

**Divine Conspiracy Book Study**  
Reflection/Discussion Questions – July 6, 2009

**Chapter Four – Who is Really Well-Off? -- The Beatitudes**

*Pretty Poison?*

1. What is the misunderstanding Willard speaks of when approaching the Beatitudes? What are the unfortunate side effects of this erroneous understanding? (p.99)

*Teaching from the Context*

2. Jesus' teaching in the Beatitudes is a clarification or development of his primary theme: the availability of the kingdom of the heavens. Who was in this audience (Mt 4:24) and how was this availability "good news" to them? (p. 100)

*Staying in Charge*

3. On p.101-103, the case is made that mistranslations of the Beatitudes are attractive because they suit our desire to achieve or even engineer our way into the kingdom. In this view, we view meekness, mercifulness, and purity of heart as qualities to attain, *then* we'll be blessed. Who is actually blessed? Hint: Mt 4:24. Who might be the equivalent for today? (the unemployed, the single parent, the neglected elderly, etc?)

*Dealing with the Soul in Depth*

*How to Make a Neighbor*

4. Jesus tied his teaching to concrete events that occurred in the average hearer's life (using parable, occasions, and specific cases). If Jesus was telling that story to us today, he would have told "us about the 'good Iraqi,' 'good Communist,' 'good Muslim,' and so on." Does this change the impact of the parable for you? What might it tell you about your heart?

*The Beatitudes as Kingdom Proclamation*

5. Read the Beatitudes below with explanations in italics from *The Divine Conspiracy* (pp. 100, 116-19). Into what deplorable categories, if any, do you fit?

- v 3) Blessed are the poor in spirit [*“the spiritual zeroes—the spiritually bankrupt, deprived and deficient, the spiritual beggars, those without a wisp of ‘religion’”*]
- v 4) Blessed are those who mourn [*“the weeping ones”*], for they will be comforted.
- v 5) Blessed are the meek [*“the shy ones, the intimidated, the mild, the unassertive”*], for they will inherit the earth.
- v 6) Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness [*“who burn with desire for things to be made right...in themselves” or in others*], for they will be filled.
- v 7) Blessed are the merciful [*those who are “taken advantage of”*], for they will receive mercy.
- v 8) Blessed are the pure in heart [*those “for whom nothing is good enough, not even themselves”*], for they will see God.
- v 9) Blessed are the peacemakers [*the ones “in the middle” where “neither side trusts you”*], for they will be called children of God.
- v 10) Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, [*those who stand up “for what is right”*], for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- v 11) Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account [*you’ve “gone off” your “rocker and taken up with that Jesus”*].<sup>1</sup>

#### *Beatitude Under the Person Ministry of Jesus*

6. How does Willard’s interpretation of the Beatitudes (that they are about the availability of the kingdom of the heavens to the humanly hopeless) agree with other statements Jesus made? (p. 120)
  - Luke 4:18-19
  - Matt 11:4-6
  
7. Who are the unfortunate people around you? (*A Silly Side of Salvation?* p. 122). Who are the “seriously” crushed ones? (*And the More Serious Side* p. 123). How might you make the kingdom of God available to them?

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<sup>1</sup> Jan Johnson, and Keith Matthews, *Dallas Willard's Study Guide to the Divine Conspiracy* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001), 44-45.