

WEEK 1 | MATTHEW 5:1-6

A BEAUTIFUL KINGDOM

PRAY.

Consider opening your group by praying. Here are a few prayer points to posture your heart for the semester ahead

- Confess your dependence upon the Lord in different matters of life.
- Ask God to ask for his direction and wisdom as you open the Bible together.
- Ask God to give you a greater desire for righteousness.

THEME.

As believers in Jesus Christ, and citizens of his kingdom, we have the unique responsibility to reflect the glory of God to a watching world. In our new series, *A Beautiful Kingdom*, we will study Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount, considering what it means to flourish under his rule and reign, and live as his representatives where we work, live and play.

QUESTIONS.

Feel free use any, all, or none of these questions as you facilitate your group. Their purpose is to be an aid to you as you consider how to teach the implications of the week's Scriptures.

1. Have you studied the Sermon on the Mount in the past? If so, what is your favorite part? Which is your favorite beatitude? Why?
2. Read vv. 1-2. What contextual clues seem significant to you? Why do you think it's important that "[Jesus] opened his mouth" to teach?

Hint: It's a formal introduction to a significant teaching. Matthew considered Jesus' words in this sermon to be significant. They are words that each disciple should hear and heed.

3. Verses 3-11 are known as the *beatitudes*, which is taken from the Latin word for "blessed." Since *blessed* is not a common phrase today, we often translate it as *happy*. That's true, but it's important to note that the meaning "reflects God's estimate rather than human emotion."¹ A more precise translation may be *fortunate; to be congratulated*.

Q: Read vv. 3-11 with this phrasing: "To be congratulated are..." Give your initial impressions. Which beatitudes make sense to you to include? Which ones strike you as strange or out of place?

4. The promise given at the beginning and end of the beatitudes is the same, namely, "... for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." How would you define the kingdom of heaven? Why is it such a great promise?

Hint: Our Naples campus pastor, Jeremiah Taylor, defines it this way: "The *kingdom of heaven* is the rule and reign of God through his Son—King Jesus. This kingdom is the place where what God wants done, gets done, through his loyal subjects. It's God's rule, through God's people, under God's king."

5. Do you think Jesus had a reason for ordering the beatitudes in the way that he did? If so, what are some reasons you have in mind?

Hint: Read them with salvation in mind. Those who see God experience poverty of spirit, mourn their sin, etc.

¹ Gundry, Robert H., *A Survey of the New Testament: 5th Edition*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2012, 200.

6. Consider the beatitudes in vv. 3-6. Have you ever experienced utter poverty in spirit, grief over sin, contentment in Christ, and a strong desire for his righteousness? What was experience like? How did God answer you?
7. What are you excited about as we continue to study the Sermon on the Mount? What questions do you have that you'd like to answer?
8. How can we pray for you?

PRAY TO CLOSE.