



# Beatitudes From the Back Side: A Different Take on What It Means to be Blessed

*John Schroeder, J. Ellsworth Kalas*

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Using his method of approaching Bible passages from an unusual angle or a unique starting point, J. Ellsworth Kalas presents new insight into the beatitudes, Jesus' blessings from the Sermon on the Mount.

When we start examining the beatitudes we realize that in Jesus' view, happiness is not something we get by pursuing it; indeed, almost the contrary. We are told that we will be happy—or blessed, if you prefer—in what appears to be the near antithesis of happiness. If we choose to live by the beatitudes, we make a declaration of dependence. We put ourselves into bondage to such things as poverty of spirit, purity of heart, and a readiness for persecution. This isn't the sort of product they advertise on prime-time television; indeed, I'm not sure that it appears overly often in our prime-time worship services. That is because this is not a spiritual quick fix. It doesn't come in a five-easy-lessons capsule. Instead, it is largely contrary to the way we live and to the way we think.

Before we go any further, however, let me say that over the past twenty centuries a very great many people have found in these beatitudes a depth of peace and joy beyond anything our common culture promotes and seeks. But it isn't easy, and it isn't obvious. There's nothing easy or soft about this kind of dependence. Rather, it is an attitude that demands a huge store of courage. It's the kind of dependence the trapeze artist displays when he or she lets go of the bar and with no safety net awaiting, flies off into space, trusting.

Welcome to the beatitudes. And may you be eternally happy, beginning now.

—adapted from the introduction

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