

FAITH SHARING GROUP ~ HANGING ONTO HOPE: REFLECTIONS AND PRAYERS FOR FINDING "GOOD" IN AN IMPERFECT WORLD by Sr. Melannie Svoboda, SND

Week 4 Chapter 15-19

Check in Question: Which of the Beatitudes can you try to live out today, and how will you do that?

Opening Prayer

Jesus, as we gather today, we thank you for the gift of the Beatitudes and the wisdom they offer for our lives. Help us carry their message into our daily choices, our relationships, and our prayer.
Teach us to embrace our poverty, our weaknesses, and our vulnerabilities, recognizing that these are not signs of failure but opportunities to draw closer to you. Deepen our hunger for the living God, even more than our hunger for the things we need each day.
Give us the courage to love even when loving brings pain or sorrow. When we are misunderstood, ridiculed, or hurt because of our faith, help us respond with compassion rather than anger or a desire for control.
Keep us on the path you have set before us. Open our eyes to the blessings we sometimes overlook, and remind us how fortunate we are to be your disciples.
May our time together deepen our understanding of the Beatitudes and inspire us to live them with greater faith, love, and hope.
Amen.

Reflection Questions

Chapter 15: Hope and the Beatitudes

1. Rabbi Stephen Schwarzschild writes, "Happy isn't good enough to describe the word in Greek used as the beginning of each one of the Beatitudes. Blessed, in this case, means you are not lost." How does that change your understanding of the Beatitudes?
2. Sister Melannie asks the question: Do you want God as much as a starving person wants food?
3. Could you write a Beatitude of your own? Sister Melannie came up with a few on page 95.

Chapter 16: What Others Have Said About Hope

4. Sister Melanie talks about the many quotes she has collected over her lifetime. There were several on pages 98 - 100 Which one attracted you? Or could you share a favorite quote of your own about hope?

Chapter 17: Hope and a Sense of Humor

5. Sister Melannie often tells cute little stories. If you can, remember and share one of your favorite jokes or an interesting anecdote that brings a smile to your face.

Chapter 18: Hope Makes a Difference in Our Lives

6. Sister Melannie shares how the hospitality of Abraham and Sarah made all the difference in their lives. How do you share hospitality with others?
7. How do you express gratitude in your daily life?

Chapter 19: Images of Hope

8. The cover of this book has a flower growing out of the pavement. Sister Melannie suggests that hope only needs a crack to sprout. Where have you seen hope growing in seemingly hopeless places?
9. One of Sister Melannie's final anecdotes is about a master pianist who encouraged a child to keep playing "Chopsticks" while he played alongside the child. The child represents us, playing our simple tune, while the master pianist represents God, gently encouraging us to keep going, not to stop, and not to give up. Where in your life might God be inviting you to keep playing, trusting that God is right there beside you?

Closing Prayer

For whom and what shall we pray?

God of hope and endless possibility,
Thank you for the gift of the Beatitudes and for reminding us that true blessedness is found not in having everything, but in knowing that we are never lost or forgotten by you.
Help us recognize your presence in the ordinary moments of our lives. Teach us to welcome others with open hearts, to practice hospitality, to live with gratitude, and to find joy even in the midst of life's challenges.
When hope seems distant, remind us of the small signs of new life that push through the cracks of our broken world. Open our eyes to the unexpected places where your love is growing and where your light is breaking through.
And when life feels difficult, when our efforts seem small, or when we are tempted to give up, remind us of the child playing "Chopsticks." Help us trust that you, our master pianist, are always beside us, gently encouraging us to keep going, to keep loving, and to keep believing.
May we leave this gathering with hearts renewed, eyes open to possibility, and a hope that gives us courage for whatever lies ahead.
We ask this in your name, Jesus.
Amen.