

I Will Become Blessed
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LIFE'S BIGGEST QUESTIONS: WHO WILL I BECOME? Sermon Series

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This week we look at 4 more counter-intuitive character traits Jesus gave in the Sermon on the Mount. These are the opposite of how we naturally live. It's hard to understand how we will be blessed by the attitudes and behavior Jesus emphasized. Yet, His sermon insisted God's blessing came by reversing the norm. Jesus was no pushover. He taught as someone with authority, passion and enthusiasm (not like the scribes).

APPLICATION: The world teaches us to push and shove to get our way, not to serve. Our world operates from a "kingdom of self" perspective, not according to the kingdom of God. Bob Dylan sang, *"You Gotta Serve Somebody."* What does it mean, from a biblical perspective, to be blessed?

Our English word, "blessed" (from a Latin word, "beatus") means MORE than a temporary or circumstantial feeling of happiness. The Christian worldview is not about "being happy." This is not a war on "happiness," but happiness is not the Christian worldview for several reasons:

- 1.) "Happiness" is based on **short-term thinking**. Years ago, a woman who was in another congregation I was serving told me they were having financial problems and she was depressed. I asked what she would do about it. She said she liked to go to the mall to buy something as it made her feel better. Her short-term happiness strategy led to longer-term pain (more debt).
- 2.) Happiness tends to be based upon **feelings** rather than upon making responsible choices.
- 3.) Happiness is **circumstantial**. "Hap" is at the root of the word. "Hap" is circumstantial. It may/may not happen. If my team wins – I'm happy (may be obnoxiously so) but if my team loses and I am unhappy it's time to curse the players and fire the coach. (Ironically, much of this pertains to spectator sport – I'm watching others play; but not an actual participant in it). Happiness is determined by outside events and by others. I'm happy if I get what I want; I'm unhappy when things don't go my way. Toddlers have temper tantrums. So do adults. We want to blame someone (God, the government, the job/boss/employee, motorist, church, etc.). As long as we live by the dictum, "I just want to be happy," we set ourselves up for failure. When we base our

happiness on circumstances, emotion and material possessions, we will always be disappointed.

The word “happy” does not appear in the Christian Bible (New Testament) and only appears 7x in the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament). I don’t think of Jesus as always being “happy.” How could He have been when He lived in the circumstances of a 1st century Jew living in an occupied Roman government with your own religious leaders always trying to trap you and successfully crucifying you? Jesus never promised, “*Follow me and I will make you happy.*” He did say that if we followed Him we would have a purpose in life (to be fishers of men, not fishers of fish), we would have peace, and His presence. He would give us abundant and eternal life. The Gospels do not record, “And they all lived happily ever after.” One day, we will. But until then, we have a different word. Our culture says, “Be Happy.” Jesus says, “Be Blessed. Followers of Jesus need another concept: “Blessed.”

Matthew 5:7-12

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. “What you sow, so shall you reap.” “What goes around, comes around.”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. Bible notes call this “messianic peace” or shalom = total well-being both personally and communally¹⁰ “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.

“Those with a well-kept heart are persons who are prepared for and capable of responding to the situations of life in ways that are good and right.” (Dallas Willard)

In her book, **Almost Christian**, Kenda Dean (the book is subtitled, “*What the Faith of our Teenagers is telling the American Church*”) described something that has happened within Christian culture that has had a devastating effect upon the church in America. She coined a phrase to describe a phenomenon she has observed: **“MORAL THERAPEUTIC DEISM.”**

Here are 5 ways to describe MTD:

- 1.) A god created the world and watches over life on earth
- 2.) God wants people to be good, nice and fair to each other (as taught in the Bible and by most world religions)
- 3.) The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself

4.) God is not involved in my life except when I need God to resolve a problem

5.) Good people go to heaven when they die

MORAL = Be good and good things will happen to you. THERAPEUTIC = Feel good.

Be happy DEISM = God is not really involved in your life. Leaves God in the

background. MTD = has no faith language or practices. Results: No investment =

no return. People with MTD simply do not care about faith. They don't hate it, but they don't want it or need it.

"The days of casual Christianity are over. It used to be easy to be a Christian in western culture, but not anymore. Christians are out of the mainstream of western culture. Culture has marginalized Christianity. The question becomes, will we transform culture or will culture transform us? In the ancient world Christians knew they were aliens and exiles. This is also happening around the world. We are under great temptation to capitulate. If we capitulate, we will lose it all.

"Christianity, if false, is of NO importance, and if true, of INFINITE importance. The only thing it cannot be is moderately important." (C.S. Lewis)

Jesus provides what all people need:

1.) A governing identity.

2.) A significant community – Christianity is not just something we believe, it is something we live. And we live it connected to others.

3.) A purpose in life (a mission) – we are Christ's representatives in the world.

"Helping Others Follow Jesus." A "mission" may include going on a trip but a mission is not a trip. We must have an experience, not just doctrine or opinion.

4.) Hope

4:30 Video on Persecution

If our view of Christianity = God is supposed to make me happy, then how do those who have been and are persecuted for their faith, live out their faith?

WHAT are you asking me to do? **TRULY BECOME A DISCIPLE OF JESUS CHRIST**

WHY are you asking me to do it? **HELPING OTHERS FOLLOW JESUS.**

HOW can I do it? **HAVE JESUS IN YOUR LIFE.** ***"Those with a well-kept heart are persons who are prepared for and capable of responding to the situations of life in ways that are good and right."*** (Dallas Willard) We can't do this w/o Jesus.

KEEPING OUR MEMBERSHIP VOWS HELPS US FOLLOW HIM