

Because we ARE God's children our position in His kingdom is secure. We need to remember:

- a) where we are going (II Timothy 4:8);
- b) the prophets were persecuted (Acts 7:52); and
- c) persecution strengthens us:

*"... We also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out His love in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom He has given us."
Romans 5:3-5 NIV*

*"Let us not become weary doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."
Galations 6:9 NIV*

*"It is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil."
I Peter 3:17 NIV*

"Personalize the Scriptures ..."

- 14. How does it pay in the present to walk with God? _____

- 15. What do you think it means to be poor in spirit? _____

- 16. What does it mean to be meek? _____

- 17. How does a person behave who is hungry and thirsting after righteousness? _____

- 18. What are some examples of showing mercy? _____

- 19. Which of these promises means the most to you today? Why? _____

- 20. What attitudes about your life will you change with the help of your Lord? _____

*May God richly bless you
as you seek to live victoriously
in Jesus Christ!*

The Most Excellent Way

*The Christian Solution to Chemical Dependency
"Becoming GOD-Dependent"*

1177 Pacifica Place • Encinitas, CA 92024
760-635-3945 • 800-548-8854 • FAX 760-635-3946

WEBSITE: www.tmewcf.org • ONLINE RESOURCES: www.mostexcellentway.org

The Beatitudes

"Now when [Jesus] saw the crowds, He went up on a mountainside and sat down.

His disciples came to Him,² and He began to teach them, saying:

- ³*'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.'*
- ⁴*'Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.'*
- ⁵*'Blessed are the meek, for they will be filled.'*
- ⁶*'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.'*
- ⁷*'Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.'*
- ⁸*'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.'*
- ⁹*'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.'*
- ¹⁰*'Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.'*

Matthew 5:1-10 NIV

*Jesus Teaches
Kingdom Living*



*The Beginning of
Victorious Living*

Introduction ...

The Sermon on the Mount is the Great Manifesto of the Kingdom of God.

Jesus addressed His sermon to His disciples, not the multitudes. He did not intend to bring a new social gospel, nor did He intend to bring an end to suffering and wars.

Some wrongly say that the Sermon is for the future, that its message concerns the Kingdom Age (that period when Christ returns to rule over the world). But Jesus said that, *“the kingdom of God is among you” (Luke 17:21)*, meaning that we are living in *“the age of grace.”* And as we bow to the King’s authority, we become citizens of the heavenly kingdom. *“Our citizenship is in heaven” (Philippians 3:20 NIV)*.

The Sermon on the Mount declares to us what we ARE through the grace of God working in our lives; and because of what we are, what our relationship to the law (the Ten Commandments) has become.

The Sermon begins with the Beatitudes—a list of characteristics that make up the Christian character. These characteristics are all inter-related and progressive. The Beatitudes are not “natural” attitudes. They actually create a sharp distinction between the believer and non-believer in what they admire and what they seek after. We must be willing to change our attitudes if we desire “victorious living.”

“Victorious Living”...

Each of the Beatitudes tells how to be “blessed” — other Bible translations use the words “fortunate” or “happy.” These words don’t promise laughter, pleasure, or earthly prosperity. Jesus turns the world’s idea of happiness upside down.

To Jesus, happiness means hope and joy, independent of outward circumstances. To find hope and joy, the deepest form of happiness, follow Jesus no matter what the cost.

There are at least four ways to understand the Beatitudes:

- (1) They are a code of ethics for the disciples and a standard of conduct for all believers.
- (2) They contrast Kingdom values (that which is eternal and spiritual) with worldly values (what is temporary, or temporal).
- (3) They contrast the superficial “faith” of the Pharisees with the real faith Christ wants.
- (4) They show how the Old Testament expectations will be fulfilled in the new Kingdom.

These Beatitudes are not multiple choice — pick what you like and leave the rest. They must be taken as a whole. They describe what we should be like as Christ’s followers. These are the attitudes Jesus had, and He wants us to be like Him.

To experience victorious living, we must embrace and develop these “BE” attitudes.

“The Beatitudes . . .”

1. **What are some ways people typically try to find happiness or fulfillment in life?**

2. **What person (living or dead) do you respect most? Why?**

“Blessed are the peacemakers ...”

11. **Why are peacemakers blessed? (5:9)**

Peace is more than a passive existence (“anything to keep the peace”). Peace is a very positive state of good. A peacemaker is more than one who stops quarrels; a peacemaker brings good into the lives of others. Real peace can never be found in a compromise with evil. There can never be a peaceful coexistence with sin:

“Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.”
I Corinthians 5:7 NIV

“But the wicked are like the tossing sea, which cannot rest, whose waves cast up mire and mud.”
Isaiah 57:20 NIV

Peacemakers bring others to God. Man’s basic problem is that he has to be reconciled unto God. “They will be called sons of God” could be interrupted “they will be CHOSEN as sons of God.” God initiated peace with many. We should have this same desire:

“Glory to God in highest, and on earth peace to men on whom His favor rests.”
Luke 2:14 NIV

“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”
Romans 5:1 NIV

Even within our own lives, God will never make a pact with sin. We must BE sons and daughters of God, and deal with our own sins as we bring God’s peace to others.

“Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness ...”

12. **What does the future hold for those who are persecuted because of righteousness? (5:10)**

The Lord is up front in telling us we will suffer and that the world will not react in love and kindness to His disciples (see Matthew 10:16-25 and Acts 9:1-16). Within the Kingdom of heaven, we join the ranks of kingdom citizenship because we have a King who gives purpose to life:

“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”
Hebrews 12:2 NIV

13. **What unexpected command is given to Christians who are insulted, hassled, and lied about? (5:11-12)**

As Christians, because of who we ARE in Christ, we should willingly face persecution in very specific ways:

- a) By not retaliating against our persecutors (Matthew 5:44);
- b) By not holding resentments against our persecutors (Luke 23:34);
- c) By rejoicing in the fact that this proves we are God’s children and have a great reward in heaven (Romans 8:7).

"Blessed are the pure in heart . . ."

10. According to this passage, who will see God? (5:8) _____

The word "pure" in this BE Attitude refers to a purity that is the result of a washing. The heart is the center of one's being, the throne of the spirit. God is concerned with the inner heart:

*"Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life."
Proverbs 4:23 NIV*

*"The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?
I the Lord search the heart and examine the mind, to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve."
Jeremiah 17:9-10 NIV*

The heart needs to be cleansed:

*"Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me."
Psalm 51:10 NIV*

Being "pure in heart" is a work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. The Christian has a renewed heart in an un-renewed body:

Jesus said: *"Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak."
Mark 14:38 NIV*

**"I do not understand what I do.
For what I want to do
I do not do, but what I hate I do.
And if I do what I do not want to do,
I agree that the law is good.
As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it,
but it is sin living in me.**

I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—

*this I keep on doing.
Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members.*

*What a wretched man I am!
Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!"
Romans 7:15-24 NIV*

*"For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want."
Galatians 5:17 NIV*

*"... for He knows how we are formed, He remembers that we are dust."
Psalms 103:14 NIV*

Seeing God is evidenced in His creation, in the events of history, and in our daily circumstances:

*"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose."
Romans 8:28 NIV*

In the future, we'll see Him face to face:

*"Now we see but a poor reflection; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known."
I Corinthians 13:12 NIV*

3. Are you ready to look at your life from Jesus' point of view? Why? _____

4. Who was Jesus addressing? (5:1-2) _____

Enormous crowds were following Jesus— He was the talk of the town and everyone wanted to see Him. The disciples, who were His closest associates, were certainly tempted to feel important, proud and possessive. But Jesus pulled His disciples aside and warned them about the temptations they would face as His followers.

Jesus would tell them not to expect fame and fortune, but rather mourning and persecution. Jesus also assured them that they would be rewarded — but perhaps not in this life.

If we don't live by Jesus' words in this sermon, we will find ourselves using God's message to promote our personal interests.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit ..."

5. According to Jesus, what is the reward for those who are poor in spirit? (5:3) _____

The first characteristic of the child of God is a foundation that God can build upon. God will not and cannot build upon the foundations of pride, self will, or our own ambitions. "Poor in spirit" indicates a willingness to surrender prideful self-will to the authority of God, so He might govern our lives. We will not be making demands, because we know we are unworthy and undeserving.

*"I am unworthy of all the kindness and faithfulness you have shown your servant."
Genesis 32:10a NIV*

Poverty of spirit is a consciousness of our own sinfulness and spiritual poverty:

*"Woe to me!" I cried. 'I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty."
Isaiah 6:5 NIV*

*"You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world-becomes an enemy of God."
James 4:4 NIV*

*"Come near to God and He will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded."
James 4:8 NIV*

*"Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will lift you up."
James 4:10 NIV*

"Blessed are those who mourn ..."

6. Why are those who mourn blessed? (5:4) _____

"Mourn" in the Greek is the most intensive kind of mourning. We develop an attitude of repentance for sin. "Those who mourn" are mourning over their sinful state. Being poor in spirit produces an attitude of mourning over our own shortcomings and sins. We are comforted as God cleanses us of our unrighteousness and sins:

*"Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death."
II Corinthians 7:10 NIV*

We are comforted by the fact that our sins have been forgiven.

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.”
II Corinthians 1:3-4 NIV

“Blessed are the meek...”

7. What is the reward for those who are meek? (5:5)

When we realize the truth about ourselves, our attitude towards others is one of meekness. Meekness is related to lowliness:

Jesus said: “Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”
Matthew 11:29 NIV

Meekness is related to a gentle, humble spirit in our Christian walk—not an arrogant or aggressive attitude, but a submissive attitude in obedience to God’s Word. We are to seek meekness:

“Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought His judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be you shall be hid in the day of the Lord’s anger.”
Zephaniah 2:3 NIV

Another meaning for “meek” is “to domesticate a wild animal.”

“Do not be like the horse or the mule, which have no understanding but must be controlled by bit and bridle or they will not come to you.”
Psalms 32:9 NIV

Meekness is having others see the truth about ourselves, and giving honor to others:

“Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves.”
Philippians 2:3 NIV

Finally, Jesus was meek:

“Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!”
Philippines 2:5 NIV

In reality, a meek person has already inherited the earth because he is a satisfied person. A meek person has learned that happiness does not lie in possessions, people or position, but in a personal relationship with God.

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness...”

8. What can those who hunger and thirst for righteousness expect? (5:6)

The first three Beatitudes were the emptying process. Now we come to seek an answer to our helplessness. In the Greek this verse denotes one of deep desire, not for just a portion but, ALL of the righteousness of God.

Righteousness cannot be achieved in our own strength; it is our standing before God. God

has imputed to us righteousness because we believe in Jesus Christ. Righteousness is being right with God and our fellow man.

That is why “The Most Excellent Way” stresses the importance of a Biblical self-examination. When we acknowledge the root of our bitterness and anger that we experience, we are able to leave these self-centered, selfish feelings at the Cross, and get on with victorious living.

We are not to hunger and thirst after happiness, but after righteousness. Blessed is the man or woman, not who is righteous, but who hungers and thirsts after righteousness. It isn’t necessarily righteousness itself that brings happiness — it is right standing with God by faith in Jesus.

When we seek righteousness in accordance with God’s plan for our lives, we will be filled with all spiritual blessings.

“Blessed are the merciful...”

9. What does God promise to those who are merciful? (5:7)

God is merciful:

“The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. ... For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him.”
Psalms 103:8, 11 NIV

The Greek word for “mercy” has its root in the Hebrew word meaning “to get inside someone else’s skin.” This means that you are able to totally identify with what another

is seeing, thinking, and feeling. God came into the skin of man through Christ to be able to identify with us — what we see, what we think, what we feel.

In the Gospels, Jesus places the emphasis on who we ARE, not on what we are doing (see Ephesians 1-4). When we ARE what God wants us to BE, we will do what God wants us to DO:

“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”
Galations 2:20 NIV

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”
II Corinthians 5:17 NIV

After being filled, we become the next BE Attitude. Because we have received the mercy of God through repentance, we are able to be merciful. If we are not merciful, we don’t understand God’s mercy. Those who have received forgiveness must forgive.

The BE Attitudes are like a beacon light that calls us to self-examination. If we’re merciful, then others will be merciful towards us:

“Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.”
Luke 6:38 NIV

“A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. ... If we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment.”
I Corinthians 11:28, 31 NIV

**Justice is getting what you deserve.
Mercy is not getting what you deserve.
Grace is getting what you don’t deserve.**