

# JESUS' MANIFESTO



## Discussion Questions

### Mar 1: The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-16)

#### **The Upside-Down Kingdom With Rachel Anderson**

1. The attitudes that Jesus describes as “blessed” in Matthew 5:3-10 are often understood to include humility, mourning, meekness (or intentionality), hunger for righteousness, peacemaking. How do these attitudes contrast with other ways of being often prioritized in our culture?
2. Mourning and grief can be difficult, but they can also bring us into deeper connection with ourselves and others. Is there a time in your life in which mourning or grief played this role – helping you connect with yourself or with others?
3. The word “meekness” (Matthew 5:5) is sometimes associated with passivity, but it can also be interpreted as having restraint, being slow to anger, and acting with intentionality rather than impulsivity. In what way might meekness, understood as restraint, be powerful?
4. The “hunger for righteousness” in Matthew 5:6 can be understood as a desire for relationships of mutual respect and care with others. Does this desire show up in your life? If so, in what aspects of your life does it show up?
5. What steps might you take this week to let go of a win/lose posture toward a relationship and adopt a goal of mutual respect and care?
6. What active and creative projects are you part of (or could imagine being part of) that help you refuse to despair over the state of the world? These could be projects in your personal life, projects undertaken with neighbors, friends, family, coworkers or the Cedar Ridge community.
7. Take a moment to do this week’s Prayer Practice below together and discuss your experience of it afterwards. Then take a moment to pray for one another.

## Prayer practice for this week: Praying the Beatitudes

Take a few minutes each day this week to pray through one of the Jesus' sayings about blessedness. Sit comfortably with your back straight, feet planted on the floor, arms relaxed, and hands supported in your lap. Close your eyes and relax your shoulders.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Pay attention to God's presence, letting go of pride, competition, fear. Draw your awareness to God's love for you, just as you are.

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted." Hear Jesus saying that it is okay to grieve. Draw your attention to God's love for that which you mourn – a person, a community, a dream. Ask God to make you aware of those with whom you might safely share your grief – for the sake of your comfort or theirs.

"Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth." Use this day to practice a version of the welcoming prayer. Become aware of your thoughts, feelings, emotions. Welcome them. Let go of the desire for power and control. Let go of reactivity or rage. Become aware of God's love and presence within this situation. Ask yourself, what aligning with God's course of action might involve.

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled." Find a quiet place and time where you can be free of distraction. Let go of the desire for entertainment or consumption or a new thing. Become aware of what you are truly hungry for. Ask God to meet those needs in God's own time.

"Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy." Offer to God a situation in which you are inclined to judge or condemn. Invite God to instill a posture of compassion toward this situation.

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God." Seek out a place or experience of beauty this day. Go for a walk. Stop working in time to observe the sunset. Spend five minutes observing a piece of art. Thank God for making this specific place, season, color, or time.

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God." Reflect on a situation that seems stuck or conflicted. Ask God to help you see one step – no matter how small - that might change that situation for the better. Ask God for the courage to take that step.

### Alternative Practice: Seeing the Blessed

If seated prayer is not helpful this week, engage the Beatitudes through attentive action and observation. As you participate in the active or creative projects you reflected on in Question 6, move through them with quiet awareness.

Notice the people around you. Who is carrying grief? Who is choosing restraint over reactivity? Who is working quietly for peace? Or longing for relationships built on mutual respect and care?

Rather than fixing or analyzing, simply pay attention. Let yourself see the small, often unnoticed ways humility, mercy, and peacemaking are already present. Where do you glimpse courage that refuses despair?

Hold what you see in gratitude. Thank God for signs of the Kingdom breaking through and ask for the grace to participate — even in one small way — in this upside-down way of living.