

HAPPY ARE THE...

Discovering Joy
In The Beatitudes

Steven Hudgik

HAPPY ARE THE... – The JOY of the BEATITUDES

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First Edition

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THE MTA QUICK COMMENTARY SERIES

The MTA ministry (Move To Assurance) is an outreach and discipleship ministry bringing the gospel of Jesus Christ to the lost.

Our goal with the Quick Commentary series is to provide a series of short commentaries on popular sections of scripture that are commonly misunderstood. Written so the layperson can easily understand them, I hope these books are useful to new Christians as well as those who are mature in their faith.

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to our many MTA prayer partners. Thank you for your prayers. You have powered this ministry through good times and tough times. You have kept us going when we've been overwhelmed and when we've been blessed.

Thank you all!

Large crowds followed Him
from Galilee and the
Decapolis and Jerusalem
and Judea and from
beyond the Jordan.~ Matthew

4:25

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And turning His gaze
toward His disciples, He
began to say, “Blessed
are... – Luke 6:20

■ NOTES

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■ NOTES

INTRODUCTION

Happiness is the great question confronting mankind. The whole world is longing for happiness and it is tragic to observe the ways in which people are seeking it. The vast majority, alas, are doing so in a way that is bound to produce misery. Anything, which by evading the difficulties, merely makes people happy for the time being, is ultimately going to add to their misery and problems. That is where the utter deceitfulness of sin comes in; it is always offering happiness, and it always leads to unhappiness and to final misery and wretchedness. – D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Studies In The Sermon On The Mount, 1976. page 24

What are the Beatitudes? The common answer is, “blessings.” The word beatitude is derived from a Latin word meaning happy, blessed or blessedness, and that’s the word Jesus uses for eight declarations, in Matthew chapter 5, at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount.

So, what are the Beatitudes? Are these instructions on how to live a good life? Are these characteristics we must have in order to have eternal life? Are these blessings Jesus is pronouncing on certain groups of people? Or is Jesus simply instructing us on how we can be happy?

The Beatitudes seem paradoxical. The conditions and their corresponding blessings do not seem to match. By normal human standards such things as humility, mourning, desire for righteousness, mercy, and persecution are not the stuff of which happiness is made. To the natural man, and to the immature or carnal Christian, such happiness sounds like misery with another name. – John MacArthur, New Testament Commentary Matthew 1-7, 1985, page 142

What are the Beatitudes?

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus is describing the characteristics of people who are in His kingdom. Basically this sermon is a series of comparisons with the worldly false teaching of the Pharisees. Jesus shows that the Pharisees are all about appearances and looking good on the outside. And that's not good.

Kingdom residents have the right stuff on the inside. It is our heart attitude that is important. Jesus is making the point throughout the Sermon on the Mount that, once you get your heart right, your resulting words and actions will be right.

What Is The Purpose of the Beatitudes?

In the Beatitudes Jesus lays out the heart attitudes His kingdom residents will have, and the resulting actions. But, we're not there yet. So for us He is also describing the process of sanctification through which we grow to be more like Christ. Yes, the Beatitudes may seem cryptic and paradoxical to you now, making them difficult to understand, but they will all make sense by the time you get to the end of this book.

The Beatitudes have a second purpose. In addition to defining the attitude of kingdom residents, the Beatitudes also lay out the path to salvation. So this is both a descriptive sermon and probably the greatest evangelistic sermon in all of scripture. So let's get going and start with a little background that will help you understand what Jesus is teaching.

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WHAT IS YOUR HEART?

CHAPTER 1 WHAT IS YOUR HEART?

What is your heart?

That sounds like an odd question. We all know about our heart. We can feel it thumping in our chest. We also know our heart is where our emotions are. We feel love in our heart and



experience heartbreak when we're sad. We have a broken heart when a loved one leaves us. Our heart beats faster when we're scared. And when we see someone we really love, our heart even skips a beat. When we're talking about our heart, that's what we're talking about... our emotions...right?

Nope. That's not it. At least that is not what scripture means when it talks about your "heart."

In our culture our heart is the center of our emotions. In Jesus' day it was considered to be a lot

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more. While first century Jews believed a few emotions, such as pity, mercy and tenderness, came from the bowels, the heart was the center of everything that is you. The heart was not only the source of most of your emotions, it was the center of your thoughts and your desires. It was the inner you... or maybe I should say the real you. It is the “you” that God sees.

Think about that. God sees the inner you. He sees your heart. That’s a little scary.



Imagine I’ve put a high capacity SD card into a hidden slot in your head. It records your every thought for a month. Then I rent a theater, invite all of your friends, and show it on the big screen. How would you feel about that?

I wouldn’t like it either. If my thoughts were to be shown on the big screen, I’d have to move out of town and probably even Boingo Boingo wouldn’t be far enough away.

But that’s what God sees...He knows your every thought and every desire. You can’t hide from God. Those inner thoughts, attitudes and emotions are who you are in God’s eyes. That’s why, later in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says that getting unjustly angry at someone is the same as murdering that person. And looking at another person with lust is the same as committing adultery. Your thoughts... the inner you... your heart... that is what counts. And Jesus wants you to have a right heart... a righteous heart.

WHAT IS YOUR HEART?

In the Beatitudes Jesus begins with the heart issues... the right inner attitudes. He is describing the way you were designed to be—who He made you to be.

The Roadblock To Having A Right Heart

There is a roadblock to your having a righteous heart. Your existing heart is rotten and it can't be fixed. No matter how much work you put into it, nothing you do will make your heart any better. The only way to inner righteousness is to get a new heart.

Does that sound serious? It is. Heart surgeons are expensive. But, you don't need to be concerned about your insurance not covering it. There is only one heart "surgeon" who does this type of surgery, and He does it for free. You see, there is only one person who can give you a new heart... meaning a new inner self... and that person is God.

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. – Ezekiel 36:26

Remember that SD card? If the thought of God knowing your thoughts, desires, and secret emotions concerns you, and you recognize that your thought-life condemns you to eternity in the lake of fire...then repent. Get on your knees and confess to God that you have disobeyed Him. Turn away from having those thoughts again. Turn away from disobeying God and know that when Jesus Christ died on the cross He paid the penalty you've earned for sin...and He paid it in full. The cross is the only way. If you believe this is

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true, and trust Christ alone as your Savior... if you trust the one who rose from the dead proving you can rely on His promise of eternal life... then you will have the free gift of eternal life and a new heart.

THERE IS A PURPOSE

CHAPTER 2 THERE IS A PURPOSE

Everything in scripture has a purpose. Not only are words, and the meaning of those words, important, but even their order can help us understand and learn what Jesus is teaching. Nothing in scripture is random.



This does not mean we should be looking for secret messages and codes in scripture. That is called Gnosticism and it is foolishness. While the more you study scripture, the more you'll learn, there are no hidden meaning or messages in scripture.

I HAVE A QUESTION: But what about when scripture talks about things that are hidden? For example, in Colossians 1:25b & 26 Paul says:

so that I might fully carry out the preaching of the word of God, that is, the mystery which has been hidden from the

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past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints, - Colossians 1:25b-26

What Paul is talking about is information God did not reveal until New Testament times. Let's read the next verse:

to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. - Colossians 1:27

The “mystery” was that salvation through Jesus Christ is available to everyone, Jews and Gentiles alike. The Jews thought they were the only group of people who would be saved. God clarified this during the Apostolic age, giving a fuller revelation through Jesus and the Apostles, plainly revealing that Gentiles could also be saved. So this was not knowledge that was hidden in some secret code in scripture. God never says, “I told you about this. If only you had figured out the code.” What He says is that He did not fully reveal this fact until He wanted it fully revealed.

Well... I'm getting a little off the topic. I was talking about everything in scripture, including word and subject order, may help us better understand the fullness of what Jesus is teaching. And that is true in the Beatitudes. They are not in a random order. They are progressive, with each one leading to the next. John MacArthur writes:

Each leads to the other in logical succession. Being poor in spirit reflects the right attitude we should have to our sinful condition, which then should lead us to mourn, to be meek and gentle, to hunger and thirst for righteousness, to be

THERE IS A PURPOSE

merciful, pure in heart, and have a peacemaking spirit. A Christian who has all of those qualities will be so far above the level of the world that his life will rebuke the world—which will bring persecution from the world (5:10-12) and light to the world (vv 14-16). – John MacArthur, New Testament Commentary, Matthew 1-7, 1985, page 145

In a later chapter we'll also see that the eight Beatitudes are divided into two groups of four, with the first four being heart attitudes that lead to the actions in the second group of four.

Let's get started and learn what Jesus has to teach us about having a right heart attitude. It starts with being poor in spirit.

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CHAPTER 3
BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. - Matthew 5:3

I've spent a lot of time doing street evangelism, which in my case means politely engaging people who are interested in having a conversation. When asked why God should let them into heaven, nearly everyone says, "Because I'm a good person." People have great self-esteem and nearly everyone is sure they are good enough to be acceptable to God and thus get into heaven. The problem is... this belief does not match reality... no one is good except God.



And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one

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is good except God alone. – Mark 10:18

That's a fact, no one is good. We are all sinners. We've all disobeyed God (visit: www.911Christ.com).

That is the point Jesus is making in the first Beatitude. None of us is good and that's why we need to be "poor in spirit." We have absolutely nothing to boast about.

Poor in spirit means to be humble. Jesus is explaining that, if we desire to enter the kingdom of heaven, we cannot be full of pride about who we are, or the abilities we have, nor anything else. We need to have a humbleness that focuses on Jesus.

The facts are, there is nothing good in us. Oh, we like to think we are strong, or smart, or skillful, or we're good enough to get into heaven... well at least we're better than the guy who lives next door. That's like thinking that, when a bear is chasing you don't need to be the fastest runner. You only need to be faster than the slowest one in your group.

BUT, that's not the way God sees it. He doesn't compare us with other people. We are created in the image of God, and that means the standard is God.

*For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; -
Romans 3:23*

God sees the truth. He knows our every thought and every sin. We have NOTHING good to offer God... nothing we can be proud of. We're not even running away from the bear, we're running toward it.

We are wretched sinners. When you stand before Jesus on judgment day, there is nothing you can offer Him. Jesus is saying that you need to realize this truth,

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and then you will be poor in spirit.



John MacArthur gives an example of submitting your resume to God.

Imagine you are standing at the gate to heaven applying to get in. The angel guarding the gate asks you to fill out an application and send them a copy of your resume. What will you put on that resume?

You can't list any good deeds. When God is used as the standard of good, you have no good deeds. How about good thoughts? Nope. Again God is the standard and your thoughts are not even close to being good as defined by God. (Remember that SD card?) How about a good recommendation? Nope, there are none. Education? Past experience? Nope. Nope. There is nothing. Your resume is blank. You have nothing to offer that will please God. Nothing that is acceptable to God. If you cannot think of a reason... any reason that God should let you into heaven, then you understand what it means to be poor in spirit.

Since you have nothing you can bring to God, how are you going to get into heaven? If you can't do it yourself, how are you going to get into heaven?

The only way you can enter the kingdom of heaven is when you understand that it is a free gift from God. Just give up and trust God.

When you repent, meaning to turn away from disobeying God, and trust in Christ Jesus as having fully paid the penalty you've earned for breaking God's law, then the free gift of salvation is yours. Then,

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instead of having nothing, you have Jesus. When God looks at you, instead of seeing a lawbreaker who deserves eternity in hell, He sees His Son... the perfect and righteous Jesus. Because of His love, grace, and mercy, God does it all... everything needed to get you into heaven. You just need to believe it is true.

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. – Ephesians 2:8 & 9

Entrance into the “kingdom of heaven”— which is another way of saying being saved— cannot be gained without being “poor in spirit.”



“What is poverty of spirit? It is the opposite of that haughty, self-assertive, and self-sufficient disposition that the world so much admires and praises. It is the very reverse of that independent and defiant attitude that refuses to bow to God.” - A.W. Pink, *The Beatitudes and the Lord's Prayer*, 1979, page 15

We hear people say, “Jesus wants you to come as you are.” That's true in one respect... there is nothing you can do to fix yourself, or make yourself more acceptable to God. In that respect you must come to Jesus as you are, totally destitute and with nothing that pleases God.

On the other hand, there is something you must lose in order to gain entrance into the kingdom. You cannot bring pride with you. You cannot bring even a

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pinch of self-assurance that you have something you can bring to God. You cannot come as you are, full of confidence that you are good enough to enter heaven. If you think you are good enough... if you think you have something to offer God... then you are not poor in spirit. John MacArthur writes:

"As the first beatitude makes clear, entrance into the kingdom of heaven begins with being "poor in spirit," with recognition of total spiritual bankruptcy. The only way any person can come to Jesus Christ is empty-handed, totally destitute and pleading for God's mercy and grace. Without a sense of spiritual poverty, no one can enter the kingdom."
- The MacArthur New Testament Commentary
Matthew 1-7, 1985, page 157

We learn the same thing throughout scripture:

The LORD is near to the brokenhearted, and saves those who are crushed in spirit. - Psalm 34:18

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise. - Psalm 51:17

For My hand made all these things, thus all these things came into being," declares the Lord. "But to this one I will look, to him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word. - Isaiah 66:2

Give up your pride. Come to our Lord Jesus begging for His salvation.

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CHAPTER 4 BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO MOURN

Is Jesus saying that in order to please Him we need to be constantly sad and crying? Are those who are empathetic, those who feel the pain of others and cry



for them, are they the ones who will be blessed? That seems contradictory. In order to be happy you need to be sad all the time.

In the second beatitude Jesus says:

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. -
Matthew 5:4

To understand this verse we need to ask two key questions: “What is the object of our mourning?” Why are we mourning? The answer is in scripture:

For the sorrow that is according to the will of God...

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produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death. For behold what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you: what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong!
- 2 Corinthians 7:10-11

The sorrow, meaning the mourning, must be according to the will of God, and it must be mourning that produces repentance without regret.

What Type of Mourning is This?

Once you recognize you have nothing good to offer God (humbleness), then you'll see that all you do have is sin... you have disobeyed God. And that results in mourning over sin.... mourning over both your sin and the sin of others. This is the type of mourning that produces repentance without regret.

"The man who is truly Christian is a man who mourns also because of the sins of others. He does not stop at himself. He sees the same thing in others. He is concerned about the state of society, and the state of the world, and as he reads the newspaper he does not stop at what he sees or simply express disgust at it. He mourns because of it... He knows that it is all due to sin; and he mourns because of it." – D. Martin Lloyd-Jones, Studies In The Sermon On The Mount, page 48

One of the most often memorized verses in the Bible is John 11:35, "*Jesus wept.*" It is short so it's an easy one to memorize. But, it says something important. This verse is part of the story of Lazarus,

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who lay dead and decaying in a tomb for four days before Jesus raised him from the dead.

*Therefore, when Mary came where Jesus was, she saw Him, and fell at His feet, saying to Him, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died." When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, He was deeply moved in spirit and was troubled,³⁴ and said, "Where have you laid him?" They *said to Him, "Lord, come and see." Jesus wept. – John 11:32-35*

Why Did Jesus Weep?

Yes, he was weeping out of love for Lazarus. But, He knew Lazarus would soon be alive again. So there really was not much of a reason to weep for Lazarus. There was another, more serious reason to weep.

Lazarus was apparently a well-known person. Many people had come to his home to mourn his death. Jesus was surrounded by people. They were crying and wailing over the death of Lazarus, but they didn't truly understand death. They were sinners, dead in their sins. Lost and without a Savior.

Jesus was not weeping because of Lazarus's death, He was weeping because He was overcome with grief over sin. He saw the sin in the people around Him. Jesus knew they were about to witness the greatest miracle He had ever done. And He also knew they would not turn from their sin and trust Him to give them life. Jesus was mourning over their sin, and their love for their sin. Do you mourn and weep over your sin?

Being poor in spirit means we understand we are sinners and we have nothing good in us, nor is there

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anything good we can bring to God. This leads to Godly sorrow over sin. We mourn over our sin, as well as the sin that saturates the world. And our Godly mourning leads to repentance... a turning away from sin and toward obeying God. Mourning over sin leads to our rejecting sin and seeking to obey God in everything.

BLESSED ARE THE MEEK

CHAPTER 5
BLESSED ARE THE MEEK

*Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. -
Matthew 5:5 (KJV)*

We think of meek and gentle people as being the losers. They are the ones who do not stand up for themselves. They get pushed around by stronger people. Our big-screen heroes are those who are bold, and who refuse to submit to authority. We honor those who believe they are right, and who act on that belief and are victorious... and at the end of the film they get the love of a beautiful woman. They are the winners! Those who are meek get nothing.

*But the humble [meek] will inherit the land, and will
delight themselves in abundant prosperity. - Psalm 37:11*

The meek will inherit the earth? What's with that? This does not make sense... until we recognize that Jesus is talking about spiritual attributes. Jesus was strong and bold. He did not cower before the leading

Jews of His day, the scribes and Pharisees. He called them hypocrites, vipers, and white-washed tombs—good looking on the outside, but with death inside. He drove the sellers of sacrificial animals and money changers from the Temple, overturning their tables in the process. (John 2:14-15; Matthew 21:12-13)

Jesus was not weak, but He was meek. The meekness Jesus is talking about in this third beatitude is strength under control.

Here's a question: From what we have seen so far in the beatitudes, is Jesus talking about the physical or the spiritual? Is he talking about the way we are on the outside, or on the inside?

Jesus has been focusing on the internal. Our thoughts, our attitudes... our spiritual life. So our question in this chapter is, what does it mean to have an internal attitude of meekness... an attitude of Godly meekness?

Looking at the original Greek word is helpful here. The Greek word translated as “meek,” or sometimes as “gentle,” is also used to describe a wild animal that has been “broken” so it can be useful to man. The example we're most familiar with is that of a wild horse being “broken” so it can carry a rider.



When a horse is broken, what has changed? Has its physical strength changed? No. It is the horse's attitude that has changed... from an attitude of wildness and self-centeredness... to an attitude of gentleness. The power and strength is still there, but now it is completely under control.

BLESSED ARE THE MEEK

“True meekness is not weakness. A striking proof of this is furnished in Acts 16:35-37. The apostles had been wrongly beaten and cast into prison. On the next day the magistrates gave orders for their release, but Paul said to their agents, ‘Let them come themselves and fetch us out.’ God-given meekness can stand up for God-given rights.” - A.W. Pink, *The Beatitudes and The Lord's Prayer*, 1979, page 28.

When Jesus says *“blessed are the meek”* He is saying that those who have submitted to God... those who no longer seek to do what they desire, but instead seek to do what God desires... those are the people who will be blessed and will inherit the earth.

Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. - Ephesians 4:1-3

Jesus was not weak. Meekness does not mean to be without power... it means strength under control. Strength that serves God, not our selfish desires. .

Like a city that is broken into and without walls, is a man who has no control over his spirit. - Proverbs 25:28

He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit, than he who captures a city.
- Proverbs 16:32

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Those who are truly meek are in control of their emotions and their strength. They use their resources according to the will of God as revealed in scripture.

The meek man is not a human mouse afflicted with a sense of his own inferiority. Rather he may be in his moral life as bold as a lion and as strong as Samson; but he has stopped being fooled about himself. He has accepted God's estimate of his own life. He knows he is as weak and helpless as God has declared him to be, but paradoxically, he knows at the same time that he is in the sight of God of more importance than angels. In, himself,, nothing; in God, everything. That is his motto. He knows well that the world will never see him as God sees him and he has stopped caring. He rests perfectly content to allow God to place His own values. He will be patient to wait for the day when everything will get its own price tag and real worth will come into its own. Then the righteous shall shine forth in the Kingdom of their Father. He is willing to wait for that day.

In the meantime he will have attained a place of soul rest. As he walks on in meekness he will be happy to let God defend him. The old struggle to defend himself is over. He has found the peace which meekness brings. – A. W. Tozer, The Pursuit of God, Chapter 9

BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO HUNGER & THIRST FOR
RIGHTEOUSNESS

CHAPTER 6
BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO
HUNGER & THIRST FOR
RIGHTEOUSNESS

I recently went on a diet. I began exercising, and I cut back from five meals per day, with various snacks in between, to just three regular-sized meals per day. The result was that I'd eat a meal, and still be hungry. I went to bed hungry. I woke up hungry. I was hungry all the time. No problem, I thought. I have will-power.

But, by the third week I was ready to give it up. Will-power or no, I was hungry. My wife was gone for the day. No one was around. And I ate the dish of cookies she had left on the kitchen counter. It was her fault, she left them out! (Didn't Adam say something like that, when he was held accountable by God?)

We are to hunger for righteousness... hunger for sin to be gone... in the same way we hunger for food when we're starving. Going on a diet for a couple of weeks is not even close to having the level of hunger and thirst

Jesus is talking about.

Imagine it's a hot, sun-scorched day in the desert. Early that morning you started out on a short hike. But, now you are lost, and you've not had anything to drink all



day. Your tongue feels like sandpaper. Your lips are cracked. You've got a headache. All you can think about is a cool bottle of water. But, night comes, there is no rescue, and no water.

The next day is even hotter. Your every thought is about water. If only there was a drop of water for your tongue. Just a single drop. That would be some relief. But, there is none. You are thirsty... you desire water more than anything else. All you can think about is getting just one small drink. It is your ONLY desire. You can't go on unless you get some water!!! Just a little!! Just a few drops!!! PLEASE!!! Now we are getting to the level of thirsting Jesus is talking about when He says:

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. - Matthew 5:6

Jesus is talking about a desire for righteousness that has the intensity of a starving man's desire for food.

Our normal desires are focused on ourselves. We hunger and thirst for the physical necessities of life, as well as things that are not necessary. Our human desires are to satisfy ourselves, whether it is for necessities such as food and shelter, or things such as respect and fame. Sometimes we even desire that

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others will desire what we have—we desire that they be jealous of us. But those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, they desire, above all else, to obey and glorify God. Their focus is on God and on righteousness, not on themselves.

“We have realized that in this Beatitude we begin to turn away from an examination of self, to God. This is, of course, a vital matter, for it is this whole question of how to turn to God that causes many to stumble... Unless we 'hunger and thirst' after righteousness, we shall never have it, we shall never know the fullness which is here promised to us... the very essence of the Christian salvation is given us in this verse. It is a perfect statement of the doctrine of salvation by grace only.” - D. Martin Lloyd-Jones, Studies In the Sermon on The Mount, 1976, page 71

But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness. – Romans 6:17-18

They have become slaves to righteousness? What does that mean? What is righteousness? The dictionary definition of righteousness is: *“behavior that is morally justifiable or right.”* But, if we look at a Bible dictionary we get a somewhat different definition:

“God is righteousness... All of God's acts are righteous.... Because God is righteous, he expects righteousness of others, who are to reflect the nature of their creator. The expected

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response to God's rule is... conformity to His rule and will.”
- Tyndale Bible Dictionary, 2001, page 1134

The character of God defines righteousness. We are created in His image and need to conform to His character. But, that's impossible! God is holy and perfect. No one can be that perfect!

Yes, it is impossible for us, but not for God. Through the cross God has assigned Christ's righteousness to us. We are not righteous, but as Christians we have the righteousness of Christ. And as Christians our hunger and thirst is for Christ's righteousness. It is the driving desire, a deep hunger and thirst for Christ's righteousness that makes us willing slaves of righteousness... continually striving to put off the wretchedness of sin, and put on the new life we have in Christ.

“As slaves of righteousness, our entire being has been rescued and reoriented under the authority of Christ. Through the work of the Spirit, we are being conformed into Christ's character and refined for the work of His kingdom.” - Jeremiah Johnson, Slaves To Righteousness, <http://tiny.cc/6kh34x>

Oh what a future. To be transformed into Christ's image. There is no better nor greater promise. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst to be like Jesus in every way.

He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. –
2 Corinthians 5:21

BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO HUNGER & THIRST FOR
RIGHTEOUSNESS

Just as food and water is required for us to stay physically alive, righteousness is required for us to be spiritually alive. Just as food and water are not optional, righteousness is not optional for spiritual life.

“Hunger and thirst represent the necessities of physical life. Jesus’ analogy demonstrates that righteousness is required for spiritual life just as food and water are required for physical life. Righteousness is not an optional spiritual supplement but a spiritual necessity. We can no more live spiritually without righteousness than we can live physically without food and water.” - John MacArthur, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary Matthew 1-7, 1985, page 178

But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness... - Matthew 6:33

God's character describes righteousness. God's law, such as the Ten Commandments describe God's character. Scripture gives us God's law, describing the righteousness we should hunger and thirst after. We need to be in God's word, reading and studying scripture and then applying it to our lives. That is the result of hungering and thirsting for righteousness.

Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, And delight yourself in abundance. Incline your ear and come to Me. - Isaiah 55:2-3a

HAPPY ARE THE... – The JOY of the BEATITUDES

CHAPTER 7
BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. —
Matthew 5:7

As with the first four characteristics, mercy is a characteristic of both God and of those who are in God's kingdom. Without God's mercy, it would be over, we'd all be headed to hell.

In the first four beatitudes a definite progression of spiritual awakening and transformation has been noted as one of the thrusts of our Lord's teaching. First there is a discovery of the fact that I am nothing—poverty of spirit. Second, there is conviction of sin, a consciousness of guilt producing godly sorrow—mourning. Third, there is a renouncing of self-dependence and a taking of my place in the dust before God—meekness. Fourth, there follows an intense longing after Christ and His salvation—hunger and thirsting for righteousness... In the next four Beatitudes we come to the manifestation of positive good in the believer, the fruits of a new creation and the blessings of a transformed character. -

A.W. Pink, *The Beatitudes and the Lord's Prayer*, 1979, page 37.

There is a pattern to the beatitudes. The first four beatitudes are about our internal attitudes. They show us that what God looks at is the person we are on the inside—that we need to have right thinking... right desires... a right heart. Later in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus will give some specific examples of having a right heart. He'll show that God sees unjust anger as being the same as murder, and lust as being the same as adultery.

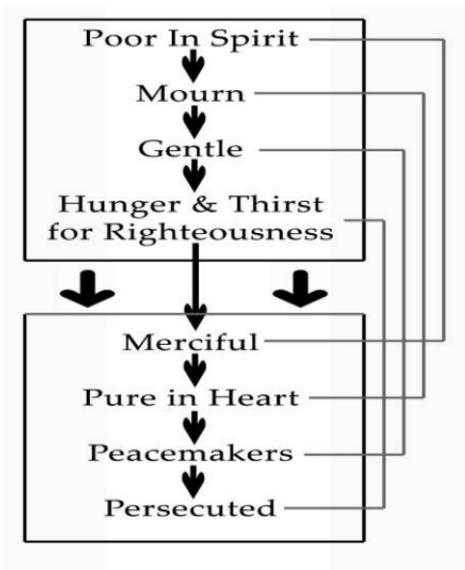


Fig 1 - The upper box shows internal attitudes, the lower box external actions. The fat arrows show that that internal attitudes lead to external actions. In addition, each Beatitude leads to the next, and each Beatitude in the top box leads to the corresponding one in the lower box.

BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL

The next four beatitudes are about the external... about our actions. Each of the first four Beatitudes are directly related to the last four, as shown by the lines on the right side of the diagram. For example, being poor in spirit leads to the action of mercy. Mourning over sin leads to the action of being pure in heart.

This is an important principle: We cannot have right actions unless we have right attitudes. The first four Beatitudes describe the right attitudes we are to have. The next four describe the right actions that result from those right attitudes.

John MacArthur explains how mercy is related to being poor in spirit:

“Those who are in poverty of spirit recognize their need for mercy and are led to show mercy to others.” - The MacArthur New Testament Commentary Matthew 1-7, 1985, page 187

But that's not what comes naturally. Since the fall people have essentially been focused on themselves. Self-concern characterizes humanity. We see this in such sayings as: *“If you don't look out for yourself, no one else will.”*

What is Mercy?

Mercy results from love, and is compassion in action. It is our taking action to give help to the helpless who are in need.

Jesus Christ is the perfect example of mercy. He is the most merciful human who ever lived—His mercy is perfect mercy. He reached out to heal the sick, restore the crippled, give sight to the blind, hearing to

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the deaf, and even life to the dead. Jesus wept with those in sorrow and gave companionship to the lonely.

What is mercy? Mercy is the result of love. Jesus is love, and because of His love, He has mercy on us.

But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), – Ephesians 2:4-5

If we are to understand mercy, we must understand love. Biblical love is not a feeling, it is an action. Mercy is one of the actions produced by love. Here are some of the characteristics of mercy:

- Mercy is not just feeling compassion. Mercy is taking action to do something about another person's poor condition.
- Mercy is not voting for more government welfare programs. In other words, mercy does not compel other people to use their resources to help others. Mercy is you using your time, and your own resources, personally taking action to help other people with their needs.
- Mercy is not giving people whatever they want. Mercy is helping the helpless with their true needs.
- Mercy is not just forgiving someone who has harmed you, and then putting them out of your mind and “moving on.” Mercy means reaching out to your enemies and helping to

BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL

meet their true needs.

An important principle is that mercy is not giving someone whatever they ask for, but giving them what they need. For example, no matter how much they plead for one, it is not merciful to buy an alcoholic a drink. A drink may be what they want, but it's not what they need.

How would you show mercy to an alcoholic? First, recognize they may not want your mercy. In that case, praying for them might be all you can do. (And by the way, prayer is powerful. When you pray you are doing a lot for them.)

If an alcoholic wants help, mercy would be to direct them to a Biblical addiction recovery counselor or group. Then drive them to their appointment, and even go to the meeting with them. Pray with them after the appointment, and be someone they can call whenever they feel the urge to take a drink. That is the loving thing to do... sacrificial giving to meet true needs. That is true mercy.

Love Your Enemies

What about when someone has harmed you? How do you respond with mercy?

Mercy begins with forgiveness, but it doesn't stop there. For example, God's mercy did not stop with forgiving your sin, His mercy dealt with the entire problem of sin. For example, forgiving a criminal does not save them from the punishment for their crime. There still must be justice. It's the same with God. The mercy God gave you not only included forgiveness, but also included justice. Jesus took on Himself the

punishment you deserved. When He died on the cross He paid the penalty you had earned for breaking God's laws. Justice was served, and now you can be forgiven.

The Penalty For Law-Breaking Must be Paid.

Imagine I've committed a major crime and I'm standing before a judge. Let's even say the crime was breaking into the judge's home, trashing it, stealing everything of value, smashing his cars, and stealing his identity and selling it to a crime syndicate. At the end of the trial the judge looks at me and says, "You are guilty, but I forgive you."

Does that mean I go free? No, I still must pay the penalty for what I've done wrong. That is justice.

And that's what Jesus did on the cross. He died on the cross, taking on Himself the full wrath of God for your sin. You deserved God's wrath. That is the fair and just penalty for your breaking God's laws. God could not just say, "I forgive you." and let you go free. There is no justice in that.

God is just. He cannot ignore justice. So what He did was to take on Himself the punishment you deserved. He paid your fine, so to speak. That is true mercy! He gave you what you needed the most... freedom from the debt of sin!

"If we have received from a holy God unlimited mercy that cancels our unpayable debt of sin—we who had no righteousness but were poor in spirit, mourning over our load of sin in beggarly, helpless condition, wretched and doomed, meek before almighty God, hungry and thirsty for righteousness we did not have and could not attain—it surely follows that we should be merciful to others." - The

BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL

MacArthur New Testament Commentary
Matthew 1-7, 1985, page 197

Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. - Luke 6:36

For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy; - James 2:13

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, - 1 Peter 1:3

What is everyone's greatest need? The gospel which brings God's mercy. If someone is hungry and you feed them, you are showing a worldly type of love and mercy. Why? Because if you don't tell them about Jesus and they end up in hell with a full belly, you have given them nothing.

Ray Comfort tells a story about a blind man walking toward a cliff. A storm has washed away the fence that prevents people from falling from the cliff. So what do you do? Rush up to the blind man and say, "Here take my MP3 player and enjoy some beautiful music on your walk." You may have made his walk more pleasant, but he is still going to step off the cliff and fall to certain death. You have not addressed his real need.

Or would you run up to that blind man, yelling, "Blind man! Stop! You are about to step off a cliff. Stop!"

Helping someone with a physical need, without addressing the fact that they are heading toward certain death in hell, is like giving that blind man an MP3

HAPPY ARE THE... – The JOY of the BEATITUDES

player. It is not truly being loving or merciful. If someone is not trusting in Jesus Christ as their savior, their greatest need is the gospel. If you tell them about Jesus and the gospel, then you have shown them the greatest act of love and mercy anyone can do for another.

Does this mean we should not give food to someone who is hungry? We should just tell them the gospel and move on? NO! Not at all. If you share the gospel without also helping with their physical needs, you'll be seen as a hypocrite and the gospel will have no power.

We are to feed the hungry, help those who are sick, provide warm clothing, provide shelter for those who are truly in need, but not without the gospel. Both physical and spiritual needs must be addressed. That is true mercy.

CHAPTER 8
BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. -
Matthew 5:8

What did God just say? These are amazing words. They should leave you in awe... you will see God. What an incredible promise! You will see God... live... face-to-face... in person... God, who can hold the entire universe in the palm of His hand (Isaiah 40:12) and who knows the names of all the stars (Isaiah 40:26). God, who created everything by just speaking it into existence. God, who knows your every thought. God, who is perfect and pure, and holy. Yes, that God. You will see that God.

When I picture myself in heaven I see myself as a file clerk in a basement room. There is just one small window, up high on the wall behind my desk. If I stand on my tippy toes I can just see out the window... and in the distance I can see God's glory glowing on the other side of a far-away hill. I'm too much of a sinner to be any closer to God. But, God says that's a lie! You

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will see God! It is both frightening and incredibly awesome. You will see God!!!

The great reception is at hand; in a sense the ceremony is all prepared; you and I are waiting for the audience with the King. Are you looking forward to it? Are you preparing yourself for it? Don't you feel ashamed at this moment that you are wasting your time on things that not only will be of no value to you on that great occasion, but of which you will then be ashamed. You and I, creatures of time as we appear to be, are going to see God and bask in His eternal glory for ever and ever. Our one confidence is that He is working in us and preparing us for that. But let us also work and purify ourselves 'even as he is pure.'" - D. Martin Lloyd-Jones, Studies In 'The Sermon On The Mount, 1976, page 99

Imagine it. If you are pure in heart, you will see God. All believers will see the holy God. The one the angels called holy, holy, holy.

And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him [Jesus] purifies himself, just as He is pure. - 1 John 3:3

We're talking about being pure in heart. Remember, the "heart" is the center of who you are. It includes your mind, your desires, your personality, and your character. It is who you are and what you think.

For as he thinks within himself, so he is. - Proverbs 23:7

"Why are you thinking evil in your hearts?" – Jesus speaking in Matthew 9:4

BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART

To be “pure in heart” means to have pure thoughts, pure desires, pure feelings, and a pure character.

Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life. - Proverbs 4:23

What Do I Need To Do To Have A Pure Heart?

When a metal is made pure, it is refined to remove all impurities. A pure metal is one composed of just one type of metal. There is no contamination. This is what Jesus is talking about, but applied to your heart instead of metal. He is telling you to be single-minded. You need to have a single-minded devotion to God, and a single-minded devotion to obeying God. If you have desires to serve both the Lord, and follow the world, that is double-mindedness. That's not being pure in heart, and it won't work. Later in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus says:

No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth. - Matthew 6:24

James puts the same truth another way...

You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. - James 4:4

Then in verse 8 James gives the solution to the

problem.... how we can become pure in our hearts:

Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. - James 4:8

How do you have a pure heart and draw near to God? Cleanse yourself. Put off all sin. Put off the world. Put on the new man who has a pure heart—a single minded devotion to God and obeying God.

As you become pure in heart, the result will be a closer relationship with God. Why? Because you have turned away from sin. Sin is always the problem, and it is sin that brings death and separates you from God. Only when you become pure in heart can you draw near to God.

A holy person's motivating aim, passion, desire, longing, aspiration, goal, and drive is to please God, both by what one does and by what one avoids doing. In other words, one practices good works and cuts out evil ones. – J.I. Packer, *Rediscovering Holiness*, 1992, page 22

Sin is the problem. If you don't deal with sin, you can never draw near to God.

How do we deal with sin? We can't. Sin means we've broken God's laws and must pay the just penalty, eternity in hell. Only Jesus Christ can save us. By dying on the cross he paid the penalty you owe for sin. He freely offers His work on the cross to you. If you repent (turn away from law-breaking) and accept the gift God offers, it is yours. Then you will draw nearer to God.

Are we perfectly pure of heart after we are saved?

BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART

No. We still sin. We still desire some of what the world offers. So we are double-minded... not pure. What can we do? The answer is to continue to live out the Beatitudes, and when you sin, repent and confess your sin to God.

What Does Drawing Near to God Mean?

First, it means you are saved. Being pure in heart and our salvation are both gifts from God, and they go together. You cannot become pure in heart through your own efforts. And you cannot be saved through your own efforts. It is through trusting that Jesus paid your penalty for sin that you receive these gifts and can then draw near to God. It is the foundation of your relationship with God. (Hebrews 10:19-22)

When we are saved we have the promise of seeing God face-to-face. Meanwhile, as we live out our physical life here, we can continually draw nearer to God. Here are some of the ways to do that:

- Drawing near to God means loving Him with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind (Matthew 22:37). Loving God means obeying God. (John 14:15, 23)
- Drawing near to God means walking in the will of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:16). This means to not only desire to obey God, but striving to obey God in all your thoughts and actions.
- Drawing near to God means knowing God, and that means being in God's word. You

can't draw near to God without being deeply in His word. If you are not spending time in God's word, you will not know God nor His will.

What does being in God's word mean? Reading four pages every day? Reading a chapter a day? Reading through the Bible in a year? Yes, it could be any of these, or all of them, or something different.

What it means is reading and understanding God's word, whatever reading plan you use. There are various approaches that can be used, such as:

- Reading one book in the Old Testament, and then one book in the New Testament.
- Memorizing scripture is excellent and should be a part of any Bible reading plan.
- Reading a chapter a day is another good approach. You'll be surprised at how quickly you'll get through the entire Bible.
- Rereading one book, or several chapters from a larger book, once a day, every day for a week. Or Rereading the same scripture several days in a row. The repetition will help see things you had not noticed before and go deeper into God's word.

Do not skip around, reading random verses each day. Have a reading plan that allows you to get an understanding of each book, as well as understanding the overall flow through the entire Bible.

BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART

Whatever approach you use, get help with understanding scripture. Being a part of a Bible study group can be helpful. Or use your church library as a source of commentaries and reference books. Plus spend time meditating about what you've read. Fill your head with scripture and then consider how what you've read fits with the rest of scripture, and how it applies to your life.

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. – Romans 12:2

- Finally, drawing near to God means being in prayer. Not frivolous prayer, but a serious conversation of thanks, worship, and petition.

With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit. - Ephesians 6:18

What do we pray? We could pray with David:

Create in me a clean heart, O God, - Psalm 51:10

Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? And who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, - Psalm 24:3-4

Loving God, walking in His will, knowing Him, and being in prayer, these are ways we can draw nearer to God. But, there is one unchanging fact we need to deal with. We are fallen. We are broken. That means that in this life we can never fully be pure in heart. We need

the purity of Christ.

Who can say, "I have cleansed my heart, I am pure from my sin"? - Proverbs 20:9

The assumed answer to the above question in scripture is, "No one." Because we are fallen we cannot become pure through our own efforts. The answer is to trust in Christ's purity. Trust in Christ's righteousness. When you are saved He gives His purity and His righteousness to you.

Jesus is calling you to have a pure heart—a purity that only comes with salvation. Jesus is calling you to trust in Him as your savior from the wrath of God. And as a result you will receive the righteousness of Christ and the pure heart only Christ can give you... and you will see God. What an incredibly marvelous promise!

CHAPTER 9

BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS

Jesus offers true peace and expects us to share that peace with others.

All Christians are called to be peacemakers. That means sharing the peace of Christ with others by telling them about Jesus Christ and the gospel. It also means being a peacemaker in your family, neighborhood, and to as wide a circle of people as you can reach.

This connotes both peace with God and peace between people—the latter flows out of the former. Jesus is the supreme peacemaker, who reconciles human beings with God through the cross (Colossians 1:20), so the supreme peacemaking is the proclamation of the gospel. - Grant Osborne, Exegetical Commentary on Matthew, 2010, page 168.

Men are without peace because they are without God, the source of peace.” - John MacArthur, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, Matthew 1-7, 1985, page 213

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“The great enemy of peace is sin. Sin separates men from God and causes disharmony and enmity with Him. And man's lack of harmony with God causes their lack of harmony with each other.... To talk of peace without talking of repentance of sin is to talk foolishly and vainly.”

- John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, Matthew 1-7*, 1985, page 212

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. - Matthew 5:9

Understanding what Jesus means by “peace” is crucial. The Greek word translated as “peace” in the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:9) is used in only one other place in the Bible. You’ll find it in Colossians 1:20 where Paul talks about the cross:

“...and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross;” - Colossians 1:20

As Christians we are to be peacemakers, working to bring harmony to the world. But, peace is only temporary without the cross. For true peace there must first be peace between men and God. A peace that only comes through the cross.

What Type of Peace Is This?

We are all born as enemies of God. Born as children of Satan. That means we are children of God's wrath:

BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS

You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. - James 4:4

For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, - Romans 5:10

You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. - John 8:44

The natural man is a child of wrath... an enemy of God. You may feel very spiritual. You may be very religious. You may sound very godly. But you are still an enemy of God... someone without the peace of God.

What is Peace With God?

Most people define peace one of two ways:

1. A cessation of hostilities, usually between two countries, but this may also be applied to individuals. This is very close to the type of peace we are talking about, except on a larger scale.
2. Peace is a feeling. It is a feeling of relaxation, safety, and calmness. This is the type of “peace” New Age teachers, yoga classes, and mindfulness gurus offer. It is not the peace of the Bible.

In scripture peace is a condition. It is the condition of no longer being at war with God and instead being in harmony with God. It is a condition of no longer being in conflict with God, but being in agreement with God. Not only is it a cessation of hostilities, it means we are in full agreement with God on everything. As a result of having this real peace, you will have the fruit of the Spirit, which includes a feeling of peace and contentment.

Bringing Peace to the World.

Who are the peace markers Jesus is saying are blessed? At the head of the list are those who help the children of wrath make peace with God. Christians are commissioned (Matthew 28:16-20) to bring peace to the children of wrath, by bringing them the gospel... the good news about salvation through the cross of Christ.

What is the message we bring? Because of what Christ did on the cross you can have peace by repenting and trusting Jesus Christ as your savior. Peacemakers are those who tell others about sin, repentance, the cross, and the resurrection, and how their lives have been changed by the gospel.

But, don't be surprised if you do not get the results you expect. Our efforts to bring peace between men and God often result in conflict and a less peaceful world.

“Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.” - Matthew 10:34

BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS

Why would Jesus say this? Why is it that, for true and lasting peace to exist, there first must be more conflict?

Because the world hates the gospel. The world rebels against the gospel. Although it is only through the gospel that there can be the righteousness that brings peace, the world wants nothing to do with the gospel

As Christians we need to be working to bring peace among people, this is called being the salt of the earth. But, true lasting peace only comes through the cross, through people being born again with a new heart and new life. A new life based on these eight Beatitudes.

“There is no peace like the peace of those whose minds are possessed with full assurance that they have known God, and God has known them, and that this relationship guarantees God’s favour to them in life, through death, and on forever.” – J.I. Packer, *Knowing God*, 1973, page 26

Christians are also to be peacemakers among men. Although there can be no lasting peace among men without the gospel, we are still to work to reduce conflict and fighting among individuals, as well as nations.

However, the focus is always on the gospel, even as we help our neighbors to get along with each other. This is crucially important: there is no permanent peace without the gospel. For there to be peace, we must tell people about the gospel.

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ – Romans 5:1

HAPPY ARE THE... – The JOY of the BEATITUDES

Go out and be a peacemaker today. Tell someone about Jesus and how He has delivered you from the penalty for sin.

BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO ARE PERSECUTED BECAUSE OF
RIGHTEOUSNESS

CHAPTER 10
BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO ARE
PERSECUTED BECAUSE OF
RIGHTEOUSNESS

Here is some “good” news, but I’m not sure you are going to like it. If you are a true Christian, you will be persecuted. You will have troubles. People will hate you. Isn't that great? It must be, because Jesus says, “Happy are those who are persecuted because of righteousness.”

Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. - 2 Timothy 3:12

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. - Matthew 5:10

This verse is commonly interpreted to mean: if you stand up for what is right, and evil people oppose you, that’s a good thing. God will be pleased with you and

because you are such a good person (fighting for justice), and you will go to heaven.

But, that's simply not true. It's a worldly, self-centered view of this Beatitude, and not at all what Jesus is saying.

This verse is also used by cults, such as Mormons, to say, "You've just called my religion a cult. I'm being persecuted. That means my religion is the right one. That I'm being 'persecuted' for my faith proves it!" This also is not what Jesus is saying.

If we continue reading in Matthew, Jesus makes it clear what He is talking about:

Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. – Matthew 5:11-12

Jesus first states that those who are persecuted because of righteousness will be blessed. He follows that with a clear definition of righteousness—He is righteousness. Jesus is righteousness.

But, and this is important, only the true Jesus is righteous. There are many false Christs. The Mormons and Jehovah Witnesses follow false Christs. Books such as *Jesus Calling* and *Jesus Always* present a false Christ, and many people follow them. Prosperity preachers such as Joel Olsteen and Creflo Dollar present false Christs. There are many, many false Christs in the world today. And none of these false Christs are righteous.

BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO ARE PERSECUTED BECAUSE OF
RIGHTEOUSNESS

But, Why Are true Christians Persecuted?

When Jesus Christ was on earth the world hated him. He was despised, constantly challenged, and finally beaten, scourged, and crucified. If Christ was persecuted, why should we think we'll receive anything less?

*For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake. -
Philippians 1:29*

That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death. - Philippians 3:10

What is your reward for being poor in spirit, mourning over sin, being meek, and hungering and thirsting for righteousness?

What is your reward for being merciful, pure of heart, and a peacemaker?

What is your reward for all this?

You will be persecuted.

You will be persecuted because you are obeying God. Persecution means you are living the kingdom life... you are living the way people in the kingdom should live... and that means you will be blessed. BUT... the world does not like people who are obeying God.

When you act like Christ... when you live out the righteousness of Christ, you will share in the persecution of Christ.

To live for Christ is to live in opposition to Satan

and to his world... and to his world system. And that means those in the world system will hate you. They preach love, but they hate Jesus. They will talk about peace, but will seek to silence Jesus, even if it means crucifying Him. But since they can't get at Jesus their hatred turns to those who follow Jesus... you.

To be like Christ—and that is our goal—will bring the same result it has throughout history... and the same result it brought to Christ when He lived on earth. Persecution.

The Beatitudes, and the Sermon on the Mount, are about righteousness, and by its very nature righteousness confronts wickedness. And that brings persecution. The Puritan writer Thomas Watson wrote the following about Christians:

“Though they be ever so meek, merciful, pure in heart, their piety will not shield them from sufferings. They must hang their harp on the willows and take the cross. The way to heaven is by way of thorns and blood. Though it be full of roses in regard of the comforts of the Holy Ghost, yet it is full of thorns in regard of persecutions.” – Thomas Watson, Discourses On Important and Interesting Subjects, Volume 2, 1829, page 348

Persecution is not incidental to a faithful Christian lifestyle, it is certain. In 1 Thessalonians chapter 2 Paul mentions persecution and how he has been hindered by persecution. In chapter 3 he says this is to be expected...

“...so that no one would be disturbed by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we have been destined for this. For indeed when we were with you, we kept telling you in

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RIGHTEOUSNESS

advance that we were going to suffer affliction; and so it came to pass, as you know. – 1 Thessalonians 3:3-4

There is a simple way to avoid persecution... live like the world. Do whatever the world does... fit in with everyone around you. Or if that's more than you can do, then just keep your mouth shut and have an attitude of "live and let live." Don't make waves.

Living like the world may even seem like it costs nothing, and it has the benefit of avoiding trials, troubles, confrontation, and conflict. That's all good, right? It makes life easier, right? But, what are you doing? You are turning your back on Christ. You are turning your back on God and losing your spiritual purity and righteousness. That's a huge cost.

For churches and church leaders there may seem to be no other option. The worldly benefits in keeping quiet far outweigh the benefits of preaching the gospel.

Preaching the gospel may insult some people in the church. You may lose a part of your congregation, and the associated income.

Preaching the gospel may strain the church's relationship with the community. You don't want to do that. So just keep quiet about the reality of sin. Don't tell people that apart from the saving power of the gospel they remain in their sins and are destined for hell.

And what do you get? A church that has turned its back on the mission God has called the church to do. A church that has rejected God in order to please man.

If we live as Christians should, having the righteousness of Christ, then we are truly following Jesus as we cry out to the world that Jesus Christ is the way... the

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only way to salvation. And scripture says this will bring persecution that results in your being blessed.

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. - Matthew 5:10

CHAPTER 11
THE PATH TO SALVATION &
SANCTIFICATION

Jesus has very simply laid out the path to salvation. It's an easy path to understand, once you know what He's talking about. But, it's an impossible path to walk. You can try every day, all of your life, and you'll never get past the first Beatitude. You need God's help. That only comes as a result of the cross. Until someone is saved, the Beatitudes are meaningless. They need the gospel!

This seems like a catch 22. You can understand the Beatitudes until you are saved. You can't become saved until you understand the Beatitudes. So what are we to do? We can help people understand the first step, coming to the realization that they are sinners in need of a Savior.

Over the years I've shared the gospel with thousands of people, helping them realize they are a sinner in need of a savior. It's common to hear replies such as, "I've never understood Christianity before. It makes sense now. But, I'm still not going to become a

Christian. I just don't want to."

Why would someone understand the gospel and intentionally pass up eternal life? Scripture tells us:

This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. – John 3:19

They reject Christ because they love their sin. There is a sin, or several sins they don't want to give up. They love the world more than they love life.

But your job isn't to save people. Only God can do that. Your job is to tell them the good news.

What is it that I tell people that helps them understand Christianity? My approach is to not tell anyone anything.

How Does That Work?

I use the approach Jesus used. I ask questions. If you ask the right questions, people will realize they are a sinner in need of a savior. There is a YouTube video showing me using questions to share the gospel in just 3-1/2 minutes. It is available at:

<http://tinyurl.com/gn8olq5>

In the video I use a gospel tract to get the attention of people walking by. Then I use the law to help them realize they are a sinner in need of a Savior. Why? Because the purpose of the law is to show people their sins.

Why, then, was the law given? It was given alongside the promise to show people their sins. – Galatians 3:19 (NLT)

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Here are some of the questions along with a typical answer. Yes, people are different and I've gotten all types of answers to these questions. But, let's just stick with the easy ones:



How many lies have you told? They answer, "A lot."

What would you call me if I told a lot of lies? They answer, "A liar."

Have you ever taken something that does not belong to you? They answer, "Yes."

What do you call someone who takes things that do not belong to them? They answer, "A thief."

Have you ever looked at another person with lust? They answer, "Yes, of course I have."

Jesus said that if you look with lust you have committed adultery in your heart. So that makes you a what? They answer, "A human."

If I commit murder I'd be called a murderer, right? So if I commit adultery I'd be called a what. They answer, "An adulterer."

You have just admitted you are a liar, thief and adulterer at heart. These are just three of the Ten

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Commandments. So are you innocent or guilty of breaking God's law? They answer, "Guilty."

Will you go to heaven or hell? They answer, "Hell."

Hell is a pretty nasty place. Do you want to go there? They answer, "No."

Do you know what you can do to not go to hell? They answer, "No."

Two thousand years ago Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty you've earned for disobeying God. You broke the laws, Jesus paid the penalty.

Let's say I've committed a serious crime. I was caught, and I'm in the courtroom. The judge pronounces me guilty. The fine is ten million dollars or life in prison. I don't have that much money, what happens to me? They answer, "You go to prison."



But then, someone walks into the courtroom, opens a briefcase full of cash, and pays my fine. What happens to me now? They answer, "You go

free."

That's what Jesus did for you. He paid your fine and that means you can go free. But, there is one more question.

We're back in the courtroom. The guy offers to pay my fine and I say... "No thank you. I don't believe that is real money." And I turn down his offer. What

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happens to me now? They answer, “You go to prison for life.”

It’s the same with Jesus. He is offering you the gift of the cross. If you reject that gift you must pay your penalty yourself, and that is an eternity in hell... no escape... no hope. So it’s your choice. Will you accept this gift from Jesus?

That’s how I share the gospel by asking questions. People don’t get upset and many people thank me. So what do you think? Have you accepted Christ as your Savior? Have you repented, meaning have you turned away from breaking God’s law? Are you trusting that Jesus Christ truly did pay your penalty for breaking God’s laws in FULL?

Jesus made an amazing promise. He said, “I’ll pay the penalty you’ve earned for breaking God’s laws. I’ll do it all. Just believe Me. Trust Me.” And then you know what He did? He died receiving the death penalty you deserved. Was buried. BUT... on the third day, proving that His promises are true and there is truly life after death, He rose from the dead. He didn’t do this in secret. For the next forty days He talked with people. He ate with people. He walked with people. Over 500 eyewitnesses saw Him and heard Him speak. It’s real... and you can also have the eternal life that Christ offers.

The Beatitudes – The Path to Sanctification

The path Jesus lays out to salvation is the same path we walk to sanctification, meaning to become more like Christ. When Christ saves us He gives us a new heart. We become a new person, with new attitudes. But we still sin. And that means we need to improve in

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every one of the Beatitudes. But again, it's impossible. We can't make one step of progress without God.

But, there is good news... a lot of it. As believers we have God's promise:

For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.

– Philippians 1:6

When God saved us He began a good work... He began to sanctify us. Growing us to be more like Christ. And He will continue that work until we are perfected in heaven.

The natural man, that's us before we were born again, is at war with God. It may not feel like it. Before you were saved you may have felt very spiritual. You may have felt like you had a close relationship with God, and that you were even walking in the presence of God. But, you were close to something else, not the God of the Bible. As I mentioned in a previous chapter, we are born enemies of God and we need to be reconciled with God. Then we need to grow... to become more like our Lord Jesus Christ. The Beatitudes are the path we follow.

CHAPTER 12

JOY IN CHRIST – THE BEATITUDES

The word Beatitude means blessed, happy, fortunate, or blissful. In other words, joy! It is a joy that has nothing to do with your circumstances. It's the joy that comes from having a right heart before God.

In the Beatitudes Jesus gives you the path to having a right heart and as a result having joy. It is the path to trusting Jesus Christ as your savior. It is a joy that nothing and no one can take away from you.

Joy vs. Happiness

Christians make a distinction between joy and happiness. Happiness is the result of your circumstances. For example, being with a special person results in your being happy. When you are not with that person, you may not as happy.

Joy, on the other hand, is a gift of the Holy Spirit and is unrelated to your circumstances. For an example let's look at Acts 16:

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“But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God...” – Acts 16:25

It seems that Paul and Silas were having a good time together. They were staying up late enjoying each other's fellowship as they prayed and sang hymns of praise together. What were their circumstances? Let's jump back a few verses and find out:

The crowd rose up together against them [Paul and Silas], and the chief magistrates tore their robes off them and proceeded to order them to be beaten with rods. When they had struck them with many blows, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely; and he, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. - Acts 14:22-24

They had been beaten, probably rather severely, with many blows. If you had been beaten as they had, you'd probably be in the emergency room demanding pain killers. But, there was no medical treatment for Paul and Silas. They were put into prison, which in those days were dark, foul, filthy places. And to make it worse their feet were fastened in stocks. Stocks are a torture device designed to hold your feet and legs motionless. The intent was to make your leg muscles cramp up and cause you some serious pain.

So Paul and Silas had been severely beaten, locked in a dark, damp cave-like prison, chained to the wall, and their legs were seriously cramping up. Not what I'd call the best of circumstances... yet they were filled with joy, singing hymns and praising God.

JOY IN CHRIST

Why?

Because joy is a gift of the Holy Spirit. Their circumstances could not take away their joy. All Christians, everyone who is trusting in Jesus Christ alone to pay their penalty in full for breaking God's law, have this joy available... always... in all circumstances. Because all true Christians have the fruit of the Holy Spirit dwelling in them.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. – Galatians 5:22-23

The fruit of the Spirit is one of the blessings that comes from trusting in Jesus as your Savior. The greatest blessing is eternal life, and knowing that whatever happens during this life on earth, nothing can take away eternity.

While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. – 2 Corinthians 4:18

There is a dramatic difference between those who have Christ as their Lord and the rest of the world, and the Beatitudes highlights those differences. In his book *The Pursuit of God* A.W. Tozer describes the difference between the attitude of Christians and the attitude of the world.

A fairly accurate description of the human race might be furnished one unacquainted with it by taking the

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Beatitudes, turning them wrong side out and saying, "Here is your human race." For the exact opposite of the virtues in the Beatitudes are the very qualities which distinguish human life and conduct.

In the world of men we find nothing approaching the virtues of which Jesus spoke in the opening words of the famous Sermon on the Mount. Instead of poverty of spirit we find the rankest kind of pride; instead of mourners we find pleasure seekers; instead of meekness, arrogance; instead of hunger after righteousness we hear men saying, "I am rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing"; instead of mercy we find cruelty; instead of purity of heart, corrupt imaginings; instead of peacemakers we find men quarrelsome and resentful; instead of rejoicing in mistreatment we find them fighting back with every weapon at their command.

Of this kind of moral stuff civilized society is composed. –
A. E. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God*, Chapter 9

Are you going to follow Christ or are you going to follow the world? Repent... turn away from disobeying God and trust that Jesus Christ has paid the penalty you've earned for disobeying God. How can you know this is true? Jesus gave you the proof. He was dead, buried, and on the third day He rose from the dead, demonstrating that there truly is life after death.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

GOSPEL RESOURCES

The following are resources that will help you share the gospel with others.

I learned the approach of sharing the gospel using questions from Way of the Master. They have training materials, great videos, very effective tracts, and free resources available on their web site:

www.wayofthemaster.com



In sharing the gospel you will talk with many different types of people. I like to have a number of tools in my toolbox. Another approach to sharing the gospel that I like is Share Without Fear:

www.sharejesuswithoutfear.com

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Our ministry provides some online resources and ideas for meeting people you can share with. Unfortunately our resources limit what we have available, but you can find some good ideas on our web site at:

www.MTABible.com

A tool that I have found useful for sharing the gospel is the EvangeCube. Kids have been mesmerized when I've used this cube to tell the story about Jesus. You do not need to follow the script that comes with the EvangeCube, you can modify it to include principles from Way Of The Master.

<http://www.e3resources.org>

I feel one of the best evangelism ministries out there is Child Evangelism Fellowship. If you want to get involved with an established ministry, and you like working with children, I highly recommend CEF

<https://www.cefonline.com>

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Steve Hudgik has been serving as the pastor of the Cannon Beach Bible Church, in Cannon Beach, Oregon since 2013. If you should be in Cannon Beach please come visit us for our Sunday morning service. Our web site has the times and directions to the church:
www.CBBC.us

Steve has been the executive director of the Move To Assurance (MTA) ministry since 2000. MTA produces apologetic videos and is involved in street evangelism, outreach, and apologetics ministries.

Some of the MTA web sites include:

www.911Christ.com
www.MTAbible.com
www.MoveToAssurance.org
www.JesusAlways.us.com
www.NotJesusCalling.com

**Other books by Steve Hudgik
available on Amazon.com**

RUN! It's Jesus Calling
www.NotJesusCalling.com

Should You Run From Jesus Always?
www.JesusAlways.us