

June 30

Lesson 5 (NIV)

RIGHT ATTITUDES

DEVOTIONAL READING: Isaiah 61:1-8

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Matthew 5:1-

12

MATTHEW 5:1-12

¹ Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, ² and he began to teach them.

He said:

³ “Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of
heaven.

⁴ Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.

⁵ Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.

⁶ Blessed are those who hunger and
thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.

⁷ Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.

⁸ Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.

⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children
of God.

¹⁰ Blessed are those who are perse-

cuted because of righteous-
ness,
for theirs is the kingdom of
heaven.

¹¹ “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”



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KEY VERSE

Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. — **Matthew 5:12**

COVENANT IN GOD

Unit 2: A Heartfelt Covenant

LESSONS 5–9

LESSON AIMS

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. List characteristics that mark a blessed life.
2. Give examples of how Jesus' teachings go against the standard practices of the world.
3. Express gratitude to a fellow believer for living "beatitude attitudes."

LESSON OUTLINE

Introduction

- A. Blessed Awareness
- B. Lesson Context
- I. Prelude (MATTHEW 5:1, 2)
 - A. The Mountain (v. 1)
 - B. The Words of Jesus (v. 2)
- II. Blessings (MATTHEW 5:3–9)
 - A. On the Desperate (vv. 3–6)
 - B. On the Hopeful (vv. 7–12)
 - Power in Praise*
 - Imprisoned but Free*

Conclusion

- A. Blessed Attitudes
- B. Prayer
- C. Thought to Remember

HOW TO SAY IT

beatitude bee-*a*-tuh-tood (a as in

mat).

Corinthians Ko-*rin*-thee-unz (*th* as in *thin*).

Ecclesiastes Ik-*leez*-ee-**as**-teez.

Ephesians Ee-*fee*-zhunz.

Nahum *Nay*-hum.

Palestine **Pah**-luh-*stin* (*i* as in *eye*).

Introduction

A. Blessed Awareness

As someone who has traveled extensively, I am acutely aware every time I come home how convenient my life is in big and little ways: clean water in my home for daily showers; refrigeration to keep food fresh and safe to eat; fast Internet and dependable cell phone coverage. I come home feeling more satisfied about the accessibility of education for myself and my loved ones and less frustrated with participatory government. For a while, I do not take for granted being able to attend church without fear.

In our age of dissatisfaction, unhappiness, and continual complaining, even these comforts at home aren't always enough to convince us that we are blessed. We want something even bigger, even better, and we certainly don't hope for hardships. How can we become people who wake up counting our blessings in all circumstances?

B. Lesson Context

The word *beatitude* does not occur in the Greek New Testament; it comes into English through Latin and means “a blessing.” Beatitudes in the Bible begin with the word *blessed*. A rich source for such beatitudes is the book of Psalms, which even begins with a blessing ([Psalm 1:1](#)). Jesus spoke many blessings that New Testament writers preserved in Gospels and letters.

The basis for God’s blessing is his love. The person whom God blesses receives an expression of his love, whether the person knows it or not ([Matthew 5:45](#)). Some whom God blesses are further singled out for finding favor with God ([Luke 1:30, 42](#)).

Blessings often have both a present and a future fulfillment. If one is blessed, the benefits are evident now or will come soon. Unlike a curse, a blessing is never earned but is granted by God according to his good pleasure (see [Psalm 8](#)). Furthermore, a righteous action itself can be considered a blessing, because virtue is part of its own reward. When Jesus says “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed” ([John 20:29](#)), he is not advising us to believe so that we can receive a blessing. He is saying that the state of being a believer is a blessing in and of itself.

Both Matthew and Luke include the Beatitudes of Jesus in their accounts of

one of His sermons (compare [Luke 6:20–23](#)). It’s quite possible that those two writers recorded different teaching occasions. But if that is the case, there is at least a significant overlap in what Jesus said at both times.

The general form of the Beatitudes is (1) to pronounce a certain group of people “blessed” and then (2) give a reason for or result of that blessing. However, some key differences exist between the two writers’ accounts regarding how the Beatitudes are worded (see commentary below for examples). Beyond the differences in the Beatitudes themselves, Matthew does not include woes to various groups of people who seem to be enjoying good things in this life (compare and contrast [Luke 6:24–26](#)).

I. Prelude

([MATTHEW 5:1, 2](#))

A. The Mountain (v. 1)

1a. Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside

Great *crowds* had begun to follow Jesus from all the regions of Palestine ([Matthew 4:25](#)). Jesus chooses a *mountain-side* as a venue to address and teach these followers. In such a location, he is above them and the crowds can spread below (see [Luke 6:17](#) regarding an alternative sermon location on a plain).

Preaching from a mountain is symbolically important for Israel because Moses received God's law for the first time at Mount Sinai ([Exodus 19:2, 3](#)). Because of Matthew's description of the location, we call this the Sermon on the Mount. The traditional site for Jesus' sermon is a mountain overlooking the Sea of Galilee from the northwest, but this is uncertain.

1b. and sat down. His disciples came to him,

Once Jesus has chosen his teaching platform on the mountain, *his disciples* come closer to *him*. Matthew presents this teaching occasion as both intimate and public. It is as if Jesus is teaching a small group on the stage of an auditorium with a large crowd of listeners in the seats.

The full complement of 12 disciples has not yet been announced in this Gospel (see [Matthew 10:1-4](#)). Only Peter, Andrew, James, and John have been named thus far ([4:18-22](#)). According to the Gospel of Luke, however, the 12 were designated before the Sermon on the Plain ([Luke 6:12-16](#)).

B. The Words of Jesus (v. 2)

2. and he began to teach them. He said:

Jesus' teaching is always oral in the New Testament, not written. Matthew presents a situation in which the curious

followers of this wonder-worker simply cannot get enough of him. They want to hear everything he has to say, just as they want to witness his healings and exorcisms ([Matthew 4:23-25](#)).

What Do You Think?

Under what circumstances should the church give preference to oral vs. written teaching? When should it be the other way around? Why?

Digging Deeper

To what degree does combining the oral with the written (such as with a PowerPoint presentation) improve teaching, if at all? Why?

**II. Blessings
([MATTHEW 5:3-9](#))**

A. On the Desperate ([vv. 3-6](#))

3a. "Blessed are the poor in spirit,

This is the first of eight total beatitudes. The first four beatitudes give promises to those living tough and unfulfilling lives, people who need God's blessings desperately. The first group Jesus blesses is *the poor in spirit*.

Both spiritual and material poverty are indicated, though in the third Gospel Jesus' words are explicitly about the materially impoverished ([Luke 6:20](#)). Poverty grinds on the human spirit, and often the poor have no hope of relief

except from the Lord himself (compare 1 Samuel 2:8; Psalms 12:5; 14:6; 72:12; 140:12; Luke 1:52, 53; 4:18, 19; etc.). Those who recognize their spiritual poverty are humble and lowly (Proverbs 16:19; see also Job 42:1–6).

3b. for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus understands his ministry as bringing good news to the poor (see Luke 4:18, 19, quoting Isaiah 61:1, 2). Indeed, Jesus later says that it is difficult for a rich person to enter the *kingdom of heaven* (Matthew 19:23). The blessing here is that there is no entrance fee, whether in money or spiritual riches, to be welcomed into the kingdom of Heaven. The kingdom is a major theme in Matthew, mentioned over 30 times by this Gospel writer. This kingdom is anticipated as being very near because Jesus has brought it near in his ministry (4:17; 10:7). He makes this explicit in his teaching (5:10, 19, 20; 13:24, 31, 33; etc.) and gives signs of its truth with his healing ministry (see especially Matthew 8; 9).

What Do You Think?

Should ministry to those who are poor in spirit be combined with ministry to those who are poor in material things? Why, or why not?

Digging Deeper

How, if at all, does John 6:26 cause you to modify your answer? What

about Romans 15:27?

4a. Blessed are those who mourn,

To *mourn* is more than tearful behavior, for the New Testament has another word for weeping (see Mark 16:10; Luke 6:25). Jesus speaks to those who are grieving, who have a deep sense of sorrow and loss. This may be for personal sins, for life's tragedies, for community loss, etc.; Jesus does not say.

4b. for they will be comforted.

Many Jewish people of Jesus' day carry constant sorrow about their national situation and history. They are humiliated and oppressed by the Romans who occupy their land. Yet for Jesus' hearers, the promise is not of national renewal or even of improvement in their personal situations. Jesus promises they will *be comforted*. They will find relief from their sorrow (Revelation 7:17; 21:4; compare Psalm 34:18). True and lasting comfort comes from God (2 Corinthians 1:4; 7:6).

What Do You Think?

What are some practical ways for Christians to be a blessing of comfort to those who mourn?

Digging Deeper

Are there times when we should not attempt to comfort someone who mourns? Why, or why not?

5a. Blessed are the meek,

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Some equate *meek* with *weak*. Better synonyms for biblical meekness are *gentleness* or *humility*. The opposite of meekness is aggression, especially self-serving aggression.

5b. for they will inherit the earth.

Jesus is not encouraging his hearers to be meek, for such is not his purpose here. Rather, he is offering hope and a promise to those who know their meekness: *they will inherit the earth*. In so doing, Jesus recalls [Psalm 37:11](#), where David declared a similar thing. Jesus and David both are referring to land. Ancient Israel inherited the promised land according to God's promise ([Genesis 12:1, 7](#); [Joshua 1:1-6](#)). In the same way, David anticipated the meek in Israel receiving their inheritance from God, and Jesus promises that the meek are not forgotten (compare [Romans 4:13](#)).

6a. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,

The pangs of physical *hunger and thirst* are reminders that no one survives without food and water. But Jesus is describing those who are consumed by their pursuit of righteousness, by the pursuit of justice. Theirs is not a whim or short-term goal, but a daily obsession.

We often understand the word *righteousness* more narrowly than the original text intends, because of its religious over-

tones. Righteousness, at its base, is knowing and doing the right thing. Since this knowledge comes only from the Lord, it is a religious word. But its applications apply to every corner of human existence. Righteousness is for living in every facet of one's life.

Righteousness is tightly paired with judgment, what we often refer to today as justice. Justice is the desire to see the right thing done, especially for others who cannot ensure that they are treated correctly. While justice can mean punishing a wrongdoer, it is also a proactive stance. Righteousness and justice do not wait for something to go wrong so that it can be made right. Injustice should be prevented as often as possible.

These terms and concepts are ultimately defined by God ([Job 29:14](#); [Psalms 33:5](#); [36:6](#); [50:6](#)). A human perspective might allow the exploitation of the poor in order to gain riches or simply to take care of oneself before thinking of others' needs ([Isaiah 5:7](#)). From God's perspective, however, the poor should be protected and assisted, not victimized and oppressed ([Job 37:23](#); [Psalm 103:6](#)).

6b. for they will be filled.

Jesus' promise is that spiritual hunger and thirst will be satisfied in the kingdom of Heaven (compare and contrast the beatitude on hunger in [Luke 6:21](#)). A trusting relationship with the Lord is the

only antidote for those who yearn for spiritual food and drink (Psalm 107:9). The kingdom of Heaven is the place where everyone may eat without need of purchasing food (Isaiah 55:1, 2; see also Revelation 22:17). The kingdom of Heaven that Jesus represents fulfills all our godly desires for both personal righteousness and community justice (Isaiah 9:7; 11:4).

B. On the Hopeful (vv. 7-12)

7a. Blessed are the merciful,

The second set of four beatitudes offers promises to people who live in godly ways. Some people seem always to “err on the side of mercy.” They give of themselves and their possessions selflessly. They truly feel the pain of their friends and family who are suffering and seek to bring comfort to those situations.

What Do You Think?

What safeguards can we adopt to avoid making things worse while extending mercy?

Digging Deeper

Give examples, without mentioning names, of failure to do so.

7b. for they will be shown mercy.

Jesus promises the merciful the *mercy* of God himself. God’s deep desire to be merciful will rest on them as they show mercy themselves and wait for him (Isa-

iah 30:18). Jews of the first century view mercy as a primary attribute of the Lord, repeated throughout their Scriptures (2 Samuel 24:14; Nehemiah 9:31; Psalm 25:6; etc.). But God’s mercy is not blind. Elsewhere, Jesus teaches that unmerciful, unforgiving people should not expect mercy or forgiveness from the Lord (Matthew 6:14, 15; 18:23-35; see also James 2:13).

8a. Blessed are the pure in heart,

The group addressed by the sixth beatitude is most perplexing. Who deserves to be identified as *pure in heart*? The Bible often speaks of evil in the human heart in a universal manner (see Genesis 8:21; Ecclesiastes 8:11; Romans 3:10), a trait that excludes purity in the same heart. Yet elsewhere the pure in heart meet God (Psalm 24:3, 4).

Jesus is not addressing a select group of people who are without sin, for no one in his audience or elsewhere meets that standard. The *heart* for Jesus’ hearers is more than the seat of emotions such as love or hate. It is, rather, the source of the human will or motives. While no one is without sin, some habitually act with pure motives. For children, it is the parent who always makes decisions for the best interests of the family. For citizens, it is the official who puts the interests of the people being served above personal benefits. For church members, it is the

leader who prioritizes the good of the church even if it may be painful or costly for that leader. Their primary motivation is to please God. Such are the pure in heart.

What Do You Think?

In what ways can a Christian be an example of one having a pure heart while not coming across as “holier than thou”?

Digging Deeper

Fine-tune your conclusion by considering the Bible’s numerous “conscience” passages (example: [1 Corinthians 10:23-32](#)).

8b. for they will see God.

This promise may also seem unusual, but in the ancient world to be allowed to see the monarch is an enormous privilege (see [Esther 4:11](#)). For Jesus, the pure-hearted will gain this great blessing

Chronological Outline of Selected Events in Matthew	
EARLY PERIOD	4:00
Genealogy (1:1-17)	
The Birth of Jesus (1:18-2:12)	
The Flight to Egypt and Return to Nazareth (2:13-23)	
BEGINNING OF JESUS' MINISTRY	4:26
Jesus Begins (2:1-12)	
The Baptism of Jesus (3:13-17)	
The Temptation (3:1-13)	
THE GALILEAN MINISTRY	4:27
The Calling of Peter and Andrew (4:18-22)	
Teaching and Miracles in Capernaum (8:14-17)	
The Call of Matthew (9:9-13)	
Teaching and Healing the Multitudes (12:1-21)	4:28
The Sermon on the Mount (5:1-10:1)	
Agony in Gethsemane (26:39-45)	
The Great Sermon on Parables (13:1-52)	
Miracles of Compassion (9:10-13)	4:29
The Twelve Apostles named (10:1-4)	
The Feeding of 5,000 (14:13-21)	
Walking on Water (14:22-33)	
Peter's Great Confession (16:13-20)	
The Transfiguration (17:1-8)	
JOURNEY TO JUDEA	4:30
Jesus in Bethany (21:1-11)	
The Rich Young Ruler (23:17-23)	
The Wind Blows at Jericho (21:20-24)	
THE FINAL DAYS	
The Triumphal Entry (21:1-11)	
The Day of Cleansing (21:12-17)	
Prediction of the Temple's Destruction (24:1-14)	
The Parable of the Ten Virgins (25:1-13)	
The Passover Meal and the Lord's Supper (26:17-29)	
Agony in the Garden (26:30-46)	
The Arrest and Trial of Jesus (26:47-27:26)	
The Death of Jesus (27:27-56)	
The Resurrection (28:1-10)	
The Great Commission (28:16-20)	

Visual for Lesson 5

Keep this chart posted throughout the study of Unit 2 to establish a chronological perspective.

([Psalm 42:2](#); [Hebrews 12:14](#); [Revelation 22:4](#)). They will experience intimate fellowship with the Lord himself; they will ascend his holy hill and enjoy his presence ([Psalm 24:3, 4](#)).

POWER IN PRAISE

On the night of March 31, 2014, 9-year-old Willie Myrick was playing in his driveway in Atlanta. A would-be kidnapper approached Willie and lured him until he was close enough to be forced into the car.

For three hours, the assailant drove the boy away from his home to an uncertain fate. Willie Myrick did not respond with a struggle or with tears. Instead, he began to sing his favorite gospel song, “Every Praise,” repeatedly. The song visibly enraged the driver. “He was cursing at me, telling me to shut up,” Willie told a reporter later. Finally, the kidnapper kicked the boy out of the car. Obviously shaken but not hurt, Willie ran to a nearby house and called his godmother.

Willie’s pure heart motivated him to sing his favorite song in the face of danger, and he was delivered by God from his trial. How is the purity of your heart affecting your experience of God?

—J. E.

9a. Blessed are the peacemakers,

The seventh beatitude can call to mind diplomats brokering treaties between nations to avoid war. Such people may deserve a blessing, but they are not the target group for Jesus here. Instead he addresses those *peacemakers* in his audience who are bold to resolve conflicts, restore relationships, and avoid strife ([Romans 12:18](#); [James 3:18](#)).

Biblical peace is not simply an absence of violence. Rather, it is a full experience of well-being and harmony (compare [Isaiah 26:3](#); [John 14:27](#); [Philippians 4:7](#)). The greatest need for peace is in our relationship with the Lord, what Paul

refers to as “reconciliation” ([2 Corinthians 5:18–20](#)). Peacemakers in the kingdom of God bring about reconciliation between people and God and then between individuals as based on the shared restored relationship with the Lord ([Ephesians 2:16](#)).

9b. for they will be called children of God.

The promise for peacemakers to be called the *children of God* is not just as a label but as a reality ([1 John 3:1](#)). To be a child of God makes us heirs of his riches ([Romans 8:17](#)). Third-party reconciliation work can be thankless and frustrating. Jesus promises hope to such workers, namely full inclusion in God’s family.

10a. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,

The eighth beatitude is the other side of the coin of the seventh, just considered. Those who bring peace are not always honored and encouraged. Here, those who stand for God’s *righteousness* (see comments on [Matthew 5:6](#), above) are seeking peace, but there are many for whom injustice and unrighteousness have benefits. These are not exclusively criminals but, instead, anyone who is comfortable living in the midst of injustice and sinful behavior. Challenging this status quo will receive a strong response. Rather than heeding the message and repenting, the guilty will target the mes-

sengers for punishment (1 Peter 3:14).

10b. for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

The promise for the persecuted comes back to the first beatitude. As with spiritual poverty, the ones persecuted for righteousness will receive *the kingdom of heaven*. Their rewards are not found in the world of sin, injustice, and corruption, but in the realm of the Lord, the sphere where God reigns as king. He will be their protector and rewarder (Genesis 15:1; Psalm 12:7, 8; Nahum 1:7).

11. “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.

Jesus expands the simple description of persecution from verse 10 to include reviling and having *all kinds of evil* said *falsely* (1 Peter 4:14). The corresponding beatitude in the third Gospel includes “when people hate you” (Luke 6:22). This further strengthens the magnitude of *evil* that is directed at believers. The reason for persecution is quite focused: *because of me*. Followers of Jesus are hated and persecuted for no more complicated reason than that they are followers of Jesus (John 15:21; Acts 5:41). Even today, those who stand for Jesus and his teachings are hatefully labeled as religious bigots or dismissed as hopelessly naïve.

12. Rejoice and be glad, because

great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

Jesus has a twofold promise for his persecuted followers. First, they have a *great ... reward in heaven*. This is sometimes called the “great reversal,” that the oppressed righteous in this life will be blessed and honored in the next life (compare Luke 16:19–31).

But there is more at stake than reward in the hereafter. Jesus is ushering in the kingdom of Heaven in his lifetime (Matthew 4:17). Persecuted saints do not simply suffer now for a reward later. Despite real or threatened persecution, the Christ-following life is rich and satisfying, a reward in and of itself (2 Corinthians 6:10; 12:10; Colossians 1:24).

Second, Jesus promises that those who suffer as his disciples join an august group that has gone before: the *persecuted ... prophets* (2 Chronicles 36:16; Matthew 23:31, 37). This is the “cloud of witnesses” spoken of in Hebrews 12:1, the honored body of God’s servants. Standing for righteousness and justice is a prophetic voice not subject to human approval. It is to stand and speak for God himself.

IMPRISONED BUT FREE

Palani was known as the village drunk in his Laotian community. But that changed after a visit to his brother, a

minister. Desperate because of his alcoholism, Palani allowed his brother to pray for him. According to his testimony, the change in his life was immediate. Palani returned to his village and began to help a local minister preach and distribute Bibles.

Only days after accepting Christ, a village leader told Palani he could no longer talk about God or distribute Bibles. Days later, police came to Palani's house and arrested him. Having then been shackled, beaten, ruthlessly interrogated, and witnessing fellow prisoners die of malnutrition, Palani surprisingly was released two months later.

Persecuted believers recognize that the freedom Christ gives cannot be taken away. What about you: Are you experiencing freedom in Christ in all circumstances?

—J. E.

Conclusion

A. Blessed Attitudes

Taken together, the Beatitudes describe characteristics of people who are earnestly seeking the Lord. Living the God-honoring life can often go unrecognized and unrewarded by society in general, leaving the godly person to wonder, "Is it worth it?" Jesus promises, "Yes, it is worth it!" and gives hope for God's bless-

ing.

B. Prayer

God of blessings, we take comfort in the promises you give to us through the Beatitudes. As these words of encouragement have strengthened the souls of many Christians through the centuries, may they lift our hearts today. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

C. Thought to Remember

The Christian life is full of blessings we don't always appreciate.

INVOLVEMENT LEARNING

Enhance your lesson with [NIV Bible](#)
Student

Into the Lesson

Distribute 10 index cards to 10 students, one each. On the 10 cards have a single statement each (you prepare) of the following: 1-The founder of Alcoholics Anonymous asked for a shot of whiskey on his deathbed. 2-Tammy “Stand by Your Man” Wynette was married five times. 3-Most tobacco company executives don’t smoke. 4-The inventor of the stop sign, the crosswalk, and one-way streets never learned to drive. 5-Hitler’s grandmother was Jewish. 6-The world’s largest ice cream cone is made by Tiny Dairies. 7-Alexander Graham Bell refused to have a telephone in his study. 8-The most shoplifted book in America is the Bible. 9-Hippopotomonstrosesquippedaliophobia means “fear of long words.” 10-The inventor of basketball is the only basketball coach in University of Kansas history to have a losing record.

Ask each student to read his or her card. Then poll the class as to whether the statement is true or false. After all 10 statements have been read, reveal that all are true.

Alternative. Distribute copies of the “What’s in a Name?” activity from the reproducible page, which you can download. Have students work to match the ironic names with their identities.

After either activity, ask for a definition of the word *irony*. (*Expected response:* the use of words to express something other than and especially the opposite of the literal meaning.)

Lead into Bible study by saying, “The world’s tallest man is nicknamed Tiny. Drug abuse educators meet for a wine and cheese reception. A fitness guru has a heart attack while jogging ... We see examples of irony daily. Jesus told his disciples that their lifestyle would seem just as contradictory to the world.”

Into the Word

Divide the class into three groups, giving each group paper and one of the following Scriptures:

[Matthew 5:1-5](#); [Matthew 5:6-8](#); [Matthew 5:9-12](#). Ask each group to rewrite each of their beatitudes to make it reflect popular wisdom. *Examples:*

Verse [3](#) Blessed are the confident; they conquer the world!

Verse [4](#) Blessed are those who laugh; the whole world laughs with them!

Verse [5](#) Blessed are the aggressive; everyone needs to get out of their way!

Verse [6](#) Blessed are those who like the

- way things are; change is inconvenient!
- Verse 7 Blessed are the tough; they are nobody's fool!
- Verse 8 Blessed are the streetwise; they know how the real world works!
- Verse 9 Blessed are those who keep people riled up; people will let them have their way!
- Verse 10 Blessed are those who go along to get along; life is easier when that happens!
- Verse 11 Blessed are those with good reputations; no one trusts a troublemaker!

Allow the groups to share and explain their rewrites, contrasting their “commonsense” rewrites with Jesus’ counter-intuitive commands.

Alternative. Distribute copies of the “Unexpected Words” activity from the reproducible page. Allow no more than a minute for students to fill in the grid. Discuss why Jesus’ teaching on being blessed is countercultural.

After either activity, lead into the closing activity with these words: “It goes against common thinking to say that a person can be filled when empty, powerful when peaceful, and happy when hurting. But we have known believers who exhibit those characteristics. Let’s recognize someone who displays beatitude attitudes.”

Into Life

Distribute blank thank-you cards. Have students review the list of beatitude attitudes and think of a believer who exhibits one or more of them. Ask each learner to write a note to the person that comes to mind, thanking him or her for being an example of a truly blessed person.