

The Beatitudes Answer Key

Group 1: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, / for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 5:3)

(Paragraphs 67–70) What does “being poor of heart” mean in terms of cultivating holiness, and what (unholy behaviors) does it help us avoid?

“Usually the rich feel secure in their wealth, and think that, if that wealth is threatened, the whole meaning of their earthly life can collapse” (67). Wealth often leads to being “so self-satisfied that we leave no room for God” (68). Being poor in heart allows an attitude of “holy indifference” to all created things (69).

Group 2: “Blessed are they who mourn, / for they will be comforted.” (Matthew 5:4)

(Paragraphs 75–76) What does “knowing how to mourn with others” mean in terms of cultivating holiness, and what (unholy behaviors) does it help us avoid?

“The world has no desire to mourn; it would rather disregard painful situations, cover them up or hide them” (75). “A person who sees things as they truly are and sympathizes with pain and sorrow is capable of touching life’s depths and finding authentic happiness . . . [and] is consoled, not by the world but by Jesus. Such persons . . . discover the meaning of life by coming to the aid of those who suffer, understanding their anguish and bringing relief (76).

Group 3: “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land.” (Matthew 5:5)

(Paragraphs 71–74) What does “reacting with meekness and humility” mean in terms of cultivating holiness, and what (unholy behaviors) does it help us avoid?

In a world “where we constantly pigeonhole others on the basis of their ideas, their customs and even their way of speaking or dressing” (71), our pride and vanity have us thinking that we have the right to dominate others. If, instead, “we regard the faults and limitations of others with tenderness and meekness, without an air of superiority, we can actually help them and stop wasting our energy on useless complaining”(72). Meekness helps us put our trust in God alone.

Group 4: “Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, / for they will be satisfied.” (Matthew 5:6)

(Paragraphs 77–79) What does “hungering and thirsting for righteousness” mean in terms of cultivating holiness, and what (unholy behaviors) does it help us avoid?

We can intensely “desire justice and yearn for righteousness” (77) knowing that only Jesus can satisfy that desire. We can cooperate with Jesus in making justice and righteousness possible, “even if we may not always see the fruit of our efforts” (77). Helps us avoid becoming “mired in corruption, ensnared in the daily politics of quid pro quo, where everything becomes business” (78). True justice comes about when people are just in their own decisions and pursue justice for the poor and the weak” (79).

Group 5: “Blessed are the merciful, / for they will be shown mercy.” (Matthew 5:7)

(Paragraphs 80–82) What does “seeing and acting with mercy” mean in terms of cultivating holiness, and what (unholy behaviors) does it help us avoid?

Mercy has two aspects: giving, helping and serving others, and forgiveness and understanding (see 80). “Giving and forgiving means reproducing in our lives some small measure of God’s perfection, which gives and forgives superabundantly” (81). Rather than plotting revenge, judging, and condemning others,



we need to remember that the measure we use for understanding, forgiving, and giving to others will be the measure for what we will receive.

Group 6: “Blessed are the clean of heart, / for they will see God.” (Matthew 5:8)

(Paragraphs 83–86) What does “being pure in heart” (or “keeping a heart free of all that tarnishes love”) mean in terms of cultivating holiness, and what (unholy behaviors) does it help us avoid?

“The Bible uses the heart to describe our real intentions, the things we truly seek and desire, apart from all appearances” (83). God expects a commitment to our neighbor that comes from the heart (85). This will not only help us avoid falsehood, deceit, foolish thoughts, whatever is impure and insincere (84), but a pure heart genuinely loves God and neighbor in words and deeds (86).

Group 7: “Blessed are the peacemakers, / for they will be called children of God.” (Matthew 5:9)

(Paragraphs 87–89) What does being a peacemaker and “sowing peace all around us” mean in terms of cultivating holiness, and what (unholy behaviors) does it help us avoid?

Although being a peacemaker makes us “think of the many endless situations of war in our world” (87), it is each individual person that is “often a cause of conflict or at least of misunderstanding” (87). “Peacemakers truly “make” peace; they build peace and friendship in society” (88). Peacemakers do not participate in repeating gossip or spreading negativity. A real peacemaker “excludes no one but embraces even those who are a bit odd, troublesome or difficult, demanding, different, beaten down by life or simply uninterested. It is hard work . . . for building peace is a craft that demands serenity, creativity, sensitivity and skill” (89).

Group 8: “Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, / for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 5:10)

(Paragraphs 90–94) What does being persecuted for righteousness sake and “accepting daily the path of the Gospel, even though it may cause us problems” mean in terms of cultivating holiness? (*Note:* Unlike the other Beatitudes, this one is about encouragement, not avoiding unholy behaviors. Focus on that.)

Jesus warns us that the path he proposes—taking seriously our commitment to God and to others—goes against the flow. We challenge society by the way we live, becoming a nuisance and being persecuted in our struggle for justice (see 90). “Whatever weariness and pain we may experience in living the commandment of love and following the way of justice, the cross remains the source of our growth and sanctification” (92).

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