



What Is Different About Christian Attitudes?

“Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again – rejoice!” (Philippians 4:4, NLT)

You have heard it said, “It’s all in your attitude!” Jesus must have thought that, too. One day he gathered his excited disciples and followers and climbed up the side of a mountain for their first Christian retreat. Jesus wanted them to know the attitudes that they must have to please him. They had no idea how Jesus was about to turn their thinking upside down in this “Sermon on the Mount.” These attitudes are shockingly contrary to the way the world thinks, even in Jesus’ day.

What is an attitude? It is how you show how you think or feel about something. Why are your attitudes so important? Because your attitude toward something or someone determines how you act. You may be surprised; what you think are good attitudes may not be in line with God’s thinking. These eight attitudes, known as the “be-attitudes”, promise to bring you great rewards. As a believer, you are in a new kingdom. This kingdom of heaven is God’s rule in your heart.

All the beatitudes begin with the word “blessed” or “God blesses.” The word “blessed” means joyful or supreme happiness – a happiness that is not temporary or dependent on circumstances, but fills you with an inner joy, even in the saddest and most difficult times. Imagine being calm when a relationship breaks up; content when you don’t make the soccer team or peaceful in the middle of trouble with your parents. Join this first retreat. Prepare to change your attitudes and receive great rewards!

Recognizing your need

“God blesses those who realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of heaven is given to them.” (Matthew 5:1, NLT) Without this attitude, you cannot even become a Christian. Only when you realize that someone is missing from your life are you ready to receive the Lord Jesus Christ who can fill that empty space. You can then become part of his Kingdom or family. However, “poor in spirit” means much more than that. It is a day-by-day attitude of total dependence on God. The moment you think, “I can do it myself,” check your attitude. With the correct attitude, his power is available to you every moment. What problem are you trying to handle by yourself?

Mourning over your sins

“God blesses those who mourn, for they will be comforted.” (Matthew 5:4, NLT) What things make you feel sad? Do you feel sad when you fail a test, your parents ground you

(probably more mad than sad), your friend no longer speaks to you or someone dies? Life is real. Sad things happen. However, Jesus is not talking about ordinary sadness. He is speaking of a deep sadness and grief that comes when you take a good look at yourself. You realize how sinful you are – in your thoughts, words and actions. With this attitude, you are ready to receive God’s forgiveness and ask Jesus into your life as your Lord and Savior (or receive forgiveness for some sin if already a believer). The Holy Spirit, the Comforter, the Spirit of Jesus, comes to reside in your heart and comforts you. That brings great joy!

Learning to be gentle

“God blesses those who are gentle and lowly, for the whole earth will belong to them.” (Matthew 5:5, NLT) The secular world says, “It’s all about you! Do your own thing!” Jesus must have shocked his disciples when he told them that their attitude must be different – gentle, humble, submissive. Do you look at this as being weak – a doormat? That’s not true! Picture a powerful stallion not broken, totally out of control. Now picture the same stallion controlled with a bit, bridle and saddle – disciplined and tamed. This is the picture of a gentle Christian – a picture of our Lord. Can you think of a wrong attitude that has caused you to act like an uncontrolled stallion? What will you do about it? When you are gentle and humble, you are free to enjoy all the beauty of the earth. Some day you will join Jesus as he reigns over the earth!

Hungering and thirsting to do right

“God blesses those who are hungry and thirsty for justice [doing right], for they will receive it in full.” (Matthew 5:6, NLT) What do you do when you are extremely thirsty and feel like you are starving? Do you try to find a water faucet and look for food in the refrigerator? Jesus is saying that just as your body hungers and thirsts for food and water, your soul and spirit should hunger to do what is right. How does your craving for food compare with your craving to study God’s word and learn to do what is right? Did you know that when you do what is right, Jesus fills you with an inner satisfaction and happiness? You will have such a good feeling; you will want to live that way!

Becoming merciful

“God blesses those who are merciful, for they will be shown mercy.” (Matthew 5:7, NLT) Mercy is willingly forgiving and showing kindness to someone who has done wrong against you rather than punishing them or taking revenge. It is undeserved kindness. That’s radical! If you are merciful, you will forgive someone who told a lie about you or stole something. Out of mercy, you may give your lunch to someone who cannot afford one. Why should you show mercy toward others? You must, because God has been merciful to you. While you were still his enemy, he loved you and took the punishment for your sins. (Romans 5:9, 10) Is there someone whom you need to show mercy and forgive? When you show mercy, Jesus may surprise you by having someone show you mercy!

Cleansing your heart

“God blesses those whose hearts are pure, for they shall see God.” (Matthew 5:8, NLT) The Jewish people put great value on external purity or cleanness, but here Jesus speaks of inner purity, which results in purity in actions. He desires purity in thought, imagination and attitudes. Often you may do the right thing but with the wrong attitude. When a parent asks you to do a task such as cleaning out the garage, how do you react? Do you obey because you love him/her and want to help or whine and complain while you do it? Only God can cleanse your heart of wrong motives, thoughts and attitudes. When your heart is pure, you will know God more intimately and be able to “see” him at work in your life. Some day you will live in his presence forever.

Working for peace

“God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God.” (Matthew 5:9, NLT) A peacemaker brings calm and quiet in a situation between two or more people. (Be careful breaking up a physical fight. You could get knocked out!) By obeying your parents, you can help keep peace in your family. By yielding to others when they want to argue or fight, you can bring peace. Because you now have peace with God through his Son Jesus, you can share. Why not e-mail or text message a friend and share how he/she can have their sins forgiven and have peace with God? God has promised that those who are peacemakers will plant seeds of peace and reap a harvest of goodness. (James 3:17, 18) People will know that you are a child of God!

Receiving persecution

“God blesses those who are persecuted because they live for God, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.” (Matthew 5:10, NLT) As your attitudes change and you begin acting more and more like Jesus, persecution will come. You may not be turned out in the streets by your family or be beaten and thrown into prison or killed, but you may be laughed at, ridiculed or dropped from your circle of friends. However, Jesus said, *“I will never fail you. I will never forsake you.”* (Hebrews 13:5b, NLT) He will always be there to help you and to give you strength. The Bible says, *“Be happy about it! Be very glad! For a great reward awaits you in heaven!”* (Matthew 5:12a, NLT) That is an attitude change!

Do you find that Jesus’ teaching on attitudes contradicts the world’s view? The disciples were probably stunned. How could they live that way? How can you? You can’t. Only Jesus can produce these attitudes in you as you trust and cooperate with him. Why not memorize and meditate upon each attitude, asking God to work it into your life and experience? (Read Matthew 5:13-16, pp. 6-7) and discover how these new attitudes will affect your world, give honor and glory to Jesus and bring rich rewards to you in this life and in heaven. So much depends on your attitudes!

Attitude Check:

- Search your heart. How willing are you to let Jesus change your attitudes?

Explore:

- Read, “We Need to Recognize Our True Condition.” (Matthew 5:3-5) Read Philippians 4:4-7. Discover how to have peace when you are tempted to worry.
- List the attitudes in your journal God wants to change. Pray daily about them.

Talking with God:

- Father, make me aware of attitudes that are not in line with your will. Soften my heart to be willing to change.