

HOW'S YOUR  
**ATTITUDE?**  
*A Study in the Beatitudes*

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## Special Thanks

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*How's Your Attitude?*

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# God's Plan of Salvation

Carefully ponder these Scripture verses, as they explain how you can have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

God loves you and wants you to enjoy the abundant *life* He offers you.

- John 3:16—“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”
- John 10:10—Jesus said, “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”

Man is sinful, and his sin separates him from God.

- Romans 3:23—“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”
- Romans 6:23—“For the wages of sin is death [spiritual separation from God].”

Jesus Christ's death is the only provision God has made to pay for man's sin.

- Romans 5:8—“But God commendeth [demonstrated] his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”
- John 14:6—“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”

You must receive Jesus Christ as your Savior before you can personally experience His love for you and the abundant life He has planned for you.

- John 1:12—“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.”

You can invite Christ into your life right now by an act of faith.

- Ephesians 2:8, 9—“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.”

Are you ready to invite Christ into your life to be your Savior? Use the following prayer as a guide to help you express your desire to God: “Lord God, I know I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe Jesus died for my sins. Right now I receive

Him as my Savior. Take control of my life, and replace all the restlessness and anxiety with peace and contentment.”

If you have prayed this prayer, tell your Bible study leader or a friend who has been trying to help you.

Learn to trust God's Word—not your feelings—when doubts come.

- Romans 10:13—“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the LORD shall be saved.”
  
- 1 John 5:11–13—“And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.”

# What Are the Beatitudes?

*“He opened his mouth, and taught them” (Matthew 5:2).*

Jesus’ earthly ministry brought great excitement and controversy. Thousands came for healing, while others came to scorn and mock. And some came looking for truth. Did you know that Jesus’ first recorded sermon was not for the masses but focused on the attitudes born-again believers should have? In Matthew 5—7 Jesus preached a message called the Sermon on the Mount. The first twelve verses in the message are called the Beatitudes. What does “beatitude” mean? Wikipedia says it means “supreme blessing or happiness.”

As Jesus sat on the mountainside and began to preach, His primary audience was His disciples, or followers. However, He wanted the masses to hear His words too. Many of them were the scribes and Pharisees—professional religionists. Matthew 5:20 and 23:25 describe these groups: “For I say unto you, That *except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees*, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. . . . Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess” (emphasis added).

How could anyone’s righteousness exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees? They were the religious leaders of the day.

The scribes were experts in the law of Moses, since their office came out of the priesthood. They were responsible to preserve and teach the law. The scribes had been on the scene long before the Pharisees came into power, but by the time of Jesus’ birth, the Pharisees were in authority with the scribes. The Pharisees not only taught the law of Moses, they had added their own traditions and interpretations. In fact, by that time, the law included 350 negative commands and 250 positive commands. The people were hearing a distorted version of the law. That’s why Jesus took the scribes and Pharisees to task, even calling them hypocrites.

The Beatitudes describe a standard of living that denounces the ritualistic, hypo-

critical practices of those religious leaders. Christ taught about a relationship—not just a religion. He wasn't concerned with outward performances; He emphasized their hearts and minds. The Beatitudes describe true righteousness in contrast to the false righteousness of the religious leaders. Warren Wiersbe explains: "In the Beatitudes, Jesus teaches us that true righteousness is a matter of the heart. It has been well said, 'The Beatitudes describe the *attitudes* that ought to *be* in the believer's life.' What good are tithing, fasting, and outward obedience to rules and regulations if the heart is proud, critical, and condemning? Conduct must be based upon character."<sup>1</sup>

### What Are the Beatitudes?

The Beatitudes are a list of godly attitudes that should mark every believer and that lead to true happiness.

Jesus didn't tell us how to live step-by-step, but He told us about the attitudes that result in proper behavior. Right internal attitudes lead to right external behavior.

I love these thoughts by Chuck Swindoll about our attitude:

The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on life. . . . The remarkable thing is we have a choice everyday regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day. We cannot change our past . . . we cannot change the fact that people will act a certain way. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the one string we have, and that is our attitude. I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to me and 90% how I react to it. And so it is with you . . . we are in charge of our Attitudes.<sup>2</sup>

### General Lessons

Since the Beatitudes are "the *attitudes* that ought to *be* in the believer's life," there are several general lessons we can learn from them. Read the Beatitudes in Matthew 5:3–12.

1. *These attitudes are not just for the men and women we might call super saints.* List a few men and women who come to your mind when we use the term *super saints*.



2. All Christians are to display all these attitudes. There are nine Beatitudes and nine fruit of the Spirit. I think the Beatitudes and the fruit of the Spirit passages have similarities. Ephesians 5:18 says believers are to be filled with, or controlled by, the Holy Spirit. Read Galatians 5:22 and 23 to see the list of the fruit of the Spirit. See if you can list a fruit of the Spirit by each of the Beatitudes below. If you have never studied the Beatitudes or the fruit of the Spirit before, you may want to come back and answer this question at the end of the study. Blessed are . . .

<b>Beatitude</b>	<b>Fruit of the Spirit</b>
The poor in spirit	
Those who mourn	
The meek	
Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness	
The merciful	
The pure in heart	
The peacemakers	
Those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake	
Those who are reviled, persecuted, and slandered for Jesus' sake	

3. None of these attitudes can be produced and lived out in our own strength. According to Ephesians 2:8 and 9 and Galatians 5:16, 22, and 23, what are the attitudes the by-products of?

No one can live the challenges given in the Beatitudes unless that person has been born again. After the new birth, the person is capable of living the radical transformation pictured in the Beatitudes.

4. The more we become *like* Christ, the more we become *unlike* non-Christians. What words in John 15:5b would never come from the mouth of an unbeliever?

What opposite words might an unbeliever say?

5. In the first and eighth beatitudes, Christ promised His followers that “theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” The believer and unbeliever belong to two different kingdoms. How do the following verses describe these differences? See John 15:18, 19; 17:14–16; Philippians 3:20; Colossians 1:13.

Songwriter Jim Reeves wrote, “This world is not my home, / I’m just a-passin’ through.” For the believer, the best is yet to come!

6. Christ started each of the Beatitudes with the word *blessed*. In many translations the word is “happy.” What does this word mean to you?

To Kay Arthur, it means the result of a right relationship with God:

Happiness is disguised in the Word of God under the term “blessed” or “blessedness,” from the Greek word, *makarios*. . . . Blessedness meant “a sense of God’s approval.” It comes from being right with God, from doing what is right before God. . . . This, then, is true happiness: a state of blessedness that comes not from circumstances but from a right relationship to God.<sup>3</sup>

Surely it would be a blessed life to know you have God’s approval. Therefore, the blessed are those who have found that the Beatitudes are the way to the happiest kind of life.

## **Being ‘the Blessed’**

As we study the Beatitudes, I will use “happy” instead of “blessed” as I refer to the different verses.

7. Since Matthew 5:3–11 begins with “happy,” what can we conclude Christ wants believers to know?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. How would the world describe happiness?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. Now that you know the Bible’s description of happiness, how would you describe happiness?

The world’s view of happiness is something that depends on happenings. Someone called it a “gambler’s paradise”: happiness can be here today and gone tomorrow. God’s kind of happiness is described as “blessed,” or “enjoying happiness.” It is a permanent joy not affected by the ups and downs of life. We can have this kind of stability because we are partakers of God’s divine nature (2 Peter 1:4).

10. Why are the Beatitudes a paradox as they relate to the world’s idea of happiness?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
11. The world’s idea of happiness is that the person with the most things is the happiest. A few years ago a popular bumper sticker read, “He who dies with the most toys wins.” Yet Christ knows that a person’s soul can’t be satisfied by external things (Luke 12:15). Why not?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
12. Read Ecclesiastes 1:2. What was King Solomon’s response to all his material wealth?

13. “Blessed” is a word to describe the character of God and Christ (see Psalms 68:35 and 72:18; see also 1 Timothy 6:15). Read 2 Peter 1:4. Why are believers the only ones who will experience the blessedness that is part of the character of God and Christ?
14. Read 1 Corinthians 6:19 and 20. Who helps our divine nature grow in Christlikeness?

Since believers have the divine nature of God and the Holy Spirit, others should be able to observe the very character of God in them. As we live in this dark world, the light of Christ in us should make us reflections of Christ. The Holy Spirit in us helps us overcome sins and weaknesses that we may have struggled with all our lives. Because we are partakers of His divine nature, we are able to rise above our human limitations to see God working in our lives.

In lesson 2 we will learn more about being partakers of God's nature.

15. Did you learn anything new about true happiness today? If so, what?



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*From My Heart*

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The Beatitudes give us nine verses that are like stepping-stones to reach the top of the mountain and view the beautiful life offered to the “blessed,” or happy ones. The first step is salvation; the last step is total dedication. We start as babes in Christ and end up spiritually mature. It will take a lifetime for God to do all He has planned for us.

You may have been on this journey for years, or you may begin the journey during this study. I've been on my journey for sixty-two years, and what an exciting and challenging journey it has been! I say “exciting and challenging” because there were many dark valleys filled with disappointment and heartache. During those dark days, I would ask myself, “Where is God in this? What is He wanting to teach me?” I recently heard a statement that was such an encouragement to me. A man woke up from a coma and was told by his nurse that he was recovering from a serious accident. He told the nurse there are no accidents in a believer's life—just incidents where God is working.

I was about twenty years into my journey with the Lord when He taught me the valuable lesson I have emphasized here—my happiness does not depend on what is going on around me but on what is going on inside me.

The Beatitudes should *be attitudes* displayed in every Christian. We are now ready to find out what each of the Beatitudes is and if each one is reflected in our own lives.

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*From Your Heart*



After reading the Beatitudes, which ones do you need to work on the most? Do you agree that the Beatitudes are the attitudes every believer should have? Why? As we start this study, how is your attitude?

**Notes**

1. Warren W. Wiersbe, *Live like a King: Making the Beatitudes Work in Daily Life* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1976), 22.
2. Chuck Swindoll, “Popular Quotes,” *GoodReads*, <http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/attitude?page=2>.
3. Kay Arthur, *How Can I Ever Be Righteous* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming R. Revell, 1985), 4.