

***The First Four Beatitudes (Mat. 5:3–6)***

**I. REVIEW: SERMON ON THE MOUNT ARE THE CORE VALUES OF THE KINGDOM**

A. Sermon on the Mount is the constitution of God’s kingdom on earth in this age, revealing what God most values. It is Jesus’ most comprehensive statement on a believer’s role in cooperating with the grace of God and is the “litmus test” to measure our spiritual development and ministry impact. In this sermon, Jesus calls His people to perfect obedience and to make this their primary goal in life. We do this by seeking to walk in all the light that the Spirit gives us. Pursuing obedience is not the same as attaining it.

<sup>48</sup> ***You shall be perfect [walk in all the light you receive] as your Father...is perfect. (Mt. 5:48)***

B. Jesus calls us to live out ***the eight beatitudes*** (5:3–12) as we pursue ***100-fold obedience*** (5:48). The 8 beatitudes are *being poor in spirit, spiritual mourning, walking in meekness, hungering for righteousness, showing mercy, embracing purity, being a peacemaker, and enduring persecution.*

<sup>3</sup> ***Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*** <sup>4</sup>***Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.*** <sup>5</sup>***Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.*** <sup>6</sup>***Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.*** <sup>7</sup>***Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.*** <sup>8</sup>***Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*** <sup>9</sup>***Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.*** <sup>10</sup>***Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (Mt. 5:3–10)***

C. The Beatitudes are like 8 beautiful flowers in the “garden in our heart” that God wants to fully blossom. They define love, godliness, and spiritual maturity and describe the kingdom lifestyle. Implied in all of God’s commands is the promise of the enabling to walk out the command.

D. These ***8 flowers*** must be cultivated as we “weed our garden” by ***resisting 6 temptations*** related to our natural lusts (5:21–48) and as we “water our garden” by ***pursuing 5 activities*** (6:1–18). These eight virtues are ***the way*** to experience a vibrant heart before God and enter into Kingdom Life.

1. ***The 6 temptations:*** *anger, immorality, disregarding the marriage covenant, making false commitments, demanding personal rights, and living with a spirit of retaliation (5:21–48).*
2. ***The 5 kingdom activities:*** *prayer, fasting, giving, serving, and blessing enemies (6:1–18)* are spiritual disciplines that position our heart before God to receive more grace freely.

E. The world sees the first four beatitudes as ***negative qualities***; the second four as ***positive qualities***.

1. ***First Four:*** *Poverty of Spirit, Spiritual Mourning, Meekness, Hungering and Thirsting for Righteousness*
2. ***Second Four:*** *Mercy, Purity of Heart, Peacemaking and Persecution for Righteousness*

**II. THE FIRST AND FOUNDATIONAL BEATITUDE: POVERTY OF SPIRIT (MT. 5:3)**

- A. To be poor in spirit is to be aware that we are in great need of experiencing spiritual growth in our heart, ministry, church, and society. This truth is one of the most misunderstood and misapplied truths in the grace of God. To be “happy” means to have a vibrant spirit.

**<sup>3</sup>Blessed are the poor in spirit [those who see their need], for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. <sup>4</sup>Blessed are those who mourn [spiritually], for they shall be comforted. (Mt. 5:3-4)**

- B. *Poverty of spirit* is a deep awareness of our spiritual needs and deficiencies, especially in light of the call to be perfect (Mt. 5:48). We see a lack in our love towards others, living a godly lifestyle as Jesus defines it in the Sermon on the Mount, being hungry for the Word, for a spirit of prayer, and for the release of the Holy Spirit’s power through our words, hands (praying for the sick), and deeds. *Poverty of spirit* understands we can’t produce godliness in our emotions. We can’t create a lasting impact as salt and light in the earth (Mat. 5:13).

- C. Jesus has provided us immeasurable spiritual wealth because of His work on the cross (Eph. 1:3, 7; Col. 1:27), but we see the gap in our living condition when experiencing what He has freely offered.

**<sup>3</sup> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ (Eph. 1:3)**

- D. We grow in poverty of spirit by seeing what the Scripture says about what God desires to do in and through us and by exposing ourselves to teaching, writings, songs and fellowship that presses in for God’s fullness. Also reading Christian biographies of what God did through others imparts vision. Stories from Hudson Taylor, Corrie Ten Boom, George Mueller, H.A Baker, Mahesh Chavda, etc...

1. *Maturely understanding God and His end time plan* (Jer. 23:20; Dan. 11:32–33; Rev. 1:19; 1:3; 22:7)

**<sup>20</sup> ...the Lord will not turn back until He has executed and performed the thoughts of His heart. In the latter days you will understand it perfectly [maturely]. (Jer. 23:20)**

2. *Growing in godly character* (Eph. 4:13; 5:27; Gal. 5:22–23; Mat. 5:3–10, 48)

**<sup>27</sup>...He [Jesus] might present her [Church] to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. (Eph. 5:27)**

3. *Walking in supernatural power* (Dan. 11:32–33; Mt. 16:18–19; Jn. 14:12)

**<sup>12</sup> “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. (John 14:12)**

- E. It’s a common temptation to lower God’s standards for our experience in Christ, individually and corporately. We don’t know how much He will release in this generation but we don’t want to settle for less. The question we should be asking is “How far will you let me go in you, Lord?”

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F. *Seeking the Lord* answers the dilemma of our spiritual poverty. (Mat. 7:7–12). *If we seek the Lord, we are to be confident that He will intervene more than our seeking deserves!* (Heb. 11:6) We know God is gracious (Ex. 34:6; Psalm 103:8; 145:16-18).

***<sup>17</sup> The Lord is righteous in all His ways, gracious in all His works. <sup>18</sup> The Lord is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth. (Psalm 145:17-18)***

G. We seek the Lord by engaging in five activities of *prayer, fasting, giving, serving* and *blessing our enemies* (Mat. 6:1–18), helping us position our hearts before God to receive more grace free of charge.

H. A temptation when engaging in these five disciplines is to be *prideful* of our activity, thinking it earns us something before God. Another temptation is to see our weakness in pursuing God and *despair*. God is attracted to weakness and sincerity, not performance. (Psalms 34:18; 1 Pet. 5:5; James 4:5–6; Isa. 66:2)

***<sup>5</sup> ...“God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” (1 Pet. 5:5)***

I. If we see the lack and it doesn't move us to action, that is called *passivity*. If we don't see the lack but we think we are doing great, it is called *pride*. *Being poor in spirit* is one of the hardest beatitudes to maintain and cultivate over the years. There are many false comforts and distractions that can keep us from agreeing with the Lord in our need.

J. ***Theirs is the kingdom:*** Theirs “is” the kingdom, not “shall be.” Jesus promised that any who live poor in spirit would experience the kingdom realities. This includes having a vibrant spirit, feeling God's presence, and being a vehicle of His presence to others. Many feel a lack in these realities without ever connecting it to being poor in spirit. *The kingdom belongs to us now*. This speaks of experiencing more of the kingdom in a personal way. This is how to seek the Holy Spirit on His terms.

## III. ASSESSING OUR LIVES AND MINISTRY

A. Paul said that no good thing was in him apart from God's grace. To be poor in spirit includes seeing ourselves rightly, specifically with regard to our natural abilities and dedication being unable to produce spiritual life; it starts with salvation, then grows in our heart and our ministry.

***<sup>18</sup>For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find...<sup>24</sup>O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? <sup>25</sup>I thank God—through Jesus Christ! (Rom. 7:18-25)***

B. *We each have a ministry assignment and lead in some way:* partnership in marriage, parenting, serving at Church and our work in the market place. We assess our effectiveness not by the external things happening but if we are imparting the inner life addressed in the Sermon on the Mount as seen in the eight budding virtues of Mat. 5:2–12. Are we imparting spiritual poverty to those entrusted to us? Do they have a vision for God's promises and are they hungry for them and pressing into them?

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- C. Many ***evaluate their ministry*** by *the numbers gathered* and other natural indications for success, such as an *increase of money, achievements of goals, enthusiasm of people*. In our church ministry we may evaluate our effectiveness by *how many get healed* or have *an outward manifestation of the Spirit*. While breakthrough in these areas are good, we should not allow them to comfort us in our desperation. Jesus evaluates the quality of our ministry by another set of standards (Mat. 5:19; 7:21–23).

***<sup>19</sup> Whoever...breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least ...but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (Mat. 5:19)***

- D. Many evaluate themselves spiritually by comparing themselves with others. It makes them feel superior and successful. But we must evaluate ourselves by the Word of God.

***<sup>12</sup> We dare not...compare ourselves...But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise. (2 Cor. 10:12)***

- E. Some take *poverty of spirit* beyond Jesus' intent and despise their weakness and efforts of loving God (Zech. 4:10; Song of Solomon 1:5; 2 Cor. 12:9) We must see God's enjoyment of us and how He values the small things that we are doing, as we press in for a greater breakthrough in our heart and ministry.

## **IV. POVERTY IN SPIRIT VERSUS PASSIVITY**

- A. Jesus addressed this as the root problem in the church of Laodicea (Rev. 3:14-21). When a ministry (individual or corporate) becomes rich in finances, popularity, and influence they are tempted with spiritual passivity. Passivity is what separates believers' lives and ministries before the Lord.

***<sup>16</sup>...you are lukewarm...neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. <sup>17</sup>Because you say, "I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing" and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked...<sup>19</sup>As many as I love, I rebuke...be zealous and repent...<sup>21</sup>To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne. (Rev. 3:16-21)***

- B. *Believers in prosperous circumstances* often lack poverty of spirit (Rev. 3:16–21). They believe their material wealth indicates they have arrived in their faith to some degree.

- C. *Believers with strong gifting* often lack poverty of spirit (2 Cor. 12:9). They rely on their abilities versus seeking God how He wants to use them. Some may feel superior to others in their gifting and accomplishments resulting in self-confidence, minimizing in their eyes their need for God.

- D. *Believers with a rich spiritual history* can lack poverty of spirit (Acts 19:10-20; Rev. 2:5). They evaluate their present circumstances based on a past connection with God. After some time they will still be doing church activity but not be releasing life as they once did.

- E. In our lives and ministry, have we let achievements, popularity and increase determine if we are successful? Are we *poor in spirit*, knowing that we can do nothing and impart nothing of worth without a breakthrough in God?

- F. What are we imparting to others in our ministry? Are they learning and growing in the eight beatitudes?

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**V. THE NEXT THREE VIRTUES: SPIRITUAL MOURNING, MEEKNESS AND SPIRITUAL HUNGER**

A. ***Mourning for breakthrough*** (“for they shall be comforted,” Mt. 5:4) is to be desperate enough to be extreme in pursuing a breakthrough for our heart, ministry, church, or for justice in society.

1. *Poverty of spirit* is about how we see ourselves. *Spiritual mourning* is how we feel about what we see in our lives. Isaiah responded in mourning when seeing himself and his nation short of God’s destiny (Isa. 6:5).
2. Does not refer to mourning over natural losses or difficult circumstances but for spiritual breakthrough.
3. Spiritual mourning is a gift from God as it is an escort into the deeper things of God. We are not to silence the inner heartache by comforting ourselves (or others) with superficial solutions or things other than the fullness of God’s destiny for us as revealed in His Word.
4. Paul spoke of godly sorrow to the Corinthian church in how it lead to repentance (change of thinking) to a greater experience of salvation (2 Cor. 7:9–11).

***<sup>10</sup> For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death. (2 Cor. 7:10)***

5. Feeling the pain of our holy discontent causes us to be extreme in rearranging our life to spend our strength, time and money to seek God for all that He will give.

B. ***Walking in meekness*** (“shall inherit the earth,” Mt. 5:5) is to walk in the fasted lifestyle, or to have a servant spirit in the use of our natural strengths or resources (time, money, reputation, etc.). Meekness speaks of using our resources with a servant spirit in serving others without regard for receiving any gain from them.

1. Poor in Spirit is about us seeing our spiritual lack and need for God. Meekness is about seeing our lack before people. We see our indebtedness to God for our resources and see His ownership over them.
2. Our natural mindset is to see our resources (gifting, money, position of authority, etc.) as mostly belonging to us and being the fruit of our dedication and hard work. (1 Cor. 4:7)

***<sup>7</sup> For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it? (1 Cor. 4:7)***

3. Meekness is not about a timid or deferential personality. It’s a spiritual virtue that sees ourselves and our gifting belonging to the Lord and His use. Someone who walks in meekness is overcoming their selfish desires to serve others instead of their primary aim to use resources they have for self-promotions.
4. Meekness is about with whom we are preoccupied. Someone not walking in meekness will be concerned of their honor, opportunities, position and keep these things. Those lacking in meekness may be offended easily by being overlooked, resistant to menial tasks, or think of ways to promote themselves for a better place. God wants to free us to be grateful for what He’s given us and see all things from Him and belonging to Him. This frees us to love others in any situation in which He puts us. (Luke 17:7–10)

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- C. ***Hungering and thirsting for righteousness*** (“for they shall be filled,” Mt. 5:6) is to have sustained faithfulness in seeking God with a whole heart for the breakthrough of His kingdom in our lives and in others. It speaks of being consistent through the changing seasons, without drawing back in disappointment or offense.
1. Spiritual hunger and thirst is about pressing in for more of God. Some define grace as the absence of pressing into God, but this is a distorted message of grace, which is common today.
  2. At the end of his life while in prison, even the apostle Paul pressed ahead for more of God. (Phil 3:12–14)  
*<sup>12</sup> Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. <sup>13</sup> Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, <sup>14</sup> I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (Phil 3:12–14)*
  3. This involves *engaging in fasting* which will expose the hunger in our spirits for more of God. This also involves *resisting the six temptations* that grieve the Holy Spirit (Mt. 5:21–48). We begin to hunger for a righteous lifestyle that can only come through partnering with the Spirit and His help. We cry-out for more.
  4. Hunger is an important sign of life. There are some Christians that do not hunger for more of God. This is not normal Christianity. Believers with no spiritual appetite are in a spiritual Intensive Care Unit (ICU).