



THINKING IT THROUGH

MONDAY

I suggest in this chapter that the Beatitudes may be the first words Jesus spoke to the whole group of disciples. Let's look at the evidence for this.

- Read Matthew 4:18–5:3 and Luke 5:1–6:20. Each of these begins with the call of Peter and Andrew and ends with the first Beatitude. Between these two events, does Jesus say anything to the entire group? Who does Jesus speak with in this interval? Make a list.
- What are the first words in Mark and John addressed to the disciples as a group? What significance do these statements have for discipleship?
- Back to the Beatitudes. Write out your responses to the following questions: If these are the first words Jesus spoke to his disciples, does that lend any special importance to them? If Jesus is describing the kind of people he wants them to become, should that serve as a guide for us as we try to follow Jesus today?

TUESDAY

I call the Beatitudes Christ's instruction manual on discipleship. Finding such a thing in the Bible is not uncommon. In fact, several other instruction manuals addressing different issues and serving different purposes are scattered throughout Scripture. Read the following passages and write down: (1) what the instructions were about, and (2) the circumstances the instructions were given in.

- Exodus 12:1-20
- Skim through Exodus 25:8–31:18
- Leviticus 16:1-34
- Read Proverbs 1:1-6 and consider the possibility that the entire book of Proverbs is really an extended instruction manual.
- Read 1 Timothy 3:14-15. Aren't both of Paul's letters to Timothy simply instructions given by an older preacher to a younger one?

WEDNESDAY

Review the study you did yesterday, then think about the following statements.

- This list identifies traits found in instructions. How are these demonstrated by the instructions you read yesterday?
 1. Good instructions usually add up to "one thing," something you can write on an index card.
 2. Instructions are given by people who know what they're talking about.
 3. Instructions are given to people who have a need to know.
 4. Instructions are called for by the circumstances people find themselves in.
 5. Instructions are often given in lists and are sequenced.
- Now think about the Beatitudes. How do these ideas apply to this group of sayings? Who gives and who receives these instructions? What were the circumstances when the Beatitudes were given? What was their purpose?
- Given what you've just studied, do you think it's reasonable to call the Beatitudes an "instruction manual for discipleship"?

THURSDAY

Bad advice about discipleship has never been in short supply. Not everything people say about discipleship is helpful. Read the following passages and write out the bad advice you find there. How is that advice countered?

- Acts 15:5
- Romans 3:7-8
- 1 Corinthians 1:12; 15:12-14,32
- 2 Corinthians 10:10
- Galatians 6:12-13
- Colossians 2:21
- 1 Timothy 4:1-3
- Jude 4

FRIDAY

Each of the Beatitudes begins with the word “blessed.” (In fact, “beatitude” comes from the Latin word for “blessed.”) Some writers believe this word means “happy.” In a certain sense, it does. But the “blessedness” Jesus speaks of here goes deeper than a good giggle or an emotional high. Read the following passages and think about what this word means.

- Genesis 1:22; 9:1; 24:35-36; 35:9-12
- Exodus 20:11
- Deuteronomy 7:12-15
- Job 5:17
- Psalm 1:1-3
- Matthew 11:2-6; 13:14-17; 16:15-19
- John 20:29
- Ephesians 1:3

What’s the most important lesson you learned this week through your study?