



MIND  
session page

## Who Gets Blessed?

**Matthew 5:1-12 | Session 18.5**

### Before the Session

Facilitator: In advance of the session

- Review today's scripture text and the session activities to help better facilitate the discussion.
- Have the Bible Background Video ready to view.
- Encourage your group to listen to the Faithelement podcast ahead of the next session (Share the link via email or social media).
- In advance, choose at least one different translation or interpretation of today's passage. Here are some suggestions:
  - o [The Message Bible](#)
  - o [The New Living Translation](#)
  - o [Nadia Bolz-Weber's modern reimagining](#)
  - o [Clarence Jordan's retelling in the Cotton Patch Gospel](#)

## Context

Begin the conversation with prompts like these:

- What do you think of when you hear the word, “blessed?” What are some different ways it is used in our culture?
- For those who are not a part of the Christian faith, how might they define this word differently? How might they hear it differently when Christians use it?
- Today’s scripture reading comes from the Sermon on the Mount. You’ve likely heard this many times before; do you see this passage differently than you used to? Explain.
- Which one of these blessings speaks most to you today? Which one might have had special significance for you in the past?

## Content

Read together [Matthew 5:1-12](#), then watch the Bible Background Video and ask:

- How are these categories of people different from what we’d usually consider as “blessed?”
- Why do you think Jesus decided to turn conventional wisdom on its head? What is particularly effective about the way Jesus chooses to express these truths?
- Take a moment to reflect on Jesus’ original audience. What were their lives like, as subjects of the Roman Empire? How does Jesus’ message speak directly into their experiences?
- How might those original hearers have received this message?
- While we’d certainly never ask to find ourselves poor, hungry or persecuted, what blessings can be found when we are in those positions? How do these situations remind us of our dependence upon God?

## **Closure**

Take a moment to read aloud one or more of the different versions of the beatitudes. What surprised you or made you think differently about these blessings? Then ask:

- How might you rewrite these beatitudes for today's society?
- When you read this passage, do you try to find yourself in one of the "blessed" categories? How might this invite us to look beyond ourselves? What could it look like to seek out the ones Jesus says are truly blessed?

Close with a prayer.

**Writer: Jon Parks**



# CURRENT

session page

## Who Gets Blessed?

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### Context

Say: Faith leaders across the USA are speaking out against the actions of the Department of Homeland Security. The push-back is rooted in faith principles that value human life, oppose oppression, and celebrate diversity and freedom.

Share a few quotes from clergy members as listed in this article, ["Faith leaders call for end to ICE aggression in communities"](#).

OR

Share this [video of a PBS interview with Episcopal Bishop A. Rob Hershfeld](#), describing how he is responding to this moment in our society. Watch the first 10 minutes of the video (at least).

Then lead a conversation with questions like these:

- What do you hear motivating these faith leaders to speak out and act?
- What themes or Christian values do you hear in their words?
- How do you think Jesus would respond to the treatment of persons we are witnessing? Why?

Say: Today we are considering a significant passage in the New Testament; the beatitudes. Let's look at the text and hear Jesus' sermon again.

## Content

Read together [Matthew 5:1-12](#), then watch the Bible Background Video and ask:

- How are these categories of people different from what we'd usually consider as "blessed?"
- Why do you think Jesus decided to turn conventional wisdom on its head? What is particularly effective about the way Jesus chooses to express these truths?
- Take a moment to reflect on Jesus' original audience. What were their lives like, as subjects of the Roman Empire? How does Jesus' message speak directly into their experiences?
- How might those original hearers have received this message?
- While we'd certainly never ask to find ourselves poor, hungry or persecuted, what blessings can be found when we are in those positions? How do these situations remind us of our dependence upon God?

## Closure

Share this brief video of [clergy gathering and standing with immigrant communities in Minnesota](#). Then lead a discussion using prompts like these:

- How do you think the persons in this community in her congregation are feeling?
- What specific beatitudes come to mind that speak to how this community is feeling?
- The beatitudes speak to needs that persons have what does this community need from each other and God?
- How can each of us allow Jesus' sermon to guide our actions and shape our values? What needs do we see in our own community?

Close with a prayer.



# CONVERSATIONS

session page

## Who Gets Blessed?

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### Context

Remind the group of what Daniel Glaze said early in the podcast about the word "blessing":

"Well, I'll admit, I've gotten mixed feelings because, you know, I mean, we're blessed in blessings. I mean, it's a biblical word, but we've misused it. It's been co-opted by, you know, prosperity Gospel and others to indicate, you know, some sort of like special favor that we have. And certainly like we often think of material blessings or nation's blessings. So yeah, and if I'm blessed with material blessings and then someone. Doesn't have as much as I do. Does that mean God doesn't love that person as much? It's just there's a lot of problematic things there that, that goes along with this word. So we're gonna have to contend with that today."

Then ask:

- What do you think of when you hear the word "blessed"?
- How is the word blessed used in today's world?
- How do you define "blessed"?

## Content

Read together Matthew 5:1-12, then watch the Bible Background Video and ask:

- What is different about the blessings in this passage from what we typically think of as blessings?
- What do you think is the blessing in these unusual blessings?
- If the poor, the meek, the mournful are called blessed, what does that make those of us who don't fit those descriptions?
- What is different about the rules of God and the rules of humans when it comes to blessings?
- What do those who are oppressed know that we who are more privileged do not know about God?
- How might those who are oppressed understand what it means to be blessed?
- How does this discussion of blessings to the oppressed turn the definition of blessing on its head for what people typically understand as being blessed?

## Closure

Watch Nadia Bolz-Weber give her version of the Beatitudes. Then ask:

- What do you notice about this version of the Beatitudes?
- How is this the same as the Beatitudes in Matthew?
- How does this give us a way to understand what Jesus was talking about?

Close with a prayer.

**Writer: Sara McClain**



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### Context

Watch this [skit on the many meanings of the phrase "Bless your heart"](#) then ask the following questions:

- While this video is a bit facetious, the term "blessing" is commonly used in today's society. What does the term "bless" or "blessing" mean to you? How many different meanings can you come up with?
- Why do you think there are so many different popular meanings for the term?
- When you think of a person who is "blessed", what kind of person do you picture?
- Can a blessing be something difficult or painful? Why or why not?
- How does our culture and upbringing shape what we consider a blessing?

## Content

Read together [Matthew 5:1-12](#), then watch the Bible Background Video and ask:

- What do you imagine people were thinking as they heard Jesus' words?
- How might this speech have been surprising, frustrating, or hopeful?
- What does it mean to be blessed? How does this passage describe blessings?
- In what ways does this passage shake up the idea of who is blessed? Were you expecting the poor, grieving, meek, and hungry to be named as those who are blessed?
- How do you think this passage might be relevant today?

## Closure

Watch this story of [Bacillio's immigration from Guatemala](#), then ask the following questions:

- What stands out to you about Bacillio's story? What themes did he express through his writing?
- Why did Bacillio and his family make the decision to immigrate? How might this decision have been a difficult one?
- What was the immigration process like for Bacillio and his family? What challenges have they faced?
- Where might Bacillio's story of struggle possibly fit into the passage in Matthew? How does this passage reshape our views of people who are poor, grieving, meek, hungry, etc.?
- How can we help care for people in our communities who have faced similar struggles with hardship like Bacillio?

Close with a prayer.

**Writer: Devin Harris-Davis**



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- Have the Bible Background Video ready to view.
- Review today's scripture text and the session activities to help better facilitate the discussion.
- Listen to the FaithElement podcast for this session.

### Context

Watch this clip from [Kung Fu Panda \(2:58 5:00\)](#), then ask the following questions:

- What kind of characteristics do you imagine the people were looking for in a Dragon Warrior? How did they react when Po was chosen?
- How did the reaction from the bystanders differ from Master Oogway's (the elder tortoise) response?
- Why do you think it was surprising to Po that he was selected as the Dragon Warrior? What does this say about his image of himself?
- What kind of responsibilities, for both the onlookers and for Po, come with this selection?
- How is Po's selection subversive? What kind of impact do you imagine this sudden shift could have on the community?

## Content

Read together [Matthew 5:1-12](#), then watch the Bible Background Video and ask:

- What surprises you in this reading of the text? Did you notice anything new as you read the Beatitudes?
- Why do you think Jesus went up the mountain to deliver this message?
- How is this passage subversive? How does it change one's view of blessing?
- What relationship does God have to the poor, meek, hungry, persecuted, etc.? How should this impact our understanding of these people?
- If you were to rewrite the Beatitudes in today's context, who might be included?

## Closure

Watch this [trailer for the movie Minari](#) and ask the following questions:

- What do you notice about this family and their new lives as immigrants to America? What makes them stand out?
- What challenges do they face as individuals and as a family? How are the challenges different among the various generations?
- How do others in their community engage with the family? How do people's actions change throughout the trailer?
- How do you see the Beatitudes from Matthew reflected in the lives of people in this movie? Where might you identify the poor, meek, and hungry in the film?
- In what ways does the story of this family reshape your understanding of blessing? What are some ways you can bless others this week?

Close with a prayer.

**Writer: Devin Harris-Davis**



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### Context (from the Media session page)

Watch this [skit on the many meanings of the phrase "Bless your heart"](#) then ask the following questions:

- While this video is a bit facetious, the term "blessing" is commonly used in today's society. What does the term "bless" or "blessing" mean to you? How many different meanings can you come up with?
- Why do you think there are so many different popular meanings for the term?
- When you think of a person who is "blessed", what kind of person do you picture?
- Can a blessing be something difficult or painful? Why or why not?
- How does our culture and upbringing shape what we consider a blessing?

## **Content (from the Mind session page)**

Read together [Matthew 5:1-12](#), then watch the Bible Background Video and ask:

- How are these categories of people different from what we'd usually consider as "blessed?"
- Why do you think Jesus decided to turn conventional wisdom on its head? What is particularly effective about the way Jesus chooses to express these truths?
- Take a moment to reflect on Jesus' original audience. What were their lives like, as subjects of the Roman Empire? How does Jesus' message speak directly into their experiences?
- How might those original hearers have received this message?
- While we'd certainly never ask to find ourselves poor, hungry or persecuted, what blessings can be found when we are in those positions? How do these situations remind us of our dependence upon God?

## **Closure (from the Conversations session page)**

Watch Nadia Bolz-Weber [give her version of the Beatitudes](#). Then ask:

- What do you notice about this version of the Beatitudes?
- How is this the same as the Beatitudes in Matthew?
- How does this give us a way to understand what Jesus was talking about?

Close with a prayer.