



# Jesus Gives the Beatitudes

Matthew 5:1-12

BIBLE BACKGROUND  
FOR LEADERS

## What God Expects...

This passage marks the beginning of a message Jesus preached called the Sermon on the Mount. This particular section of the Sermon on the Mount is called the Beatitudes. These verses describe the characteristics that Jesus expects of those who follow him. In addition, each description is accompanied by a pronouncement of blessing on those who demonstrate that characteristic. Some of the blessings are worded in the present tense, and others are worded in the future tense, but all are certainties. Some Bible translations use the word *happy* instead of *blessed* in these verses, but *happy* doesn't convey the full meaning of what's intended here. This blessing by God involves joy that doesn't depend on circumstances but rather is based on what God has done for us.

## ...Leads to Joy...

*Poor in spirit:* those who are not proud, understanding that they can do nothing without God. *Theirs is the kingdom of heaven:* God grants them entry into his kingdom because they trust in him.

*Those who mourn:* people who are saddened by their own sin and the sin around them. *They will be comforted:* one day God will dry all their tears.

*The meek:* those who are humble before God. *They will inherit the earth:* the arrogant will inherit nothing, but the meek will be honored by God.

*Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness:* people who strive to do what is right and pleasing to God. *They will be filled:* God will grant them personal satisfaction as they faithfully seek to serve him.

*The merciful:* those who humbly realize they don't deserve God's mercy, but having received it, strive to extend it to others. *They will be shown mercy:* As they extend mercy to others, God will grant more mercy to them.

*The pure in heart:* people who continue to focus on Christ and don't allow other allegiances to contaminate that relationship. *They will see God:* One

day they will see the object of their worship face to face.

*The peacemakers:* those who live at peace and seek to make peace among others. *They will be called sons of God:* By seeking to bring peace to others, they will show that they are God's children.

*Those who are persecuted because of righteousness:* people who suffer for standing up for God. *Theirs is the kingdom of heaven:* Those who endure in faith are assured a place in the kingdom.

## ...No Matter What

Matthew 5:11-12 expands on the last of the Beatitudes, describing what our attitude should be when we are persecuted: We should rejoice because we'll be rewarded for our perseverance. What happens to us on earth will seem insignificant in light of the rewards we'll receive for faithfully honoring God in our earthly lives.

## The Jesus Connection

Jesus preached in front of a large crowd, but he directed these blessings to his followers. Following Jesus has its price, but it also has great rewards.

Which of these blessings seem most true in your life? Which ones do you need Jesus to make more real in your life? Jesus wants this passage to describe you—so pray about what needs to change for that to be true. You can write your prayer here.

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Matthew 5:1-12

► Bible Point—God blesses us when we choose his ways.

Key Verse—“Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things” (Philippians 4:8).

## DIGGING DEEPER

## Daily Challenges

Choose one or more of these activities to do this week.

- **Commit to spending an entire day doing everything in your relationships with children, friends, and co-workers with the kind of love and compassion Jesus calls us to. If you catch yourself slipping, correct yourself and start over. At the end of the day, reflect on your choices.**
- **Take a “fast” from all media for a day, or even for a week. Use your newfound time to pray, read God’s Word, or help others. After your fast has concluded, think about how it felt to make those changes, and what changes you may want to make permanent.**
- **Use the ideas from the list your group made in the “Focusing Our Minds on God’s Ways” activity to guide your thoughts this week. Look for how focusing on God impacts your choices.**

## Through the Week

Use the following passages to explore additional biblical perspectives on how God blesses us when we choose his ways.

### Monday—1 Peter 2:11-12

- How does thinking of yourself as an alien affect your life?

### Tuesday—Romans 12:2

- What does the world accept and want that Christians cannot accept or want? How can we have the right attitude about this?

### Wednesday—Philippians 2:5

- How can we have the same attitude as Jesus?

### Thursday—1 John 2:15

- Do you love God more than things in this world? Why or why not?

### Friday—Ephesians 4:22-24

- What attitudes do you have that need to change and “be made new”?

### Saturday—Psalm 19:14

- What attitudes do you have right now that are pleasing to God?

## Talk Topics

- Discuss ways you can practice focusing on the things Paul mentioned in Philippians 4:8 rather than on things that are depressing, petty, or wrong.
- Talk about ways we can identify God’s ways and choose to follow them.
- What’s a choice you’ve made recently? Is there anything you’d choose to do differently now?