

Is God Happy With My Attitude? (Part I)

Matthew 5:1-2: (NASB) ¹*Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him.*

²*And he opened his mouth and began to teach them...*



Arguably, the most well-known sermon in the world is the Sermon on the Mount, delivered by Jesus over 2,000 years ago on a mountainside near the Lake of Gennesaret and Capernaum. It was his longest recorded sermon and covered important topics like loving your enemies, anger, murder, adultery, divorce, fasting and laying up treasures in heaven. His audience was his disciples plus a curious crowd, attracted by his ability to perform wondrous miracles. The sermon began with several deceptively simple “blessed” statements called the Beatitudes. These statements are a profound foundation for all the teachings of Jesus. They show us not only how to frame

our view of life, but they also show us how we are to treat those around us with godly grace.

The simple theme of these Beatitudes is based on the idea of being blessed:

Blessed: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #3107 *mak-ar'-ee-os*; a prolonged form of the poetical makar (meaning the same); supremely blest; by extension, fortunate, well off:—blessed, happy(X -ier)

The meaning of *blessed* is far deeper than simple happiness. In every use in the New Testament, it is always tied into those who serve God no matter what the circumstances or it describes God Himself. When we think *blessed*, we need to think of being touched or guided by God's favor, which means we personally have God's attention!



Rick's Uncle Steve used to call these the “Be-Attitudes” because they describe the attitude we are supposed to have and person we are to be. “Happy” is a mood we achieve based on our circumstances, but according to the Amplified Bible, *blessed* is being spiritually prosperous, with life-joy and satisfaction in God's favor and salvation regardless of the outward conditions. *Blessed* is much deeper. *Blessed* sets the stage for everything else that follows in the Sermon on the Mount.

These Beatitudes are an early teaching in the ministry of Jesus. They set a specific tone of love, compassion and humility, and they separate the teachings of Jesus from all others:

Matthew 5:3-9: (NASB) ³*Blessed <3107> are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* ⁴*Blessed <3107> are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.* ⁵*Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.* ⁶*Blessed <3107> are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.* ⁷*Blessed <3107> are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.* ⁸*Blessed <3107> are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.* ⁹*Blessed <3107> are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.*

The message of this sermon was so different from what the people were hearing from the religious leaders of the day. They taught the people to hold in high regard (and even to try to copy) the rich, learned, mighty and



influential men. These influential men were the Pharisees! Things have not changed much, have they? Jesus sets forth the reverse.

Who was the primary audience? His disciples:

Matthew 5:1-2: (NASB) ¹When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. ²He opened his mouth and began to teach them, saying...

We know he was addressing them even though others could hear because of what he said immediately after all the **blessed** statements:

Matthew 5:13-14: (NASB) ¹³You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. ¹⁴You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.

You are the salt of the earth...you are the light of the world. Jesus was obviously speaking to his disciples, and if we are followers of Christ, he is also speaking to us. We are the preservation (salt) for all the world now and in the future kingdom.



The Beatitudes are so rich in content that they contain lessons for everyone who heard them at the time and all those who have considered them down through the ages. But they clearly hold special meaning for the faithful followers of Jesus.

Whenever Jesus used this word **blessed**, he always addressed those who followed him.

Interestingly, the last **blessed** teaching of Jesus before his crucifixion was another foundational principle:

John 13:14-17: (NASB) ¹⁴If I then, the lord and the teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. ¹⁵For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you. ¹⁶Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him. ¹⁷If you know these things, you are **blessed <3107>** if you do them.

Jesus gave us bookends of blessings! This profound blessing of the Beatitudes comes at the beginning of his ministry when he is talking to his disciples. When he is with them the last night before he dies, he says, *If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.* It is an encompassing teaching for us.

We will review each Beatitude from three different angles:

1. Readings from *Moments with the Savior* by Ken Gire, showing how the Beatitudes provide us with a “word photograph” of Jesus.
2. Understanding the sense of “empty” required by the true disciple of Christ in order to copy the master.
3. Seeing how each Beatitude is a cumulative steppingstone to the next and why each foundational lesson is necessary for our Christian development.





The first excerpt from *Moments with the Savior* by Ken Gire:

Introduction to the Beatitudes, *We have no description, Ken Gire, Moments with the Savior*

- We have no description of what Jesus looked like or sounded like. We don't know the color of his hair or how tall he was or what he weighed. The closest description we have is the mosaic that Matthew inlaid in his gospel - the Beatitudes. The fragments, so intricately fitted together, form a composite of the character of Christ. As we stare transfixed at this sublime work of art, the mosaic stares back, searching our soul. And, in a way only great art can, it speaks to us. Its still, small voice whispers of all we were meant to be, and all, by God's grace, we might become. The voice entices us to submit to the artist. But before we undertake to become the artist's work, we must understand the artist's way. When the Father begins crafting character, a crushing must first take place. Not because He's a temperamental artist who's angry with His work, but because the raw materials for His art come from a broken heart. The heart may be broken from a blow by the hard circumstances of life, from a fist of the enemy, or sometimes from the very hand of the artist himself. But once the shattering takes place, it is His hand that reaches into our brokenness to pick up the pieces. And piece by painstaking piece, He fits them together in such a way as to form the likeness of the son He so dearly loves.*



THE BEATITUDES

MATTHEW 5:3-9

show us different parts
of Jesus' character
for us to copy



As his followers, we are to copy the character of Jesus. Here we are given different views of each part of his character. It is like a photographer who wants to show you all the details of the subject: they would take pictures of the front, the right side, left side, rear and angled views. This is what we find in the Beatitudes - the different features of Jesus, so we can see who he was. We see a picture of Jesus in the Beatitudes, in order to then look at ourselves.



Understanding the sense of "empty" required by the true disciple of Christ in order to copy the master:

We know that Jesus emptied himself on several levels to be the Messiah the world needed.

He emptied himself of his life and authority on the spiritual plane of existence which he had next to his Father:

Philippians 2:6-7: (NASB) ⁶who, although he existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷but emptied himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.

Jesus took himself out of that spiritual realm and authority (he *emptied himself*) and voluntarily became a man so he could do the Father's will.



We also need to empty ourselves and do the Father's will.

Jesus emptied himself of his earthly will to do the will of God:

John 6:38: (NASB) *For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of Him who sent me.*

I have come... to do... the will of Him who sent me. If these Beatitudes are a clear picture of who Jesus was and is, then surely, we should see them through the eyes of emptying ourselves so we might be filled and blessed as he is!



What do we have to empty as it applies to us?

As followers of Christ, we are to be a representation of Jesus. We do this by emptying "self" and filling ourselves with Christ. It is not about what we are, but what God through Jesus can make of us. In order to know righteousness, we have to be empty in the sense of being teachable. If we are filled with ourselves, there is no room for God's teaching. There is a lot of emptying we need to do as followers of Christ.



Seeing how each Beatitude is a cumulative steppingstone to the next and why each foundational lesson is necessary for our development:



Jesus was very intentional in listing these Beatitudes as the VERY FIRST teachings of the Sermon on the Mount. He was laying a foundation for our lives and for the rest of the teachings that would be built upon them. Each Beatitude is a foundation for the next. Seeing them this way provides us with cumulative steps towards Christlikeness.

The Beatitudes are not randomly ordered. They are cumulative steps to take to reach the higher altitudes of spiritual life. Some call this "spiritual mountain climbing." Without the steps at the bottom, they all topple. Intentionally practicing the concepts in the Beatitudes will contribute to our spiritual transformation.



As Christians, this is a basic principle. Remember, the Beatitudes are in order for a reason. They are not random. They are specific, clear and profound and they picture Jesus.

Becoming one
who can be blessed!



As a whole, the Beatitudes provide us with the necessary ingredients to have others see Jesus in us.

Each and every Beatitude plays a vital role in our character, and we can only truly reflect Jesus when they are all in place. This is a blessed way to live!

It is amazing how such a seemingly simple list of things can be the recipe for complete personal transformation.

**What is the first foundational Beatitude message of Jesus?
Where does our Christian maturity begin?**

No conversation about Christianity, as a matter of fact, no conversation about any faithful person in the Bible, is ever complete unless this first foundational Beatitude is firmly recognized.

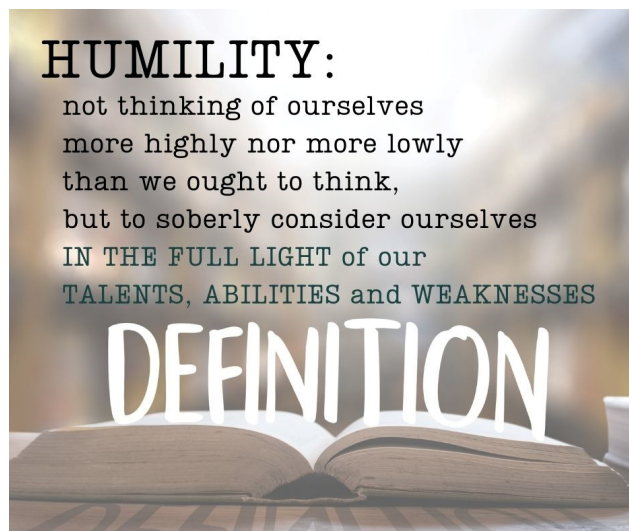
In every case without exception, anyone who can be ultimately blessed of God must have a deeply humble spirit - this is where the Beatitudes begin:

Matthew 5:3: (NASB) *Blessed <3107> are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

Poor: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #4434 *ptōchos*; a beggar (as cringing), i.e. pauper, literally (often as noun) or figuratively (distressed):—beggar(-ly), poor

Spirit: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #4151 *pneuma*; a current of air, i.e. breath (blast) or a breeze; by analogy or figuratively, a spirit, i.e. (human) the rational soul, (by implication) vital principle, mental disposition, etc., or (superhuman) an angel, demon, or (divine) God, Christ's spirit, the holy spirit: —ghost, life, spirit(-ual, -ually), mind

To be *poor in spirit* is to be humble and lacking in the ego of self-spirit (air of superiority - the "puffing up" of one's consequence).





Having humility (being *poor in spirit*) requires us to be honest with ourselves. This can be hard. We tend to magnify our faults and not look at the talents and abilities God has given us because we do not want to be proud. However, we are not humble unless we recognize who we are in our totality.

First, a look at Jesus's own humility:



Beatitude number one, *Here is what he looked like, Ken Gire, Moments with the Savior*

- Here is what he looked like. He was poor in spirit. ...he impoverished himself, laying aside the robes of heaven for the rags of our humanity. He did so in order to serve us. And to show us what it means to be fully human.*

Isaiah 53:3-4: (NASB) ³He was despised and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face he was despised, and we did not esteem him. ⁴Surely our griefs he himself bore, and our sorrows he carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

Can we imagine the son of God as someone *whom men hide their face from*? He had no shadow of that superior self-spirit. *Blessed are the poor in spirit, the humble, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* Jesus taught us how to do this by who he was.

Humility - seeing yourself as you truly are - talents, faults and all is always biblically important:

Old Testament: **Micah 6:8:** (NASB) *He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?*

Walk humbly with your God - walk with a clear assessment of who and what we are so we can follow godliness.

New Testament: **1 Peter 5:5-6:** (NASB) ⁵...and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. ⁶Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time.

This is matching our humility with the mighty hand of God. True humility always begins to find its perspective when it is in relation to the greatness of God. This is how we find true humility. We start with a comparison with the greatness of God and we build from there.



How do we apply the sense of being “empty” as a true disciple of Christ in relation to *poor in spirit*?

The *blessed* gift from God related to humility is inheriting the *kingdom of heaven*. This is not only about the reward, but also the pathway to the reward:

1 Corinthians 1:26-29: (NASB) ²⁶For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; ²⁷but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, ²⁸and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, ²⁹so that no man may boast before God.

God has chosen the weak things and the base things for this incredibly high calling - the inheritance of the kingdom of heaven. It is all on God to bring this



about, *no man may boast before God* that he accomplished this himself. It is only by being empty that we can be filled. If I am full of me, there is no room for godliness; it just does not fit!

Humility recognizes the integrity of not being filled with things that are not true to ourselves and therefore not honest before God:

Luke 12:29-32: (NASB) ²⁹And do not seek what you will eat and what you will drink, and do not keep worrying. ³⁰For all these things the nations of the world eagerly seek; but your Father knows that you need these things. ³¹But seek His kingdom, and these things will be added to you. ³²Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom.

Being *poor in spirit* might include being empty of any worldly ambition, stripped of any desire for recognition in the eyes of others. After searching for deeper meaning in religion, philosophy, relationships - we can sense there is still something missing; some type of void we cannot fill. When we stop always searching for "the next big thing" the world has to offer to make us happy, it is in this state of "humble empty" we come to Jesus. We realize we can be "filled" with the prospect of something bigger - the *kingdom of heaven*.

We must realize our own emptiness before God can work with us. This is the opposite of arrogance. We must acknowledge our own spiritual insufficiency, our nothingness before God. We cannot make progress in our walk with God unless we first realize our need for Him. Realizing our need for God does not negate recognizing a gift or talent He has given us. **Our need for God is enhanced when we DO recognize our gifts and talents and ask Him what we can do with our talents so that we can honor Him.**

Humility does not mean having so little self-esteem that we are worthless. It is understanding what God has given us, both negative and positive. How can we glorify Him and be emptied so that we can be filled with His grace and spirit, direction and will?



How does being poor in spirit, being humble, fit into the cumulative steps of the Beatitudes?



This recognition of need is our starting point. The foundation of our character cannot be proud, haughty or self-conceited. And the life of sacrifice required by a faithful follower of Jesus will not appeal to a proud person anyway. Earthly wisdom says: *Hold up your head; show others why they should think so well of you. Bend the truth if you have to. "Fake it 'til you make it."*

Without a humble appreciation of our own deficiencies and lack of wisdom, we will not be in the right attitude of heart to receive the wisdom God is pleased to grant us. It is not what we are, but *what God can make of us* that is worth appreciating and loving. When we look at it through that lens it is so clear.

John Newton wrote the beautiful hymn, *Amazing Grace*. He was once a slave trader. Towards the end of his life as his faculties were diminishing, he said, "I am a great sinner and Christ was a great savior." Only a great sinner can appreciate the depth of redemption that our Lord has provided. Our Lord suffered and died even for those of us who have done terrible things.

Humility, being *poor in spirit*, must be the beginning for us as well.



Every strong and broad foundation needs footings. There is no better way for a disciple of Christ to bear the weight of being Christlike and the blessing of God's personal attention than humility:

James 2:5: (NASB) *Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?*

The *poor of this world* are those who did not have a lot, who were not well recognized, the humble. A footing is important for a foundation. It is dug beneath the foundation, on the corners and in strategic places. As the earth settles, the foundation will not crack because the footings hold the foundation solid.



HUMILITY IS THE FOOTING
FOR THE FOUNDATION TO BECOME TRULY CHRISTLIKE.



Is it possible to feel good about yourself and be humble at the same time? Yes, of course. We need to recognize that humility is NOT saying that we are worthless, that there is nothing good in us.

If John Newton, the slave trader, had taken this kind of attitude, he would not have been able to turn his life around. He would not have been able to stand up and speak against the slave trade or any of the amazing things he did at the end of his life because he had done so many horrible things before. He recognized the grace of God in him and the power he had to do something with it. We, too, must do the same.

Let's look at the Apostle Paul and all the horrific things he did as Saul. If that would have influenced him, he would not have been able to take one step forward to become the great apostle that he became. Did he feel bad about what he had done? Of course he did, but that made him work harder with a greater focus and he became more spiritual.

True humility is the basis for everything the Beatitudes teach.



To be truly blessed of God is not possible without a genuinely humble spirit that recognizes our abilities and our faults.

Genuine humility is only possible when our point of reference begins with honoring God and taking to heart our sinful nature and need for Jesus.

We have to start somewhere, so if we are looking at how we can become more humble, we first have to compare ourselves to how the Father sees us - our potential yet also our weaknesses.

Proverbs 29:23: (NASB) *A man's pride will bring him low, but a humble spirit will obtain honor.*



The humble spirit will obtain honor. That is what Jesus had and look at the honor he received! That is what we need to strive for as we take these Beatitudes and apply them to ourselves, building on the foundation Jesus taught us how to build.

It seems like no matter how much you say about humility, there is always room for more development and learning.

**With humility as our necessary footing,
what would come next in the building of our Christian character?**

The next Beatitude is about mourning. At first glance, this does not seem to fit into the building of our Christlike characters. Do we have to be grieving to be like Jesus? That would be depressing! The point here is not focusing on being sad; rather, it is focusing on embracing whatever grief we have in faith. We all face grief over something. The key is to embrace it in faith and be comforted.

Matthew 5:4: (NASB) **Blessed <3107>** are those who **mourn <3996>**, for they shall be comforted.

Mourn: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #3996 *pentheō*;
to grieve (the feeling or the act):—mourn, (be-)wail

This can include mourning for many reasons, from grieving over loss of loved ones, to grieving over our own personal sins, to grieving over the worsening sin-sick conditions of our world. Grieving is healthy and productive, especially in the context of the gospel. However, we need to be sure our grieving is appropriately focused so as not to be overwhelming and unproductive.



Accepting, managing and growing from grief and its sorrow



First, a look at Jesus's own grieving:

Beatitude number two, *He mourned*, Ken Gire, *Moments with the Savior*

- He mourned. He was, as Isaiah prophesied, a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief. Crying over the grave of a friend. Weeping over the fate of a nation. In his face, we see brows furrowed by the hard plow of the world's pain. And beneath those brows, eyes brimming with unfathomable heartache.*

When we look at Jesus, we do not necessarily think of him grieving. Most of the time we do not. We usually see the teacher, the wisdom, power, strength, compassion and leadership, but there is something else there.

The grieving of Jesus over the sins of the world began long before he came to be the ransom. We get a hint of that in these verses:

Isaiah 6:8-10: (NASB) ⁸Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us? Then I said, Here am I. Send me! ⁹He said, Go, and tell this people: Keep on listening, but do not perceive; Keep on looking, but do not understand. ¹⁰Render the hearts of this people insensitive, their ears dull, and their eyes dim, otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and return and be healed.



Jesus cried over the grave of a friend. This is the shortest scripture in the Bible:

John 11:35: (NASB) *Jesus wept.*



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DID JESUS EVER CRY?

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This is remarkable. Even though he knew he was going to momentarily raise Lazarus from the dead, he still allowed himself to feel the same depth of grief as the family of Lazarus. We are comforted, knowing he understands when we feel that same heartache.

Jesus felt the loss. He was not only weeping because he felt the pain of the others grieving, but he himself felt the hurt. He and Lazarus had been close, he stayed at Lazarus' house many times. He had just lost a close friend - the sickness of death became very real to him in a very different way, a personal way that struck at his heart. We can feel his grief and loss, even though he had the power granted him by God to resurrect Lazarus. We see Jesus as an incredibly well-rounded man.

Jesus grieved over the nation of Israel, even though they rejected him as Messiah:

Matthew 23:37-39: (NASB) *³⁷Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. ³⁸Behold, your house is being left to you desolate! ³⁹For I say to you, from now on you will not see me until you say, Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!*

We see him having to let God's favored people go. This is right after the earlier verses in Matthew 23 when he gave the "woes" against the Pharisees. *But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because...*

For more on the "woes" against the Pharisees in Matthew 23



Episode 1210
Whose Voices Are
You Listening To?

Identifying what we hear, its affects and how to rise above the fray

Jesus laid into them again and again for all of the horrible things they were doing in the name of God. After doing this, what was his reaction? *How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling, and now you are out of time. So now (for a time, according to prophecy), Behold, your house is being left to you desolate!*

We can see the grief Jesus had in these statements. He was so hard on the Pharisees - not to beat them down - but to save them. It was to pull them out of the mire because he *loved* them. He grieved deeply over Israel's rejection. This picture of grief really does show us who he was.



How do we apply the sense of being “empty” as a true disciple of Christ in relation to mourning?

Mourning implies a loss. It is another form of “empty.” It could be a loss of a loved one. It could be a loss of faith, friendship, job, social status, earthly possessions or dreams. Many of us mourn “what might have been.” We mourn when we realize how far we come short of God’s perfect standards. In a bigger sense, we mourn for all of those who hurt and are suffering in this world. Only Jesus can fill that empty “tomb of loss” with his comfort.



In my experience, the time I mourn most is in prayer. Prayer is the time my heart opens up to tell God what’s bothering me, things like my own weaknesses and mistakes. I also mourn over the loss of loved ones and the broken condition and confusion in the world. We need to be vulnerable to say, “Lord, here’s where my heart is, and I’m looking forward to Your solution which is in Your kingdom to come.”

Part of mourning is a recognition that we do not have an answer within ourselves to fix whatever we mourn over. This creates an emptiness. It is beyond us; we do not know what to do. It is recognition that we need something bigger than we are to help us through the experience.

Our emptiness because of the grief of loss is real and needs filling. Jesus knew this and gave us practical lessons regarding a remedy. Jesus showed us the promised blessing of comfort.



The night before his crucifixion:

John 16:19-20: (NASB) ¹⁹Jesus knew that they wished to question him, and he said to them, Are you deliberating together about this, that I said, A little while, and you will not see me, and again a little while, and you will see me? ²⁰Truly, truly, I say to you, that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will grieve, but your grief will be turned into joy.

You will weep and lament... but your grief will be turned into joy.

Blessed are those that mourn, for they shall be comforted.

There is an aspect of this that is important. We can see from Bible prophecies that this present evil world is not going to be renovated. While the physical earth will remain, our selfish and evil societies and governments are being torn down, leveled, to make way for God’s righteous kingdom. *Blessed are those who mourn* now - having a sympathetic spirit includes our dissatisfaction with present conditions. We are not supposed to cling to the things of this earth. We want to long for the better things coming in God’s divine plan for humankind.

We mourn, not for the loss of what we have on earth now, but for what could have been and the grief our present evil world has brought to mankind. But we mourn with the hope and joy for the kingdom in our hearts!



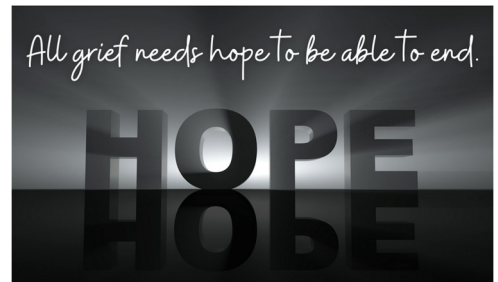
It is so important that we realize our mourning over the sins of the world will not fix it right now. We are not in a position to, nor are we supposed to! Our mission is to prepare for the reconciliation of the world in the future. This grief for the world, though, is an emptiness that needs filling. The only way it will be filled is through the grace of God. We need to feel helpless and hopeless, being empty so that we can be filled.

How does grieving fit into the cumulative steps of the Beatitudes?

We have talked about a lot of different aspects to mourning. We are empathetic to the suffering around us, and we deeply feel our own hurts, loss and disappointments. But with the foundation - the footing and stability of humility- this mourning includes a repentance of our own misdeeds. It is an admission of our own constant mistakes and sinfulness even when we want and try to do better and fail.

Realizing Christ's sympathy for our own weaknesses, in turn, helps us to stay tender-hearted towards others. We know where to go to *find grace to help in time of need* (see Hebrews 4:14-16). We will need this in order to help reconcile the world of mankind back to God in His future kingdom - *the ministry of reconciliation* described in 2 Corinthians 5:18. It comes down to being vulnerable in our grief so that we can be comforted. We saw how Jesus was this way, so we must be as well. This is built directly upon humility.

All grief needs hope to be able to end, even if the hope is only in the simple acceptance of that which was lost is gone: *I've lost it, and now I need to move on*. Our grief over our sins and losses could easily become inconsolable and overwhelming if there was no hope. Our humility "footings" that hold up our foundation enable us to look up with an expectation of being filled by God's grace when we have been emptied by grief.



If we allow ourselves to be vulnerable to our grief, we enable God's comfort through Christ to have the space to do its work:

Psalms 40:1-3: (NASB) ¹*I waited patiently for the LORD; and He inclined to me and heard my cry.* ²*He brought me up out of the pit of destruction, out of the miry clay, and He set my feet upon a rock making my footsteps firm.* ³*He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God; many will see and fear and will trust in the LORD.*



When I read this scripture preparing for our subject, I had a flashback from years ago when I was broken, empty and feeling worthless. I pleaded to the Lord to help me, give me direction and give me purpose for my life. After several months He answered my prayer and put *a new song in my mouth*. This new song is that Jesus died for *me* and for every man, woman and child from Adam to today. That's the good news! Thank God for His plan of salvation for ALL - how can I keep from singing!

For Jonathan to get to that point required humility. Humility opens the door to recognize the emptiness of grief so we can be comforted through Christ.

We can humbly enter into the grieving experiences of the brotherhood:

Romans 12:15-16: (NASB) ¹⁵*Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. ¹⁶Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation.*

We must enter into the experiences of others. If we do this with faith and humility to help and encourage, we can be part of God's hand of providence in their lives. Think about the privilege of being part of God lifting someone up in their grief. Jesus brings comfort through the workings of his followers. We can build others up and rejoice that God and Jesus get the credit. To do this we have to be outside of ourselves, being willing to give to those around us.



We must enter into the experiences of others

The bottom line of the blessedness of those who grieve - Jesus IS the comfort. Here is a powerful description of that comfort:

Isaiah 61:1-3: (NASB) ¹*The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives and freedom to prisoners; ²To proclaim the favorable year of the LORD and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn, ³to grant those who mourn in Zion, giving them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting. So they will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified.*

Notice the beautiful replacements here:

- *giving them a garland instead of ashes*
- *the oil of gladness instead of mourning*
- *the mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting*

There is no greater comfort, but we cannot be comforted unless we are willing to be vulnerable to the pain.



The promised comfort for our grief can bless us when **we humbly bring our grief-stricken lives before God through Jesus.**

Whether our grief is personal and private or related to others, **humbly accepting Jesus as our savior is the healing balm for our pain.**

Handling grief can feel like an awfully hard second step towards Jesus (and it is only the second step!) We need faith in the humility we started with!



With humility and the vulnerability of embracing grieving in place, what is the next foundational step?

These first two Beatitude steps give us a sense of positively embracing a life that has a firm grip on what is real from a godly perspective. This opens the door for becoming a truly teachable disciple of Jesus. This is where the actions that provoke growth and maturity begin.

The next Beatitude builds firmly on the first two:

Matthew 5:5: (NASB) *Blessed <3107> are the gentle <4239>, for they shall inherit the earth.*

Gentle: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #4239 *praus*; mild, i.e. (by implication) humble: meek

This uncommon Greek word is only used three times in the New Testament. It is important to not confuse being gentle or meek with being weak. This gentleness also carries the thought of being teachable and of a gentle nature, rather than being stubborn and abrasive. It is a very specific character trait. *Blessed are the gentle, the meek, the teachable, for they shall inherit the earth.*



First, a look at Jesus' own gentleness and meekness:

Beatitude number three, *He was meek, Ken Gire, Moments with the Savior*

- *He was meek. Riding into Jerusalem on the back of a baby donkey. Stooping to shoulder the cares of the down-and-out. With the strength to speak out in defense of an adulterous woman. And the strength to remain silent when it came to defending himself.*

We do not often think about "the strength to remain silent when it came to defending himself." He had such a meekness, such a teachableness about him.

The meekness and gentleness of Jesus came out at every turn, especially when he was treated unjustly:

Matthew 26:55-56: (NASB) ⁵⁵*At that time Jesus said to the crowds, Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me as you would against a robber? Every day I used to sit in the temple teaching and you did not seize me. ⁵⁶But all this has taken place to fulfill the Scriptures of the prophets. Then all the disciples left him and fled.*

Here he is - this unarmed, passive, loving, caring, compassionate and miracle-working individual - taken in the middle of the night like a dangerous robber by people with weapons. He confronts them. He says: *I have been with you all the time. You know me and of me. Just take me; it is okay.* There is an incredible gentleness even when he had all the power. Still, he was not weak or cowering.

Even while Satan is responsible for facilitating all the awful things going on around us, the meek in Christ are patient, knowing everything is under the ultimate control of divine providence and evil is being *temporarily* permitted just for a time and just for a specific purpose.



Jesus certainly knew that and lived that purpose, going with the flow that the prophecies showed would be the plan of God. His gentleness, his teachableness, was what developed in him such faithfulness.

One example of Jesus being teachable is how he studied and asked questions of the learned scholars:

Luke 2:52: (NASB) *And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and people.*

Often we think of Jesus as the teacher, not of being taught. We do not think of him learning through his experiences, his studies; and learning because he was insatiably curious about what it meant to be human. He needed that knowledge so that he could help this beloved stiff-necked people to succeed in coming back into a righteous relationship with God eventually, and so that he could understand what it would take to save all of mankind. He cared profoundly about those around him and the conditions on the earth and therefore learned profoundly. The Father's plan demanded his thorough understanding of the human mind and heart in order to eventually achieve the reconciliation of all that choose to be reconciled. He learned everything he could possibly learn during his short time on this earth as a man. He was the epitome of teachable.

“Meek is not weak.” Those who are meek must fully submit themselves to God through His son Jesus, but they are bold in the defense of His truth and His way, even if it means enduring persecution for the sake of righteousness.

We tend to think that being humble and meek means never speaking up and allowing people to trample on us. That is NOT what meekness is. Meekness is that gentle, teachable attitude, but one that stands strong for righteousness when necessary.



How do we apply the sense of being “empty” as a true disciple of Christ in relation to meekness?

We keep saying the meek are teachable. They are willing to be taught better ways and a better life in the school of Christ. They are not full of themselves, conceited or self-centered, instead they are emptied of all these self-serving traits and ready to be taught by the master. Ready to be his “meek sheep on the earthly pastures” now and in the future, being filled with the privilege of bringing the earth and the world of mankind back into harmony with the Father.

This does not happen overnight. That does not happen by us making a resolution that from now forward, we will be teachable. It has to be developed just like humility, and embracing grieving and the growth it brings, in order to empty ourselves enough to receive God's comfort. We build our lives around these principles.

No one can truly be a disciple if they already know everything, as a disciple is a learner and a follower.



If we already know everything, the only thing we are following is ourselves. We are to unburden ourselves before Jesus:

Matthew 11:28-30: (NASB) ²⁸*Come to me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.*

We hear the gentleness in the attitude of Jesus here. If we *come to him*, he will take care of us. If we take his yoke upon us there will be work, but he will be with us to help in that work. His *yoke is easy* and his *burden is light*, and He shows us how to be teachable.

We, in turn, must empty ourselves of ungodly thoughts as we serve others:

2 Timothy 2:24-25: (NASB) ²⁴*The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, ²⁵with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth.*

These scriptures are directed specifically to those who have responsibilities in the true church, but they apply to all followers of Jesus in their dealings with others. We are to be gentle in correcting those in opposition. It is so tempting to come down on them because these church servants have the authority and responsibility to keep the flock from harm. But this is not what Jesus taught and is not what we are supposed to do. We must *be kind... be patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those...in opposition*. What strength is in this approach! However, in order to do this, we must empty ourselves of our own ego so that we have the gentleness Christ showed us.



How does being meek fit into the cumulative steps of the Beatitudes?

We are back to building the steps.



First is humility - knowing who we are. A truly gentle character and teachable heart are not attainable without the humility that reminds us of what we do not know.

Next is grieving - feeling the pain of loss and sin. We realize that mourning, the loss of something, leaves an emptiness which can be filled only when we are humble enough to allow our Father to fill it. We realize how empty and incapable we are without the Father to solve the problem of sorrow and pain in the world.

Being meek - meaning teachable and having patient submission to the divine will, is impossible without humility. It can only be developed in those who mourn, in the sense of both being sympathetic to others and recognizing just how far we individually fall short and require the covering of Jesus.

Once we know who we are and once we feel the grieving and accept it, we can now take the discipleship action built upon learning. Being teachable means being able to learn. Learning flourishes when the mind and heart are in lockstep with the teacher.

Let's go back to this appropriate quote from Jesus:

John 13:14-17: (NASB) ¹⁴*If I then, the lord and the teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. ¹⁵For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you.*



¹⁶Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him. ¹⁷If you know these things, you are **blessed <3107>** if you do them.

You are blessed only if you do them - this is an action. We cannot just say we are teachable. We have to put instructions into action to show our willingness to follow Jesus' examples. Jesus instructed his disciples to serve one another. He showed them by example, but they did not quite grasp it, so he told them in words. This is an appropriate cumulative step in the Beatitudes.



If the followers of Jesus are going to heaven, why does Jesus tell them that their being blessed by God means they inherit the earth? What happened to inheriting heaven?

Great question! It would seem that this could not apply to the followers of Jesus since he said:

John 14:2: (NASB) *In my Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you.*

In what way could his followers inherit the earth if they will be living in heaven?

Remember, at the beginning of Jesus' ministry in Matthew 4:1-11, Satan tried to tempt Jesus by saying he would give Jesus the kingdoms of this world if Jesus would just bow down to him. Why was this a temptation? Satan knew Jesus came to save the kingdoms of this world, which were his inheritance. He knew that Jesus would have to go through some major trial doing this. Why would Satan offer to just give Jesus the kingdoms? Satan was trying to keep his own power over the earth (he is the *prince of this world*, John 16:11 [KJV]), by making Jesus become subservient to him.

We have this uttered prophetically as well:

Psalms 2:7-8: (NASB) ⁷*I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to me, you are My son, today I have begotten you.* ⁸*Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as your inheritance, and the very ends of the earth as your possession.*

Jesus was made human and came for the nations of the earth. His ransom, as was said earlier, was not just for Adam, but for every man, woman and child who ever lived in the nations of the earth. This prophecy is in line with the promise to Abraham to bless all the families of the earth.

For more on the ransom of Jesus, see:



Scripturally pinpointing the extent and reach of Jesus' ransom

Jesus and his disciples inherited this Abrahamic promise. We know this through the following scriptures:

Galatians 3:26-29: (NASB) ²⁶*For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.* ²⁷*For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.* ²⁸*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.* ²⁹*And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.*



The faithful followers of Jesus receive a heavenly reward like he did, but they get to help him with blessing all the families of the earth. So, *the meek inherit the earth* in the sense, if faithful, they get to help reconcile back to God those who have been resurrected on earth. *Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven.*

This teachableness gives us the ability to inherit the earth because that is where Jesus and his followers “go to work.” This is what the *ransom* and *restitution* is about.

True disciples of Christ are learning now for the purpose of reconciling in the future those whom Jesus ransomed:

2 Corinthians 5:18-19: (NASB) ¹⁸Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, ¹⁹namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

As followers of Jesus, we have the responsibility of reconciliation. We have been given the *ministry of reconciliation* so that we can begin this work in the future when Jesus calls all from their graves. The idea of this third Beatitude is to be teachable so that we can learn to be like Jesus and help in this ultimate work of reconciliation.

We started with humility, that basic “footing” that says there is no character development before God without humility.

We saw having vulnerability to the grief in our lives so that we can be filled with comfort, as well as be sympathetic to others.

Now we have this meekness, this teachableness, so that we can learn how to be like Jesus and inherit the earth and help reconcile mankind to God. These are steppingstones to becoming truly Christlike.



To be gentle and teachable is to engage in the actions of godly living and true discipleship.

Knowing who we are, feeling the pains of this world and learning and living in Christ are all *ingredients of being supremely blessed by God!*

There is so much to these Beatitudes that we must learn if we are going to truly be footsteps followers of Jesus. Do not miss next week’s episode when we add the rest of the Beatitudes to provide a picture of what our Lord looked like, acted like, felt and thought. By looking at our Lord Jesus, we see a picture of what WE must look like, act like, feel, think and do. The Beatitudes frame our lives!



*So, is God happy with my attitude?
For Jonathan, Rick, Julie and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*

All quoted scriptures are from the 1995 version of NASB unless otherwise indicated.



Join us next week for our podcast on January 24, 2022
Ep. 1214: Is God Happy With My Attitude? (Part II)

Study Questions follow



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Study QUESTIONS

Ep. 1213: Is God Happy With My Attitude? (Part I)

<https://christianquestions.com/character/1213-beatitudes/>

See:  **CQ.Rewind**
SHOW NOTES

1. What does it mean to be blessed? To whom did Jesus preach the Beatitudes? How do we know this for sure? What does this tell us about the message? (See Matthew 5:1-9, 13-14, John 13:14-17)
2. What do the Beatitudes teach us about Jesus' character? How did Jesus empty himself twice? Why did he do this? Why is it important that we learn to empty ourselves as Jesus did? (See John 6:38, Philippians 2:6-7)
3. What does it mean to be "poor in spirit"? How did Jesus exemplify this in his life? Being poor in spirit means being empty of what? (See Isaiah 53:3-4, Matthew 5:3)
4. Why is it so important to be properly humble? How can we incorporate humility in our service to God? Why is being humble, or poor in spirit the first Beatitude? (See Proverbs 29:23, Micah 6:8, Luke 12:29-32, 1 Corinthians 1:26-29, 1 Peter 5:5-6, James 2:5)
5. During what circumstances did Jesus grieve? Why did Jesus mourn so deeply for Lazarus even though he was going to raise him from the dead in a few minutes? Why is this important? What did Jesus say in Matthew 23:37 after scathingly denouncing the Pharisees? What did this show about his character? (See Isaiah 6:8-10, Matthew 5:4, 23:1-39, John 11:35)
6. How can we follow the example set by Jesus and mourn appropriately? Why is it crucial to do so? What might we mourn for in our lives? What aspect of mourning is shown in Romans 12:15-16? What is the message of Isaiah 61:1-3? (See also Psalms 40:1-3, John 16:19-20)
7. How did Jesus embody meekness and gentleness during unjust treatment? Is a meek and gentle character weak? Explain. How was Jesus teachable? What can gentleness and meekness look like in our lives as Christians? How can we be teachable? (See Matthew 5:5, 11:28-30, 26:55-56, Luke 2:42, John 13:14-17, 2 Timothy 2:24-25)
8. What inheritance has been given to the followers of Jesus through God's Grace? What is the "ministry of reconciliation"? What must our attitude be to attain this inheritance? (See Psalms 2:7-8, John 14:2, 2 Corinthians 5:18-19, Galatians 3:26-29)
9. What do the first three Beatitudes mean to you? How do you incorporate them in your Christian walk? In looking at yourself humbly and honestly, what are your weaknesses? What are your God-given strengths and talents? How will you use them in God's service?