



Live
Life
Approved
By
God!

Eight Studies For
Adult Individuals or Groups

S.A. Keith



The Be-Attitudes
Live life approved by God



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I want to thank Elizabeth Nielsen
and the “Jesus and You” Women’s Bible Study Group
for their helpful insights with the discussion questions.

And as always,
to my wonderful friend and editor,
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and for helping me to write better than I do!

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*“Have this attitude in yourselves which
was also in Christ Jesus...” Philippians 2:5 (NAS)*

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Getting Started

These lessons are for personal Bible study or groups. In a group setting, I recommend that one person facilitate the discussion. To further enhance your study time, I suggest looking up the Bible references marked, “Read” from different translations. The discussion questions can be worked together or done in private, and then discussed.

I hope you will make the Beatitudes your daily attitudes, so you can live your life approved by God and become the person God intended you to be. Jesus’ eight declarations of blessing are absolutely life changing!

In His Loving Grip,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. A. Keith'. The signature is stylized and cursive, with a large initial 'S' and 'A'.

S. A. Keith

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“I just can’t get over it!”

Most of us, if not all of us, at one time or another have to deal with experiences in our past or current life that make us stumble in our faith or that cripple us emotionally. It could be something as severe as being physically or sexually abused as a child, or a feeling that our parents didn’t give us the proper attention we needed growing up. Maybe it’s a broken friendship or business plan gone sour, or a disappointment so deep that you can’t get past it. Whatever “it” is, many times these painful experiences can affect us the rest of our lives, preventing us from reaching our greatest potential or eventually destroying us. Trying to “get over it” doesn’t work. We try and fail, and “it” goes round and round in our minds, blocking us from receiving what God intends for us. Thankfully, there is an alternative. God can heal our pain, so we can live productive, God-approved lives.

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If you feel powerless to overcome your pain, there is hope. You are about to discover that the Beatitudes are the key to unlocking your spiritual and emotional well-being, so you can “get over” the painful experiences in your life—past and present—and have hope for the future!

The Beatitudes are the eight declarations made by Jesus at the beginning of his Sermon on the Mount, recorded in Matthew 5:3-12. Each one begins with the words, “Blessed are,” and continues with a statement concerning those who live in obedient and joyful unity with God. They are for those who partake in his salvation, and who have entered into his kingdom, not in its fullest sense, but as a foretaste of what’s to come.

The word “blessed” is from the Greek word, “makarios,” which means, happy, well off, or fortunate. Some Bible translations use the term happy, yet happiness most often depends on one’s emotional state—it is temporary. On the other hand, blessed also means favored, which more accurately describes the spiritual harmony of a person who is in relationship with the King of the universe—it is eternal.

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God's children are blessed because we are *approved by Him*. He has bestowed his favor on us, and given us a place in his eternal kingdom (2 Corinthians 6:2, 18)!

However, because we live in the “already and not yet” of God's kingdom, the Beatitudes teach us what it means to live here and now, they are concerned with our inner life and attitudes. They teach us how to think and act and how to receive God's riches in order to become the salt of the earth and lights on a hill. They also tell us what rewards are in store for those who abide by them. The Beatitudes help us realize God's purpose and plan for our lives!

I confess that before embarking on this study, I had never closely studied the Beatitudes. I think I did what many people do, read them quickly to get to the “real meat” of Jesus' sermon. What a mistake that is, because unless you understand them, it is impossible to apply the rest of the sermon to your life.

Enjoy your study; you're about to discover how blessed and favored by God you truly are!

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

Matthew 5:3

Is being poor ever a good thing? After all, don't most of us want to be rich in spirit, rich in health, and rich in our bank accounts? We want the best of everything, because having the best is a measurement of our success—right? However, when Jesus began his sermon on the mount by saying, “Blessed are the poor in Spirit...,” he was not touting the benefits of those who *don't* have money, nice clothing or fine food to eat. In God's economy, being poor in spirit is about *spiritual emptiness*. It is coming to the realization that we are powerless to help ourselves and that nothing in us naturally chooses to follow God's ways. Our condition apart from Jesus Christ is bleak:

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There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one (Romans 3:10-12).

And no matter how hard we try, or how good we become, we can never earn God's favor or approval:

All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags. . . (Isaiah 64:6).

Another way to say Jesus' opening statement is, "'Favored' or 'Approved by God,' are the empty ones, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Being empty, or poor in spirit, is exactly what Jesus wants from his children. Because, admitting our spiritual poverty is the beginning of spiritual and emotional healing.

Have you recognized your spiritual poverty?

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Philippians 2:5-8 tells us exactly what God wants from us:

Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although he existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross (Philippians 2:5-8 – NAS).

Think about this: Jesus had equal status with God, but he gave up all the privileges that come from being God to become a servant! Can you imagine this? Jesus Christ set aside his God-self, his deity, to become a lowly human-being! He did this for one purpose: to redeem the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve, who *wanted* equality with God, “to be like God,” yet, by trying to get it, they disobeyed him.

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Read: Genesis 3:1-7, 14-15.

Verse 15 of Genesis predicts the future for our adversary, and for us, “I (God) will put enmity between you (Satan) and the woman (Eve), and between your offspring and hers (Eve’s ancestors); he (Jesus) will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”

Jesus came to earth to redeem us, to buy us back. He emptied himself, he became nothing, he became a man, a slave, to save us from death! God wants us to do the same thing, *to have Jesus’ same attitude*—to empty ourselves.

God’s approval is possible only through Jesus’ sacrifice. Satan struck the heel of Jesus when he was crucified—at the time, it appeared as if all was lost. But the victory for all people is in the resurrection; Jesus crushed Satan by overcoming death—he rose from the dead!

Where, O death, is your victory?

Where, O death, is your sting? (1 Corinthians 15:55)

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We are approved by God by following Jesus' example:
he did not seek equality with God, but emptied himself. . .

The immediate benefit of admitting to God that you are poor in Spirit, and that you cannot save yourself, is that he forgives *your* sins, fills you with his Spirit, and you become an heir to his heavenly throne. You begin the journey. You are blessed—favored by God—because you have entered God's kingdom, but not in its fullest sense; that will come when you see him face to face.

Let the poor man say, "I am rich in Him."

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Discussion Questions

- 1) How would you define spiritual poverty?

- 2) What do the following references have to say about being “poor”: Psalm 34:6; Psalm 40:17; 2 Corinthians 8:9; Revelation 3:17-21?

- 3) According to Philippians 2:5-8, what five Christ-like attitudes should believers possess?

- 4) According to Galatians 5:1, what happens when you don’t empty yourself?

- 5) What blessings are in store for those who have admitted their spiritual poverty and are now filled with God’s spirit? (See Psalm 84:10, John 15:1-5, Romans 8:35-39, Ephesians 1:3-8, 13-18, Hebrews 13:15.).

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**Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted. Matthew 5:4**

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
(Matthew 27:46)

As Jesus hung dying on the cross he cried out, “*Why . . . me?*” At that pinnacle moment the full wrath of God descended on Jesus, and he was utterly separated from God’s love.

When we mourn, we too can feel like God has abandoned us. We cry out, “*Why me?*” This is a normal response to suffering. But, Jesus . . .

Your free sample is complete.

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http://www.sundayschoolnetwork.com/curriculum_beatitudes_intro.htm