



Written by
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“The Beatitudes” A Choral Reading of Matthew 5

Scripture: Matthew 5: 1-12

Dramatic Category: Choral Reading

What is “Choral Reading”?

Choral Reading is “literature in vocal dimension,” which means that multiple voices interpret literature, thus giving it dimension that a single voice-oral interpretation cannot give.

NOTE:

Please consult the “Choral Reading Guidelines” that follow this reading. There, you will find helpful hints to maximize this beautiful art form that uses the syncopated reading of scripture to communicate the truth of God’s Word.

Topic: The “beautiful attitudes” of the believer

Performance Time: 1 minute, 15 seconds

Number of Readers: 7 readers (3 men (M), 4 women (F))

Suggested Configuration:

1 (M)	3 (M)	5 (M)	
2 (F)	4 (F)	6 (F)	7 (F)

Background Music:

This is a classic scripture reading; therefore, the quiet playing of a classic hymn or hymn medley is suggested. Music is played down and under throughout.

Sound Needs: Seven standing microphones. The readers must have their hands free.

Lighting Notes: Even light across the group of readers

Props:

Small black notebooks in which readers keep their scripts.

(The notebooks are held waist-high, in the left hand, leaving the right hand free for gestures that “physicalize” the meaning of the words.)

Costume Suggestions: Black and white, with the addition of one other color, shared by all readers

Music: Begin the background music while the readers get into place.

The Script:

**3: When He saw the multitudes,
 He went up on the mountain;
 and after He sat down,
 His disciples came to Him,
 and opening his mouth He began to teach them,
 saying:**

Men: Blessed are the poor in spirit,

Women: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Men: Blessed are those who mourn,

Women: for they shall be comforted.

Women: Blessed

4: are the gentle,

6: for they shall inherit the earth.

3: Blessed

2: are those

4: who hunger

6: and thirst

7: for righteousness,

Men: for they shall be satisfied.

Women: Blessed are the merciful,

Men: for they shall receive mercy.

1, 2: Blessed are the pure in heart,

7, 5: for they shall see God.

3: Blessed

4, 6: are the peacemakers,

2, 7: for they shall be called

Men: sons of God.

3: Blessed are those who have been persecuted

2, 7: for the sake of righteousness,

All: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

2: Blessed are you

1: when men cast insults at you,

4: and persecute you,

3: and say all kinds of evil

6: against you

5: falsely,

7: on account of Me.

Women: Rejoice

Men: and be glad,

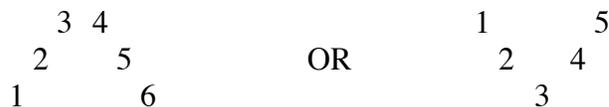
All: for your reward in Heaven is great

Music: *REPRISE of the music selection. Consider having the congregation join in.*

The End

Choral Reading Guidelines

1. Select literature that is **lyrical** such as: songs, poems, stories with repetitious dialogue, odes, or ballads.
2. Analyze the literature to determine the **theme**. Divide it into phrases that deserve more emphatic treatment, such as a single voice for effect or all voices for effect.
3. Assign each member of the choral reading team a **number**.
4. **Divide the literature up by phrases** and decide which number or numbers will read which lines.
5. Create **“phonal”** (dominant/deeper voices) and **“anti-phonal”** (softer/higher voices) effects by assigning lines to voices that come from opposite places on the team. These voices will create the same relationship as “melody” has with “harmony” in music. This keeps the audience entertained.
6. **Choreograph** the arrangement of the readers, for example:



7. Assign **gestures** to various members of the team to emphasize the lines they will read.
8. **Costume** the readers for effect if it is appropriate. Generally, readers wear black and white. It is very effective to dress the ladies in floor-length black skirts and white blouses, and the men in black slacks, white shirts, and a colored tie. Sometimes, the addition of one other color is appropriate as long as all readers use the same additional color. This uniform effect helps tie the visual image together to create the illusion of this being “one” reading with multiple voices.
9. **Props** are used sparingly if it would add to the effect of the reading. The only constant prop used is the small black notebook in which each reader keeps his/her script. It is held at waist-height in the left hand, leaving the right hand free for gestures.
10. **Rehearse** the reading over and over so that the readers are **syncopated** and there is no interruption or hesitation in the **vocal unison**.