

Get Your Attitudes Adjusted for the New Year

Jesus clearly described the heart attitudes that please Him. Make the Beatitudes your goal in 2011.

I'm not a big fan of religious greeting cards, especially the schmaltzy, pastel-colored variety that feature flowers and rainbows along with an obligatory Bible verse. The verse often comes from Jesus' opening words in the Sermon on the Mount. We call this passage in Matthew 5 the Beatitudes.

These are weighty, gutsy, penetrating words—but they are neutered when we treat them like sappy poetry. The Beatitudes are not platitudes. Jesus was not tiptoeing through the tulips and mouthing pleasant phrases so they could decorate crocheted pillows or stained-glass windows.

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In the Beatitudes, Jesus declared war on status quo religion and overturned the world's values. These strong words are the muscle and bone of the kingdom of God. With them Jesus outlined His plan for a new kingdom and described the heart attitudes we must have to please Him.

Do you want to experience God's blessing in 2011? Let Jesus adjust your attitude. Here's your checklist from Matthew 5:3-12:

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

This speaks of a **dependent** attitude. Do you constantly acknowledge your need for God, even in small things? Or do you only seek His help when you can't figure things out on your own? The path to true blessing begins when we acknowledge that God is God and we aren't. If your prayer life is weak, it's because you really don't believe you need God's help.

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

Do you have a **repentant** attitude? Do you sense the Holy Spirit's conviction immediately after you sin? Or does God have to send three warnings and a sledgehammer to wake you up? Are you painfully aware of your tendency toward sin, or do you make excuses for it—or hide it? God does not look for perfect people—but He is attracted to those who make repentance a daily habit.

☒ *"Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth."*

We need a **humble** attitude. The world teaches us to compete and win so we can be top dog. Jesus calls us to take the lowest place. The world says it's okay to fight and claw your way to

“success” at any price—no matter how many people you hurt along the way. Jesus declared that the secret to true strength—and real leadership—is servanthood.

✘ *“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.”*

Do you have a **zealous** attitude? You won’t accomplish anything for God if you are half-hearted, smug or satisfied with the status quo. You must never get to the point that you have “arrived.” Jesus calls us to be passionate. You cannot settle for yesterday’s manna. If you allow the Holy Spirit to fill you continually, you will fast, pray, worship and pursue God with increasing intensity.

✘ *“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.”*

Jesus calls us to have an attitude of **forgiveness**. The world says we have a right to get offended. But Jesus calls us to turn the other cheek and pray for our enemies. Are you holding any grudges? Has your heart grown cool toward a family member, a friend or a co-worker because of something they said or did? Jesus said His love flows through the channel of forgiveness, and we cannot know His love intimately if we refuse to forgive others.

✘ *“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”*

Do you have a **clean** heart? The world says sexual purity is passé. A million voices invite us to indulge at Baal's altar. Have you kept your conscience clean? If you have sinful habits, have you confessed these to Christian friends and asked for healing prayer? The world also says it's okay to cheat and lie to get your way. What's inside your heart that others can't see? Have you allowed the Holy Spirit to refine your corrupt motives, or do you manipulate people so you can accomplish your selfish agenda?

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

We need an **evangelistic** attitude. Many Christians prefer to be spectators, never actually engaging in the work of ministry. Yet God is looking for mature disciples who will share the gospel, win souls, pray for people, use their spiritual gifts and actively carry the message of reconciliation to those who need Christ. Are you willing to swallow your fears, open your mouth and become His ambassador?

✘ *"Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."*

Do you have a **faithful** attitude? Jesus said many people who receive the Word of God eventually fall away from the faith because of persecution and

affliction. Are
you holding onto Jesus no matter what happens? When life gets
tough, do you
quickly lose heart and give up—or do you turn to Jesus for the
grace He
promised?

✘ *“Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you,
and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me.
Rejoice and be
glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way
they persecuted
the prophets who were before you.”*

Do you have a **joyful**
attitude? It is one thing to endure hardship; it is another
thing to endure it
with overcoming joy. When you go through painful circumstances,
do you choose to
rejoice—or do you whine and complain through the entire
process? God does not
call us simply to tolerate the difficulties of life; if we
rejoice in the hard
times we will emerge as more than conquerors.

The kingdom of Christ
is firmly built on these spiritual values. By His grace each
of these attitudes
can be yours in 2011.

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