



**Discipleship 101**  
**New Believer Lesson #11**  
**The Path to a Blessed Life**  
Based on the Book,  
*The Divine Conspiracy*,  
by Dallas Willard



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**Introduction:**

*The drift of the Beatitudes has often been misunderstood. They have been supposed to describe the characteristics of true Christians, pronouncing those blessed who possess such-and-such qualities. But the structure is much more complex. . . . For example, one of the Beatitudes says, "Blessed are they that mourn": and, if we stop there, the statement is almost equivalent to the absurd saying, "Happy are the unhappy." The addition, however, of the words, "for they shall be comforted," makes all the difference. . . . And the same principle applies to all the Beatitudes. . . . Thus, mourning, hungering, persecution are not in themselves and by themselves, desirable, but the reverse; yet, taken along with what is given by Jesus to those thus circumstanced, they are blessedness itself. James Stalker (1848-1927) Scottish scholar, pastor, and professor at United Free Church College, Aberdeen from 1902-1926.*

The Sermon on the Mount is not a set of rules and regulations: it is a statement of the life we will live when the Holy Spirit is getting His way with us. **Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest*.**

The pathway to a blessed life is not a rigorous effort to become poor in spirit, meek, or mournful. True blessing is offered to all who are tired, weary, hurting, lonely, merciful, pure, and persecuted. The kingdom life of Jesus is offered to all who will simply receive it. **Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy – Jesus Master Class for Life*, participant's guide.**

**The Discourse on the Hill:**

The bible has the most complete, concise statement of Jesus' teachings of how to actually live in the reality of God's present kingdom. This reality is available to us now, today, as we become his disciples or apprentices, and it is as close and available as the very space surrounding our bodies (ref. Lesson #10).

This discourse, known as the Sermon on the Mount, is the most influential talk ever made in human history. In it, Jesus sets the perception of human well-being and well-doing which has influenced mankind, especially the western world, for over two millennia.

This discourse is more than a "religious talk." Indeed, it is far different from any religious dialogue ever recorded. It answers for us three fundamental questions about ourselves and our lives: what is real, who is well off (blessed), and how can I be a really good person? This last question will be addressed in lesson #12. The beatitudes teach us what is real. They teach us how well off we actually are. And when we begin to live our lives as really good

people, then Jesus’ kingdom presence and power will flow from our lives, from our hearts, from our homes and families, from our jobs and schools, and from our churches (Amen!) and cover all those we have influence over, even the earth itself.

In the beatitudes, the world clearly sees God’s love revealed through us.

***The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.***

[Romans 5:5](#) KJV

In the beatitudes, a measure of redemption, restoration, and healing comes to everything we apprentices of Jesus have influence over.

***For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.*** [Romans 8:19](#)

ESV



You really must read Matthew chapters 5 through 7 – the Beatitudes and the Sermon on the Mount – for this lesson. Write down one big truth you see in this passage that has impacted your life, or one that you want to grasp hold of.

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### **What Is Real?:**

The answer to the question, “What is real?” instructs you on ***who*** and ***what*** will guide your life.

- Are you guided only by the five senses (sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste)? Do these really guide your life, or just provide input for processing ***who*** or ***what*** truly will guide your life?
- Does one study physics or chemistry or astronomy to learn ***what*** to live for?
- Is there a “Department of Reality” at your local university? in your town? in your state?

The answers to each of these rhetorical questions is, of course, “no.” None of these inputs will be a guide for your life.

Alright, how about looking at the various “reality teachings” people turn to for advice, like Buddhism, Confucianism, Communism, Socialism, Marxism, Naturalism, Atheism, even Christianity? That’s right, even Christianity, when used solely as a reference, can’t guide your life. The answer is you need a relationship with a living person to guide your life – you need a guide! Children have parents; students have teachers; businessmen have mentors; Christians have Jesus, and those representing him who are his apprentices, acting on behalf of his kingdom in this present world.

***“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”*** [Matthew 4:17](#)

The kingdom, Jesus said, is ***“at hand.”*** What does that mean? Is that what is real? Is it available for me to access immediately? Can I count on its power and influence in my life today? tomorrow? when I behave? when I fail to behave? when I feel spiritual?

The answer to all the questions above is a resounding “yes!” The kingdom of heaven, and all it represents, is currently, presently, immediately available to apprentices of Jesus. That is real. That will guide your life. The kingdom of heaven is available for we apprentices to use to begin redeeming our friends, family, culture and world back into relationship with their Creator.

### **Who Is Really Well-Off?**

Who is well off (blessed)? Is it the wealthy? Is it those with great political influence and power? Is it the famous? Is it the most intellectually gifted? Let’s look at the beatitudes as Jesus laid them out on that hill over 2000 years ago so we can begin to refer to them easily. They are the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, in [Matthew chapter 5, verses 2 through 12](#):

***2 And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:***

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

***4 "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.***

***5 "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.***

***6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.***

***7 "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.***

***8 "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.***

***9 "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.***

***10 "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.***

***11 "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.***

***12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."***

Another way to phrase verse 3 would be like this (Dallas Willard’s version):

***Blessed are the spiritual zeros – the spiritually bankrupt, deprived and deficient, the spiritual beggars, those without a wisp of ‘religion’ – when the kingdom of heaven comes upon them.***

Older (pre-1950) biblical commentators and theologians seemed to recognize what their more recent colleagues do not – that being poor spiritually is not a positive thing to emulate and does not convey blessing because one has attained to it. Older commentators (like James Stalker quoted at the beginning of this lesson) seemed more in-tune with Jesus’ original intent

in describing “blessedness.” Men like Alfred Edersheim knew that blessedness is not earned by behavior, but is bestowed by God, as he said in the following:

“ . . . in the sermon on the mount . . . the promises attaching, for example, the so-called “Beatitudes” must not be regarded as the *reward* of the spiritual states with which they are respectively connected, nor yet as their result. It is not *because* a man is poor in spirit that his is the kingdom of heaven . . . the connecting link is, in each case, Christ himself: because he . . . has opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers.” Alfred Edersheim, *Life and Times*.

The poor in spirit are not called “blessed” by Jesus because they have achieved some meritorious condition of “spiritual poverty” as modern bible commentators insist. The poor in spirit are blessed *in spite of* their spiritual poverty, and *in the midst of* their deplorable condition. They are blessed because the goodness of the kingdom of heaven is available to them now, today, immediately! The kingdom of heaven has redemptively moved into position upon them by the grace of Jesus Christ.

This is the gospel!

Just as we apprentices move throughout the world we inhabit, bringing the redemption of Jesus to all we have influence over, everyone we encounter, our homes, schools, workplaces, the things we create, like art, music, poetry, inventions, ideas – everything we influence, so too does the kingdom of heaven move on those who desperately need it – like the spiritually poor.



How does our society define whether someone is well off, and how does Jesus’ definition conflict with that?

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As stated earlier, most people today learn that these beatitudes are statements of what we are supposed to be like. They look at these incredible statements, realizing they are not attainable, and give up. Who can comply with a list like this: you have to be poor, you have to mourn, you have to be meek, you have to be persecuted, and so on. Who would want that, and who could achieve that? No one! And if we made that the measuring stick to attain “blessedness,” then we would create a list of rules, a cookbook method to achieve our own state of blessedness. At this point, who needs Jesus or his kingdom when we can manufacture blessedness ourselves? How silly is that!

The good news (Gospel) is that God’s kingdom has come to those who are already poor, mourning, meek, and persecuted. The good news is they can find safety and comfort in God’s kingdom just as they are. Anyone on this “beatitudes” list can be well off, can be blessed,

because the kingdom of God is available right now. The beatitudes are a proclamation of how to be blessed, and like salvation, we can't do anything in our power to get there. Jesus is already there waiting for us.

21<sup>st</sup> Century beatitudes might include other items:

- Blessed are you if you are overweight, because in the kingdom of God there is hope and joy and the prospect of change for things they truly need changing.
- Blessed are the divorced . . .
- Blessed are those with HIV . . .
- Blessed are those in bankruptcy . . .
- Blessed are the parents of drug-addicted children . . .

. . . . because Jesus has offered to these and all others in hopeless situations the present blessedness of the present kingdom of Heaven. You can have it now; you don't have to die first. This is precisely where the gospel becomes real!



Take your present hopeless, disappointing condition straight into the kingdom of God, and the reality of that kingdom will give it a different definition, a different viewpoint for any condition that is beyond human hope.

Read [Romans 8:28 and 35-39](#). What is the difference between saying “All things are good,” and “All things work together for good”? Describe a time you experienced God taking some difficult experience, even a very bad one, and working it out for good.

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The Beatitudes proclaim Jesus' fundamental message: the free and present availability of God's kingdom – his rule and righteousness – to all humanity. It is available to all who take on the role of apprentice to Jesus, relying on him and doing what he did. Jesus, the one who is truly loose in the world through the presence of the Holy Spirit, is mingling among his people every moment of every day. The Beatitudes tell us that our human point of view is not the reality of God's kingdom. The reality of his kingdom is that we may seem hopeless, helpless, and beyond the possibility of God's blessing, but in fact, we are exactly in the center of his loving embrace, his very touch, and lavish provision. No human condition excludes God's blessedness. His kingdom is wide open to us all to experience and enjoy.

See you in Lesson #12!

[Note – This lesson can be downloaded in PDF format for printing or sharing]