

Journey Into Blessed Living

LESSON 1 . . . Getting the Right Start (Matthew 5:1-2)



NOTES

To discover how to have a “journey into blessed living,” we must carefully consider the introduction to Jesus’ first sermon recorded in the New Testament. We call this section of His sermon “The Beatitudes.” Jesus is near Capernaum in Galilee. Large crowds of people have come from Galilee, Jerusalem, Judea, and other places to hear Him (Mt 4:25). Jesus’ first recorded sermon is called the “Sermon on the Mount” because of what He does when He sees the large crowds. What does He do, according to Matthew 5:1b-2?

The introduction to this great sermon tells us how to have a “journey into blessed living.” Jesus’ sermon is first presented amidst a climate of great unhappiness in the nation of Israel. They are living under the burden of high, corrupt Roman taxation. The Jewish priesthood is also corrupt and void of any meaningful teaching. The nation is filled with social, racial, political, and religious prejudice and strife. Into this scene comes an uneducated, country preacher named “Jesus,” and crowds flock to hear Him teach. They are mesmerized as they listen to Him. How does Matthew 7:29 explain why?

The teachers, or rabbis, normally read a passage of Scripture and then shared what famous rabbis had said about it. The rabbis sometimes had differing opinions and would contradict each other. The listeners were then left to make up their own minds. However, Jesus taught the Word of God in a clear, powerful way, not relying on any famous rabbi for His *authority*. His style was a clear, commanding, “Thus saith the Lord!” Also, while the rabbis of His day expounded on the heavy burdens of the Law, Jesus taught authoritatively about love and blessedness.

Getting the right start to a “journey into blessed living” requires **two** things. The first is . . .

Avoid the wrong pursuit.

Most people pursue a blessed life in all the wrong places. Some pursue it

through careers and some in relationships. However, most search for a blessed life in fortune, fame, or finances. They have the “when and then” attitude of pursuit: “**When** I get that car, **then** I’ll be happy;” “**When** I get that job, **then** I’ll be happy;” or, “**When** I make lots of money, **then** I’ll be happy.” Yet, what does Jesus tell us in Luke 12:15b?



Solomon records his wrong pursuit of a blessed life. In Ecclesiastes chapter two, Solomon describes his efforts to find happiness in the same ways most people do today. First, he tried to find it in **pleasure**. He tried to *cheer* himself with *wine* (2:3). He also hired men and women singers, and he had many concubines, or a harem of women. He had everything that could delight a man’s heart (2:8). Concerning his long, thorough pursuit of a blessed life, what does Solomon write in Ecclesiastes 2:10a-b?

He was like people today who pursue a blessed life through pleasure by living an “amusement park” kind of life. They try to find blessedness through music, concerts, sex, drugs, trips, and all kinds of entertainment. They pursue happiness by pampering themselves.

When Solomon couldn’t find a blessed life in **pleasure**, he pursued it through **prosperity**. Therefore, he tried to fill the void in his life by building houses that would put the mansions of today’s rich and famous to shame. He also planted vineyards, which were very valuable in His day. He owned more livestock than anyone in Jerusalem or anyone who ever lived in all of history. He amassed a fortune in gold and silver that was more than the wealth of kings and provinces (Eccles. 2:7-8).

Solomon was so successful in amassing his fortune that he became the wealthiest man to ever live. He was wealthier than Wal-Mart’s founder Sam Walton or Microsoft’s Bill Gates. Someone has said, “Money can’t buy happiness, but it can rent it.” When you have a huge financial windfall, you can be happy for a while, but it won’t last. This is the tremendous problem with trying to find a blessed life through **prosperity**. How does Solomon express the problem in Ecclesiastes 5:10?

The Hebrew word translated *vanity* (HEBEL, heb-el) means “empty” or “futile.” Like Solomon, those who pursue a blessed life through **pleasure** and **prosperity** will discover what he writes nine times in the book of Ecclesiastes. It is all *a striving after wind*, or “vexation of spirit” (Eccles. 1:14 & 17; 2:11, 17 & 26; 4:4, 6 & 16; 6:9).

To get **the right start** on a “journey into blessed living,” **avoid the wrong pursuit** and . . .

Abide in the right pursuit.

The right pursuit comes from understanding the word that opens each beatitude. What is it (Matthew 5:3-11)?

This word is often used interchangeably with “happy.” The definition of “happy” is “favored by circumstances” or “lucky” because the root word “hap” means “chance” or “luck.” Therefore, if your “hap” is good, you are happy; if your “hap” is bad, you are unhappy. In other words, happiness is based on circumstances. However, what Jesus is talking about when He uses the word *blessed* goes way beyond the word “happy.”

The word translated *blessed* (MAKARIOS, mah-car'-e-os) was used in reference to Greek gods. They were considered to be happy within themselves because they were not affected by the circumstances and happenings in the world. Therefore, the word *blessed* refers to an inward contentment and tranquility not affected by circumstances.

Being *blessed* is best defined as having “divine delight.” The word *blessed* is used in the Bible to describe God; for example, He is called *the blessed God* (1 Tim. 1:11). Paul refers to Jesus as *the blessed and only Sovereign* (1 Tim. 6:14-15). Being *blessed* is an exclusive part of God’s divine nature. Therefore, the only way we can find the blessedness Jesus speaks of in the Beatitudes is by having a personal relationship with God through Him.

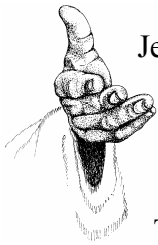
Since blessedness is part of God’s nature, the only people who can experience it are those who share in His nature. Peter tells us we have been given *precious and very great promises* (2 Pet. 1:4a). Then, what does he write in 2 Peter 1:4b?



The word translated *partakers* (KOINŌNOS, coin-oh-nos') means "fellowship" or "to share in." How do we become *partakers* of God's *divine nature*? It is through Jesus Christ. In Christ, we take on the very nature of God. How does 2 Corinthians 5:17 express this fact?

The phrase *in Christ* is found over eighty times in the New Testament. One of my favorites is: *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places* (Eph. 1:3). That means *in Christ* we have every *blessed* thing Jesus talks about in the Beatitudes. This is possible because *in Christ* we share in the *divine nature* of God. Therefore, a "journey into blessed living" is the result of an ongoing relationship with God through His Son, Jesus Christ.

Many people are exhausted and frustrated because of their endless pursuit of "blessed living." Like Solomon, they have tried everything the world has to offer and found it all *a striving after wind*. That's why Jesus gives us what wonderful promise in Matthew 11:28?



Jesus knows the **wrong pursuit** of blessed living can be difficult and painful. To those who are tired and weary of the wrong pursuit of happiness, Jesus promises divine *rest* and divine delight.

To get **the right start** on a "journey into blessed living," **avoid the wrong pursuit and abide in the right pursuit.**