

MARCH 2025

# BE GROUPS

**GROUP GUIDE**

“Becoming a *beatitudes* people”

[WWW.FORESTBROOK.CA/GROUPS](http://WWW.FORESTBROOK.CA/GROUPS)

## BE GROUPS

### — *How to Use this Guide:*

The Group Guide is divided into four sessions; **Heart, Feet, Eat, Dream**. Each session corresponds with a video featuring leading voices from our Canadian context who explore the concept of *Becoming a Beatitudes People and God's heart of Justice*. Start at the beginning and work your way through!

We designed this guide for Be Group Leaders and members to follow along with, both during your time together and on your own. Use it on your phone, tablet or laptop, or print off the printable version if you prefer.

Each session includes a collection of quotes, related Scripture and ideas to jump off from. This is a guide, not a script, so feel free to add and edit however it fits your Be Group best. Designate one leader to facilitate throughout or select someone new for each session. The guide flows in a suggested outline, beginning with opening questions to 'get the juices' flowing and share what you're learning as you go.

The four videos will be shared with Group Leaders via email (accessible by YouTube link), and posted on [online](#). **Discussion questions are embedded in each video**, with prompts to pause and respond intermittently.

Each session invites your group to read through the provided Scripture out loud, together. Lastly, there is a **practice to participate in as a group**, as well as something to reflect on individually in between sessions.

*(Heads up: in Session 3 - Eat - your group is invited to share a meal together, so you'll want to plan ahead. Keep it simple; maybe soup and bread, pizza delivery, or a good 'ol potluck!)*

# — *Voices of Hope*

PRACTITIONERS, PROPHETS & DREAMERS LEADING THE CONVERSATION.



## **Stephanie Douglas-Bowman**

Canon Stephanie worked as a missionary overseas, before serving as a Priest in the Anglican Church. She's currently with St. Paul's on the Hill in Pickering. St. Paul's operates the Community Food Bank, serving 3000+ individuals in the Pickering and Ajax areas each month.

## **Joy Wakefield**

A lawyer by trade, originally from the GTA but living and working in Thunder Bay, Joy has worked for Legal Aid Ontario, alongside local Tribal Councils for justice access, and in a variety of advocacy roles.



## **Greg Paul**

A longtime friend of Forest Brook and a trusted voice, Greg is the (soon to be retired) founder and director of Sanctuary Ministries of Toronto and the pastor of the Sanctuary community.

## **Marla Walters**

A familiar face around Forest Brook, Marla is the Executive Director for Christian Faith Outreach Center, Doors of Compassion serving the Ajax community in shelter work and community housing.



## **Lorraine Lam**

Lorraine moved to Canada with her mother when she was young, and grew up in the Toronto area. She has been working with people who are unhoused for the last 15 years in various roles, and is currently supporting those incarcerated and recently released from prison.

# *Session One: Heart*

## — *Introduction*



We learn through Scripture that justice is deeply tied to God's character. This session will look at the heart of God and the idea of embodied justice.

*“We come to know God as we do what pleases God. Knowing God is something we do with our minds, but it is also something we do with the whole of our bodies. It is not simply a set of ideas and concepts. It is also a fundamental orientation to God wherein knowledge emerges from and is embedded in our actions of justice, peace, friendship and fairness. As we engage in actions aimed at fairness, social justice and faithful change we are living into something of what it means to know God. Knowing things about God and knowing God are thus seen to be inextricably interlinked. We need both.”*

***John Swinton,***  
***Walking with Jesus in Strange Places***

### **Opening Questions:**

- What does the word justice mean to you?
- And how do you experience or intersect with it in your own life?

## — Watch the Video Together



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## Becoming a Beatitudes People:

As Greg rightly points out, *the Beatitudes are not intended to be aspirational*. When we say 'becoming a Beatitudes People', what we mean is that we want to grow into a faith community whose values truly reflect the Kingdom - God's Dream. More and more, we want to be a people who prioritize and center those at the center of God's heart. We want to consider how we're being invited into the work of restorative justice and how we can participate in the redistribution of power. We want to see the world around us through God's eyes and imagine what flourishing might actually look like, 'for all.'

*“This crowd had lived a script that said blessing was equated with empire, wealth and ease. Jesus was there to take their old script of what it meant to be human and toss it. So he started with a poem of macarisms, a speaking device from the Greco-Roman virtue tradition, a teacher listed, based on observation, ways of being in the world that would produce happiness or authentic human flourishing. Jesus delivered an unexpected list, one that spoke intimately to his listeners' daily struggles as oppressed people in a brutal empire. Those who practice wisdom. Those who will experience true and whole life. The ones who will flourish. ‘Wise, true and whole,’ Jesus said, ‘are the ones who suffer, the ones who have no power, the ones who are mistreated.’ And so he began his ministry, inviting his listeners to use their spiritual imagination to reorder their notions of society, prioritizing the vulnerable above the powerful.”*

**- Micha Boyett, *Blessed are the Rest of Us***

## — *Read*

**Together as a group, read these passages of Scripture. Take turns reading, as people feel comfortable, so that multiple voices are heard.**

“Does it make you a king to have more and more cedar? Did not your father have food and drink? He did what was right and just, so all went well with him. He defended the cause of the poor and needy, and so all went well. Is that not what it means to know me?” declares the Lord.”

**Jeremiah 22:15-16**

“Here's what I want: Let justice thunder down like a waterfall; let righteousness flow like a mighty river that never runs dry.”

**Amos 5:24**

“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.”

**1 Corinthians 13:4-8**

## — *Read (continued)*

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

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

“Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

“Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

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

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

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

### **Matthew 5:1-11**

#### **A Poem by Jesus of Nazareth**

Adapted by Micha Boyett, Blessed are the Rest of Us  
(“*Makarioi*”: *Wise, true, whole, flourishing.*)

*“Makarioi* are the weak ones, the poor in wealth and the poor in soul. They are caretakers of the Dream of God.

*Makarioi* are the ones who grieve. They will be invited to a divine banquet.

*Makarioi* are the powerless ones and the ones who release their power.

They will recognize that the entire earth has always been theirs.

*Makarioi* are the ones who long for justice that restores and dignifies. They will be filled with whole and mutually dependent love.

*Makarioi* are the ones who give mercy. They will receive in turn what they have offered in love.

*Makarioi* are the true ones. They will have eyes to see the Spirit of Truth.

*Makarioi* are the ones who serve peace. They will be called kin, safe in God’s chosen family.

*Makarioi* are the ones who suffer for doing good. Their dreams will become like God’s dream.

*Makarioi* are the fearless ones, the rejected or pushed out. They will find joy on the edges, coworking with God, transforming the world in love.”



## — *Practice*

Engaging our Spiritual Imagination as a vehicle for hope.

Together: Have someone in your group read 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 again, pausing briefly after each attribute of love. During the pauses, picture and pray for a person or circumstance that needs this aspect of God's love right now.

On your own this week: Write a Beatitudes-style blessing or prayer. You can use a similar format to the original or your own. Make it as specific as you want to fit your own life and context. Consider the idea of re-ordering and prioritizing the vulnerable. *\*\*Before you leave, ask someone to volunteer to bring their written blessing to share to open your next session!*

Another idea: The Church Center app has a tab for Groups - there, you should see the Be Group you belong to. Use the chat function of this app to connect during the time between your meetings- share simple moments and ways in which you experience the concepts of this session 'in real life'.

# *Session Two: Feet*

## — *Introduction*

Where should we be, who should we be with and how will we find God there?

This session will look at doing uncomfortable things, releasing our power and what resistance might look like.



*“The Beatitudes is not a spirituality, after all. It’s a geography. It tells us where to stand.”*

*Gregory Boyle,  
Tattoos on the Heart*

## **Opening Questions:**

- Begin your time by having someone share their beatitudes blessing or prayer from last week
- Over the course of the last week, how has God been working/challenging/speaking/nudging your heart with the material we’ve engaged with? (don’t shy away from the uncomfortable, or the unfinished, we are a people being formed and “in process”)

## — Watch the Video Together



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## — *Read*

**Together as a group, read these passages of Scripture. Take turns reading, as people feel comfortable, so that multiple voices are heard.**

*“We don’t think our way into a new way of living,  
we live our way into a new way of thinking”*

***Henri Nouwen***

“But he’s already made it plain how to live, what to do, what God is looking for in men and women. It’s quite simple: Do what is fair and just to your neighbor, be compassionate and loyal in your love, And don’t take yourself too seriously- take God seriously.”

**Micah 6:8**

“Don’t be misled- you cannot mock the justice of God. You will always harvest what you plant. Those who live only to satisfy their own sinful nature will harvest decay and death from that sinful nature. But those who live to please the Spirit will harvest everlasting life from the Spirit. So let’s not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time, we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don’t give up. Therefore whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone- especially those in the family of faith.

**Galatians 6:7-10**

## — *Read (continued)*

“Jesus looked him hard in the eye—and loved him! He said, “There’s one thing left: Go sell whatever you own and give it to the poor. All your wealth will then be heavenly wealth. And come follow me.”

The man’s face clouded over. This was the last thing he expected to hear, and he walked off with a heavy heart. He was holding on tight to a lot of things, and not about to let go.

Looking at his disciples, Jesus said, “Do you have any idea how difficult it is for people who ‘have it all’ to enter God’s kingdom?” The disciples couldn’t believe what they were hearing, but Jesus kept on: “You can’t imagine how difficult. I’d say it’s easier for a camel to go through a needle’s eye than for the rich to get into God’s kingdom.”

That got their attention. “Then who has any chance at all?” they asked. Jesus was blunt: “No chance at all if you think you can pull it off by yourself. Every chance in the world if you let God do it.”

**Mark 10:21-27**

## — *Practice*

Engaging our bodies in prayer.

Together: Follow along with this series of simple prayer postures from *Infinitem Daily Prayer*, moving your hands to reflect your words- hands up, hands open, hands forward. Have someone lead the prompts and begin the prayers outloud, then respond by each completing the sentence silently in prayer.

1. **Surrender** - *Hands up*     *“I choose to surrender ...”*
2. **Generosity** - *Hands open*     *“I choose to hold my hands open to...”*
3. **Mission** - *Hands forward*     *“I choose to engage in the world You love by ...”*

[infinitemlife.com](http://infinitemlife.com)

On your own this week: Go for a walk and pray with eyes open for whatever jumps out or comes to mind.

\*\*Before you leave, make a plan for the meal you will share next session! (Read ahead for more)

# *Session Three: Eat*

## *— Introduction*

This session will look at re-centering, sharing the abundance, building a table that makes sense and belonging to one another.



*This week we begin with our practice; eating together. We've incorporated the practice of sharing a meal as a tangible reminder of our shared vulnerability, a taste of the Kingdom banquet, and a nod to Jesus' custom of meaningful dinner parties. We hope this time together is a bright spot of your week and an opportunity to be fully present and engaged with one another.*

### **Meal-time Questions:**

- Share about your familial and cultural traditions and celebrations around meals.
- Over the course of the last week, how has God been working/challenging/speaking/nudging your heart with the material we've engaged with? (don't shy away from the uncomfortable, or the unfinished, we are a people being formed and "in process")

## Becoming a Beatitudes People:

*“Beloved community isn’t a watered-down version of performative racial harmony, not a soda commercial in which people of all colours hold hands across the world. Instead, it’s a muscular and absolute vision of the dream of God, the vision Jesus was introducing to his followers. Under God’s reign on earth, love is not a squishy ideal. It’s a way of being neighbors together. It’s a way of living for the good of everyone. And the only way to accomplish that lofty goal is to reject our dependence on and submission to the power we’ve been taught to hoard for ourselves, release it, and begin to work toward the common good.”*

***Micha Boyett, Blessed are the Rest of Us***



## — Watch the Video Together



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## — *Read*

**Together as a group, read these passages of Scripture. Take turns reading, as people feel comfortable, so that multiple voices are heard.**

“On this mountain the Lord Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine—the best of meats and the finest of wines. On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; he will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove his people’s disgrace from all the earth. The Lord has spoken. In that day they will say, ‘Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the Lord, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation.’”

**Isaiah 25:6-9**

“Then Jesus said to his host, “When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

**Luke 14:12-14**

## — *Practice*

Sharing a meal together.

On your own: Invite someone to share a meal with you this week, and bring the spirit of this session into your time together - *listen, learn, be present, share ideas.*

For the next session: bring a favourite family recipe. Email or print a copy for everyone in your Be Group.

# *Session Four: Dream*

## *— Introduction*

We know that God's Dream- *The Kingdom* - is both present among us and still yet to come. This session will look at the tension we must hold, moving towards allyship, and finding Jesus in the world.

*“Makarioi (blessed) are those who push against the cultural current that denies value to so many. Wise, flourishing, and becoming whole are we who learn to live utterly outside the rules of the stream, letting go of our ease so we can learn a new way of living: God's dream for the world. We join the ones who already have the most value in the currency of the really real.”*

*Micha Boyett,*

*Blessed are the Rest of Us*

### **Opening Question:**

- Over the course of the last week, how has God been working/challenging/speaking/nudging your heart with the material we've engaged with? (don't shy away from the uncomfortable, or the unfinished, we are a people being formed and “in process”)

## — Watch the Video Together



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- Pause the video *when prompted* and engage with the questions on the screen

## — *Read*

**Together as a group, read these passages of Scripture. Take turns reading, as people feel comfortable, so that multiple voices are heard.**

“He told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches.”

**Matthew 13:31-32**

“So here’s what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don’t become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You’ll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you.”

**Romans 12: 1-2 (MSG)**

## — *Read (continued)*

“My beloved friends, let us continue to love each other since love comes from God. Everyone who loves is born of God and experiences a relationship with God. The person who refuses to love doesn’t know the first thing about God, because God is love—so you can’t know him if you don’t love. This is how God showed his love for us: God sent his only Son into the world so we might live through him. This is the kind of love we are talking about—not that we once upon a time loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to clear away our sins and the damage they’ve done to our relationship with God.

My dear, dear friends, if God loved us like this, we certainly ought to love each other. No one has seen God, ever. But if we love one another, God dwells deeply within us, and his love becomes complete in us—perfect love!”

**1 John 4:7-12**

## — Practice

A Justice inventory

### Pray Together:

*"God of justice, open our eyes to see our lives and our world as You do. Help us notice where You have been nudging us, where we have space to grow, and where we can align more with Your heart."*

### On your own: Taking Stock – A Personal Inventory

*Using a journal, notes app or quiet reflection, consider these questions:*

#### 1. My Time

- *Where does the majority of my time go each day?*
- *When do I feel most aligned with God's heart? When do I feel furthest?*
- *What is one small way I could create space in my schedule to reflect, listen, or engage in justice?*

#### 2. My Resources

- *What gifts, skills, or resources has God given me?*
- *How have I been using these for others?*
- *Is there an area where I sense an invitation to be more generous or intentional?*



## — *Practice cont'd*

### 3. My Thought Space

- *What issues or concerns tend to occupy my mind?*
- *What narratives do I tell myself about justice? Are they shaped more by fear, comfort, or love?*
- *How might I open my mind to God's broader vision for justice?*

### 4. My Heart Space

- *What emotions arise when I think about justice? Hope? Guilt? Overwhelm?*
- *Where do I notice resistance? Where do I notice eagerness?*
- *What spiritual practices (prayer, silence, scripture, etc.) help me stay rooted in God's justice?*

### Making Room – The Baby Step

*Now, prayerfully ask: Where can I make space for justice to take root?*

- *Identify one small shift—not necessarily an action, but a mindset or habit (e.g., a weekly reflection, a prayerful pause before reacting, noticing who I'm influenced by, reshaping a routine).*
- *Write down one step to practice this in the coming week.*
- *End by thanking God for the ways He is already at work in and through you.*

*"God of mercy, help me to **live justly, love mercy, and walk humbly** with You. May the small shifts I make create space for Your justice to take deeper root in my life. Amen."*

## BE GROUPS

# — *Benediction*

May the end of these sessions mark a beginning for us, Forest Brook.

May we have ears to hear what God is saying to us through these present-day prophets. May we listen for the Holy Spirit to lead us- *what is ours to hear/do/engage in the work of restorative justice in our context* - and respond.

May we be willing to sit with uncomfortable truths long enough to be moved by them.

May we have eyes to see the world around us through a Beatitudes lens - to *seek*. To identify the people and places that are at the center of God's heart but are otherwise overlooked or excluded. May we *be with* and *listen to* - so that the the need for justice has a face, and the need for mercy has a story.

As we encounter injustice, may we have the courage to take baby steps towards a better understanding of 'what got us here'. May we faithfully move towards allyship - *kinship*.

May we be continually formed into a people that embody the values of the Kingdom, and may these values help to re-direct, re-order and re-imagine our priorities where needed.

May the Kingdom of God come, and God's Dream come true, on earth as it is in heaven.