



## WE'RE WAITING FOR YOU!

### KEY TERMS

**Free will:** The power, rooted in reason and intellect, to act or not to act. Human freedom is a force for growth and maturity in truth and goodness; it attains its perfection when directed toward God.

**Beatitude:** Condition or statement of blessedness and spiritual happiness. The beatitudes respond to the natural desire for happiness.

### WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO

Ask to share some choices they have made throughout their day and why they made those choices. For example:

Speaker: Why did you choose to wear that outfit? Teen: Because I thought it looked good.

Speaker: Why did you want it to look good?

Teen: Because I am more confident and happier when I look good?

*The purpose of this questioning is to get to the bottom of why we do what we do. We choose to do what we think will make us happy.*

God graces us with the desire to seek happiness because, ultimately, He is the only one who can make our happiness complete. "God has placed [happiness] in the human heart in order to draw [us] to the one who alone can fulfill it."

*John 15:11, CCC 33, 1718*

The spiritual happiness that God has given us as a motivation to pursue Him is called beatitude. You may have heard the word beatitude before in relation to one of the most famous scripture passages in the Bible.

In Matthew 5:1-12, the start of a section known as the *Sermon on the Mount*, Jesus shares with His followers the recipe for true happiness in what is called the Beatitudes.

It is a series of dispositions and their affiliated promises that teach us the way to eternal happiness. Responding to the Beatitudes leads us to beatitude or spiritual happiness.

*read Matthew 5:1-12.* As you can see, the Beatitudes are different than what the world tells us will make us happy. The world instructs us to seek material wealth while Jesus instructs us to be "poor in spirit." Modern culture encourages us to eat fast food, while Jesus encourages us to "hunger and thirst for righteousness." Society tells us to participate in all of the pleasures that come our way and Jesus tells us to be "pure in heart."

Notice that the happiness of the world is self-focused, temporal, and fleeting, while the actions given to us by Jesus are all other-oriented and end in both earthly and eternal happiness.

### HAPPINESS

God is the complete source and summit of our happiness. In other words, there is nothing in this world that can bring us true and unmitigated happiness but God. And there is nothing in this world or beyond it that is the height of happiness but God.

When we experience happiness, we are experiencing something of God. All happiness points back to God. For example, the happiness found in friendship, love, and

family points back to the communion of persons found in the life of the Trinity. On the other hand, we may think that some sins, like cheating on a test or excessive partying, make us happy while it is only a distortion of happiness.

CCC 33

## FREEDOM

Not all of us pursue the Beatitudes. Since God is love, He does not force us to love Him or to follow His ways. He gives us the responsibility of being “our own counsel” so that we can freely seek Him and gain perfection.

*Genesis 3:4-5, CCC 1730*

The harsh reality is that with free will sometimes we follow Jesus and sometimes we don't. The world sees freedom as doing whatever we want, whenever we want, with whomever we want, however we want. This leads to hostility, injury, abuse, and, ultimately, to slavery of self-centered desires.

A girl may start off with choosing to have an occasional drink at a party because other people are doing it and she doesn't want to feel left out. An “occasional drink” at an “occasional party” turns into getting drunk on a weekly basis; and when she's drunk, she says mean things to her friends and does things that she would never do if she were sober. Now she thinks that she can't have fun or be fun without alcohol. She does not have control over her drinking, it has control over her, thus making her a slave to her self-centered desires.

But when we choose to live for Christ we are truly set free. And it's not only us who benefit from this pursuit of freedom but also those around us, because when we choose rightly, our love for God looks outwardly towards others. What would the world look like if we all freely chose to respond to God's love by living out the Beatitudes?

*Galatians 5:1, John 8:32*

## OUR RESPONSE TO GOD'S PLAN

It can be tough to be a disciple of Jesus, especially when so many around us are choosing to either make up their own laws or be completely lawless altogether. Many people look at the Church and say that there are too many rules and regulations, but, as Catholics, we know that there is true happiness in following God.

Through our experiences and encounters with Jesus, we know that He is real and that He lives in us. We are, therefore, called to be disciples and make decisions that not only lead us closer to Christ, but that can also be a path for others to follow as well.

Over the next four weeks, we are going to delve further into what it means to respond wholeheartedly to God's pursuit of us and our pursuit of God, especially through knowledge of the Ten Commandments, Church authority, and forming our own conscience.