

Becoming like Jesus through his call (Based on Chapter 6 of *Costly Grace*)

The Big Idea

We develop the characteristics of Jesus when we obediently trust God to fulfill his promises, not because we try hard to be like Jesus.

Biblical Foundation

Happy are those ... Matthew 5:1-12 (TEV) See below for specific verses.

The beatitudes are the personal message of a God who comes to live among us— an intimate and involved God—leaving heaven to declare that religion can no longer be used as an excuse for keeping distant from him.

What are the things that make a difference between religion and a relationship with Jesus?

God is for us

Jesus comes to give us an extraordinary life. How do you think Jesus would define an extraordinary life?

We are called to do things that are impossible for mere humans and so we should expect to be constantly pushed into positions that require faith. Discuss this statement: If we are living a life that does not require faith, then we are living faithlessly.

Jesus says if you choose to follow me, you will develop these characteristics:

Dependent—God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs (Matthew 5:3 NLT). We must come to the end of ourselves in order to become the blessed heirs of his kingdom. What does it mean to come to the end of yourself?

Mourning—God blesses those who mourn, for they will be comforted (Matthew 5:4 NLT). We will begin to see what Jesus sees and care about the things Jesus cares about. How would the way we live change by opening our eyes to eternity?

Humble—You're blessed when you feel you've lost what is most dear to you. Only then can you be embraced by the One most dear to you (Matthew 5:4 MSG). How do you understand this statement: We are humble when we come to understand who we are and who we belong to—and who is protecting us.

Just—God blesses those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they will be satisfied (Matthew 5:6 NLT). As disciples of Jesus, we are helping him bring as many people as possible into the kingdom and that means we don't have time to stop and argue about our rights and possessions.

Merciful—God blesses those who are merciful, for they will be shown mercy (Matthew 5:7 NLT). Jesus says that what we give to others, we will also be given. Bonhoeffer notes mercy means we risk our own reputations as we take on “the distress and humiliation and sin of others.” The Bible says that Jesus was a man of no reputation. What does that mean?

Pure—God blesses those whose hearts are pure, for they will see God (Matthew 5:8 NLT). Jesus says that when our hearts are pure, God will become real to us. How is God becoming real to us related to our faith?

Peaceful—God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God (Matthew 5:9 NLT). Discuss Eugene Peterson’s paraphrase of this verse: “You’re blessed when you can show people how to cooperate instead of compete or fight. That’s when you discover who you really are, and your place in God’s family” (Matthew 5:9 MSG).

Righteous—God blesses those who are persecuted for doing right, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs” (Matthew 5:10 NLT). Jesus says we will be required to do what is right and this means we will face persecution.

Why do you think the blessing for suffering persecution is the same as for those who are humble?

Why do we so often try harder to be a Christian instead of trusting Jesus to develop his characteristics in us? Will you set your heart and mind on the things above (your new life in the kingdom of heaven) or keep focused on the things below (your old life)?