

# Red Rocks Church



GROUP GUIDE | MESSAGE BY ERIC PARKS

## START

To get things started, let's go around the circle and answer this question:

**Have you ever had to manufacture being nice or will yourself to try to act a certain way? If so, did you find it to be a good thing or exhausting and why?**

## SHARE

This week we are going through a timely message on a particular section of one of the greatest sermons ever told by Jesus. In the sermon on the mount, Jesus spoke about how we are called to be different and to view the world differently from people who don't know God; it is referred to as the 'Beatitudes.' They are postures of the heart that every Christ follower should desire to cultivate.

What we might think is not important or trivial; in God's eyes just might be of utmost value. Conversely, things we might place a high importance on; in reality, are often not be important in the eyes of God. In the sermon on the mount, Jesus flips the script, turns things upside down to help those listening better understand what matters.

**Let's read Matthew 5:1-12**

It's easy to read this section and get familiar with it, but let's really dig in and talk about what this means. This might take up a large part of this study, but it is extremely important to really understand the types of people Jesus was talking about in the text.

**When you think about being poor, what are some words that come to mind?**

**Give some examples of why a person would mourn or be distraught?**

**Meekness is not being a wallflower, but a humble, gentle and non-aggressive person. How might a meek person be taken advantage of in today's culture?**

**What are some examples of merciful people? Pure in heart? Peacemakers?**

**Why do you think the meek, merciful, pure in heart, the peacemakers, and all those who follow Jesus have times of persecution in this world? You would assume all these great traits in people would be celebrated, so why instead are they insulted?**

**Lastly, Jesus says, "Rejoice and be glad because great is your reward in heaven..." when we are persecuted. How can this truth help us to actually be encouraged when we are insulted because we follow Jesus?**

## GROW

In the last section, we took some ample time to really describe the types of people Jesus was talking about. Having a better perspective on this helps us ultimately realize our need for God. Most of us would agree that our natural instinct in life is not to be a humble peacemaker, but to default to pride. We can easily be full of ourselves, passive-aggressive, vengeful, and not all that merciful when other people mess up.

For some, we hear this description and find ourselves encouraged because we so often feel insignificant, trying to do the right thing in a world that seems to never reward doing the right thing. At the same time, we watch people take advantage of others, take vengeance and only seem to become more wealthy and powerful at times and wonder if God sees what's really happening down here on earth.

The truth is, we are all hungry and thirsty for God in our lives. We are all poor in spirit and longing for the heavenly kingdom, where there will no longer be a world fractured by sin.

### **Let's re-read Matthew 5:3**

In C. Blomberg's (1992). *Matthew* (Vol. 22, pp. 98–99) we get an amazing description of this poverty we all feel:

“Poor in spirit,” as a virtue, must refer not to a poor quality of faith but to the acknowledgment of one's spiritual powerlessness and bankruptcy apart from Christ (cf. Goodspeed, “Those who feel their spiritual need”). Blessing the spiritually poor provides an important qualification of Luke's more absolute use of “poor” (Luke 6:20). No contradiction appears here because an important strand of Jewish thought had developed a close equation between poverty and piety in the use of the Hebrew term *anawim* (as, e.g., in Isa 61:1, which probably underlies this passage). In other words, both Matthew and Luke picture “those who because of sustained economic privation and social distress have confidence only in God.”<sup>16</sup> This interpretation coincides with Paul's observation in Corinth that most who were becoming Christians came from the poorer classes of society (1 Cor 1:26–29). It is consistent with the experience of a majority of Jesus' own followers who came from the poor *am-ha-aretz* (“people of the land”), and it fits in with the fact that in many periods of world history including our own, the gospel has spread fastest among those who have had the fewest possessions to stand in the way of whole-hearted commitment to God. As previous discussion of the kingdom showed (see 3:2), part of the church's mission is to try to improve the socioeconomic lot of the poorest of this world. But fallen humanity will never create social utopia; the truth of Rom 8:18 must remain important consolation for many people.

### **What does it look like to be spiritually bankrupt?**

**Whether financially or spiritually poor, why do you think that those who recognize their own bankruptcy are more open to the good news of Jesus' message?**

**On the other hand, why do you think it is that those who are wealthy, powerful, or privileged seem more resistant to the Gospel?**

## MOVE

In conclusion, we have an opportunity to respond to the teaching of Jesus. That is why this section is called “move,” we want to see people make a move toward the life Jesus offers. Hopefully by now, we can all agree that the ‘beatitudes’ show us an upside-down kingdom. We can see the things that God rewards are quite different from what we think at times.

As followers of Jesus, we are called to be different from the world around us. We are to be salt and light, but we can't do it on our own. We need God to change us and to soften our hearts. It is far too easy to harden our hearts in this fallen world and to try to take advantage of others, when God calls us to be a different kind of people.

**Read Titus 3:2-7**

Those of us who have decided to follow Jesus should remember the height from which we have fallen and that it was because of God's kindness and mercy that we have been reborn and set on a new path. Paul writes here to remind Christians that we need to live differently in society, to be peacemakers, to do the right thing, and to be humble.

**What is one thing you need to stop doing and one thing you need to start doing after talking through this study?**

**PRAY**

As a group, spend some time praying for each other and the struggles that we all face. If you are in a co-ed group, consider breaking up into men and women's groups to talk more freely.

**GO**

**Philippians 4:13**

*I can do all things through him who strengthens me.*