







## **A Study on the Sermon on the Mount**

### **Developing and Living Christian Character**

**Matthew Chapters 5-7**

	<p><b>Sovereignty</b> – Knowing God, his revealed nature. Knowing man, his depravity and need for God. Understanding the gospel and its implications. Create a biblical lens through which men see the world and interpret the events of their lives.</p>
	<p><b>Servanthood</b> – Understanding the Biblical definitions of Servanthood and leadership. Comprehending what it means to be doulos. Learning to die to self, live for others in all of our relationships. Learning from practical examples, biographies, stories, biblical applications. Create opportunities to put into action what is learned.</p>
	<p><b>Suffering</b> – Embracing the call of God to enter into suffering as a critical part of the Christian life. Understanding the purposes of God in suffering. Break down our cultural bias toward suffering and instill a Biblical worldview. Look at actual examples through biographies, stories, interviews. Develop a Biblical understanding of suffering.</p>
	<p><b>Sending</b> – Obeying the Great Commission. Joyfully committing to a life of mission, a one-way ticket. Understanding cross cultural mission. Developing a biblically informed understanding of mission. Develop a practical, applied understanding of ministry and missions.</p>

## Mission

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With our eyes focused on Christ, we desire by God's grace and power to stand firm; men who boldly obey, humbly serve, willingly sacrifice, and readily share the gospel of Jesus Christ for his glory both now and forevermore.

## Vision

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- Raise up biblically trained men who can disciple others
- Encourage men to fulfill their God-given leadership roles in their families and the Church
- Arm men to advance the kingdom of God
- Provide opportunities for men to discover, apprentice, and effectively use the gifts God has given

We are praying that God will raise up men who are spiritually mature, aren't swayed by culture, lead with conviction and passion, display vision and initiative, know their Bibles, lead their families, are willing to sacrifice, hear the voice of God, respond the will of God, will stand firm to the end, will commit to their marriages, will reflect the image of God, will protect and defend the body, will teach others, and will leave a godly legacy.

## My Commitment

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You are committing to a community of fellow believers that you will:

- a) Submit to and obey the call and leading of Christ
- b) Live openly and honestly with other men. You are willing to share openly, giving other men authority to encourage and challenge areas of your life.
- c) Pursue disciplines and lifestyle that will honor and glorify God by spending quality time in God's Word, prayer, and study – we believe this will require 30-45 minutes of study per day.

# A Study on the Sermon on the Mount

## Developing and Living Christian Character

### Matthew Chapters 5-7

#### Introduction

The Sermon on the Mount is first and foremost a sermon on sanctification. This is a central issue in the Christian life. If we don't get this right, we will never experience the fullness of a deep relationship with Jesus. Sanctification is the process that God takes us through to make us like Jesus, to set us apart from the world. But for many of us, even if we have been followers of Christ for a long time, this seems like an impossible task. We have questions. What does it look like? How does it happen? What do I have to do? Is it even possible? These questions are all addressed and answered by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. It is an exciting and life changing study.

#### What to Expect

This study is designed to be practical and hands on. It is a Biblical study, which means that we will be looking at multiple scripture passages to determine how Jesus wants us to understand His teaching. It will be challenging, but not overwhelming. This is not a "check the box" kind of study. It will require you to prayerfully consider the application of the teaching. It won't be able to be done in the thirty minute window prior to meeting with your group 😊.

Hopefully, you will find that this study can be completed by spending a half hour to forty five minutes per day. Our prayer is that you will see the value in taking that time to do the study each day and to prayerfully consider how the truths in the Sermon on the Mount are challenging your beliefs and your lifestyle. Without application, which implies heart change, this simply becomes an exercise in "knowledge acquisition" and frankly, that misses the whole point. Becoming like Jesus means changing what we love, which requires our hearts to change.

#### Format

Each day you will be asked to read a short introduction and several scripture passages. Following your reading, you will be asked a series of questions about the passages. Please prayerfully consider your answers, relying on the Biblical text – not on what you already know or believe. Interact with the text by asking yourself questions about meaning and context. Write those questions down if you don't understand the passage and bring them to your group discussion. Occasionally, you will see a section titled **Theology Reset**. In those sections, we will consider important theological issues that are critical to understanding the text. The first several lessons will be filled with Theology Resets, as we will interact with the text to understand the doctrines of justification and sanctification. References for further study will also be given so you can do independent study on topics that catch your attention.

## **Keep a Notebook**

These pages are formatted so you can put them in a three ring binder. Having a binder will allow you to put blank pages in for each lesson's notes and thoughts, and it will keep your materials organized so you can use them as reference materials later. You will be encouraged to write down insights and questions as you move through the study. These will be useful in your group discussion time as you compare notes and insights with others in your group.

## **Group Time**

Each week we will all gather together to worship and have a short time of teaching. We will then break into small groups to discuss the study, but not to answer all of the questions... our time together will be focused on the application of the study and discussing the practical implications of Jesus' teaching in our life. That is why it is incredibly important that you do your study and come to the group meeting if you want to get the maximum benefit from this study.

## **The Goal of this Study**

The goal of the Christian life is to become more like Jesus. This study is intended to help guide you in that process. The Christian life is about transformation and heart change, as God erases our fallen self-centered nature and replaces it with His perfect God-centered nature. This study has been specifically chosen for that purpose. The Sermon on the Mount is all about developing and living out Christian character. In other words, it is about who we are to be and what we are to do as we live our lives to glorify God. This will require changes in our hearts and our lives, with the promises of God to back us up as we seek to do His will. It is going to be a great adventure!

# Week 1: An Overview of the Sermon on the Mount

## Day 1:

**Introduction:** The Sermon on the Mount is found in the gospel of Matthew. It opens in verse one of chapter 5 and goes through the end of chapter 7. Jesus has established his ministry, using many miracles to show that He has the power to heal and transform this lost and broken world. Large crowds are now following him everywhere as he moves through the countryside in Galilee. As chapter five opens, Jesus has gone up on a mountainside to a flat plain and he is about to deliver his first teaching on what it means to be His follower. This sermon is focused on sanctification; the process that the Holy Spirit leads us through as our lives are transformed into the image of Christ. Keep that in mind as you read and study.

### **Assignment:**

Read the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew chapters 5-7. (10-15 minutes)

1. Take notes as you read and look for things that either challenge your lifestyle or are not clear.
2. Look for 5 statements that start with the words, "You have heard it said." How did Jesus challenge the common beliefs of those he was teaching? Why do you think he raised the bar so high? (remember: the sermon is about sanctification)

### **Prayer:**

Spend time confessing your sin, especially the things that were revealed in the Sermon on the Mount. Ask God to give you a clear understanding of the scripture and how to apply it to your life. Pray that you will love Him with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind and all your strength.

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## Day 2:

**Introduction:** Jesus sermon establishes an impossible burden for his listeners. How can we ever be expected to be able to find a way to live up to his demands? Lust equals adultery. Anger equals murder. Love your enemies instead of hating them. Pray for those who persecute you. Clearly, this teaching is even more burdensome than the Old Testament law. So how are we to meet the demands of the gospel? The answer lies in understanding justification.

### **Theology Reset – Justification pt.1<sup>1</sup>**

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*Justification is an instantaneous legal act of God in which he (1) thinks of our sins as forgiven and Christ's righteousness as belonging to us, and (2) declares us to be righteous in his sight.*

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Righteous means being without sin and in perfect harmony with God's will. When God saves us, he doesn't just clean up our past

and tell us to go and live perfect lives from that day forward. When we are regenerated by God, he forgives our sin and sees us as having the righteousness of Christ through His death on our behalf. God then declares us to be righteous which means we are sinless. Let me repeat that in another way. Justification is a legal judgment in which God declares us to be “not guilty” of any sin because he sees us as if we have the righteousness of Christ. This is sometime known as the “Great Exchange.” God trades our sin for Christ’s righteousness.

**Assignment:**

Read Romans 8:1. What is true of all who have been justified? What does it mean to you when you realize that God will never condemn you for anything you have done or will do, if you are in Christ?

Read Romans 4:1-8. How was Abraham justified? Paul says that when we work, we earn a wage, it is owed to us. What is the wage we earn when we sin (Romans 6:23) Why is it important that we understand that we are not justified by our works? Verses 7 and 8 are “beatitudes”. Rewrite these verses in your own words, thanking God for his great mercy and grace.

Read Romans 3:23-26. What does verse 23 say is true of all people? Verses 23-26 may be some of the most theologically dense verses in all of the Bible. Try to write a paraphrase of these verses in your own words.

**Prayer:**

Thank God for your redemption and justification. Give Him praise for being just and your justifier. Confess your sinfulness and the fact that He will never condemn you for it because of the sacrifice of His Son.

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**Day 3:**

**Introduction:**

Today we are going back to justification. This is one of the most important theological concepts in the Bible. Rightly comprehending your standing before God is critically important. If you miss this, you will not experience the freedom that Christ intends you to have from the bondage of sin and guilt. Standing firm on your justification allows you to enter into sanctification with confidence that God is not judging you, but leading you into righteousness; all for your good and His glory.

**Assignment:**

Re-read Romans 3:23-26. This set of verses concludes by saying that God is both just and our justifier, when we have faith in Jesus. If God is just, which means he will always be fair, how can he justify us (declare us not guilty of sin) since verse 23 says that all have sinned? In other words, how is it fair that we get to go free when God has said that the wages of sin is always death? Does forgiving us make him unjust to those who are not forgiven?

Read Philippians 3:9. What kind of righteousness should we desire? Is it even possible for us to be righteous? In what way?

Read Romans 5:1, 5:9, 8:30, 8:33. These verses hold great truth and great hope. What do these four verses say are the benefits of being justified by God?

**Prayer:**

Thank God that he has released you from the bondage of sin and death. With that release He has also removed your guilt. Ask God to help you understand how to live out of your justification, as a forgiven person. Ask Him to show you the freedom that comes when you no longer allow sin to become the focus of your life.

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**Day 4:**

**Theology Reset – Justification pt.2**

Professor Wayne Grudem has written an excellent book titled “Systematic Theology; An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine.” Each of us should own a copy (around \$30 on Amazon or Monergism.com). It is an excellent, in-depth, yet very readable theology book. It is an essential part of a basic Christian library. Here is a quote from Dr. Grudem’s chapter on justification that will help as we reset our theological understanding of justification:<sup>2</sup>

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*It is essential to the heart of the gospel to insist that God declares us to be just or righteous not on the basis of our actual condition of righteousness or holiness, but rather on the basis of Christ’s perfect righteousness, which he thinks of as belonging to us... One sometimes hears the popular explanation that justified means “just-as-if-I’d-never-sinned.” The definition is a clever play on words and contains an element of truth (for the justified person, like the person who has never sinned, has no penalty to pay for sin).*

*But the definition is misleading in two other ways because (1) it mentions nothing about the fact that Christ’s righteousness is reckoned to my account when I am justified; to do this it would have to say also “just-as-if-I’d-lived-a-life-of-perfect-righteousness.” (2) But more significantly, it cannot adequately represent the fact that I will never be in a state that is “just-as-if-I’d-never-sinned,” because I will always be conscious of the fact that I have sinned and that I am not an innocent person but a guilty person who has been forgiven. This is very different from “just as if I had never sinned”! Moreover, it is different from “just as if I had lived a life of perfect righteousness,” because I will forever know that I have not lived a life of perfect righteousness, but that Christ’s righteousness is given to me by God’s grace.*

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*Therefore both in the forgiveness of sins and in the imputation of Christ's righteousness, my situation is far different from what it would be if I had never sinned and had lived a perfectly righteous life. For all eternity I will remember that I am a forgiven sinner and that my righteousness is not based on my own merit, but on the grace of God in the saving work of Jesus Christ. None of that rich teaching at the heart of the gospel will be understood by those who are encouraged to go through their lives thinking "justified" means "just-as-if-I'd-never-sinned."*

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**Assignment:**

Write your own definition of justification. Use biblical references to back up your definition. Take your time, be prayerful, re-read the previous days verses.

**Prayer:**

Pray for wisdom as you write your definition. Ask God to show you ways to apply what you are learning.

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**Day 5:**

**Introduction:**

By now you might be asking... I thought we were doing a study on the Sermon on the Mount, what does justification have to do with our study? I am so glad you asked. In Day 1, what did we say was the focus of Jesus sermon? The answer is sanctification. But, we can't be sanctified if we are not justified, it isn't possible. Therefore, understanding justification is critically important to being sanctified, which is the central theme of the sermon! Today we will look at the definition of sanctification and its connection with our standing before God.

**Theology Reset – Sanctification<sup>3</sup>**

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*Sanctification is a progressive work of God and man that makes us more and more free from sin and like Christ in our actual lives.*

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While justification is solely a work of God, sanctification is a work in our lives where both God and man cooperate;

playing separate and distinct roles. God redeems and justifies us, but we work with him as we become more and more like Christ. Wayne Grudem has an excellent chart in his book, that is reproduced on the next page, that shows the basic differences between justification and sanctification. Always remember that sanctification is a process, it can be fast or slow – much of which is determined by the level of your participation!

When you are justified, God declares you "not guilty" and sinless, through the righteousness of Christ. This is solely a work of God and is a legal declaration, but it is not a description of our daily lives. Sanctification is the process of becoming, in our daily lives, what God has already declared us to be legally.



### Comparison of Justification and Sanctification

Justification	Sanctification
Legal standing	Internal condition
Once for all time	Continuous throughout life
Entirely God's work	We cooperate
Perfect in this life	Not perfect in this life
The same in all Christians	Greater in some than in others <sup>4</sup>

#### Assignment:

Read Matthew 5:1-12. The Beatitudes are Christian character traits. Another way to say that is they are Christ's character. When God justifies us he declares that he sees us as if we already have the character of Christ. From these verses, list the traits that God sees in us.

Sanctification is the process of becoming like Christ. In short, it is becoming what God has already declared us to be. Ask yourself, are you meek? Are you merciful? Do you hunger and thirst after righteousness? God sees you that way when you are in Christ, and He wants you to become that way in your daily life as you are sanctified. Are you becoming more of each of these? If not, why?

Read Romans 6:11-14. What should be a Christians relationship to sin? How do these verses say that we are sanctified? What is the great message of verse 14? How does it feel to know that sin has no dominion over you... what does that mean?

Read John 17:17 and Acts 20:32. How do these verses say we are sanctified? Read Romans 12:1-2. How are these verses related to our sanctification? What part of this process is God's and what part is ours? How can we stop our sanctification, according to the Romans verses?

#### Prayer

Give God praise and glory that He has released you from the dominion and control of sin. Ask Him to show you how to live this out, under the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit. Look for ways that you may have conformed to the world; confess them and take action to keep them out of your life. Ask God to show you how to love him with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength..

## Assignments and Notes from Week 1

### Endnotes: Week 1

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<sup>1</sup> Grudem, W. A. (2004). *Systematic theology: an introduction to biblical doctrine* (p. 723). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. (p. 727).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. (p.746)

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

## Week 2: A Study on the Sermon on the Mount

### Day 1:

#### Introduction:

Last week we took time to review justification and sanctification. We must understand these important theological truths if we are to rightly apply the teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. This week we will dive into the sermon, as we start to look at how he is teaching us to live out the Christian life. Today we will do some review on sanctification.

#### Assignment:

Read Titus 2:14. Why did Christ die? (two reasons) What does it mean “to purify for himself a people”? How is that different than to “redeem from all lawlessness”? Once we are redeemed and purified, what should we be, according to Titus 2:14? Are you? Why or why not?

Carefully consider this verse in light of our study on justification and sanctification. Do you see these concepts in this verse?

Read Ephesians 2:10. Why were we created? How does this bring glory to God, which is the chief end of man? How do good works relate to sanctification?

#### Prayer:

Thank God that He has redeemed you from lawlessness! Pray that He will continue to purify your daily life and that you will be zealous for good works. Confess any sin in your life that is keeping you from being conformed to the image of Christ.

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### Day 2:

#### Introduction:

Today we will begin our study in the Beatitudes. This list of eight character traits of the justified believer is a life changing study. Included below is a quote from Martyn Lloyd-Jones on his opinion of the importance of the Sermon on the Mount and this section on the Beatitudes. <sup>1</sup>

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*“Here is the life to which we are called, and I maintain again that if only every Christian in the Church today were living the Sermon on the Mount, the great revival for which we are praying and longing would already have started. Amazing and astounding things would happen; the world would be shocked, and men and women would be drawn and attracted to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”*

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#### Assignment:

Read Matthew 5:1-2. Who is Jesus primary audience? Why is that important to know?

Read Matthew 5:3-12. Make a list of all Christian character traits you find in this passage. Now, make a list of all the blessings that are associated with each trait.

Read Acts 2:38. What is the promise to every person who has been redeemed by God?

Each of the traits listed in Matthew 5:3-12 is true of every true follower of Christ. These are traits that are given to us by the Holy Spirit who lives within us – they are also the very nature and character of Christ himself.

**Prayer:**

Thank God for his wisdom in giving us the Holy Spirit. Praise Him for his kindness and mercy toward us. Acknowledge that it is so undeserved. Thank God for giving us a new character and ask Him for guidance and wisdom as you become (be sanctified) what He has already declared you to be (justified).

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**Day 3:**

**Introduction:**

The Beatitudes serve as a summary of the Sermon on the Mount, as they are general statements and descriptions of true Christian character. The remainder of the sermon is a more detailed analysis of how these general statements work out in practical application. This is important to understand, as it really helps us comprehend the meaning of the whole sermon. You can't take the Beatitudes by themselves and truly understand what they mean without the practical applications. You also can't take the applications and draw the correct conclusions if you separate them from the Beatitudes.

**Assignment:**

Read Matthew 5:1-12. How many times is the word blessed used? Blessed in the Greek text is the word "makarios", which is used . It means "to be happy or fortunate." But not in the sense of our world would define happy; it is happiness in the understanding that even though we don't deserve it, we have been greatly favored by God. How is this definition different than the happiness of the world?

Read Romans 4:7-8. Ephesians 1:3-9. How do these verses say that we have been blessed by God? Make a list.

**Prayer:**

Thank God for his mercy and lavish grace. Pray through your list of blessings, thanking God for each and asking him to remind you daily of His provision for you. Pray that He would keep you and give you endurance until the day of Christ.

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## **Day 4:**

### **Introduction:**

The first Beatitude starts with “Blessed are the poor in spirit.” This is the first Beatitude for a reason; Jesus has a purpose in the way he orders his list of character traits. Each builds on the next. Being poor in spirit is foundational because the associated blessing is the ultimate blessing from God. The poor in spirit have the kingdom of heaven!

### **Assignment:**

Read Matthew 5:1-12. Look carefully at verse 3. What is different about the second half of verse 3, when compared to verses 4-9? Why is this important to our sanctification?

Read Isaiah 66:2, Job 42:6 and Proverbs 29:23. To whom does the Lord say he will look? Do you tremble at the Word of God? Do you share Job’s opinion of yourself? If not, what needs to change? How does Proverbs 29:23 help your understanding of ‘poor in spirit’? Discuss this with your small group.

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*What does it mean to be “poor in spirit”? That really becomes the ultimate question if being so is an evidence that you possess the kingdom of heaven. Let’s look carefully at what Jesus is saying. The poor in spirit in the sense of this beatitude are those who recognize that they are completely and utterly destitute in the realm of the spirit. The poor in spirit recognize their utter lack of spiritual resources and therefore, their complete and total dependence on God. Not just for salvation, yes for salvation, but not just for salvation... for everything – life and breath and everything.*

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### **Prayer:**

Come to God with a humble and contrite spirit. Ask Him to give you such humility that you will tremble at His word. Pray for wisdom to understand that your life is totally dependent upon God for all things, not just the things you cannot provide for yourself.

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## **Day 5:**

### **Introduction:**

Jesus says that the poor in spirit HAVE the kingdom of heaven. What does it mean to have the kingdom? Today we will investigate this promise and try to understand the magnitude of Jesus’ statement. Remember that the terms “kingdom of heaven” and “kingdom of God” mean exactly the same thing. Matthew uses “heaven” because he is writing to a predominately Jewish audience to whom it was more acceptable not to use the name of God.

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*The kingdom of God comes into being wherever the kingly authority of God is acknowledged. Although God is always sovereign, Scripture looks to a future “realm” or “reign” of salvation. This has come in Christ and yet will come in its fullness only when Jesus Christ returns.*

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**Assignment:**

Read Matthew 5:1-12. Don't skip the reading, keep putting this passage into your mind until you have it memorized!

Read the definition above.<sup>2</sup> If the kingdom of heaven is defined as “the kingly authority of God acknowledged” or another way of saying it is that God is totally control, how should we understand Matthew 5:3 as it relates to our lives? Is God's authority in control of your life?

Read Luke 17:20-21. When you realize that the Kingdom of Heaven has been given to all who are redeemed by Christ, how does that impact your understanding of Luke 17:20-21?

Read Matthew 6:10. This is part of the Lord's Prayer. How does praying “your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” fit with Matthew 5:3? When you pray, do you ask God to have absolute control and show you how to do His will in your life? If the Kingdom of Heaven is yours, how should your life reflect the will of God? (Hint: what does the prayer say about God's will in heaven?)

**Prayer:**

Pray that you will become more and more poor in the Spirit. Give God thanks and glory for the amazing gift of the Kingdom of Heaven. You have received the Kingdom and Jesus is your King, if you are redeemed by God. This is a reason to rejoice. Verse 3 says it makes us very happy, knowing that we did not deserve any good gift, yet God gave us the ultimate gift.

## Assignments and Notes from Week 2

### Endnotes:

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<sup>1</sup> Lloyd-Jones, D. Martyn (1959). *Studies on the Sermon on the Mount*. Grand Rapids:Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

<sup>2</sup> Manser, M. H. (2009). *Dictionary of Bible Themes: The Accessible and Comprehensive Tool for Topical Studies*. London: Martin Manser.

## Week 3: A Study on the Sermon on the Mount

### Day 1:

#### Introduction:

Our study last week ended with the first Beatitude – “Blessed are those who are poor in spirit, for they have receive the Kingdom of God.” Being poor in spirit is not something we understand easily. This week we dig deeper into how being “poor in spirit” works out in our lives.

#### Assignment:

Review last week’s lesson. What is the definition of being “poor in spirit?”

Are you utterly dependent on God for all things – is this how you live your daily life? Explain.

Read Revelation 3:17-19. This verse is written to the church at Laodicea; to believers. How does this passage relate to being poor in spirit? Have you lived the way Jesus is describing in verse 17? Explain. What does Jesus say here that is true of all of us – see the end of verse 17. What should be our immediate response – according to verses 18-19?

Reminder: The Sermon on the Mount is Jesus’ teaching on sanctification. It is teaching that is meant for believers as they become transformed into the image of Christ himself. Revelation 3 is a warning to the church; to believers. Verse 19 makes this clear. God disciplines and reproves those he loves. This is a clear indication that you “have the kingdom of God.” So, take note – this discipline is a call to repent and be zealous. What will you do – will you just live life as usual or will you obey?

#### Prayer:

Repent of your lifestyle of self-reliance. Ask God to show you the areas of your life that need to be different. Be zealous – pray with purpose and focus. Ask God to change your heart.

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### Day 2:

Self-love is a very common topic of conversation in our world and in the church. For the next few days we want to look at how being “poor in spirit” requires us to turn our focus away from ourselves and toward God. This is central to a “God-centered” lifestyle, which makes perfect sense but is very difficult to live out. Be prepared to have some of your assumptions challenged.

#### Assignment:

Read Matthew 5:1-12. Do you have this committed to memory yet? Keep working on it.

Read Romans 9:1-3. Paul is speaking of his Jewish kinsmen, who had rejected Christ as the messiah. Contemplate what Paul is saying in this passage. What is it that Paul wants for his kinsmen? What is he willing to give up for their sake – if that were possible? Ask yourself this



question – do you love lost people so much that you would be willing to be separated from Christ, if their salvation could be assured? Make a list of unsaved people you know. Ask God to give you this kind of love for them.

**Prayer:**

Pray over your list of unsaved people. Ask God to give you a love for them and a concern for them that exceeds your love for yourself and your comfort. Ask him to use this as a means to sanctify your life and make you more like Jesus.

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**Day 3:**

**Introduction:**

Being poor in spirit requires that we have come to the end of ourselves and realize we have nothing to offer God. We are bankrupt. Yet, we constantly battle our old nature which wants to keep us focused on ourselves. Today we are begin looking at a passage out of 1 Corinthians that will help us avoid the mistakes the believers in Corinth fell into – idolatry and self-centeredness. First some help from Jonathan Edwards.<sup>1</sup>

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*The essence of all true religion lies in holy love; and in this divine affection [the love of Christ], and an habitual disposition of it... From a vigorous, affectionate, and fervent love to God will necessarily arise other religious affections; hence will arise an intense hatred and abhorrence of sin, fear of sin and a dread of God's displeasure, gratitude to God for his goodness... when God is graciously and sensibly present and grief when he is absent, and a joyful hope when a future enjoyment of God is expected, and a fervent zeal for the glory of God.*

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**Assignment:**

Read Matthew 5:1-12. Contemplate its meaning in your life.

Read 1 Corinthians 8:1-13. This passage is not primarily about eating meat offered to idols. It is about how we as believers are to be willing to give up our “rights” to benefit others.

Look at 1 Corinthians 8:4-8. What do these verse say about eating meat offered to idols, is it right or wrong for a Christian to eat this meat? (this was a common practice in the day, left over offerings were sold to the public).

Look at verses 9-13. What is the main message of this passage? Does Paul say that Christians have rights? Is it possible, in the exercise of your freedom in Christ, to sin? Explain. Apply this teaching to your life. Are you willing to give up your rights to serve others? If not, what needs to change?

**Prayer:**

Pray that God would show you how to live out your life to His glory, not to yours. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal areas of your life where you need to let go of your rights and think first about the spiritual well-being of others around you.

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**Day 4:****Introduction:**

Are you beginning to see how being poor in spirit is about focusing your eyes on Jesus and turning away from yourself? If we have nothing to offer, why do we keep offering? Who do we think we are? Jesus gives us freedom – from sin and from a legalism that suffocates us. However, just because we are free doesn't mean that there aren't things we do, out of love for others, that voluntarily restrain our freedom. Jesus is the ultimate example, he laid down his life for us while we still hated him.

**Assignment:**

Read Philippians 2:5-7. Jesus is God. Did he have rights? What kind of rights do you think he had? What does this passage say he did with those rights? If you are to be like Jesus, what rights do you need to empty yourself of?

Read 1 Corinthians 10:1-13. Paul tells the Corinthians that even though our forefathers all experienced the tremendous blessing of God, most of them were rejected by God due to their idolatry. According to verses 6 and 11, why did God record these events in the Bible? How does verse 12 relate to being poor in spirit? Look at verses 13-15 – Paul offers this to us as an encouragement and as a warning. You have the knowledge you need, you are a sensible person. Take heed, judge for yourself.

**Prayer:**

Pray that God will clearly show you your poverty of spirit. Pray that you will flee from idolatry, especially the kind that worships self and my "rights". Pray that he will help you rightly judge how to apply this teaching to your life, as you are sanctified into the image of Christ himself.

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**Day 5:****Introduction:**

On Day 3, Jonathan Edwards said that, "The essence of all true religion is love". So, how does love sum up being poor in spirit? Because when we love Jesus with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength, and others as ourselves; the Holy Spirit makes us aware of the total lack of love that we have in our flesh. We will always love ourselves as the default if the Holy Spirit does not intervene. Consider this quote from the Porterbrook Network study on Gospel Living<sup>ii</sup> – it is profound.

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*Self-love is the cruelest of all slaveries: It promises everything and delivers absolutely nothing. Loving God and others is the most liberating of all freedoms: it promises everything and delivers even more.*

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**Assignment:**

Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-13. After warning them about self-righteousness, Paul summarizes his teaching to the Corinthians in Chapter 13. If demanding rights and being unwilling to serve others is not love, then what does true love look like? When we are poor in spirit, God gives us the kingdom of heaven. This means we have the Holy Spirit, we have love incarnate living within us. 1 Corinthians 13 tells us how the Spirit will lead us to love others when we let go of our rights and self-centered demands and live to glorify God and serve others.

Consider what it means to be “poor in spirit.” In light of what you have learned, write your own definition and make it personal. For example: “I am poor in spirit when I ...” Consider what needs to change in your life. These are the things that God wants to change, but you must cooperate. Remember, sanctification is a progressive work of God and man that makes us more and more free of sin and more and more like Jesus in our daily lives.

**Prayer:**

Go back through the week and look at your prayers. You should be writing them down. If not, start to record your prayers on the note sheet. Pray through your requests and pay particular attention to how your life needs to change so you are serving others first instead of yourself.

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## Assignments and Notes from Week 3

### Endnotes:

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<sup>1</sup> Edward, Jonathan. (1974, orig.1834) *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Volume .* Banner of Truth Trust.

<sup>ii</sup> Porterbrook Network. (2013) *Gospel Living*. Sheffield, England: Porterbrook Network