

## Go in peace [5 minutes]

Conclude by reading these words aloud.

*Go from this place trusting that as you discover your identity as one “in whom Christ dwells,”*

*you will be empowered to live as a Beatitude: a walking, talking blessing to the world.*

## For the Coming week

Read chapter 4, “Learning to Live Without Anger.”

The soul-training practice for the week will be keeping a Sabbath, so you will need to read the chapter early in the week and make necessary adjustments to your calendar.

# The Good and Beautiful LIFE

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## The Grand Invitation

### WELCOME – Breaking the ice

### OPENING TO GOD – Opening to God (5 minutes)

Read *Colossians 3:1-17* together

### 5 minutes of silence

#### Prayer to end the silence

At the end of the silence you may offer the following prayer or a prayer of your own.

*O Lord, with your preaching and with your life, you proclaimed that we should change the way we have been thinking, because through you a life of intimacy and interaction with God is now possible. May your Spirit lead us during this time so that we can live such lives. Amen.*

### soul training [10 minutes]

If you are in a group of six or more people, divide into small groups of three or four. Use the questions below to help you process your experience of the soul shaping exercise of hospitality.

1. Were you able to practice any of the suggestions for hospitality this week? If so, which ones.
2. What did you learn about God’s presence in the lives of those who are different than you?
3. What did you learn about God or yourself through the exercises?
4. Discuss the soul-shaping exercises from previous chapters that you continue to practice. Do you notice any long term effect from these practices?

## Engaging the Chapter [25 minutes]

The beatitudes are not prescriptions for blessedness but descriptions of the kinds of people who are invited into the kingdom of God.

Read through the following questions before you begin your discussion. Note any questions you especially want to discuss. Depending on your group size and the conversation, you may not have time to discuss all of these questions.

1. The author opened the chapter with a beautiful story of a young man named Kevin and the testimony he shared.  
What was your reaction to the story of Kevin's testimony?
2. Take a few moments to review the section "Jesus' Narrative: The Beatitudes Are Invitations of Inclusion" including the author's interpretation of each of the Beatitudes (pp. 55-62). Compare and contrast the author's interpretation with what you have been taught about the Beatitudes.
3. In discussing Luke 6:20-26, the author writes, "Jesus' stern warning is born of love. He knows that we try to find solace in our wealth and fulfillment in our bellies. And we confuse fleeting pleasure with joy. When all is well in the kingdom of this world we are tempted to think we have no need of the Kingdom of God" (p. 63). Can you identify times when success led you away from or difficulties that drew you closer to God? If you are comfortable, discuss these with the group.
4. Near the end of the chapter, the author reflects, "When I heard Kevin speak that day I was watching a living beatitude. His condition seemed unblessable in the kingdom of this world. According to society's values he has nothing going for him. He is marginalized, outcast, ostracized and neglected. No one would choose his situation. And yet, he is welcomed, esteemed and valued in God's Kingdom, which is why he smiled" (pp. 64-65). Have you known someone who is a "living beatitude"? If so, describe this person to your small group.

## Engaging the word

### —experiencing transformation [30 minutes]

Read the following:

*We may not think of people being "inside" or "outside" the kingdom of God as Jesus' audience did, but we probably think of people being blessed and cursed because of their abilities and external circumstances. To help us relate to Jesus' message, we are going to spend a few minutes brainstorming two lists: those who are "blessed" in our world's eyes, and those who are "cursed" in our world's eyes.*

Make two separate lists—"Blessed" and "Cursed"—using a white board or paper. After you have created them, ask:

How would these two groups feel about Jesus' Beatitudes?

As part of the discussion, have someone in your group read aloud Luke 6:20-26.

Ask: Looking at our list of those who are "blessed" in our world's eyes, is Jesus' warning appropriate for them? Why or why not?

Following that discussion, ask: How can we, as followers of Jesus, live out the message of invitation with people on both lists?

Finish the experience by listening to an appropriate CD

Give the group a few minutes to respond to the message of the song.