

EXPERIENCE THE LAND AND THE BOOK

The Beatitudes: Lessons by a Lake

Matthew 5:1–11



LET'S BEGIN HERE

Jesus could not have picked a better place to sow seeds of faith than on the hill now called the Mount of Beatitudes. On a carpet of wildflowers and scrub, the people sat, captivated and amazed by this Teacher. While rabbis of the day taught the finer points of Mosaic Law, Jesus' message touched the *heart*. The rabbis' endless, dusty rhetoric said little; Jesus' few words altered the way the people understood life. Even to this day, His words, ignited by the Spirit of God, cut through the stuff of life and call us to live the way God intends for us.



A CLOSER LOOK

Capernaum: Jesus' Adult Home and Ministry Base

Kick over a few rocks in Capernaum and you'll discover the black volcanic basalt that defines the rim of the region that Jesus chose as His adult home and ministry base. An area prone to earthquakes, and in the past, volcanic activity, Capernaum forms the southwestern corner of the "ministry triangle" of Capernaum, Chorazin, and Bethsaida. Within this region on the north side of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus performed most of His Galilean miracles (Matthew 4:12–16).

Capernaum was the bustling center of commerce in Galilee. Straddling the nearby international trade route from Egypt to Syria, Capernaum had a thriving fishing industry and supported craftsmen and carpenters who worked with the indigenous basalt stone.

Capernaum witnessed more of Jesus' miracles than any other town. In spite of that, the Pharisees and scribes there consistently and definitely rejected Jesus and His message. They never tried to attack Him or drive Him away; they simply disregarded Him. Jesus rebuked Capernaum for its lack of repentance (11:23–24) and doomed it to destruction, along with Chorazin and Bethsaida which also had front-row seats to Jesus' ministry (Luke 10:13–15).

In the fourth century AD, Capernaum was the epicenter of a major, devastating earthquake, and much of the area was completely leveled. In the seventh century, another quake flattened the town, and a third earthquake in the eleventh century delivered the fatal blow. Capernaum never recovered. Nothing stands there now but ruins and rocks—just as Jesus said.



Quotable

*“Blessed” defines
the wholesome
well-being of
one who shares
the kingdom life
with the King.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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Matthew 5:1–11



LET'S DIG DEEPER

1. A Message You Won't Hear from Our Culture: *Blessedness*

Blessed doesn't simply mean happy, laughing, or cheery. It has in mind the well-being of one who walks with God in peace and wholeness. This kind of life cuts across the grain of our times. Now as then, people say one thing publicly, yet do another privately. But Jesus said, "Do not be like them" (Matthew 6:8). In effect, "Live a different kind of life. Live like this . . ."

The blessed attitudes of the Beatitudes will not come easily or quickly. But kingdom living is for kingdom people who are controlled by the King Himself.

2. The Eight Attitudes of the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1–11)

The Beatitudes are divided into two groups of four. The first four deal with our attitudes toward God. The second four deal with our attitudes toward others.

Attitudes toward God:

- *Blessed are the poor in spirit.* (Matthew 5:3)
- *Blessed are those who mourn.* (5:4)
- *Blessed are the gentle.* (5:5)
- *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.* (5:6)

Attitudes toward Others:

- *Blessed are the merciful.* (5:7)
- *Blessed are the pure in heart.* (5:8)
- *Blessed are the peacemakers.* (5:9)
- *Blessed are those who have been persecuted.* (5:10–11)



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LET'S LIVE IT

The eight Beatitudes are not just attitudes; they are Christlike qualities. And though rarely seen in our culture today, all followers of Christ are called upon to adopt each one. When we do, and live them out, what an impact they make!

Look at the Beatitudes again, and reexamine how Jesus modeled each in His life. Then think of some everyday ways you can be a disciple of Jesus—not just knowing His Word but becoming like Him.



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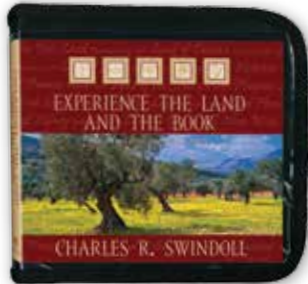
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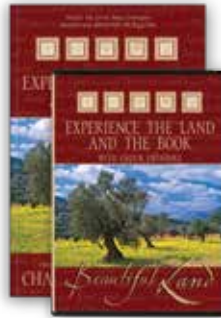
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