

STUDY GUIDE



THE BEATITUDES



The Beatitudes: Blessings of the Kingdom

Thank you for accepting the call to study *The Beatitudes: Blessings of the Kingdom*. Over the course of the program, you will embark on a visually stunning journey through the Beatitudes — the core teachings of Jesus that beautifully outline the values of the Kingdom of Heaven. This devotional pairs each Beatitude with breathtaking photography and reflective commentary, offering a unique blend of spiritual insight and visual inspiration. It serves not only as a piece of art, but also as a meditative guide to a deeper understanding and application of these timeless blessings in daily life. Experience the beauty of the Beatitudes and discover the profound wisdom, joy, and peace they offer to those who embrace them. This journey is for people at any stage in their walk with Christ.

Together in a small group, you will study the Beatitudes, engage in inspiring questions and conversations, and participate in prayer and service experiences.

As you progress through this journey, you will begin to see God in new ways and hear His voice in unexpected places. We deeply appreciate your commitment to this journey.



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Study Guide Introduction

The term “Beatitudes” comes from the Latin “beatitudo,” meaning blessedness.

At the start of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus pronounced eight profound blessings, known as the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1–12). Central to Christian teachings and embodying New Testament ethics, the Beatitudes reflect Jesus’s wisdom and form a cherished core of the Sermon on the Mount.

This devotional, inspired by Dr. Mathew P. John's sermon series at Lake Avenue Church, offers a spiritual roadmap for you to meditate on. Explore these teachings and the accompanying sermon videos to be blessed by their profound insights.

Group Size

This study, based upon the *Beatitudes* book and videos, is designed to be experienced in a small group setting.

Materials Needed

Participants should have their own study guide and copy of the book *The Beatitudes: Blessings of the Kingdom*.

Group Activities/Experiences

Each study group will engage in both a Prayer Experience and a Serve Experience. Your group members will select a date and location for corporate and individual prayer. For the Serve Experience, participants will collectively select a service project to perform together as a group under the direction of the facilitator.

Facilitation

Each group will have a facilitator to lead the study, monitor discussions, prompt participation, and ensure that everyone has the opportunity to contribute. The facilitator will coordinate the Prayer and Serve Experiences.

Weekly Lessons

- 1) Sessions start with fellowship, featuring a rotating member’s testimony.
- 2) Members discuss the weekly beatitude and the related sermon, having read the chapter and watched the video beforehand. Discuss the reflection questions.
- 3) It is encouraged to memorize each week’s beatitude.
- 4) Sessions conclude in prayer.



01 / The Test of Discipleship

THE HEART OF THIS LESSON *(Matthew 5: 1–2)*

Becoming a disciple of Jesus, not merely a follower, requires sacrifices to “see God.” True discipleship entails leaving the comfort of the valley to climb mountains with Jesus. Three biblical mountains symbolize this journey. On the **mountain of teaching**, we delve into God's Word. The **Mount of Transfiguration** offers a transformative encounter with Jesus. Finally, the **mountain of suffering** sees us bearing our own cross alongside Jesus, leading to eternal salvation. Each mountain provides insights that shift our perspective to align more closely with God's view.

TESTIMONY

Your group leader will start by sharing their testimony in the spirit of this lesson. We invite you also to share your own journey to becoming a Christian in the coming weeks. Giving your testimony involves recounting the path that led you to Christ. Testimonies should be brief, lasting between five and ten minutes, focusing on key moments of your journey to salvation. While sharing is optional, it is highly encouraged. Each testimony is unique, reflecting God's impact on an individual's heart. As a general guideline, your testimony can cover three phases: Life before knowing Christ, how you came to know Christ, and life after you received Him.

WATCH: BEATITUDES Sermon Video 1 – “The Test of Discipleship” (Sunday, June 5, 2022) by scanning this QR code or visiting <https://lakeave.org/the-beatitudes>.



REFLECTIONS

1. What was your own mountaintop experience when you first encountered Christ?
2. Are you a follower or a disciple? What are the main differences between them?
3. What are some of the mountains Jesus climbed? And where are you on your own journey of climbing these mountains with Him?



02 / Blessed Are The Poor in Spirit

*"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven."
(Matthew 5:3)*

THE HEART OF THIS LESSON

In each of the eight Beatitudes, Jesus took worldly expectations and turned them upside down to reveal heaven's true values. These blessings show that true riches come from the heart, not material wealth. To embody Jesus's ideals, we must abandon our craving for more "stuff" and depend entirely on God. This lesson teaches the Hebrew concept of *ebion*, being poor by detaching ourselves from the material world and relying solely on God. Only then, when we place ourselves completely in God's hands will we find the blessings of His Kingdom.

WATCH: BEATITUDES Sermon Video 2 – "Blessed Are The Poor in Spirit" (Sunday, June 12, 2022) by scanning this QR code or visiting <https://lakeave.org/the-beatitudes>.



REFLECTIONS

1. What have you given up for the Lord? What would you be willing to give up for Him?
2. Has Jesus ever turned an ideal in your life upside down?
3. Have you faced rejection due to financial status, education, or social standing? Conversely, have you ever dismissed someone for lacking in these areas?
4. Have you ever encountered a circumstance where God was your only source of help?



03 / Blessed Are Those Who Mourn

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted." (Matthew 5:4)

THE HEART OF THIS LESSON

This chapter explores three types of tears that receive God's blessing. Our spiritual journey commences with **tears of repentance** as we acknowledge our sinfulness and cry out to God. As our spiritual journey continues, God uses trials to draw us closer to Him, revealing Himself as our Good Shepherd in the midst of these **tears of trial**. These experiences refine our ability to discern His voice. Then, we learn to emulate Jesus by sharing the pain of others, shedding **tears of empathy**. Ultimately, our hearts align with God's as we grieve for each lost soul and empathize with His sorrows.



WATCH: BEATITUDES Sermon Video 3 – “Blessed Are Those Who Mourn” (Sunday, June 19, 2022) by scanning this QR code or visiting <https://lakeave.org/the-beatitudes>.



PRAYER EXPERIENCE

The second Beatitude builds on our recognition of our own poverty of spirit and our emotional response of sorrow over others' pain and need for salvation. We gain purpose in our pain. As we are reminded that God blesses the broken, such times of trouble call for prayer. It is thus appropriate to join with others in your study group in calling upon the Lord. Your group can decide together on a location and date to meet for prayer. You can use the following prayer acrostic, which can be helpful in structuring one's thoughts to engage the Lord in meaningful prayer.

P-R-A-Y ACROSTIC

P- PRAISE

- Worship God for who He is and what He has done.
- Pray through a praise psalm such as Psalm 103.

R- REPENT

- Confess your sins to God and acknowledge your need for Jesus.
- Read Galatians 5:16-26. Confess any shortcomings that these verses reveal in your life.
- Confess any other sins that you can think of.
- Ask God to renew His strength in you and assure you of the forgiveness you have received in Christ.

A- ASK

- Intercede for particular needs in your own life and the lives of others.
- Pray for your individual needs.
- Pray for your friends and family.
- Pray for our church, its ministries, and its leaders.
- Pray for those who do not know Jesus.
- Pray for our country and state leaders.
- Pray for missionaries whom you know.
- Pray for the persecuted church.
- Pray for the world's unreached peoples.

Y- YIELD

- Surrender your day and life to following Jesus wherever He leads.
- Spend some time giving over to Him all areas of life.
- Ask for God's will to guide your thoughts, words, actions, work, school, families, and decisions for our future.
- Spend time praying for your week ahead and items on your schedule, and ask God to work in you as you surrender these things to Him.

REFLECTIONS

1. Recollect your first experience of self-confrontation. Did it produce tears of repentance?
2. Why does the Good Shepherd lead His flock through the Valley of the Shadow of Death?
3. Have you ever shed tears for others? If so, how did it transform you?



04 / Blessed Are The Meek

"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." (Matthew 5:5)

THE HEART OF THIS LESSON

Even though the world may view meekness as weakness, meekness actually requires inner strength to control one's power. The Greek word *praus* is commonly translated to a disposition of humility, gentleness, and a willingness to submit to God's will. In the context of this Beatitude where Jesus says, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth," *praus* conveys a sense of strength under control, humility, and a gentle spirit that trusts in God. True meekness does not involve trying to eradicate all anger entirely. It is appropriate to demonstrate righteous anger toward sin, such as injustice and corruption. After all, both Moses and Jesus, described by God as meek, got angry at sin. This is the only beatitude to offer a physical rather than spiritual reward.

WATCH: BEATITUDES Sermon Video 4 – "Blessed Are The [Gentle] Meek" (Sunday, July 7, 2022) by scanning this QR code or visiting <https://lakeave.org/the-beatitudes>.



SERVE EXPERIENCE

To apply the study of chapter 6, "Blessed Are The Merciful," each group will engage in a serve experience to abundantly serve God. Together, members will choose when and where to volunteer, contributing to the needs of their church, community, or other ministries. Groups should anticipate participating in the Serve Experience during or around their study of chapter 6, "Blessed Are The Merciful."

REFLECTIONS

1. How does understanding the meaning of *praus* as a warhorse change your understanding of meekness?
2. What makes you angry? Does your anger originate from a self-centered ego or a selfless concern for others?
3. What do you learn from the way Jesus and Moses demonstrated meekness?
4. Has your meekness ever been rewarded physically?



05 / Blessed Are Those Who Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied." (Matthew 5:6)

THE HEART OF THIS LESSON

Christianity stands apart from other religions by emphasizing a craving and intense desire for righteousness rather than simply demanding it. Jesus recognized our inability to achieve righteousness on our own merit, going beyond a mere tally of good versus bad deeds. God requires perfection, which Jesus, by becoming human, balances on our behalf. True blessedness is found not in attaining flawless righteousness, but in harboring a profound longing for it. When we sincerely hunger and thirst for righteousness, God satisfies that longing, accrediting us with the righteousness of Jesus.

WATCH: BEATITUDES Sermon Video 5 – “Blessed Are Those Who Hunger and Thirst” (Sunday, July 10, 2022) by scanning this QR code or visiting <https://lakeave.org/the-beatitudes>.



REFLECTIONS

1. How is the concept of righteousness different in Christianity compared to other religions?
2. Why did Jesus need to become human in order for us to be able to gain righteousness?
3. If we don't have to do the right things to become righteous, why can't we simply do the wrong things?
4. How does God reward us for our dreams?



06 / Blessed Are The Merciful

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." (Matthew 5:7)

THE HEART OF THIS LESSON

When Jesus talked about being merciful, He referred to the Hebrew term *hesed*, meaning intense empathy and experiencing things from others' perspective. Jesus demonstrated *hesed* both horizontally and vertically. Horizontally, He showed *hesed* by becoming human and living among us, and He continues to advocate for us by practicing **intercession** for us in heaven. Vertically, Jesus showed *hesed* through his **incarnation**, submitting to the Father's will by dying for all of humanity. This act reveals true mercy, which requires sacrificial love for others — not just by monetary donations, but by giving of ourselves through acts such as intercessory prayer and evangelism.

WATCH: BEATTITUDES Sermon Video 6 – "Blessed Are The Merciful" (Sunday, July 17, 2022) by scanning this QR code or visiting <https://lakeave.org/the-beatitudes>.



SERVE EXPERIENCE

In keeping with this beatitude in finding grace to help others in time of needs, your group will participate in the Serve Experience discussed earlier in Session 4. Your group leader will coordinate the details of your group's serving opportunity.

REFLECTIONS

1. How does the Jewish understanding of *hesed* differ from the popular perception of mercy?
2. Jesus practiced *hesed* both horizontally and vertically. How can we follow His example and do likewise?
3. How can we practice *hesed* in our intercessory prayers?
4. How does the cross signify the ultimate expression of *hesed*?



07 / Blessed Are The Pure in Heart

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." (Matthew 5:8)

THE HEART OF THIS LESSON

When Jesus talked about seeing God in this beatitude, He wasn't referring to seeing God with our eyes but rather with our hearts. Because Jesus became human, we are able to understand Him and have a genuine relationship with Him. He reveals God's true nature of love and truth to us, allowing us to experience God personally. This is possible because God created a "hidden code" in our hearts — our conscience — which directs us to Him through an instinctive recognition of God's Law. However, sin interferes with our ability to connect with God, so we need to be cleansed by Jesus's sacrifice on the cross. Our role is to keep our eyes on the Lord and surrender our hearts to Him.

WATCH: BEATITUDES Sermon Video 7 – “Blessed Are The Pure in Heart” (Sunday, July 24, 2022) by scanning this QR code or visiting <https://lakeave.org/the-beatitudes>.



SERVE EXPERIENCE

Please open this week by debriefing the Serve Experience, discussing the following questions: Where did you see God's presence? What did you find challenging or rewarding?

REFLECTIONS

1. How is the human heart "coded" for deciphering the image of God?
2. How did God show Himself to the world in Jesus Christ?
3. How do we prepare our hearts to behold the glory of God?



08 / Blessed Are The Peacemakers

*"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God."
(Matthew 5:9)*

THE HEART OF THIS LESSON

Peace is being in harmony with God in all aspects of our lives. The Bible points out three types of peace to seek. First, we must have **peace with ourselves** through a clean conscience. With this inner peace, we are able to establish **peace with others** in the form of social harmony. However, true peace from conflicts only comes when we establish **peace with God**, which is possible by letting Jesus serve as a bridge between us and God. Once we have this peace with God, it is our responsibility to serve as a bridge between the church and the world, spreading the message of peace. It is not enough to merely love peace; we must actively strive to make it.

WATCH: BEATITUDES Sermon Video 8 – “Blessed Are The Peacemakers”
(August 7, 2022) by scanning this QR code visiting <https://lakeave.org/the-beatitudes>.



REFLECTIONS

1. Why is peace with God foundational to all other forms of peace?
2. How do you distinguish between a peace-lover and a peacemaker?
3. How do we model Jesus in the bridge-building process?
4. How does this new “Fifth Spiritual Law” give us a more active role in our relationship with God and the world around us?



09 / Blessed Are The Persecuted

*"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:10)*

THE HEART OF THIS LESSON

Jesus warned us that we will experience trials and persecution. In the first century, it was illegal to be a Christian, and many people were killed in gruesome ways. However, instead of being destroyed by persecution, Christians rejoiced that they were worthy to suffer for Jesus. This persecution led to growth in three ways. It **broke stagnation**, forcing Christians to abandon complacency. Further, it **unified the church** as Christians supported each other. It also **deployed the church**, causing the Christians to scatter throughout the world, spreading the message of salvation with them. Through all this, persecution strengthened the church and will continue to do so.

WATCH: BEATITUDES Sermon Video 9 – “Blessed Are The Persecuted” (Sunday, August 14, 2022) by scanning this QR code visiting <https://lakeave.org/the-beatitudes>.



REFLECTIONS

1. How does persecution contribute to church growth?
2. How has the Lord used persecution in your life to bring you closer to Him?
3. How is the persecution for the sake of your faith different from persecution in other contexts?
4. Do you embrace persecution the way the early church did? Are you worthy to suffer for Christ?



