



NAC-USA  
DEVELOPMENT  
INSTITUTE

The woman  
at the well

The  
Beatitudes  
Part 1

The  
Beatitudes  
Part 2

The Holy  
Spirit, then  
and now

# PARTICIPANT GUIDE

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**2015**

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July

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Jesus shifts the focus by naming the One they worship: God. Beyond worship that reflects God’s nature, worship can sometimes reveal truth about ourselves. In the story of the Samaritan woman, Jesus speaks the truth in love to her, revealing things about her life without judgment.

The last thing Jesus says to the woman before the disciples return is “I am He, I’m the Messiah.” How are we reoriented when Jesus reveals Himself to us?

Verses 39-42 tell about how the Samaritan woman brings much of her village to Christ through her testimony. Her belief is new and questioning, as we can see in her remark, “He cannot be the Messiah, can He?” But that doesn’t stop her from testifying, and it doesn’t stop others from coming to believe in Jesus.

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## Bible References

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John 4: 1-42

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## CA Quote

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### True Worshippers

“What is a true worshipper? It is one who says, ‘Oh God, You are the Almighty. You are the God of love. You are the God of wisdom,’ and doing that he prepares himself to listen to God. And after having worshipped God, he listens to God and then he knows who is speaking now. And then he listens to God and he does what God tells him to do...To prepare our soul to listen to God and to prepare our mind to do what He tells us to do and my dear brothers and sisters I tell you that is and will remain the key of blessing: Doing what God tells us to do. Whatever happens, it is our task, our job, to become aware of who God is.”

- Chief Apostle Schneider, Miami FL

### Discussion Questions:

1. *As we read this quote from the Chief Apostle (in the column on the left) and contemplate the discussion between Jesus and the woman at the well, we can gain new perspectives about worship. Worship isn’t about the temple versus the mountain, traditional versus contemporary – it’s about the One we worship. Worship is recognizing who God is, bringing this to expression, and then listening to God so that we might be transformed.*

How does this perspective change your view of worship? How would this understanding change your attitude of worship? How would it change your congregation? If we realized that worship was the purpose of our lives, how would that change you?

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2. **From the video:** *...worship can sometimes reveal truth about ourselves.* Where do you think truth might be necessary in our congregations? Does our “Sunday best” cover up hurt or need that we aren’t seeing?

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## Mission & Vision

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**Our Vision** is to create a church in which people feel at home and, inspired by the Holy Spirit and their love for God, align their lives to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and thus prepare themselves for His return and eternal life.

**Our Mission** is reaching out to all people in order to teach them the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to baptize them with water and the Holy Spirit. Providing soul care and cultivating a warm fellowship in which everyone shall experience the love of God and the joy of serving Him and others.

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## Go Deeper

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### Her witness...

Her witness...is invitational (come and see), not judgmental; it is within the range permitted by her experience; it is honest with its own uncertainty; it is for everyone who will hear. How refreshing. Her witness avoids triumphalism, hawking someone else's conclusions, packaged answers to unasked questions, thinly veiled ultimatums and threats of hell, and assumptions of certainty on theological matters. She does convey, however, her willingness to let her hearers arrive at their own affirmations about Jesus, and they do: "This is indeed the Savior of the world."

- Fred Craddock

### 3. What is hard about being open and vulnerable in church?

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### 4. *The woman's response (leaving her water jug to testify to the Samaritans) to Jesus underscores what it means for members to be part of the Mission and Vision of the church. In a world of individualism, it is so easy to see faith as a personal thing, and we may not feel it is our responsibility to share the Gospel.*

How does the woman's testimony exemplify part of our Mission and Vision (printed in the column)?

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### 5. The woman came to the well to get water, but ending up leaving her jug to testify to her village. When have your priorities shifted or what have you had to leave behind because of an encounter with Christ?

*We can encounter Christ in many ways; in the Bible, in prayer, in the words of a neighbor or brother or sister, in the divine service, in worship, during Holy Communion, His presence with us throughout the day, a new perspective or opportunity...*

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## Bible References

### I am...

**John 6:35** I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.

**John 8:12** I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.

**John 8:58** Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.

**John 10:7** Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.

**John 11:25** I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.

**John 13:19** Now I tell you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe that I am He.

**John 14:6** I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

**John 15:1** I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.

6. Think about the “I am...” statements printed in the guide. What do they mean to you? Do any of them inspire you to action, as Jesus’ “I am” statement inspired the woman?

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7. Think of the disciples at this time – they wanted to get through Samaria as quickly as possible, but the longer they stayed, they saw Jesus’ love at work. Have you ever found yourself in a situation where, once you were able to shed your preconceptions, you saw God at work? What do we have to do in order to allow Jesus to transform us? What preconceptions do you need to shed?

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8. Jesus stayed with the Samaritans for 2 days. How much time do we give Him to teach us? How could you incorporate Christ’s teaching into something you are already doing?

(Example: If you are taking your kids to a sporting event or school event, can you take that time to connect with other parents? Are your attitudes/actions Christian? Has God put you in that moment for a purpose? What is that purpose?)

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9. The theme for this month talks about the Gospel as a model for our lives. How did the people in this story live out the Gospel? The woman at the well? The disciples?

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

The word “mourn” in Greek is the most intensive kind of mourning. It can have three distinct meanings: first, a deep sorrow for the loss of a loved one or an affliction. Second, sorrow over the condition of the world and the feeling of helplessness to do anything about it. And third, grief over our own sinful state. Being poor in spirit means we mourn over our own shortcomings and sin. It is necessary for us to suffer for our sin. This suffering means we recognize that we have disappointed the Lord because He wants us to be like Him. In our mourning we are led to repentance, humbleness, and dependence on the mercy of God. This grief drives me to change because I’ve failed Him again. And again I need His grace and forgiveness. Then when we hear the absolution, the Lord’s peace moves over us and we are comforted.

**Bible References**

All Bible verses in the guide are taken from the New International Version

Matthew 5:1-12

Luke 6:17-26

**Blessed are the poor in spirit...**

The idea of God blessing the humble and restoring the proud can also be found in Proverbs 3:34 and James 4:6.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. “Blessed are” was a form of speech that Jesus’ listeners were familiar with. The Bible is full of people identified as blessed. In the following passages, identify who is blessed and describe the nature of the blessing:

Deuteronomy 33:29

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Psalm 1

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Psalm 32:1-2

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Psalm 41:1-3

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Psalm 84:4-7

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Psalm 94:12-13

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Psalm 112:1-9

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Psalm 119:1-2

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## Going Deeper

### The Sermon on the Mount and the Beatitudes

The setting on a mountain in Galilee evokes primarily the imagery of Mount Sinai, where God's will for Israel was revealed through Moses. "Sitting down" (v.1) and "opening his mouth" (a literal rendering of v.2) seem to be incidental features, but actually suggest Jesus' divine authority. Jesus addresses his teaching primarily to his disciples, but its power is demonstrated in its impact on the crowds, who are astounded at his teaching and follow him (Matthew 7:28).

The first part of the Sermon, 5:3-12, is known as the Beatitudes because of the repeated word "blessed", which indicates God's favor toward certain types of people. There are eight beatitudes; the last two (v. 10 and 11), which concern persecution, are counted as one. Each characteristic or action of those blessed is followed by a promise that carries an eschatological ring. The first and eighth beatitudes anticipate the same reward, the "kingdom of heaven," while "righteousness" is mentioned in the fourth and eighth beatitudes.

Proverbs 3:13-14

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Isaiah 30:18

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How do the Beatitudes of the New Testament compare to these "blessed are" statements from the Old?

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*2. Keep in mind that each of the Beatitudes is comprised of three elements: a pronouncement of blessing, a quality of life, and a reason why the recipient should be considered blessed. The first element is found in the word "blessed", which introduces each beatitude. The second element does not describe different groups of people, but a composite picture of the kind of person who will inherit Christ's kingdom. The third element looks ahead to some aspect of the coming kingdom.*

Using the two Beatitudes in this session, discuss the three different parts.

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3. Do you see a disconnect between the teachings of Jesus within the Beatitudes and current pop culture, or even our own beliefs? Read through this rewriting of the Beatitudes:

- Blessed are the rich, in things and in self-assurance.
- Blessed are those untouched by loss.
- Blessed are the powerful.
- Blessed are those who are "realistic" about righteousness, compromising at every turn.
- Blessed are those who demand justice and want an eye for an eye.
- Blessed are the crafty and opportunistic.
- Blessed are those bold enough to make war.
- Blessed are those who, doing good things, receive many accolades.
- Blessed are those who, following Jesus, are widely praised and adored.

## Going Deeper

### Jesus' teachings and the Old Testament

In Matthew 5:17-20 Jesus affirmed the authority of the principles of the Old Testament. Jesus' statement in 5:17 indicates that he brings the Law and the Prophets of the Old Testament to their desired end. His teaching does not abolish the Old Testament, as some of his opponents charged. Rather, his teaching transcends the Old Testament and brings it to its intended completion. Jesus illustrated in 5:21-48 how to apply the Old Testament to the new situations his coming has introduced by making new applications of the Old Testament.

How do these play out in our world today? Now read through the Beatitudes in Matthew 5. At a first glance, what are the contrasts?

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## CA Thoughts

### Forgiveness

Obtaining forgiveness is conditional on preparatory work.

#### We must in fact:

- Conduct an intensive examination of ourselves and become aware of our transgressions. Without this "obligation", who among us would do it spontaneously and regularly?

- Confess our sins before God, which means to recognize not only our sins, but also our guilt. Confession is a great way to counteract false excuses that we invent ourselves;

- Repent, therefore clearly express our resolution to better ourselves;

- Commit ourselves without delay in the reconciliation process with our neighbor.

4. *Mourning has three distinct meanings, the third, having grief over our own sinful state.* Have you ever thought about mourning over your sinful state? What would cause your grief? Where does the comfort come from?

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5. Think about the comments from the Chief Apostle on forgiveness in the column. Do you think we always give the necessary weight to the forgiveness of our sins? What could you do to make this "preparatory work" part of your week? How do these thoughts connect with the Beatitude about mourning?

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receive mercy from God should have mercy on others. We should also suffer together and empathize with the pains and sufferings of others.

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

The pure in heart are free from evil desires and purposes. They exclude all uncleanness from their lives which enables them to understand the motives and actions of God. The pure in heart can see God’s presence in their lives now, and in the future they’ll see Him face to face.

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

The term ‘peacemaker’ includes all who make peace between men, whether as individuals or as communities. They will be called God’s children because God is a God of peace.

***Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.***

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

Those who suffer because of their loyalty to the kingdom of heaven are blessed by being bound more closely to that kingdom for which they suffer. Choosing the way of a disciple of Christ is not easy. It is a struggle with yourself. Jesus calls us to a life of self-sacrifice and living outside the norm of culture. He asked the rich young man to do the same. The man was seeking righteousness, but he couldn’t make the choice to go down the path of discipleship. Those who choose the path, who model their lives after these Beatitudes, will see the kingdom of heaven, both today and in the future.

**Bible References**

All Bible verses in the guide are taken from the New International Version

Matthew 5:1-12

Luke 6:17-26

**Discussion Questions:**

1. The Beatitudes in focus tonight refer to the meek, hungry, thirsty, merciful, pure in heart, peacemakers and the persecuted. Which one of these conditions do you relate to the most right now? Share your connection to the one you chose and what it means to you.

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## NAC Catechism

### 4.6 God's blessing (excerpt)

Blessing is synonymous with God's saving and healing activity upon both mankind and the creation. The conviction that man's entire existence is dependent on God's blessing points to an image of mankind that derives from belief in God as the almighty Creator and Sustainer of all creation. By grasping the gifts of God in faith and allowing the Lord to lead them, human beings can partake in blessing.

### 4.6.2 God's blessing in the old covenant (excerpt)

In the old covenant, the blessing of God manifested itself primarily in the daily life directly experienced by the people, and encompassed all areas of life, for example victory in battles against enemies, longevity, wealth, numerous descendants, and fertile soil. Even in the old covenant, however, blessing already had a dimension which surpassed earthly welfare, as becomes clear in God's promise to Abraham: "I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing."

### 4.6.3 God's blessing in the new covenant (excerpt)

Starting in the new covenant, divine blessing was imparted through Jesus Christ. The Lord blessed through His word, through His miracles, and through His conduct. His ultimate blessing was given when he offered up His sinless life on the cross. Ephesians 1:3 "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ." Believers know that being chosen in Jesus Christ incorporates the calling to inherit the blessing. They demonstrate their thankfulness for God's blessing through a life defined by the fear of God, obedience of faith, and selflessness.

- Discuss how our life as a Christian can turn into a list of to-do's or check-box items. How does a "check-box" approach differ from Jesus' wish for His followers?

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- Describe a time when you've found yourself in the state of one of the Beatitudes. Did you experience the reward listed, or are you still waiting for it?

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- The reasons given for every "blessed" condition are associated with a special fellowship with God (they are filled, shown mercy, see God, called children of God, theirs is the kingdom of God). Discuss how it feels to have such great promises of fellowship with God. These are promises of the future, but describe how you can feel the effects of these promises already today.

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- The Apostle said in the video that *"choosing the way of a disciple of Christ is not easy. It is a struggle with yourself. Jesus calls us to self-sacrifice and to live outside the norm of culture."*

How have you experienced this struggle? Discuss how living to the standard of the Beatitudes that Christ gave is countercultural.

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When you build a house, you don't use the same workers for building the foundation as you would for the electrical work. Every builder of the church is different, but also necessary. God established a plan for the church, and through the methods of the Holy Spirit, He leads us to greater insight. The better question, then, is not whether things were right or wrong in the past, but rather, "Am I prepared to allow myself to be led further by the Holy Spirit?"

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## Bible References

John 2:19-22

John 20:9

John 16:1-15

Mark 8:22-26

## Discussion Questions:

1. How do you experience the power of the Holy Spirit in your life?

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2. The Chief Apostle said to "*trust in the power of the Holy Spirit.*" Discuss what this means to you. How have you applied this to your life since you heard it on Pentecost?

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3. Share some thoughts on how the power of the Holy Spirit can strengthen the fellowship in the congregation.

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4. It is interesting how Jesus explained to His disciples the upcoming "work of the Holy Spirit". Please read John 16: 1-15 and discuss.

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5. Can you share some **personal** examples of "inner growth" over the past years, inspired and led by the Holy Spirit?

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## NAC Catechism

### 1.3 Present-day revelations of the Holy Spirit (excerpts)

Fundamental evidence that the Holy Spirit would, after Jesus' return to His Father, reveal new things, and thus disclose that which had been previously hidden, can be found in John 16: 12-14. With these words, Jesus Christ promised His Apostles that they would receive further explanations about God's nature and plan of salvation through the Holy Spirit.

### 3.5.2 The Holy Spirit as a power – the gift of the Holy Spirit (excerpt)

In the course of salvation history, the Spirit of God manifests Himself as the power which takes hold of human beings and enables them to become instruments of God. This power can influence, fill and even renew a human being [Titus 3:5] It is important to differentiate between the Holy Spirit as a gift of God and the Holy Spirit as a person of the Godhead. The gift of the Holy Spirit is imparted by God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

#### 3.5.4.2 The Spirit of truth

Jesus Christ also described the Holy Spirit as the "Spirit of truth" [John 15:26]. This Spirit makes clear what is pleasing to God and what is contrary to His will: "And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" [John 16:8]. The Holy Spirit clearly distinguishes between truth and falsehood [Acts 13: 9-10].

Everything the Spirit of truth reveals is closely linked to Christ's nature and work. Thus He testifies of the sovereignty of the Son of God [1 Corinthians 12:3]

6. What new insights and spiritual developments have you noticed in **the church** over the past years?

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**7. NAC Catechism excerpt:** *"The revealed side of the church of Christ, like the Man Jesus, shares in the general history of mankind. In contrast to Him, however, the human beings at work within the church are subject to sin. Hence the errors, aberrations, and lapses inherent in mankind are also to be found in the church. However, the deficiencies of the visible church can neither damage nor destroy the invisible and perfect church, namely the church to which the true believers and elect belong. This interconnection and simultaneous distinction between the visible and invisible church can only be grasped in faith."*

After reading this, we can see how the weight of imperfection and their own humanness must weigh on our ministers and leaders as they try to lead the church of Christ. When we see glimpses of these imperfections in our leaders and in our brothers and sisters, it can lead us to judge and complain. What would happen if, instead of complaining, we prayed instead? We can pray for our leadership and congregations in a number of ways: for spiritual protection, for protection from moral failure, for preaching the Word of God, for their families, for encouragement, for physical strength, for courage, for discernment, for wisdom in leadership.

Take a moment and either as a group, or in silence individually, pray for the leadership of our church. Discuss this perspective.

8. What is required from us to allow ourselves to be led onward and to accept what the Spirit reveals to us as truth?

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