

Eight Surprising Secrets of Joy
in an Upside-Down World—
I'm a Child of the King!

A Find-out-for-Yourself Bible Study of the
Beatitudes with Elizabeth Rice Handford

© 2016 Elizabeth Rice Handford
Reproduction without written permission prohibited
ISBN: 0-912623-24-1

Available in the “Find-out-for-Yourself Series

Profiles of Bible Women

- One Women in Genesis
- Two Women in the Wilderness
- Three Women under the Judges
- Four Women under the Kings
- Five Women in the Divided Kingdom
- Six Wives of the Prophets &
Women in Captivity and Home Again
- Seven Esther: Why Me? Why Now? Because God—!
- Eight Women Who Met Jesus (part 1)
- Nine Women Who Met Jesus (part 2)
- Ten Women Who Met Jesus (part 3)
- Eleven Women in the Early Church
- Twelve Women in the Parables

Other Bible studies in the “Find-out-for-Yourself” Series:

Volume 13: Transforming Faith: The Book of James

Volume 14: On Pilgrimage to the Father's House:

Oh, Come and Go with Me (Psalm 84)

Volume 15: Eight Surprising Secrets of Joy: The Beattitudes



P O Box 90028
Chattanooga TN 37412
1-800 756-9385
Visit our websight,
www.JoyfulChristianMinistries.org
or call us at 1-800-7JOYFUL

Eight Surprising Secrets of Joy in an Upside-Down World, Because I'm a Child of the King!

Introduction: The Surprising Beatitudes	page 4
1. Blessed are the poor in spirit	page 13
2. Blessed are those who mourn	page 21
3. Blessed are the meek	page 29
4. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness	page 38
5. Blessed are the merciful	page 48
6. Blessed are the pure in heart	page 58
7. Blessed are the peacemakers	page 70
8. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake	page 78
Wonderful Ultimate Fulfillment of the Beatitudes	page 86

A Study of the Beatitudes in Matthew Five: Eight Surprising Secrets of Joy in an Upside-Down World

When I lost my dear husband of sixty-six years, the light went out of my life. Together we had endured many of the vicissitudes most human beings undergo in a long life:

The abduction of a daughter,
A long vigil of waiting for a prodigal son to come
back from the far country,
My diagnosis of breast cancer,
Childlessness (but subsequent delight in seven
adopted children),
The devastating loss of a church building while still
under construction,

The deeply hurtful loss of friends of a life-time
because of decisions we believed were God-directed.

The constant burden through 50 years of
shepherding, trying to meet the spiritual needs of people
entrusted to our care, and evangelizing, bringing people to
the Savior who died for them.

But the wonderful comfort God gave us in each of
those experiences did not prepare me for the pain of losing
Walt.

I knew very well the Scriptures that should have
brought me comfort. I grew up in a godly, joyful home and
was saturated from childhood with the precious Word of
God. I had read my Bible through nearly every year from
my early teens. My relationship with the Lord was sincere
and treasured. He had proved Himself sufficient for my
every need. Why wasn't He sufficient in this loss?

I was driven, again, to the Scriptures, and eventually arrived at the beatitudes in Matthew chapter five. This statement seemed almost incomprehensible to my wounded heart: “Blessed are they that mourn.” Blessed? Happy because I am grieving?

That took me on a journey of studying the beatitudes in depth. What an incredible journey it has been! Will you explore the blessings of these wonderful beatitudes with me, please?

Eight Surprising Secrets of Joy in an Upside-Down World

If I said to you, “Oh! Just think! My boss told me I was in line for promotion, but he gave it to my co-worker instead. Isn't that wonderful?”

Or, “I am so happy! My very best friend told me she was disgusted with me for talking about Jesus all the time, so now she's telling lies about me. Be glad with me, won't you?”

Or, “God is so wonderful to me! I have come to realize how sinful I am. Isn't that thrilling?”

Or, “I got such good news today. My sister phoned and said she's been diagnosed with stage 4 breast cancer. I am so glad!”

My kids would say, “The light's on, but nobody's home.”

Or, “The elevator doesn't reach the top floor.”

Or, “Somebody call 911 quick. We've got a looney here.”

Look over these blessings Jesus shared with His disciples and see why they are surprising, some of them even seem ludicrous:

Blessed are the poor in spirit,

For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are those who mourn,
For they shall be comforted.
Blessed are the meek,
For they shall inherit the earth.
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for
righteousness, For they shall be filled.
Blessed are the merciful,
For they shall obtain mercy.
Blessed are the pure in heart,
For they shall see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers,
For they shall be called sons of God.
Blessed are those who are persecuted for
righteousness' sake,
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you,
And say all kinds of evil against you falsely
for My sake.
Rejoice and be exceedingly glad,
For great is your reward in heaven.
Matthew 5:3-12

Which of these “blessings” would you likely welcome into your life? Poor in spirit? Mourning? Meekness? Hungering for righteousness? Showing mercy to undeserving people? Not yielding to worldly pleasures? Making peace with unpeaceful people? Being persecuted because you love God?

In truth, we probably would not welcome any of these, unless we really believed God would use them to bless us!

That's Why the Beatitudes Are Surprising.

They are the exact opposite of everything our culture values.

Poor in spirit? No! Self-esteem is essential for good health. I want to feel good about myself. I don't weigh

myself down with negative thoughts.

Mourning? No, life's too short to be unhappy. I don't let my happiness depend on anyone else. Nobody is going to control me. I plan to be popular with the "in" crowd, whoever they are. I plan to make headlines.

Me? Meek? Are you kidding? I want a blazing, successful career in a field I choose. I want a salary big enough to end all financial pressures. You don't get that by being meek.

Hunger for righteousness? Holiness is no fun. What a bore! I want to do what I want to do when I want to do it. It's the "good life" for me.

Merciful? Why? People who've done wrong should get what they deserve.

Purity? What a hangup! Sex is meant to be fun. Why load it down with moral stuff? It's not my fault if somebody else gets hurt. And I'm certainly not going to feel guilty if I have to get rid of the incidental consequences of impurity such as an unwanted pregnancy.

Peace maker? Actually, if somebody does me wrong, they are going to be sorry. They'll get it back, with interest.

Persecuted for being good? I say, live and let live. I hate people who try to impose their moral standards on others. They deserve to be shut up.

**But There Are Secrets in Our Walk with God
That He Really Wants Us to Experience**

It is possible to be a Christian, to know God, to know what the Scriptures tell us about Him, and yet not really understand *why* He does *what* He does. In the beatitudes, Jesus draws back the curtain, so that we not just learn *about* Him, but *understand* the deep longings of His heart in His dealings with us.

“When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue fails for thirst, I the LORD will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers . . . make the dry land springs of water. . . That they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the LORD hath done this” (Isaiah 41:17-20).

A beautiful progression: Endure the trial, then see God deliver, then come to know Him and think about what has happened, consider, and then finally “understand together.” Studying the beatitudes will help us not to just know about God, but glimpse His heart so we actually understand Him.

What does Isaiah 43:10 tell us about this?

We often see God working in power in the world, but we could easily misinterpret His heart motives, judging on the surface of things. But that would be a great tragedy. God willing, as we search these Scriptures, we'll come to understand Him in a new and wonderful way.

Sure, there are some things about God beyond our understanding. Deuteronomy 29:29 says, “The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.”

But the beatitudes tell us He yearns to reveal His heart to us through these blessings.

But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him." But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit.

(1 Corinthians 2:9,10)

If we want God to show us the wonderful things He has prepared for us, we'll have to change our perspective. We must look at our lives and our world in the light of what God's Word reveals about Him, not what seems "reasonable" to us.

When Jesus told His disciples He would be crucified, Peter argued with Him. "Put that right out of your mind! Don't be ridiculous," he seemed to say. Notice the strong response of Jesus:

"Jesus turned and looked at his disciples and then said to Peter very sternly, **Get away from me, Satan! You are seeing things merely from a human point of view, not from God's**" (Mark 8:33).

We will not understand the blessings of the beatitudes unless we look at them from God's eternal point of view.

These Secrets Will Give Us Unalloyed Joy

This world is broken. Psalm 82:5 says, "All the foundations of the earth are out of course." But Jesus promises us unconditional joy, untinged by sorrow, not only in the future ("They *shall be* ") but now, even today ("Theirs

is the kingdom”) simply because the High King of the Universe is a personal, real and loving Heavenly Father. Why, according to 1 Peter 1:7-9, does God test our faith?

What is “the end of our faith,” the purpose, the outcome, even when we can't see God but still believe in Him? (1 Peter 1:7-9)

There are no “booby-traps” in these blessings, no hidden bad consequences. They are genuine through and through. How are we assured of this? (Proverbs 10:22)

The blessings Jesus bestows on us, His gifts, are pure good, pure delight. You may view some of the circumstances in your life right now, things you first thought were the gift of God, but now seem to be tainted with heartache. That is because you do not yet know the end of the story; you don't know how God is going to make “all things” work together for your good and your joy, as Romans 8:28 assures us.

Let's define the word *blessed*. Two of the Greek words for “blessed” are *eulugeo*, “speak well,” and *makarios* “infinitely happy.” So these blessings will make us infinitely happy!

When King David was told by the Prophet Nathan about the future God had prepared for him and his children,

he exclaimed, "For when You grant a blessing to your servant, O Sovereign LORD, it is an eternal blessing!" (2 Samuel 7:29).

The Holy Spirit tells us, "The gifts and callings of God are irrevocable" (Romans 11:29). God doesn't snatch back

from us the good He has given us. How should that affect your feelings about the blessings these beatitudes promise?

We Can Experience Deep Joy in a Broken World

We might think this kind of joy is impossible to experience in this shattered creation, damaged by cataclysmic natural disasters and the evil actions of people and even the ways we disappoint ourselves. But we can have joy in this broken world, because God is still in control.

For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness REIGN IN LIFE through the one man, Jesus Christ. Romans 5:17

Yes, He's the High King of Heaven and Earth, but He's my Father.

I have all the rights and privileges of being the child of the King.

And that privilege began the day I accepted Him as my Savior.

I can reign with Him now, in this life, through “God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness.”

And these rights and privileges are available to everyone who trusts Jesus as Savior!