

## FOUNDATION PRINCIPLES FOR LIFE

Matthew 5, 6, 7

To set the circumstances of the teaching let's look back to Matthew 4:23-25 then Matthew 9:35-38. Jesus was teaching, proclaiming the kingdom and healing various diseases, those in severe pain and the demon possessed. In Matthew 9:36 he is doing the same and looks on them as those who are harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd. The Jews of that day had almost given up on the hope of a Messiah, yet under the abuse and dominance of the Romans, that was the only hope they had. Physically and spiritually, they were destitute.

To illustrate the point I want to make: If He was walking among us today, the text might say; they were compulsive, impulsive, addicted and disabled, like sheep that didn't know what a shepherd was. As the condition of the people during Jesus time, so we have it today. That sets up the need for the teaching of Jesus. Just as the early Jews needed a new foundation and a new house, in this land and world we need it big time.

First, in Matthew 7:24-29 Jesus presents his teaching as a foundation for life. Like in our illustration with Jake and John, John made an effort to build a quality foundation that would endure the storms of life while Jake did not. Both got what they put their faith in. Jake put his faith or confidence in himself and John put his faith in building a right foundation. These are both examples we need to see. Accepting the teaching as foundational or essential to life we can have a quality building because we have chosen quality material to build the house.

Matthew 5:1 begins with the idea that when Jesus took His seat as a teacher His authority is in place. This points to him taking authority as a teacher. With this term he began to teach. The saying in Hebrew means, saying something that had to be said. So he is teaching with authority and saying something that had to be said.

He begins Matthew 5:3 with the word Blessed which is the state where God's will is done. Some translations use the word happy, but happy doesn't present the full idea. Happy depends on circumstance. Happy depends on self. Blessed depends on God, who is the supplier. Blessed is not dependent on things as happiness, but depends on a right relationship with God. Verse 3 begins what is called the Beatitudes, which is supreme blessedness. These are characteristics of a person in whose life God has full reign.

And the first of the beatitudes is those that are Poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom. Poor in spirit is the idea of less of self or humility. It is the idea of emptying of self. Jesus uses the term "deny or forget you." (Matthew 16:24-26). He was telling Peter to forget about his own plans and see His. In order for Jesus to have their complete devotion he taught this had to happen in them, they had to forget their own agenda or ideas, take up their cross and follow Him. He further says to them if one would hold on to his life, he will lose it, but if one would lose his life for Him, he would find it. It's really the idea of letting go of self and letting God have ourselves. In the addiction/behavior area, it's called being powerless.

For real change to happen, we have to get out of or forget self, literally “forget you”! In Matthew 18:1-5, humility is seen in a child. In Luke 18:9-14, humility is seen in a tax collector. 1 Peter 5:5-7 teaches about humility. To fully surrender to God poverty of spirit or humility must take place.

Jesus is the greatest example of poverty of spirit. Philippians 2:4-11 states he who was in the form of God became a servant. In his prayer in the garden, (Matthew 26:36-46) he is fully disowning self. This is the struggle between the flesh and the Spirit. Then, in Matthew 27-28 in His death, His total denial of self is accomplished. In the area of addictions and compulsive behavior, poverty of spirit is the same as becoming powerless. We become powerless over the addiction/compulsion and must find God’s powerfulness.

2 Corinthians 12:7-10 the idea is used of Paul’s thorn in the flesh. Because of his great revelations, Paul was given a thorn in the flesh that was a messenger of Satan that tormented him. He wanted God to remove it, but he said His grace was all sufficient for him, for His power was made perfect in weakness. This is saying instead of trusting our power in any weakness, addiction or life controlling problems, we can trust in God’s power. That is, Satan meant it to hinder us in recovery, but God meant it to be a POWER for Him. Poverty of Spirit is the soil out of which all of the other beatitudes grow. God’s reign must take place for poverty of spirit and poverty of spirit must take place thus allowing the other beatitudes to come about.

The next beatitude is “Blessed are those who mourn”. With this beatitude, Jesus is presenting a blessedness that cannot come any other way than mourning. The word “mourn” is a strong word in Greek to refer to grieving for the dead. It is a passionate lament for the loss of a loved one or loss over something of great value. There are two ways that sorrow or mourning can take us. (II Corinthians 7:10) Godly sorrow that brings repentance or worldly sorrow that leads to death. We can allow death, trauma, and dysfunction to ruin us or make us. A key term that could be used in this Beatitudes is “go deep”. We want to remain on the surface as for as our problems, but here Jesus is saying there is blessedness in mourning when we allow our circumstances to take us deeper in faith and trust in God. (II Corinthians 1:8-9) Paul was in a very dark experience in his mission that he and his partner had despaired even of life – they assumed death. But that experience turned to cause them to rely on God who raises the dead. He allowed that mournful experience to go deeper in faith and trust. Again, in II Corinthians 12:7-9 Paul took the grief or sorrow concerning his thorn to be his strength. He went deeper in faith and allowed God to be his power in his weakness.

In the addiction/behavior area, you have been in the cycle, dysfunction, anger, compulsive behavior, legal troubles, and financial distress. You can mourn as the world and let it bring you to death, or you can mourn that what you’ve done is wrong and trust God to take the circumstance to drive you deeper in faith. It’s the idea of coming from the darkness to the light. One will experience a greater blessedness having gone through the darkness. Another is II Corinthians 1:3-7. Paul writes that when we experience trouble that is overwhelming, and we are comforted by God, we are then able to comfort others. That is, take the sorrow, pain, and trouble and allow it to produce endurance in suffering. Other references for the test, the trial in suffering; (1 Peter 2:21-25; James 1:2-12, 27; Hebrews 12:4-13; Psalms 38:18; I Corinthians 5:2)

The next beatitude is “Blessed are the Meek for they shall inherit the earth”. Defined, “meek” is the idea of being emptied of self or letting go of self and trusting the power of God. It is associated with humility and self controlled or God controlled. Too, it is the idea of controlled power. An example would be of Niagra falls. The dam holds water back and it produces energy for a power plant that gives electricity to a million homes. That same water released without the dam will destroy a million homes. Or it has been used to describe a horse that is broken and is controlled by a bridle and bit. The horse can run at full force or be gentle enough to guide a young calf.

It is not the idea of weakness, but instead the idea of controlled power. In Matthew 11:29 Jesus describes himself as the meek or gentle and humble. In Matthew 21:5, He comes as a king, meek or gentle, riding on a donkey’s colt. I Peter 3:4 describes a godly woman as she influences her non-Christian husband in a meek or gentle, quiet manner.

I Thessalonians 2:7 shows Paul’s manner in which he dealt with the people of the church. Applied to addiction and compulsive behavior, a key factor in the addiction cycle and co-dependency is being out of control. The meek person allows God to be in control. It goes back to God’s reign in life. When the addictive/ behavior problem of any kind hits the bottom, it is because of a lack of or no control in the situations of life. With this beatitude is the promise, they shall inherit the earth. This is an inheritance of the present. When God’s rule fully takes place the one who has meekness down will in a real sense possess the earth.

Following the character of meekness and possibly even part of getting to meekness is those that Hunger and Thirst for righteousness. This beatitude is presented as with many in sharp contrast with the external righteousness of the Pharisees or religious ritual. Matthew 5:20 Jesus says that unless your righteousness exceeds the (external) righteousness of the religious leaders, you will not enter the kingdom.

What he was telling the people then was that in order to be part of God’s kingdom they had to get past the externals. What were their externals? Prayer, giving, fasts (Matthew 6:1, 5, 16). Others were hand washing (Matthew 15) and various religious ceremonies and rituals. Matthew 23 has a good listing. Anything that could be done externally so that the shallow minded person didn’t have to be real about devotion to God. It was this shallow form of ritual that created a hunger for real righteousness.

The original language uses the sense of the word righteousness as the whole of God’s righteousness – not just part of, but the whole righteousness. In application, go to Matthew 5:20 where he says unless your righteousness surpasses the Pharisees and teachers. Replace those words with probation, drug court, society, religion, church laws, etc. Unless our righteousness gets past the externals of our social and religious world, we won’t be part of the kingdom of God. God’s reign must take place in all parts of life.

“Blessed are the merciful for they shall receive mercy”. This beatitude, as well as the next two, allows those who practice this to become more like God. Many references in scripture point to God as being merciful. 2 Corinthians 1:3 the Father of mercies or God of compassion. Romans 12:1 In view of God’s mercy be living sacrifices. Roman 9:14 & 18 His mercy is his choice. Romans 11:28-36 His mercy is upon all people. Matthew 5:7 tells us that we are blessed if we show mercy and in doing so we will receive mercy.

Luke 18:9-14 the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector shows the attitude of seeking mercy. The tax collector in contrast to the Pharisee appealed to God's mercy because of his condition of life.

"Blessed are the pure in heart". This beatitude states one is counted blessed that has a pure heart. Pure heart refers to the purity of motive and character. Pure is the idea of one element like pure gold or pure silver. If gold has rock or any other element in it, it's not pure gold. Here Jesus in the teaching is referring to again the externals of the Jews. Matthew 5:20 he says unless their righteousness surpasses the "external righteousness of the Pharisees they will not enter the kingdom. Their externals were: from chapter 6 giving, fasting and prayer, from Matthew 15 traditions of fathers, hand washing, Matthew 12 the Sabbath, Matthew 23 spices of mint dill and cumin used in worship, washing of cups and dishes and a multitude of things.

These were what they used in worship and devotion to God which became only externals. The point is they could perform these rituals and ceremonies (the externals) and go away thinking they did service to God. This was merely an external performance with no internal effect. But Jesus here in Matthew 5:8 is calling for the internalization of the religion of God. He wants the heart not just empty ritual. Other references: James 1:27, Philippians 3:4-6.

Another area is in moral character as purity. (Matthew 5:27) Jesus ties adultery to not just the external act, but to the thought process of the heart. They thought as long as they didn't commit the act of adultery, they were pure. But Jesus says it begins in the heart. This beatitude is calling for an inner examination, getting real about pure devotion to God – not what can be done physically to convince ourselves we are serving God.

While these teachings are taught in the context of the Jews' religion, the principle applies to us also. This beatitude tells us also to get past the externals of religion by going to church, communion, singing, giving, ceremony, and other forms of obedience and various rituals.

I have covered this topic in a booklet I've written called "The Struggle Between Two Principles." (for your asking) It describes the problem as a Law System that fights against a Faith System.

In our religions of today, we have complied with many externals and left out the true, pure religion of God. This beatitude calls for an internalization of the religion of God, it's called Christianity. It has nothing to do with church names and denominations, which amounts to the teaching of men. Jesus spoke it well Matthew 7:21, "Not everyone says to me "Lord, Lord", will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. (References on false teaching – Matthew 7:15-23; 12:33; 24:4, 11, 23, 24.

Other New Testament text: I Corinthians 1:10-31 mans wisdom vs. God's wisdom, I Timothy 4:1-4, II Timothy 3:1-9, II Peter 1:12-21, 2:1-22. These are a few references telling of false teachings, which is where the impure heart ends up. With these and Matthew 7:15-29, the answer is knowing the word or having a firm understanding of

Jesus' teachings. Also knowing the New Testament letters assist us in determining who has the pure or impure heart.

Jesus described this person as a wolf in sheep's clothing, or a tree with bad fruit, but in Verse 24 he says practicing his teaching is the answer. (Other references: I Thessalonians 4:8, I Corinthians 6:12-20, I John 1:5-10)

The blessing to this beatitude is that when one is pure in heart, he shall see God. Being pure in heart calls for the absolute enthronement of God. It involves the whole of the affection and full submission to God - a full surrender to His sovereignty.

"...For they shall see God." It allows a vision of God. For an example Moses was said to have seen Him who is invisible. (Hebrews 11:27) He had a spiritual view point opposed to the physical around him. Instead of the riches of Egypt, he saw God's purpose. This is another example of God's viewpoint vs. man's viewpoint.

Behind this is again the external righteousness of the Jews. Romans 10:3 points out that the Jews had a zeal for God, but their zeal was not according to knowledge. They did not know the righteousness that comes from God, which is by faith. (Romans 3:22) They establish a righteousness of their own, which was the external. This is a message for religions today that try to worship God by performing religious rituals and ceremonies that only address outward performance and never addressing the heart of inner problem.

A good example is Nicodemus (John 3). Nicodemus is approaching Jesus from an external physical viewpoint and Jesus comes from a totally spiritual viewpoint. The problem is seen as Jesus reveals that a man must be born again of water and spirit. Nicodemus sees only the natural birth and Jesus is showing the spiritual birth. Again God's viewpoint vs. man's viewpoint.

"Blessed are the peace makers for they shall be called the sons of God". This is another beatitude that connects a person to God. This beatitude presents a higher and different way of thinking. It calls for a higher ethic than the thinking of men or the world -- upholding God's viewpoint as opposed to man's viewpoint. Matthew 5:38-42 is an example. Jesus here presents the opposite view of the world. Instead of attacking or striking back, use another weapon, turn the other cheek -- be different. The world doesn't have a weapon or a method to deal with this method handling opposition. Another is Matthew 5:43-48 where Jesus presents the higher ethic of loving enemy. It is the opposite of the way the world thinks. With the human nature, how can anyone love your enemy? So Jesus is showing an ethic that the world doesn't understand, but to one who has God's reign in his life it works. Verse 48 is the key. Be perfect or complete therefore as your heavenly Father is perfect or complete. So attain to a completeness that God gives by living under God's rule.

"Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness for theirs is the kingdom". This could be understood from the standpoint of all the beatitudes. When God reigns in a person's life, and these characteristics are being lived out in this world, and one lives by a totally different ethic or way of thinking, the world isn't going to accept you. You are different; you are actually a shining light that reveals the evil in the darkness. Ephesians 5:11-14 is realized. Jesus told his disciples in John 15:18-25 and many other places. I Peter is almost devoted to this subject of persecution. I Peter 2:21-

25, 3:8-22 gives keys to endure. In I Peter 4:12-19, one shares in the suffering of Christ. This subject is very extensive in scripture, but the reward is great in heaven. (Matthew 5:12)

In conclusion when one has these beatitudes God's full reign is taking place. So if we as present day followers of Christ will allow God's rule to take place many of our present troubles will find their conclusion.

As a foot note much of this material comes from a set of CDs called The Beatitudes by Nat Cooper. The set may be purchased from the Sunset International Bible Institute. [www.extensionschool.com](http://www.extensionschool.com) or by calling 800-687-2121

Also [www.wvbs.org](http://www.wvbs.org) has a series of DVDs on the Sermon On The Mount by Eddie Parish that can be ordered. I have been using these in the ministry in groups, both for behavior and nursing home. I also have the lessons typed out if you would like to order the DVD and I could send the Lessons. These lessons were typed out by one of my helpers in the local church.