

Understanding Restorative Justice through the Beatitudes

Blessed are...	RJ Dimension	Guided Dialogue
the poor in spirit	VULNERABILITY	Initial condition of harming and harmed parties
those who mourn	REMORSE/IMPACT	
the meek	QUIET STRENGTH	Presence and priority of facilitators
those who hunger for justice	RIGHT-MAKING	
the merciful	EMPATHY	Eventual experience of harming and harmed parties
the pure in heart	HEART-ZONE	
the peacemakers	FACILITATIVE	Overall context of restorative facilitation work in society
the persecuted	ALTERNATIVE	

“Understanding Restorative Justice Dialogue through the Beatitudes”

By Ted Lewis, Restorative Church Project, for Calvin Peacemakers event on Jan. 31, 2022

The Eight Beatitudes in Matthew 5 can be read as being either...

DESCRIPTIVE

They speak to a condition
people find themselves in

PRESCRIPTIVE

They speak to a posture
people can choose into

In other words, people are blessed for either the way they are or blessed for the choices they make. What unifies both of them is that in God's kingdom, there are standard character qualities that really matter, ones which center people more in the setting of the kingdom.

The Beatitudes, therefore, have a way of leveling all people, especially in societies that try to stratify people according to power and status. In God's social economy, the humble are exalted and those who exalt themselves (with the help of social structures) are humbled.

This opens the door to dignify those who lack outward power but in fact hold the key to God's inward power. At the same time it empowers those who may hold some degree of outward power to exchange that for new qualities that outwardly may seem disempowering, but in truth, strengthen a person's place and activity in God's kingdom realm.

In restorative justice dialogue, this framework first dignifies harming and harmed people whose lives have been jolted by a crime or harm. It also empowers the peacemaking facilitator to enter into zones of solidarity with those who have offended or who are victimized, and in this servanthood-solidarity, others are empowered to heal from their harms and participate in the resolution of disruptive situations.

Blessed are those who fully participate in healing and restoration!