

What matters is living the good life



CITY BIBLE FORUM

What matters in life – The Sermon on the Mount -
Session 1ⁱ

To explore whether being a follower of Jesus is ultimately the good life (from Matthew 5:1-16).

Matthew 5:1-16¹ Now when he 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 inherit the earth.**

**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.**

¹¹ “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

¹³ “You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men.

¹⁴ “You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

Jesus’ most famous speech

Referred to as “The Sermon on the Mount”, it’s 2300 words long, and takes 12 minutes to read out loud. At the time Jesus was a little known itinerant teacher, in Palestine, a backwater of the Roman Empire, speaking to a crowd of unimportant people, 2000 years ago.

There was no media coverage and yet it’s a speech that has changed the world. Countless millions have read it, and had their lives changed by it. Even our language today in the West has

¹ Scripture taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version, NIV, Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society.

been shaped by it: sayings like “love your neighbour”, “treat others like you would like to be treated”, “eye for an eye”, “turn the other cheek”, “blessed are the peacemakers”.

The delivery

The location was the banks of the Sea of Galilee in Israel. The slope of the land created a natural amphitheatre so that the 12 disciples and the crowds could hear Jesus.



Q1. What's wrong with the image on the right?

It's a very Anglo looking group of people!

The Beatitudes

The beginning of Jesus' speech is called the “Beatitudes”. The word “beatitude” is Latin for “blessed”. Being “blessed” is more than just being happy. Someone is blessed by God if they enjoy God's favour – it means they are living the good life.

A modern day “beatitudes”

- 1) Happy are the successful, for they control their own lives.
- 2) Happy are those without much of a conscience, for they're enjoying life.
- 3) Happy are the assertive, for they get what they want.
- 4) Happy are the morally indifferent, for they live how they want,
- 5) Happy are those who take revenge, for they always get even
- 6) Happy are those who are comfortable with their own moral failures, for they won't worry about God.
- 7) Happy are the trouble-makers, for they give the spectators what they want.
- 8) Happy are those who don't believe in anything too much, for they will have a nice easy life.

Q2. Do you think these modern day “beatitudes” are what many people think makes for a good life?

Matthew 5:1-12 ¹ Now when he 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.

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for they will inherit the earth.

⁶ Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.

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for they will be shown mercy.

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Q3. How are Jesus “beatitudes” different from today’s “beatitudes”? [think big picture, rather than the detail]

They are counter-intuitive!

The beatitudes can really be broken up into 2 parts:

1. Attitude towards God
2. Attitude towards others

Verse 7 is where they switch from attitude to God to attitude to others.

Q4. What does it mean to have this kind of attitude towards God?

1. “poor in spirit”?

Hint: If wealth breeds independence, poverty breeds...
So being poor in spirit means....

Being dependent on God.

2. "mourn"?

Hint: In earlier parts of the Bible, people mourned over their sin (their's or others)

Grieving over sin / behaviour and attitudes that displeases God.

3. "meek"?

Hint: Meek has more to do with being gentle, than being weak.
So how can the meek inherit the earth?

A meek attitude towards God recognizes that God is in control, not you! The meek will inherit the earth because they know the one who owns the world (God).

4. "hunger and thirst for righteousness?"

Being in right relationship with God is the basic driver in life.

Q5. Why will this lead to these kinds of attitudes to others?

Knowing you have God's favour frees you up to genuinely care for others, rather than feeling the need to protect your own interests.

1. "merciful"

Showing mercy to others – giving them the benefit of the doubt etc.

2. "pure in heart"

Being single-minded in your motives ie genuinely caring for someone rather than being kind so that you get something out of it.

3. "peace maker"

Taking the initiative to resolve conflicts etc.

4. not fear "persecution"

Knowing you have God's favour is more important than having the favour of other human beings.

Matthew 5:13 ¹³ "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men."

Q6. If you want to live the good live, God's way, then why is it important to have a certain type of character?

[hint: think about the relationship that salt has to food]

You need to be distinctive / different in the way that you live. That is what being a follower of God is all about.

Matthew 5:14-16 ¹⁴ "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden.

¹⁵ Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

Q7. If you live that way, what's going to happen?

It will be noticed.

The Beatitudes are really an identikit picture of what it means to be a disciple or follower of God.

Q8. What if you're not yet a follower of God?

It's good to see what becoming a follower of God will involve in terms of how your life needs to change.

Q9. What if you're thinking about becoming a follower of God?

Realising you need to be dependent on God (poor in spirit), grieving over sin (mourn) and that God is in control, not you (meek) is a good place to start when it comes to becoming a follower of God. These would be good things to think about.