

DANIEL FUSCO

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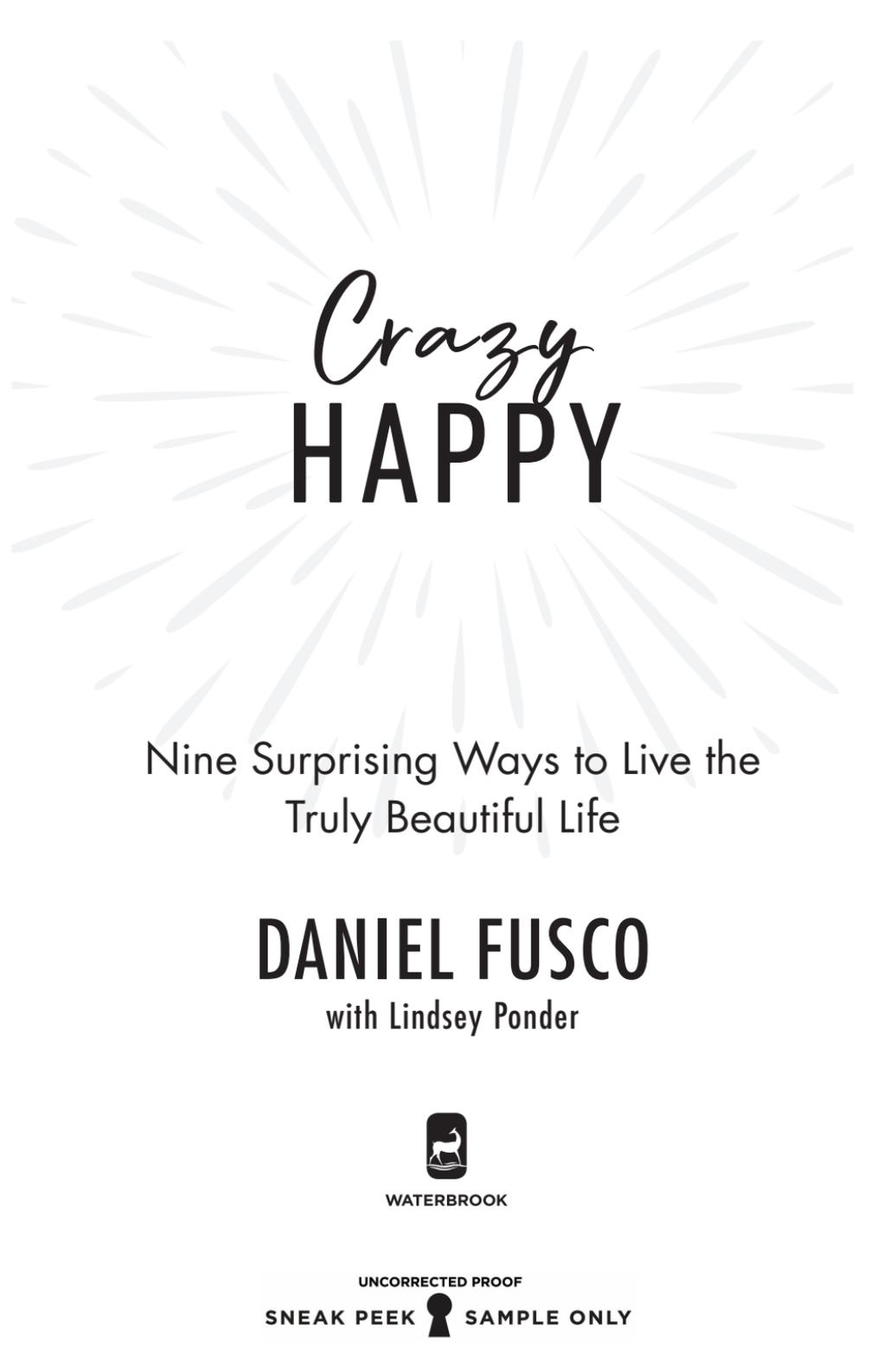
Crazy
HAPPY

Nine Surprising Ways to
Live the Truly Beautiful Life

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Nine Surprising Ways to Live the
Truly Beautiful Life

DANIEL FUSCO

with Lindsey Ponder



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CRAZY HAPPY

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To my dearest Lynn: our life continues to be unexpected and beautiful—thank you for all of it.

To Obadiah, Maranatha, and Annabelle: the best is yet to come, so keep abiding in Jesus.

To those of you who yearn to live beautifully: let's travel this path and together learn what it means to be crazy happy.

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Foreword

“What would it take to make you happy?”

That question was once asked of fifty-two thousand Americans by *Psychology Today*. Some of the most common answers included having a good job, having friends, being in love, finding recognition and success, gaining financial security, owning a house, being attractive, or being in a relationship.

What’s interesting about all these attempts to find happiness is that each one is an *external* circumstance instead of an *internal* choice.

Today’s popular idea of happiness is all about having the right circumstances. But God’s way to happiness is about having the right attitude.

Of all the subjects Jesus could have chosen to teach about first when he began his famous Sermon on the Mount, he chose the subject of how to be happy. Why? Because he knew that everybody wants to be happy but very few people experience true, lasting happiness.

Now when you read the Beatitudes of Jesus, they are definitely countercultural. They even *sound* contradictory: “Happy are the poor in spirit . . . Happy are those who mourn . . . Happy are the meek . . . Happy are the hungry . . . Happy are the persecuted . . .” (As Daniel will explain, “blessed” can also be translated “happy.”) What? Did I hear Jesus correctly? Are you kidding?

These seem upside down and don’t sound like happy to me. But Jesus was pointing out that God’s way to happiness

is very different than ours. It is possible to be happy, even in the worst circumstances.

If your happiness depends on your having all your problems solved first or everything in your life going perfectly, then you'll never be happy—because this world is broken. Happiness is a choice. And happiness is a habit.

Jesus is crystal clear: happiness depends on choosing the right values, the right priorities, and the right attitudes. It's not a matter of what is happening *around* you but rather what's happening *inside* you. That's why both the Beatitudes and the fruit of the Spirit are not merely a prescription for happiness—they are the pathway to spiritual and emotional health.

My good friend Daniel Fusco knows this well. He *embodies* the message in this book. Daniel is one of the most contagiously happy people I know! If you knew him, you'd love him. So read this book carefully and learn. Don't just skim through this book quickly. Savor it and discuss it with a friend. Your personal happiness is at stake.

As I write these words, the world is engulfed in anxiety over the global COVID-19 virus pandemic. Right now, many of us are being told to stay at home. I just wish everyone had this book to read while they are being quarantined. It will lift your spirits!

Rick Warren

Pastor, Saddleback Church

Author, The Purpose Driven Life

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Crazy
HAPPY

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Let's Get Crazy Happy

I want to ask you a big question. But first I want to give you a moment to get ready. Don't worry. This isn't a hard question. It isn't overly personal either. But it is an important question. And you don't want to overthink the answer.

Are you ready?

Take a moment. Breathe in. Breathe out.

Here it is: What is the happiest moment you can remember?

You got it? What is it?

I bet it's amazing.

My answer is simple: My wedding. It was absolutely over-the-top beautiful.

Now, I'm not saying that to score some extra brownie points with my bride, Lynn.¹ Seriously, my wedding was beautiful. To this day, it was one of my happiest moments.

¹ Although if you're married, you know you never can have too many of those. Brownie points are earned by the drop and spent in buckets. If you're not married, make a mental note: brownie points are always good!

We got married in Yosemite—in an Ansel Adams photograph. You know the kind I’m talking about: black-and-white film stills of the Sierra Nevada backcountry, windswept and rugged, with no one but the mule deer and bighorn sheep for company.

As a guy who grew up in New Jersey, I was blown away by the beauty of Yosemite National Park the first time I went there. I was on a road trip with a few buddies I grew up with, and we were checking out the national parks in California, southern Utah, and Arizona. But Yosemite was absolutely insane. As I looked around, I couldn’t speak. I was used to the “awe” of being surrounded by huge buildings and millions of people, but now I was standing in the middle of the most majestic, awe-inspiring place I’d ever been. I found myself just spinning in a circle, my eyes glued to the crags and bluffs towering above me. If you’ve never been there, I hope you can visit it sometime. Words can’t really describe it.

Picture this: almost 95 percent of the park—around 750,000 acres of land—is wild and mountainous, some of the most untouched wilderness we’ve got left in the United States. I wasn’t kidding about the photo. Ansel Adams was captivated by Yosemite, which is why I’m sure you’ve probably seen the park in photos at some point, even if you’ve never been there.

But the park is only the beginning of this story. Lynn always wanted to get married in Yosemite. During her childhood, she and her family would often visit this wonderful spot. It was one of her father and mother’s favorite places, and it became even more special to Lynn when her mom passed away after a battle with cancer. Lynn had always dreamed of having her wedding in Yosemite.

When Lynn and I got serious enough to talk about marriage, we decided we wanted to get married at the Yosemite Valley Chapel. The chapel was originally built back in 1879, and it has that kind of old-mountain-chapel quality that hits you in all the right ways when you see it. It's located in the crook of the valley, and when you look around, you realize you are literally ringed on all sides by cliffs bigger than anything you've ever seen, pockets of meadows, and (as if that weren't breathtaking enough) an incredible view of Yosemite Falls.

What could be more beautiful, romantic, and memorable than getting married in such a stunning spot *and* on the first day of spring? Lynn and I couldn't think of anything we'd like better. So imagine our excitement when we called the park service and a ranger told us the chapel was available for that date! We couldn't believe our luck.

But then we were told, "Well, given the time of year and our elevation, you've got a fifty-fifty chance of getting snowed out, and you might not be able to make it into the park to get married. And oh yeah, if that happens, you still need to pay us for the rental even though you won't be able to get married that day."

Not exactly what Lynn and I were hoping to hear. It was a total bummer.

But if you know me at all,² you can guess what we did. We said, "If God wants it to happen, it'll happen! Let's just go ahead and plan it and pray that the park is open." And you probably have an idea how things went down.

² I realize that some of you might not know me, so here's a description: tall, dark, and handsome. (Well, at least the middle one. But I *have* been told I have great hair.)

We got snowed out.

No, we didn't get snowed out! You stinkers.³

For the weeks leading up to our wedding, the weather was perfect. On the day that we got married, it was the most beautiful day we could hope for! It was seventy-five degrees, with just a few wispy Bob Ross clouds in the sky. Purple wildflowers punctuated every stretch of green surrounding the chapel. And there was a single lingering pile of snow right in front, so all our little cousins and nephews could throw snowballs at each other.⁴ I'm not kidding when I say it was the ultimate wedding.

But there was only one problem: at the start of the ceremony, my bride was nowhere to be found.

You're probably wondering, *You went through all that, only to show up and she wasn't there?* Now, Lynn is notoriously on time, but sure enough, we were supposed to get married at 10:00 in the morning, and at 10:05 she wasn't there. Then 10:10 hit—she wasn't there. And at 10:15—still not there. In Yosemite, you don't have cell reception, so I had no clue what was going on. Yeah, I was feeling a little uneasy. At about 10:20, the chapel attendant turned to me and said nervously, "Maybe she's not going to show up."

That was about all I could handle. I love Jesus, okay? And I'm a pastor. But I almost hit that attendant! Not because I was mad at him but because, geez, maybe she actually *wasn't*

³ By the way, I truly don't know how you smell. But I'm sure it's . . . never mind. In case you haven't realized it yet, we are going to have fun in the footnotes. What's a book without fun footnotes?

⁴ Confession: I threw a few snowballs at some specific family members.

going to show up. And that would be the end of the world as I knew it.

Inside the chapel where I was waiting for Lynn, I didn't have the full picture. What I didn't realize was that because of the beautiful weather and because it was a Saturday, there was a long line of cars trying to get into the park. So my wife, who's normally right on time, was sitting at the end of that line, late for her wedding day.

Thankfully, Lynn's brother, Paul, was her driver, and Paul has absolutely no issues with speaking his mind and creating a scene. I love him for that. So when he realized how late they were, he decided to get out of the car and shout, "I got the bride in here, and she's late for her wedding day!" And everyone immediately pulled over and let them drive by.⁵

When she finally showed up—about thirty-five minutes late—my whole body sagged with relief. Whew!

As the chapel doors opened, all I saw was sunlight at first. Then I saw this beautiful silhouette of my bride in her wedding gown. Of course, I'm all Italian, so I got choked up. I took everything I had to pull it together fast. I didn't want to have bad wedding pictures because I was ugly crying before she even walked through the doors of that cute little chapel.

When I think of the happiest moment in my life, I think of that day. Was everything perfect? No. But the crazy journey it took to reach the point where Lynn and I got married made that moment all the sweeter. The beauty of that moment as I

⁵ You gotta love Californians for listening like that. Where I came from in Jersey, they wouldn't even say "fuggetaboutit." They'd just shake their heads no and ignore you. Those are my people.

caught my first glimpse of my bride was amplified by the fact I hadn't been sure we'd even get in the park or that she was going to show up.

Learning to See

Part of what makes things beautiful to us are the surrounding circumstances. I think of a famous story in the Bible—the one in which the men who followed Jesus, his disciples, were traveling on the road to Emmaus.⁶ They were leaving Jerusalem, totally dejected. Bummed out doesn't even begin to describe how they felt. They thought that Jesus was the promised Messiah and Savior, so they had put all their eggs in that basket, and then he up and died. The disciples who chose to stay in Jerusalem were hiding out, fearing they were going to be next.

When I put myself in their shoes,⁷ I'm guessing they thought, *All our hope was in this guy, Jesus, and what he was going to do, and now he's gone.* Like me in the wedding chapel, they just didn't know the rest of the story. On that Saturday following Jesus's crucifixion, the disciples didn't realize the cross was going to give way to an empty tomb. Although Friday was brutal, there was a resurrection coming on Sunday.

I bet you know how that feels. I know I sure do. Our lives are full of those “Saturday moments,” aren't they? I can't tell you the number of times I've felt so lost in the middle of my circumstances that I haven't been able to see any beauty.

⁶ Luke 24:13–35.

⁷ To be more specific, in their sandals. And you *know* they'd be jealous of my Birkenstocks.

We're hitting on something fundamental to our human experience.

What I've discovered is this: plain and simple, the only reason you and I are so dissatisfied with our lives is that we don't see them as beautiful. You think I'm making this up, but I'm not. Not seeing our lives as beautiful holds us back from the happiness and satisfaction we're meant to experience.

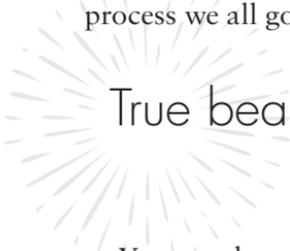


Plain and simple, the only reason you and I are so dissatisfied with our lives is because we don't see them as beautiful.

I learned this in the great philosophy classroom of the college party. (Bear with me. It's worth it.) Party after party did nothing to satisfy my thirst for happiness and meaning in life. I was the guy who handled vibe control for parties all over the city. I made sure they were the *best* anyone ever went to. But I remember sitting on my dorm bed one night, saying, "This is supposed to be fun, but it's not fun anymore."

No amount of drinking or drugs made me happy. No number of relationships made me feel loved. Later, after I became a Christian, I still fruitlessly pursued satisfaction—but as a self-righteous legalist. I tried to find happiness through all the ways my life was pleasing to God—how much better I was in God's eyes than I used to be, not to mention how much better I was than other people. But none of it worked. It was all just a bandage for a deeper wound.

I've since learned that's just the normal trial-and-error process we all go through when our lives lack beauty.



True beauty is actually what we're all longing for.

You see, longing is human. And seeking satisfaction for our deep desires, even more so. But what most of us don't realize is true beauty is actually what we're all longing for.

The famous author Fyodor Dostoyevsky said it simply: "Beauty will save the world."⁸ And I believe that! But what I would argue is that beauty has *already* saved the world, and the work God wants to do today in this generation is teach us how to live the beautiful lives he designed us for—to live so inseparably linked to Jesus (the only person whose life has ever been characterized by perfect beauty) that we start to exhibit the very beauty we're all deeply longing for.

And that's also when the world around us becomes beautiful in the way God intended.

You know you have found what you are looking for when you are happy. And not just happy in the general sense, but something beyond happiness.

Our deep ache for this beyond-happy life is something we can hardly put into words most of the time. The concept of a beautiful life can be vague. We don't want beauty in an abstract sense, floating out there in the ether, something in-

⁸ Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Idiot* (Hertfordshire, England: Wordsworth, 1996), 492.

tangible that we appreciate but can't quite grasp. We want to be united with the beauty we see, to pass into it, to receive it into ourselves, to bathe in it and become part of it. As we behold Jesus and the beauty of what God has done for us, we don't just see it from a distance; we find ourselves yearning for true oneness with Jesus.

Everyone is on a unique step of his or her journey. Some of us arrived here with serious issues, questions, and doubts about Jesus, while others of us have been following Jesus with great excitement. No matter what our personal view of Jesus is, he is still the most important and controversial person in the history of humanity. Everything he said and did matters.

We are all on this journey together, so I don't want you to be scared away if you're unsure about Jesus. It is my hope to honor the step that you are on in your journey. And if you're already following Jesus, I promise to honor your step as well.⁹

Our human love of beauty is an echoing cry in all our souls. We want to experience something beautiful not just in the world around us, not just in what we do, but in who we are. It's part of our deep longing for significance, meaning, and purpose that transcends the details of our lives and connects us to something greater. And we've all felt it.

⁹ If you are unsure about Jesus, I am truly humbled and honored that you would read this book. The same is true for those of you who already know him. Either way, we all have questions, and that's okay. Jesus is not afraid of your questions, and neither am I.

A sunburst graphic with many thin lines radiating from a central point, positioned behind the text.

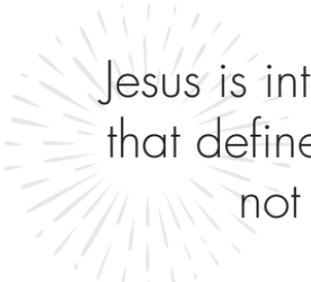
True beauty works itself out in our lives only as we are made one with Jesus.

Now, I realize I just used a bunch of different terms almost interchangeably: “true beauty,” “a beautiful life,” “oneness with Jesus.” Here’s why: true beauty works itself out in our lives only as we are made one with Jesus, because only he can breathe beauty back into the deepest parts of who we are. And when this happens, we experience happiness.

Happiness Doesn’t Just Happen

If Jesus is in the business of making us more like himself (aka more truly beautiful), what’s our part to play? Few things in life just *happen* to us, right? So what can we do to usher in this beauty Jesus has for us?

In one of his most famous teachings, called the Beatitudes, Jesus described what it looks like to live into the beautiful life he’s unrolling within us. He shared his heart on the distinctive qualities that really should just be part of who his followers are.

A sunburst graphic with many thin lines radiating from a central point, positioned behind the text.

Jesus is interested in a beautiful life that defines who his followers *are*, not just what they *do*.

This is going to be key as you read the rest of this book: Jesus is interested in a beautiful life that defines who his followers *are*, not just what they *do*.

Let's take a look:

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 poor in spirit,
 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, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.¹⁰

¹⁰ Matthew 5:3–12.

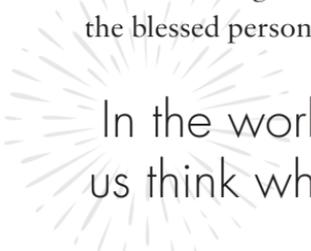
I get it. When you read this list, almost all the characteristics that are described here are not things we would necessarily see as beautiful.

We're talking about things like poverty of spirit, mourning, meekness, hungering and thirsting for righteousness, mercy, purity of heart, peacemaking, and persecution. *Maybe* some of those you might grab on to, but what we learn right away is that the life Jesus says is "blessed" is beautiful because this teaching of Jesus is a declaration not of what we're supposed to *do* but of who we're supposed to *be*.

After all, they're called the Beatitudes, not the Do-attitudes.¹¹ But isn't it hard to differentiate between the two sometimes?

In the world we live in, so many of us think that who we are is defined by what we do.

But in the Beatitudes, Jesus tells us who we already are if we are born again. If you've put your faith and trust in Jesus, the blessed person is who you are in Christ.



In the world we live in, so many of us think who we are is what we do.

Now, I want to point out an important detail from these verses. Every one of the characteristics Jesus showcases in the Beatitudes starts with the word *blessed*. In the original Greek language, the word for "blessed" is *makarios*, which

¹¹ I've heard this before, and I don't know who coined it, but it's brilliant!

literally means somebody who has been blessed by God and is fortunate or happy.

What I find fascinating about that is Jesus links the idea of happiness with blessing and the life he intends for us to live. Often we don't like the word *happy* because happiness has been devalued by our culture. People use that word to talk about feelings of situational well-being, feelings of circumstantial joy—such as, “The Amazon delivery guy just stopped by my house and dropped off a package, and it made me happy.” So the problem with the word *happy* and the way we use it today is that everyone wants to be happy, but we think of happiness as a fleeting thought. We associate happiness with societal issues such as consumerism, self-obsession, and faithlessness, so it doesn't have much weight anymore. Like, “Hey, I'm not happy, so maybe I'll trade in my wife and kids and start a new family.”¹²

But Jesus is going way deeper than that. (He usually does.)

He's saying that true happiness comes from being blessed by God.

Eugene Peterson, in *The Message* translation, originally wanted to use the word *lucky* instead of *blessed*.¹³ I know you may be thinking, *I don't believe in luck because I believe in God*. But the idea of being lucky here is the idea that you got something you didn't deserve and you feel lucky you got it.

¹² Personally, I have no problem with people wanting to be happy. Think of the alternative. If a person said he wanted to be unhappy, I'd be heartbroken for him.

¹³ Eugene Peterson, “Eugene Peterson: Translating the Beatitudes,” December 19, 2017, YouTube video, www.youtube.com/watch?v=b80KhqMeM2A.

Think about it this way: if you were at the gas station¹⁴ and decided on a whim to buy a lottery ticket and you won, you'd say, "Man, I'm lucky!" It's just an expression that means you suddenly became fortunate. Basically, the idea Jesus gives us of blessedness being a form of "holy luck" is actually quite profound. He makes it clear the blessedness he's describing is not something you've worked to receive; it's something you've been given as a gift, not because you deserved it. Jesus gave it to you because he loves you that much.¹⁵

When we understand this, we discover that true happiness is not just enjoying our circumstances; it's realizing we have been blessed by God. The life he has bestowed on us was not something we deserved, but he chose to give it to us anyway.

The true happy life comes when we live within these blessings.

Future Hope, Present Blessings

We have this idea that the benefits of Christianity come to us in the future, after we die. And they do. But we also get to live out the blessings that come with following Jesus in the present. Right here and now. You're blessed *presently*.

But don't miss that Jesus said we are blessed (happy, lucky) in some crazy situations. Remember the list? Poor in spirit, mourning, persecutions, and the like. That's why I call this kind of happiness "crazy happy." Jesus is giving us the gift of

¹⁴ When I was in high school, I worked at a gas station. It was a blast, except when it was freezing in the wintertime. Then it was awful.

¹⁵ I get it. "Jesus loves you" is cliché. But it is still true. His love is extravagant and extraordinary.

happiness in the most unexpected ways *and* places. He is inviting us to find happiness in all the situations we would much rather avoid.

A quick note on the word *crazy*. Please hear my heart. In no way am I trying to minimize mental health issues. That word has been used in inappropriate and even cruel ways. I also realize some people do not appreciate the use of ambiguous or potentially negative adjectives for the things of God.¹⁶

But I am not one of those people! I *love* provocative words. Plus, I realize that younger generations love to use language these ways.¹⁷ So I am using the word *crazy* with its most positive contemporary connotation: intensely enthusiastic and passionately excited,¹⁸ with a little bit of irrationality thrown in for good measure. Crazy happy is the life Jesus has for us.

Oftentimes when I hear someone teach the Beatitudes, it's described as a chain of imperatives—things Jesus commands us to do. But another interesting thing we learn from the Greek here is that the mood of what Jesus is sharing in the Beatitudes is in the indicative tense, which literally means it's a statement of fact. That's what I mean when I say the Beatitudes tell us who we are, not what we have to do. It doesn't mean that now we have this responsibility to act a certain

¹⁶ Like the worship song that speaks of the “reckless” love of God. Some people do not appreciate calling God's love reckless, as some definitions of *reckless* have negative connotations.

¹⁷ Like calling something “good” or “sick.” Or my son Obadiah's favorite: calling “fun” “savage”!

¹⁸ Dictionary.com, s.v. “crazy,” accessed November 11, 2019, www.dictionary.com/browse/crazy.

way; it means that because we are given this life in Jesus, we get to live blessed lives when we understand who we truly are in him. This is the crazy happy life.

That’s why James said faith without works is dead.¹⁹ You see, faith apart from a way of changed living is not really faith at all; it’s just an idea we hold in our minds. God wants us to take the next step with him when we believe. He wants what we believe to be lived out.

God is interested in theology with legs on it. He wants us to put feet on our faith and live it out into the world. It’s what I call *applied theology*.

The Beatitudes show us we need to know who we are in Christ and live accordingly.

And what’s truly wild about this adventure we call “faith in Jesus,” as we live according to his desires for our life, is that Jesus says there’s a result we can expect. It’s a promise he’s given us!

Again and again, he said, “Blessed are _____ for theirs is _____.” That means who you are leads to an outcome. Can you imagine walking by the neighbor’s house and seeing a lion caged up in the backyard with a bunch of house cats and eating dry cat food? It’s a crazy thought,²⁰ but the point is, that lion wasn’t destined for a backyard; he was destined to roam in the savannah wilderness in Africa! He was made for something so much more.

We are the same way. We are children of the Most High God, saved by the finished work of Jesus, and we are free to

¹⁹ James 2:14–26.

²⁰ That’s actually not crazy. That would be awesome. If that is you, you are totally my hero.

live that out beautifully in the world. Now, our motivation for living godly should never be to get the outcomes we want. (That's backward!) On the contrary, our motive to live like Jesus wants is to know him and love him more. And whenever life gets hard, we can always fall back on his promises to us in the Beatitudes.

So if you want a beautiful life, put your faith and trust in Jesus. And here's a key to life as a follower of Jesus: it's not just believing in Jesus one time when you commit to him; it's about following him every day as well. It's about walking with him.

See, too many of us have this idea that when you're born, you're born and that's it. It's a great thing to be born, but what's next? If you never interact with your parents again, will you grow? It won't happen, right? And it's the same way with Jesus. You put your faith and trust in him one time. That's salvation. But then the adventure begins: you follow him every single day so that you grow.

If we want to experience the crazy happy life God intends for us in Jesus—the life that fills our longings—we have to internalize this new reality. God's ideas are unique. They're so different from our culture. But they lead to exactly where you and I want to be. And better yet, they lead to what God wants for us.

His beauty changes everything. It comes as a gift, and when we live into his beauty, the world changes.

What's both interesting and heartbreaking is if you ask most people who don't go to church how they would describe the Western church, you'll likely find it doesn't go all that well. Very few people are going to list off the Beatitudes when they describe the church. Very few people are going to

describe Christians as “poor in spirit,” “hungering and thirsting for righteousness,” “mourning.”

Don’t get me wrong—I *love* the church. She is the body and bride of Christ. But if we’re real with ourselves, we’ve got to know that the rest of society is not thinking Beatitudes when they see how we live most of the time.²¹

I would venture to say it’s really urgent for us to figure out how to get back to a faith that’s beautiful—for the sake of a dying world, and also because that’s how Jesus loves us to live. And at the end of the day, living beautiful lives that are pleasing to Jesus is what it’s all about.

But I want to add another layer to help us discover the crazy happy life.

From Crispy to Crazy Happy

At the beginning of every summer, we take some family time. Just us. After many years of marriage, Lynn and I have three great kids: Obadiah, Maranatha, and Annabelle. We pull them out of school a little bit early (we are the coolest parents!) and head to one of our favorite spots, Donner Lake. Donner Lake is next to the famous Lake Tahoe on the California-Nevada border. By the end of another school year and a full season of ministry, we always look forward to this special time to rest, clear the decks, and reset. We all need it individually and as a family.

Just a few years back, I was particularly crispy. That’s the word I use when I am feeling tired, dried up, beaten down, and just plain blah. *Crispy*. I was skidding into our vacation

²¹ I like to say that Jesus needs new PR. Then I remind people that *we* are his PR.

time, I wasn't feeling all that healthy, and my proximity to vacation was what was keeping me going at that point.

I usually make some sort of plan for spiritual growth for these times. Given my crispiness, I decided that instead of seeking to consume a lot of Scripture, I would simply soak in just one passage. So I chose the Beatitudes. Day after day, it was the only thing I read, until I had the passage memorized and a journal full of thoughts and insights I picked up along the way.

After about a week, in one of my times of reflection, I had a strange thought:²² *Aren't there the same number of beatitudes as there are fruits of the Spirit?* That's the kind of thing I randomly think of. So I quickly turned to Galatians 5:22–23.

Yep, there are nine fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control. That's nine fruits to go along with nine beatitudes. That's interesting, isn't it? I wondered if something was there.

I thought, *What would happen if I lined them up?* So in my journal, on one side of the page, I wrote out the Beatitudes, and on the other side, I wrote out the fruit of the Spirit. Because I believe the Bible is unique, inspired, and perfect, I decided the order of the words was by design, so I resisted the temptation to take the words out of order. I just let them be in the order they were written.

As I looked at the paper, I instantly realized that this is important. *Really* important.

²² It could have just been my ADD kicking in after trying to focus on one passage of Scripture for that long.

Both the Beatitudes and the fruit of the Spirit tell us similar things. Both are not explanations of what we do but of *who we are*. Both explain the unique qualities of what it means to be given the gift of life in Jesus.

Think about a fruit tree. Fruit is born in its own time, simply because of the tree it stems from. Jesus said we will know a tree by its fruit. He also said God is glorified by us bearing fruit, and that is impossible unless we abide in him.

In other words, fruit can't produce itself. Its growth is a by-product of its ability to find its life from the tree itself. This is exactly what Jesus told us in John 15:4. So when you put the Beatitudes together with the fruit of the Spirit, you find that as a pairing, they give us an absolutely stunning view of what a beautiful life is made of.

Think about the fruit of the Spirit again: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control. Almost everyone agrees that this list contains qualities of a crazy happy life. But when we link these traits up with the Beatitudes, we start to learn how and where that fruit is cultivated. These nine pairings are like movements of a symphony for us to explore and soak in.

One of the greatest areas of tension for us is we all want to live happy lives, but we have a nagging feeling that our lives aren't what they could be. So we try to live better. We try to make life more beautiful. And with every attempt to cultivate more beauty, we continually find ourselves not quite there.

So the hamster wheel keeps spinning.

You might be thinking, *Fusco, it's not that hard to find beauty in life. You just need to look for it, and you'll see it all around you.* I hear you. It's been said that beauty is in the eye

of the beholder. This is fundamentally true. Each of us sees beauty in different things. But God sees certain things as beautiful as well. And what he thinks becomes our road map. When we align our ideas about beauty with that of our Creator and Sustainer, true beauty emerges.

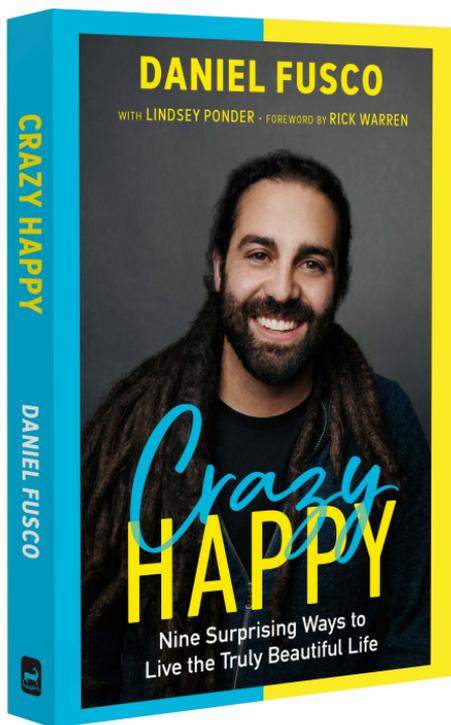
I have a sneaking suspicion you picked up this book because you want your life to be truly beautiful. You want to live crazy happy. So do I. That is also why I needed to write this book in the first place. I wanted to find the road map to a crazy happy life. I wanted to learn how to cultivate a truly beautiful life.

So let's take this journey together. Come explore these passages of Scripture and the amazing realities tucked inside. Let's put ourselves right in the middle of these passages and watch them bloom in our lives. Nine surprising and simple ways that lead to a beautiful life. A crazy happy life.

I promise to be as honest as possible. I'm traveling this path too.

Sounds beautiful, doesn't it?

Let's find out together.



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