the larger agenda, such as the rights of others in the third world; a sense of uncomfortable-ness with what is not right that demands your involvement for the sake of justice; a recognition that you and your world have not yet achieved the Kingdom of God.
  - e. Merciful -- a healing love that respects the dignity of others; a kindness and gentleness for others; a forgiveness that is not condescending.
  - f. Pure of Heart -- a singleheartedness; a sense of personal integrity; an honesty of who you are and what your motives are; a purposefulness that you are created for God; a unity within yourself.

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- g. Peacemaker -- possessing a sense of inner peace; the ability to reconcile oneself, without sacrificing important principles with others; the desire to reconcile others; a recognition of the importance of being just to others as a necessary ingredient of peacemaker.
  - h. Persecuted for Sake of Rights -- the ability to take a stand on what you believe in despite the obstacles and pressures; the ability to suffer for your values; being willing to pay the price for what you know is right.
2. Ask students what general characteristics permeate the Beatitudes. They should mention such qualities as gentleness, humility, openness, wholeness, integrity, and so on.
  3. Now ask the students what are the values of a successful person according to the vision of the world. Students might mention such characteristics as shrewdness, competitiveness, selfishness, and so on.
  4. The following questions may be used as the basis for a total class discussion:
    - a. What does it cost an individual to live the Beatitudes?
    - b. Do you know anyone who ever really lived the Beatitudes? What did it cost them? Students may mention certain historical or contemporary figures such as St. Francis, Martin Luther King, Mother Teresa of Calcutta.
    - c. If a high price was paid to live the Beatitudes, why would anyone even attempt to incorporate the Beatitudes in their lives? Answers may be sense of duty and compassion, concern for the good consequence of one's life, and so on.
    - d. What does Jesus promise people who live the Beatitudes in Matthew 5:1-12? Students should note that Jesus promised people the Kingdom of Heaven, seeing God, and satisfaction if they persisted in living the Beatitudes.
  5. Summarize the lesson by stating that Jesus asks people to live the Beatitudes but we often fall short of this demand. Yet, this awareness of our shortcoming is what is precisely demanded by the Beatitudes. That is, to really try to live the Beatitudes involves a real sense of humility, an awareness of our dependency on God and a continued effort to become more and more the person called for in the Beatitudes.