

The beatitudes are a list of requirements to live a blessed life that is found in Jesus' sermon on the mount in Matthew chapter 5. This list deals with one's attitude and relationship with God, as well as one's attitude and relationship with others. Both of these things must be present for us to experience good community, and without good community it is impossible to live the blessed life. Let's spend some time this week looking at what some of the beatitudes can teach us about getting along with one another.

Day 1

Be Humble

Jesus told us in his sermon on the mount that we should be poor in spirit, which, of course, means that we should be humble. Why is this so important to living the blessed life? In our culture, we are constantly taught that if we don't secure our own interests, no one else will. As I was riding to the office today, I was next to a car blaring a rap song about how great the rapper was, which seems to be the topic for most rap songs. The idea of praising, marketing, and promoting one's self is everywhere we look. The problem is, it is almost impossible to have community for very long if those in the community are not humble. Think of the number of bands, teams, and marriages that have been broken up over pride, and think of all the community that was lost, and all the productivity and creativity that these lost communities could have provided. When we are humble, we seek truth and growth over victory and image. We are o.k. with being proven wrong, of losing the argument, as long as we learn the truth and are able to grow and help others grow into Christ. When you are humble, the good of the community and its relationship to God and His glory are far more important than how you are viewed by the world, and this creates a firm foundation for lasting community.

Verses: James 4:10, Matthew 5:3, Proverbs 22:4

Prayer Topics: Unassuming, Truth, Dependency

Day 2

Mourn

Jesus told us, strangely enough, that those who mourn are blessed. The word blessed could also be translated as happy, so in a sense Jesus is saying happy are the sad. Why would he say such a thing? Because, in order to be truly happy, you must have things of value in your life, and if you have things of value in your life, you will see them damaged, destroyed, or lost from time to time. Many people go through life wondering why it feels so empty, even as they avoid caring about anything because it is too painful. In order to experience strong, lasting community, you must value that community. When you do, you will find you are quick to perceive problems in the community and you will work to resolve them. The presence of disunity in the community will cause you anguish and sleepless nights, and you will tirelessly work to resolve the problems and to create healthy community. In contrast to this, the image of the cool guy in a leather jacket who breezes into town, having nothing, and holding onto nothing so that he is hurt by nothing is what our culture has held up as an icon for more than 70 years. How sad it is to think of all that was missed out on by all those people who bought into this lie over the years. How much happiness and joy was lost, all because we were afraid to mourn.

Verses: Matthew 5:4, Ecclesiastes 7:3, Psalm 34:18

Prayer Topics: Sorrow, Lament, Wisdom

Day 3

Be Strong & Courageous

Jesus told us that the meek would be blessed, and perhaps no other beatitude is as ignored or misunderstood. To be meek, as many of you have no doubt heard, is not to be weak. It is to have strength, but have it under control. It is to have a sword, but to keep it in its sheath. Why is this so important to understand? Weak people do not create good community. Weak people go to community to take from others to meet their needs, while strong people go to community to help meet others' needs. We all have some weaknesses in areas of our lives, for none of us is perfect. We also experience bouts of weakness from time to time, and community exists to meet these needs. But there exists a type of weakness that cares nothing for others, and has no interest in doing the work that would make it strong. It does not seek to serve in any areas where it could, and does not see in the weakness of others an opportunity to help, but instead a rival to its own desires. It seeks only its own good, and cares nothing for the good of the community. Like a parasite, it would happily use up all the resources of the community it is in, and then move on to do the same to another community. This is the kind of weakness we must avoid. Our strength is, when it is developed, used to help others, not to defend ourselves or as a means of taking from the community. The strength is paired with self-control, so it is only used to help the community to grow, for as the community is strengthened so are we. Maybe you have lots of this strength, and maybe you only have a little. The starting point is not the point. Develop meekness, develop strength and the means to control it, for when you do you are an incomparable asset to the community, able to strengthen it by your presence, and able to defend it when called on.

Verses: Matthew 5:5, Numbers 12:3, James 3:13, 1 Peter 3:4

Prayer Topics: Capability, Restraint, Generosity

Day 4

Be Righteous

The righteous seek to be in right standing with God, not to look a certain way or to gain an advantage. The righteous are good losers, for they understand that there is something greater than winning at the game. By seeking right standing with God, when a conflict arises, the righteous not only fight fair, but they fight for something other than themselves. They do not seek to be recognized but to put things in the right relationship to God, and what bothers them is not personal shame, but that they might contribute to sin and lack of glory in the world. When they are shown a fault, they immediately rectify it. The truth of their character is not that they don't mind being shown to be wrong, it's that they crave having things put right. They love justice, and having things be ordered in a godly way that maximizes blessing for all and the glory of God is their driving force. They hunger and thirst for it. It is one thing to be humble enough to see the truth, it is another altogether to pursue it with all passion. These individuals that hunger and thirst for righteousness are a difficulty to community in the short run, because they will not allow things to be covered over or ignored, but they are an unequalled asset to community in the long run, because they will not allow injustice to fester and destroy the community, even if they are the ones that need to change.

Verses: Matthew 5:6, Matthew 6:33, 2 Timothy 2:22, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Isaiah 33:15-17

Prayer Topics: Honor, Nobility, Virtue

Day 5

Be Merciful

The merciful are good winners, just like the righteous are good losers. If the righteous lose an argument, they will make amends with their whole heart. And when the merciful win an argument, they will be gracious and magnanimous, making sure that the unity of community is not ruptured, and that the person in the wrong is not left without dignity and respect. Just as we need the righteous in our communities, so also, we need the merciful. Perhaps nothing is as out of place as someone who has great intelligence and little mercy, for they are often right, and their rightness destroys community all around them. How terrible to have such a gift of intelligence lead to so much suffering in your life, to have a positive result in so much that is negative. Strive to be merciful in your life, and let your gifts be used in your favor, as well as the favor of the community.

Verses: Matthew 5:7, Luke 6:36, James 2:13, Matthew 9:13, Titus 3:5

Prayer Topics: Goodwill, Forgiveness, Tolerance, Generosity