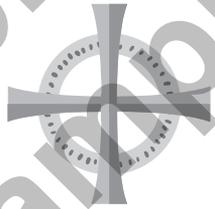


LIVING

the beatitudes

REFLECTIONS
and PRACTICES
FOR TEENS

Connie Clark



TWENTY-THIRD PUBLICATIONS, *A Division of Bayard*

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ISBN: 978-1-62785-029-2 ■ Printed in the U.S.A.

When he saw the crowds, he went up the mountain, and after he had sat down, his disciples came to him. He began to teach them, saying:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land.

Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you [falsely] because of me.

Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven. Thus they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

MATTHEW 5:1-12 ▶ *New American Bible, Revised Edition*

YOUR DESTINY

Think about it. Say the words to yourself: My destiny.

Your destiny is yours and yours alone. No one knows it. No one except God.

Do you wonder about your destiny? Do you fear it? Maybe a little? That's okay. Just remember, the destiny God has planned for you is good because it's from the mind and heart of God. And God is good. God is love. God wants all that's good and loving for you.

So what does this have to do with the Beatitudes? Everything, really. Because when you make the Beatitudes your own, you are destined for happiness. Not an illusion of happiness, or a temporary euphoria that just gets you by. We're talking about a lifetime of true, lasting joy that some of the world's most successful and accomplished people miss entirely. When you live a life of beatitude, you see things differently. You enjoy life's goodness and accept the bad stuff that gets thrown your way. But most important, you make a life that's truly amazing

A life of beatitude is different. It's radical and non-conformist. It rises above the ordinary. It's a life of true freedom. Intrigued? Read on and learn more.

WHY I WROTE THIS LITTLE BOOK FOR YOU

The Beatitudes saved my life. Which is funny, because for years I didn't understand what the big deal was. Beatitudes? Weren't they just another collection of inspirational sayings? Love your neighbor and all that?

Just because I didn't get the Beatitudes, it doesn't mean they weren't working in my life. Just because I was making monumentally stupid decisions that caused a lot of pain and nearly killed me, it doesn't mean Jesus wasn't there all along, calling me toward a better way.

So here's the deal. I'll tell you a little about how the Beatitudes managed to save my sorry soul. I'll also share stories about other, more famous people. Your job, should you accept it, is to think about how the Beatitudes can work in *your* life. How they might shape and even change your destiny.

One of the many amazing things about the Beatitudes is that you might see something in them that really speaks to you. Tomorrow, or next year, you'll see something else and wonder why you hadn't noticed that before. So we'll look at some of the Beatitudes from a few different angles.

So just read at your own pace. Reflect. Jot down your thoughts. Pray. Then take some action on the Beatitudes. There's even a little "Beati-to-do" list on each page. (See what I did there? Are you loving this yet?) Then let the Beatitudes lead you to a better life.

Are you ready? Let's do this.

BUT FIRST, A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR

What does “a life of beatitude” mean? Start with the word “beatitude.” Sounds like *beautiful*, doesn’t it? It comes from the same root word. A life of beatitude seeks beauty.

But sometimes we limit ourselves to a narrow view of beauty. We think it’s about having gorgeous hair, a great smile, or a perfect body. Most of us also get that beauty can be found in a sunset or a child’s smile. But people who live a life of beatitude have their eyes trained on a wider view. They find beauty even in the ugliest of places and situations. “I don’t think of all the misery,” Anne Frank wrote in *Diary of a Young Girl*, “but of the beauty that still remains.”

A life of beatitude is also about happiness. When Jesus says the poor in spirit are “blessed,” he’s talking about a blessed happiness light years beyond our imaginings. The “beatific vision” is the happiness of the saints in the presence of God. It doesn’t mean they’re standing around playing harps and making googly eyes at God. It means their every need, desire, and longing is fulfilled, because they are with God.

We tap into this happiness a little bit—right here and now—by living the Beatitudes. I won’t lie to you; it’s not always easy. There will be times when it seems impossible. But God has chosen you for this life. Trust God and his plan. God loves you more than you can imagine.

BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT, FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

I thought I knew what it meant to be poor when I was in middle school. My dad had disappeared and my mom's bad heart forced her to quit working. Then Mom spotted an article in one of her Catholic magazines about a famine in Ethiopia. We saw pictures of dying, malnourished babies, their stomachs swollen, flies crawling across their cracked lips. "No matter how bad things seem," Mom said, "it's always worse for someone else."

I'm telling you this, not so you'll feel guilty about all you have, but because Jesus challenges us to *use our own experiences—good and bad—for the benefit of others*. My mom and I didn't know where our next meal was coming from, but seeing those children who'd never had a full meal in their lives made us realize we had to help. *Blessed are the poor, who bring us out of our misery.*

Poverty isn't always monetary. Maybe you have every material thing you need, but you lack one true friend. That's a poverty of friendship. Maybe you have a sibling who achieves everything, but for you it hasn't happened. Your poverty may be a sense that you don't measure up to someone's expectations. Whatever your personal poverty is, Jesus can help you transform it into something good. But don't wait. Do it today. His kingdom is waiting for you.

What is my “personal poverty”? Something I’m lacking?
I need to think about this and write it down here.

Do I know of anyone else who has experienced this same kind of poverty? What did they do about it, and how was it good or bad for themselves and others around them?

God, I am poor in _____. Help me find a way to use my poverty to help others. Help me to never forget how this feels. Give me compassion and mercy for others. Thanks.

BEATI-“TO DO” LIST

Pledge: I will acknowledge my own poverty and have compassion when I see it in others.

Pledge: I will use my poverty to help at least one other person who is suffering. Here’s how I’ll do it:
