

# **THE NORMAL CHRISTIAN LIFE**

## **Studies in the Sermon on the Mount**

### **Part Two**

#### **“Introduction to the Beatitudes”**

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**Welcome to our verse by verse study of the Sermon on the Mount: the greatest sermon ever preached by the greatest Preacher who ever lived.**

**The sermon begins with the famous Beatitudes, but first, I’d like to look talk about why we are calling this project “The Normal Christian Life”**

#### **I. What is the Meaning of “Normal”?**

##### **A. Normal: “Conforming To A Standard”**

1. “Normal” is a relative term; it has no meaning unless we know what the standard is.

a. The Doctor tells me my temperature, my blood pressure, my cholesterol count; I respond, “OK, but what’s normal?” I can’t really judge my condition without knowing what’s “normal.”

2. Life makes no sense without standards; there has to be a “normal” to measure by.

a. When I gas up at the car down the street and it says I’ve drawn 15 gallons of gas, how do I know it’s the same as 15 gallons in Murfreesboro?

b. If I ask the butcher for 2 pounds of ground beef, how do I know how much I’m getting? He puts it on a scale.

c. If I tell you I’m 6’2”’, but how can I prove it without a tape measure?

3. Our founding fathers knew that the new nation needed standards and norms.

a. Back in 1790, in his first message to Congress, President George Washington recognized that life in the new nation would require standards:

**"Uniformity in the currency, weights, and measures of the United States is an object of great importance, and will be duly attended to".**

b. In 1821, John Quincy Adams, the 6<sup>th</sup> President of the United States said this:

**"Weights and measures may be ranked among the necessities of life to every individual of human society."**

4. These great men were wise enough to recognize that *it is the responsibility of those in authority to establish standards and norms.*

a. A pound of nails in Pennsylvania had to be the same as a pound of nails in North Carolina. A 2 X 4 in Georgia had to be the same as a 2 X 4 in Connecticut.

b. These were godly men, who probably knew Proverbs 1:11

**Dishonest scales are an abomination to the Lord,  
but a just weight is His delight.**

**Proverbs 11:1 NKJV**

5. Unless there is a "normal", or a standard to measure by, how can we trust anything?

6. Here's the point. Our founding fathers wanted the new nation to have fixed standards to measure by. Jesus Christ came to establish His Kingdom on earth. So early on in His ministry, He preaches the "Sermon on the Mount"; in it He sets forth the standard for the "normal" Christian life!

a. It's a perfect picture; a reference point; a yardstick to measure by.

7. Let's begin the journey by thinking of the Sermon on the Mount as a great symphony; each section plays its part and comes in at its proper place.

## **B. The Sermon is a Symphony: The Opening Movement is the Beatitudes**

1. **Jesus begins the Sermon on the Mount with 8 Beatitudes.**

2. The number 8 in the Bible is often symbolic of "new beginnings".

a. God's number of fullness and completeness is 7: God completed creation in 7 days; the new creation began to function on the 8<sup>th</sup> day!

b. That's why our calendar week consists of 7 days; each "8<sup>th</sup> day" constitutes a new beginning.

c. David was the 8<sup>th</sup> son of Jesse; the one chosen to be replace Saul and bring a new beginning to Israel

3. **Moses had come *down* from a mountain and told the Jews how to live; now Christ goes *up* into the mount to tell them who they are; He gives them a new beginning!** (A picture of the new life Christ would bring to His people)

4. Jesus is establishing a new "standard"; a new "normal".

a. These Beatitudes reveal the "mind of Christ"; they are the same attitudes in Jesus that will now mark the life of those who truly believe in Him!

**Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus...**

**Philippians 2:5 KJV**

**Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus...**

**Philippians 2:5 NASB**

5. Jesus Himself modeled every one of these; they are a picture of the very character and nature of Christ.

**We must always remember that the Sermon on the Mount is a description of character and not a code of ethics or morals. It is not to be regarded as a kind of new '10 Commandments' or a set of rules and regulations, but rather as a description of what we Christians are meant to be..."**

**David Martyn Lloyd-Jones**

## II. Overview of the Beatitudes

### A. First Things First

1. These "Be-Attitudes", as I like to call them, are the *foundation* for the rest of the sermon. They are a perfect picture of Christian character and the "normal" Christian life. *Let us read them together out loud, remembering that each of these tell us what is inside of us.*

THE BEATITUDES	
1) <b>Blessed are the poor in Spirit</b> , for there is the kingdom of heaven	5) <b>Blessed are the Merciful</b> , for they shall obtain mercy
2) <b>Blessed are those who mourn</b> , for they shall be comforted	6) <b>Blessed are the pure of heart</b> , for they shall see God.
3) <b>Blessed are the meek</b> , for they shall inherit the earth.	7) <b>Blessed are the peace makers</b> , for they shall be called sons of God.
4) <b>Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness</b> , for they shall be satisfy.	8) <b>Blessed are those who are persecuted</b> , for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.

2. Notice that all the Beatitudes begin with the same 2 words: **“Blessed are”**; so let’s look at what they mean.

3. The word “Blessed” means “happy, prosperous, to be envied”; the Amplified Bible really captures the full meaning of the word by introducing each Beatitude this way:

**“Blessed, happy, to be envied and spiritually prosperous are...”**

a. So each Beatitude describes a blessed, or happy life;

4. But the second word is “are”; (Blessed *are*); a present tense verb. Don’t miss this!

a. **The world says happiness comes when things *around us* are right. But Jesus says happiness comes when things *within us* are right!**

b. The Kingdom Jesus preaches works “inside-out”.

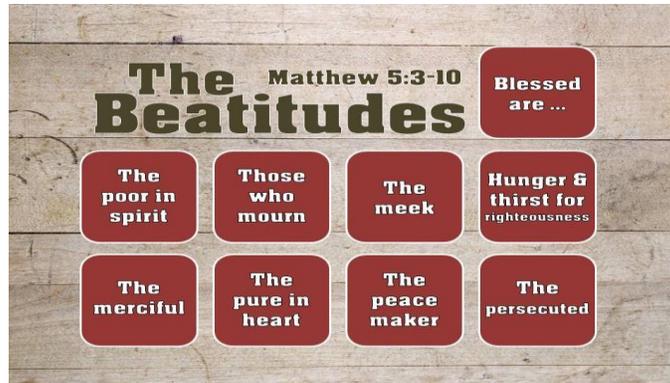
5. The old Covenant lifestyle begins with *doing*; but the New Covenant is begins with *being*!

**“Immediately the Beatitudes take us into a realm that is beyond the Law of Moses.”**

**David Martyn-Lloyd Jones**

6. In the Kingdom of God, happiness and blessing is not about *doing* something; it’s about *being* someone.

**“Blessed” + “Are” > followed by 8 characteristics of Christian character.**



7. In the normal Christian life, we don't *DO* these 8 things, we *ARE* these 8 things! We are....

- **Poor** in spirit-we see our desperate need of God!
- **Mourn**-when we sin or grieve over the sinful world around us
- **Meek**-We are humble; teachable; submitted to the Lordship of Christ
- **Hungry and Thirsty for righteousness**-We want more of God, more of His presence, more of His word
  - **Merciful**-toward those who sin against us
  - **Pure in heart**-we pursue holiness; to be more like the Lord
  - **Peacemakers**-we don't strike back; we turn the other cheek
- **Persecuted for righteousness sake**-Because we are so different from the world that the world hates us

8. Notice that everything in the normal Christian life is abnormal to the world!

- Poor in spirit? Hey, you're OK just like you are
- Mourning over sin? Hey, get over it; nobody's perfect
- Meek? Are you kidding? You have to be bold and strong if you're going to be a winner in this world
- Hungry and thirsty for righteousness? Hey, stop being so religious
- Merciful? Are you kidding? When they hit you, hit them back...harder
- Pure in heart? Don't be so uptight; everybody sins
- Peacemakers? That's for losers
- Persecuted? Hey, you must be doing something wrong

9. But the world is thinking *externally*; the Beatitudes speak of *spiritual* things!

10. They were “amazed”, because Jesus is not like all their Rabbis and religious teachers who gave them a list of things to do! He gave them a list of attitudes to live by!

**BE This-RECEIVE This**

**Be poor in spirit-receive the Kingdom**

**Be mournful over sin-receive comfort**

**Be meek-inherit the earth**

**Be hungry and thirsty for righteousness-be filled.**

**Be merciful and you’ll receive mercy.**

**Be holy and pure in heart and one day you will see God.**

**Be a peacemaker and God will claim you as His own**

**Be persecuted for righteousness sake but be happy even in this, because it proves the Kingdom is yours.**

*Notice the reward of the 1<sup>st</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> Beatitudes is the Kingdom!!!*

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**In every case, blessing and happiness does not come from what we DO, it comes from who we ARE!**

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a. The standard is Jesus Christ Himself! He is our model!

b. **Paul says “we have the mind of Christ”! (1 Corinthians 2:16)**

9. The Beatitudes express the mind of Christ, the normal, the standard we measure by IF WE ARE TRULY CHRISTIANS!

10. Here’s the difference between normal and abnormal:

**The abnormal Christian life: “Live like this and you will become a Christian.”**

**The normal Christian life: “Become a Christian and you will live like this.”**

a. The abnormal Christian life begins with doing, not being.

b. The normal Christian life begins with being, not doing.

**III. Conclusion: Various Reactions to the Beatitudes**

## A. They Do Not Come Naturally

1. The immediate reaction to the Beatitudes is that no one can *do* them!
  - a. You cannot “DO” poor in Spirit! You either are or you are not
  - b. You cannot MAKE YOURSELF spiritually hungry and thirsty!
  - c. You either ARE or you ARE NOT
2. What it means is that right here at the beginning we need to see that this normal Christian life is only for *Christians*! You cannot *live* it unless you *are* it!
3. The late Dr. Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade, said it this way:

**“The Christian life isn’t difficult. It is impossible—without the power of the Holy Spirit.”**

**Dr. Bill Bright**

4. The cruelest thing we can do is to teach the Beatitudes, or set up the rest of the Sermon on the Mount as a standard of living or a normal way of life to people who are not born again!

**a. It would be like asking a toddler to lift a barbell or telling you’re 6 year old to go dunk a basketball!**

5. This is the great mistake we make expecting unbelievers to live like believers:
  - Teaching people who aren’t born again to pray the Lord’s Prayer is a waste of time, because it begins with “Our Father”...and if you aren’t a child of God He isn’t your Father!
  - Telling people they need to hunger and thirst for righteousness is like commanding someone who’s just eaten supper to be hungry again!
  - Telling people who don’t know Christ to “turn the other cheek” or to “love their enemies” is a waste of time, because only born-again people are capable of consistently doing this!
6. Jesus never intended to give this sermon to the world to be admired; He gave it to His people to be lived! And only HIS PEOPLE are capable of living it.
  - a. If you have none of these, you are not a Christian

b. If you don't desire all of these, you are not a Christian

7. But even if you are a Christian, you will have a desire to grow in these things. And that desire alone proves that you are a true child of God!

8. Remember, we may be truly born again, but we're not yet perfected. As we work through this great Sermon, time and again we will be challenged to be better conformed to the standard.

9. But don't be discouraged! Even the Apostle Paul, late in his ministry, said he had not yet arrived, he was still pressing forward.

a. Andrew Murray, the great South African pastor, writer and teacher put it this way over a 100 years ago...

**“I go to the Word and learn there all the characteristics of a child of God. And after each one of them I write: ‘this Jesus will work in me; I have Him to make me a child of God.’”**

**Andrew Murray**

10. We are all “being conformed” to the image of Christ. We are, all of us, a work in progress!

11. But it's not all about us! There are evangelistic benefits from studying the Sermon on the Mount.

### **B. 3 Things To Know As We Go**

#1. Invite people to hear these messages! But you may ask, “Pastor, you said the Sermon on the Mount is addressed to believers, so should I invite lost people to come hear these messages?” Absolutely!

**“There is nothing that so leads to the Gospel and its grace as the Sermon on the Mount. The world today is looking for, and desperately needs, true Christians.”**

**David Martyn Lloyd-Jones**

a. Don't leave God out of your ideas about evangelism. Get people to come hear the teaching. Know that God has already gone ahead of you and has prepared the hearts of lost people to be convicted by His word.

b. Remember that there are a lot of people out there who have not really rejected Christ; they have rejected the Christian life as they have seen their Christian friends living it!

c. Nothing will drive people to their knees quicker than seeing what the normal Christian life really looks like.

## **#2. Let us stop trying to win the world by being like the world!**

a. Over the past 50 years, the church in America has had the idea that if we can make ourselves more attractive to the world we can win the world.

b. So the race is on to see who can have finer facilities; gymnasiums, some with health clubs, restaurants, coffee shops; shorten the services, shorten the sermons, and above all make things entertaining.

c. The result has been that the world has gotten more “churchy” and the church has gotten more worldly; meanwhile, the country is going to hell.

d. But Jesus said we are salt God sends to preserve the corruption of the world by sin; we are the light of a world that is in darkness; if we lose our saltiness or let our light be hid under a basket, we are good for nothing!

e. We cannot win the world by being like the world.

**“The glory of the Gospel is that when the Church is absolutely different from the world, she attracts it.”**

**David Martyn-Lloyd Jones**

#3 Finally, let us have faith that if we live the normal Christian life, evangelism will take care of itself.

**“I never tire of saying that what the Church needs to do is not to organize evangelistic campaigns to attract outside people, but to begin herself to live the Christian life.”**

**David Martyn Lloyd-Jones**

a. Over the next few months, as we go through the Sermon on the Mount, we will all see very clearly what that life looks like!

**Altar Call and Prayer**