

Week 1: What is Blessed:

Jesus is not describing eight different persons but is describing eight different qualities of the same person.

– Darrell Johnson

Blessed are...

Theme: We are truly blessed based on God’s work in our lives, not our work or circumstances.

INTRODUCTION

Icebreaker: Who is the happiest person you know? What is it about them that exudes joy?

Opening Prayer: Have a member of the group offer a prayer to start the meeting.

Example Prayer: *Heavenly Father, teach us what it means to be blessed so that we can live our lives fully devoted to you. In Jesus name, Amen.*

LESSON BEGINS:

Discuss: Happiness

- Would you say that most people you know are happy? Why or why not?
- What are some ways people seek to achieve happiness in their lives?
- Does our constant pursuit of personal happiness lead us closer or further away from being happy?

Happy/Blessed:

“The word *blessed* (Greek: *makarios*) can be translated as happy, but to do so is misleading. While Jesus intends to impart a certain kind of happiness to our souls, the English word ‘happy’ is too weak. Happy is related to ‘happenings,’ which means that happiness comes and goes as favorable happenings come and go.” – Darrell Johnson

- How does the coming and going of favorable happenings shape your happiness?

“Happy is misleading because it puts the emphasis in the wrong place. Blessed (*makarios*) does not refer to how you and I assess ourselves or our condition, but how God assesses us and our condition. What matters is not how I feel about me and my condition, but how God feels about me and my condition.” – Darrell Johnson

- How does this shift in understanding from our perspective to God’s perspective help us have a greater understanding of what it means to be happy and blessed?

BEATITUDE MEDITATION:

Read Matthew 5:1-12. Have one member of the group read the entire section. The rest of the group listen for a word, statement of idea that stands out to them.

When he saw the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and after he sat down, his disciples came to him.

Then he began to teach them, saying:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the humble, for they will inherit the earth.

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

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

You are blessed when they insult you and persecute you and falsely say every kind of evil against you because of me. Be glad and rejoice, because your reward is great in heaven. For that is how they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

Discuss:

- What word, phrase, or idea stood out to you from this passage? Why?
- How do these statements, the Beatitudes, change our understanding of true happiness/blessedness?
- How does our understanding of happiness/blessedness compare with those Jesus considered blessed?

WEEK 1 SERMON DISCUSSION

Sermon Discussion Questions:

This week the pastor discussed what it means to be blessed.

- What did the pastor say it meant?
- What did the pastor say it meant to be blessed?”
- How did the message change or enhance your understanding of the beatitudes?
- Did the pastor say anything that was particularly meaningful or encouraging?
- How were you encouraged to apply this beatitude in your daily life or spiritual journey?
- Were there any questions or concerns that you had from the message?

THE GOOD LIFE VIDEO – WEEK 1 (with Derwin Gray)

Watch *The Good Life* video 1:

Videos can be accessed at www.barmillscommunitychurch.org/goodlifevideos. This is a hidden page, please do not share it with others.

Discuss:

- How is the worldly pursuit of happiness like chasing a shadow?
- How might striving for this type of happiness make you more unhappy?
- How is Jesus’ happiness different than worldly happiness?
- How can following Jesus lead us to true happiness?

JESUS AND THE BEATITUDES:

“Jesus is the embodiment of the Beatitudes. He was humble and poor. His short life has had lasting endurance because he spent it pursuing God’s justice and righteousness. Jesus, the Prince of Peace, brought the peace of God everywhere he went. His blood on the cross transformed enemies into friends, failures into successes, and cowards into conquering apostles. What a gracious God we serve.” - Derwin Gray

- How does Jesus embody the Beatitudes, use examples from the Gospels?

“Jesus not only shows us the way to happiness by his life's example; he also teaches and empowers us to do the same. In an act of mind-blowing grace, he shares his good and eternal life with us, so we can grow into the people of God who embody the beatitudes. Jesus is a good king; he would never ask us to do something that he does not first provide the grace to accomplish. where God guides, God provides.” -Derwin Gray

- How does Jesus’ example help teach and empower us to discover godly happiness?

WEEK 1 WRAP-UP

Read Matthew 5:3-11 out loud together as a group.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the humble, for they will inherit the earth.

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

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

Closing Prayer: How can the group pray for you and others to have a “blessed” (*makarios*) week?

Have a group member close in prayer or provide an opportunity for all members to pray for each other.

For additional insight on being blessed, read the following.

- Chapter 1, ‘Chasing Shadows’ in *The Good Life*, by Derwin Gray
- Chapter 1, ‘Preliminary Observations’ in *The Beatitudes* by Darrell Johnson