



SESSION #2

LUKE 6:20-26

LEADER GUIDE

BIG IDEA: LIFE UPSIDE DOWN - FOLLOWING CHRIST

Group Time:

- What's your family like? How would someone know they are a(n) _____ (insert last name).
- What do you bring to this group? What have you learned from previous group experiences?
- Opening Comments/Questions about Sermon?

Bible Time: Begin by reading the text out loud as a group.

- **Say:** The rise of opposition, controversy, and questions has set the stage for this sermon by Jesus. There are two large groups of people: those who follow Jesus (the 12 apostles and other disciples) and those who oppose Jesus (Pharisees, Sadducees, Teachers of the Law). He is now specifically addressing those who are following him. They need to know what sort of people to be and what following him entails, especially what separates Christ's disciples from everyone else. The question to think through is "What is the difference between those two groups?"
- **Read:** The next four statements all begin with the word "*Blessed...*"
- **Leader Note:** "Disciples may be assured that the choice to enter into this walk will meet with blessing. God is committed to them and, in the eschaton (the end of the present world), blessing is guaranteed. Thus, the Beatitudes express God's grace and set all the following remarks in such a context" (Bock, 571). It all begins with God's blessing and His grace. We will be blessed through God's grace. Jesus begins his sermon with words of assurance for his disciples. Following Christ begins with God's grace. See Psalm 1:1, Psalm 41:1, Matthew 5:3-11, John 12:13, and James 1:12 for other characteristics God blesses.
- **Ask:** What are conditions that our society values and promises will elicit blessing?
- **Read:** 6:20b–22 "*Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh. Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man.*"
- **Leader Note:**
 - **1st Beatitude:** Poor, because of its strong OT roots, (See Psalm 86:1, Isaiah 61:1) can



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refer to both a socioeconomic status as well as a spiritual condition (See Luke 4:16-20,

7:22, and 14:13, 21). It refers to those who are in desperate need. An interesting **paraphrase** could be, “Blessed are you materially poor, who nonetheless look to God and his promise, for the kingdom of God is yours” (Bock, 575). We are blessed when we put ourselves in a condition to need and rely on God—both physically and spiritually.

- **2nd Beatitude:** The second beatitude is a consequence of the first; hunger is a consequence of being poor. But hungry for what? “The hungry are men who both outwardly and inwardly are painfully deficient in the things essential to life as God meant it to be, and who, since they cannot help themselves, turn to God on the basis of his promise...They are believers who seek help from Jesus because of their own helplessness” (Wallace, 250). Although the physical meaning of hunger is there, the word can also allude to any kind of want, including a spiritual want. This is true in the OT especially. See Isaiah 55:1 and Amos 8:11.
- The interesting thing about this Beatitude is the future tense, as it says, “you will be satisfied.” The hunger is now, but the satisfaction is later. While satisfaction is coming, there will be a period of hunger. We are not satisfied yet. It was an idea familiar to the people who knew the OT. See Isaiah 49:10 and Jeremiah 31:12. There is a reversal from being hungry to being satisfied. A parable that illustrates this is in Luke 16:19-31. A paraphrase of the verse to read at the end: “Blessed are you who sense your lack and depend on God, for God shall accept and reward you in the consummation (at the fulfillment of the world).” Part of following Christ is understanding that we will not truly be satisfied until He comes again. We live in an “already, but not yet” world. It can be hard to truly wait for satisfaction from God rather than turn to the world for a false sense of satisfaction. Jesus is trying to point out that the key to the present circumstances is the security of a personal relationship with God that will bring unbelievable blessing later.
- **3rd Beatitude:** This thought is again based off of OT-thinking. We see it in Psalm 126 and Isaiah 60:20, 61:3. There is weeping now, but their weeping will be turned into laughing. This is second time Luke was emphasized now in the Beatitudes; we saw in the previous verse and here. Now—as in today—for us, there will be hunger and there will be weeping. There is something lacking, but that will change in the future. This is one of the hardest lessons to live by in the Christian faith; to have the ability to trust and realize that our present sufferings will lead to blessings. See James 1:2-4, Philippians 1:12, and 1 Peter



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4:12-14. Paraphrase: “Blessed are you who suffer scorn and pain as you identify with God and depend on him, for you shall be fully welcomed by him at his table and shall rejoice” (Bock, 577).

- **4th Beatitude:** The first three Beatitudes described the condition of the person, the fourth describes the response they could receive. This is a Beatitude that Jesus has exemplified and will exemplify for his disciples. See Luke 6:2, 6:11. He is not describing to them a fate that he has not already experienced himself. These are the responses the world could give to a disciple of Christ. The religious convictions were a major part of a person’s identity, so to align with Jesus was to take a public and potentially offensive stand that could lead to hatred, exclusion, which could mean a refusal to do business or eat with a disciple, insults, which basically means verbal abuse and attacks, to “reject your name as evil,” which is basically a summary phrase of total and complete rejection. But the key words are at the end, “because of the Son of Man.” We are not simply blessed when people hate, exclude, and insult us, but when those things happen as a result of our allegiance to Jesus Christ.
- **Say:** These are really tough words of discipleship.
- **Ask:** What are the conditions that Jesus values and promises will elicit blessing? (Perhaps re-visit the conditions that society values, and compare and contrast the two different lists).
 - What do the blessings have in common?
 - Why do you think Jesus considers these conditions as “Blessed?” If they are struggling, pick one Beatitude, like being hungry, and ask why lacking food is a blessing.
- **Read:** 6:23a—“*Rejoice in that day and leap for joy...*”
- **Leader Note:** Here is the first command in the Beatitudes: rejoice. The promise of blessing—no matter how distant—should give enough reason to rejoice and leap for joy. The command is not for the future, but “*in that day*” is a direct reference to the “*now*” we had in the previous verses. The idea is: joy is the appropriate response to suffering. To see examples of joy amidst suffering see Acts 5:41 and 16:25. The distasteful reaction by the world to the actions of Christ’s disciples is evidence of the truth in their lives—just like it was for the prophets. The more displeased the world is, the more likely is it true to Christ.



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- **Ask:** How would the world respond to those situations of hunger, poor, weeping, and hatred? How does Jesus want us to respond?
- **Read:** 6:23b—“... because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their fathers treated the prophets.”
- **Ask:** Why can we respond differently? What rewards will we receive? How are they different from the world’s rewards? (Look back to the list of the world’s rewards).
- **Say:** The next four statements begin with “Woe...”. These four statements parallel the previous four. The rich, full, laughing, and liked contrast with the poor, hungry, weeping, and hated. Think of “Woe” as a warning. It’s like someone grabbing your shirt from behind before you walk into a busy street. It’s a call to carefully evaluate where you are because the conditions of your life are dangerous; you are headed down a dangerous path.
- **Read:** 6:24—26“*But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort. Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep. Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for that is how their fathers treated the false prophets.*”
- **Say:** The main point of these blessings is the reversal between the world and following Christ. It is life upside down. The world values having enough money, having enough food, enjoying laughter, and receiving praise from men—all of which pull us away from God; in essence, because they place such a high value on what this world offers—they value satisfaction, praise, and comfort now. On the other hand, as a disciple of Christ, we value the opposite conditions of being poor, hungry, sad, and excluding now—all of which bring us closer to God; in essence, because we place such a high value on the rewards God offers later, we are not attached to the values of this world. Here is the option before us: “One can have consolation now and lose it, or one may lack now, only to receive abundant blessing later” (Bock, 586).
- **Ask:** Is there a particular “blessing” or “woe” that is difficult to believe and trust in for you?



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Group Time:

- **Pray:** Follow-up on requests. Ask for new ones. Keep a record of these. Pray silently for the person to the left of you, asking God to teach them and help them live out the life Jesus desires for us. Tell the group to pray for that person during the week.

For further study later in the week . . .

- **Leader Note:**
 - **1st Woe:** The rich here is strictly material richness. To have a lot of money is potentially a dangerous path (See 1 Timothy 6:6-10 and Psalm 49). Luke doesn't like the potential results of being rich. See Luke 1:53, 12:15, 18:23-24, and 21:1-4. But at the same time there are rich people in the Bible who are part of God's Kingdom. See many kings of Israel, including David, and the story of Zaccheus in Luke 19:1-10 and Joseph of Arimathea in Mark 15: 42-47. It is not the fact that they are rich, but it is the attitude and disposition of being rich. The "Woe" is for a "misplaced focus that zeroes in on this life and its possessions without concern for God's desire or fellow humans." A **paraphrase** could read: "But woe to you who are focused on things of this world, for you have already received your comfort." It is interesting to note the word "*already*." The rich have "*already*" received their comfort. There is no hope of a future satisfaction or comfort. They have put their faith in the present; they substitute money for God in terms of their satisfaction and rely on their resources rather than God's blessing. But the roles will be reversed at the end. See Luke 16:19-31.
 - **2nd Woe:** In the same way hunger is a condition of being poor, so is being full a condition of wealth. Although the translation is "well fed," the word encompasses more than just food, it includes a fullness of many things (see Luke 16:19). It is the whole idea of having what we want, and having a lot of it, now. See James 5:5. Again, we see the reversal. Those who have now will lack later in eternity. This is prophesied in Isaiah 65:13.



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- **3rd Woe:** This woe seems to contradict the corresponding blessing in v.21b—“*for you will laugh.*” Jesus promises laughter as a blessing, and then proclaims a woe to laughter. However, the laughter here has the connotation of boasting and scoffing. See Lamentations 1:7 for a fuller understanding. It represents an orientation of superiority towards other people. On the other hand, the two words of mourning and weeping emphasize the key idea of pain and suffering that will come. The mourning and weeping is described in Isaiah 65:14, as well as in Revelation 18:15-16.

 - **4th Woe:** A pleasant reaction by the world reveals that something is lacking in the disciples’ life; it reveals something false about the way they were living—just like it did the false prophets. Maybe it’s a desire to please people more than men. Maybe we are taking away from the truth of the Bible. It could be a lot of things. The more you please the world, the less likely it is true to Christ. We should take a step back to evaluate our lives when we are receiving too much praise from all men. Praise is not a bad thing by any means. There were often times when Jesus himself was praised. But if by the world’s standards, our life would be judged and the result was pleasant, then something is not quite right. Read Galatians 1:10 again to ask a bold question. The praise of all men needs to be a signal that something isn’t quite right. It needs to be a signal that leads us to re-evaluate our lifestyle.
- **Ask:** What do these four woes have in common? Why does Jesus warn us about these conditions? What makes them dangerous? (Hint: Think about the words “already” and “now.” The emphasis is on the present comfort and well-being).

 - **Ask:** How are we supposed to view and respond to the conditions of being well-fed, enjoying laughter, and receiving praise when we find ourselves in those places?