

PRESSING ON TO MATURITY  
IN CHRIST

**THE  
BEATITUDES  
AS KEYS TO  
SPIRITUAL  
FORMATION**

A FOUNDATIONAL STUDY TO A  
SPIRITUAL FORMATION CLASS





# **THE BEATITUDES AS KEYS TO SPIRITUAL FORMATION**

Jesus gave one of the greatest lessons we have on Spiritual Formation on the side of a mountain. We find this lesson in Matthew 5-7 and many refer to it as the Sermon on the Mount. He starts the message off with a list of blessings, The Beatitudes. These beatitudes are a summary of what it means to be conformed to the image of Christ. They are a description of the lifestyle we should be in pursuit of and the work God wants to do in our hearts in the process.

This study will walk you through each of the Beatitudes in hopes to awaken your desire to pursue maturity in Christ. It is meant to be gone through in preparation for our Spiritual Formation class. As you go through each lesson, take your time to reflect on each passage and what God might be saying to you. It will lay the foundational work on which we will build during our time together in the class.

During the one day class we will talk about what Spiritual Formation is all about, touching on many of the things you will learn in this study. We will talk about the process of formation and the ways we can put ourselves in a better position to be conformed into the image of Christ. Prayerfully we will leave our time together having developed some goals, discovered our purpose, and developed some relationships that will help us grow closer to God.

May God richly bless you and transform you as you spend time in His Word!

See you in class,

Pastor Matt

# HUMILITY

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

If we really want to become more and more like Christ, then we must first learn how to be humble. Christ-likeness is going to require change on our part. If we are not willing to change then we will not become like Christ. One of the biggest barriers to overcome is pride. I think Jesus knew that, which is why He starts His sermon with this statement.

To be poor in spirit does not mean we are without money, it means we are without self. We have an accurate understanding of who we are, who God is, and are being honest enough to say, "Without God I am nothing." To be poor in spirit is to acknowledge the sovereignty of God and our need for Him.

**Read Genesis 1:26-31, 2:7.**

In whose image was mankind created? \_\_\_\_\_

Where does life come from? \_\_\_\_\_

What did God trust mankind with? \_\_\_\_\_

How did God view man and His creation? \_\_\_\_\_

God breathed life into your body, trusted you with His creation, and made you in His image (in other words to be like Him).

How should that truth impact our life and contribute to our humility? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Read Romans 3:10-18, 23.**

After the Fall in Genesis 3, sin entered our lives. How does our relationship with God change? \_\_\_\_\_

How is mankind described here and how is it different from Genesis 1? \_\_\_\_\_

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How should this truth impact our life and contribute to our humility? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Read Colossians 1:13-20.**

It did not take long for sin to corrupt God's creation (Genesis 3, Romans 3:23). But, God had a plan to redeem His creation and make things good again. That plan culminated in the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Where should Jesus be in our priority list? \_\_\_\_\_

What things did Jesus accomplish for us? \_\_\_\_\_

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God created us, we fell into sin, He sent Jesus to redeem us and reconcile us to Himself. We have done nothing at this point except sin. Life came from God, forgiveness comes from Him, and redemption is His work. Are you starting to see how much we need Him and how little we need ourselves? God gave us physical and spiritual life, sin took both away, and God wants to give both back.

The poor in spirit are those who recognize their need of God. They do not wallow in self-pity, they have seen who they are in comparison to God and are ready to accept God's sovereign grace.

In Exodus 3-4 we are told of a conversation that took place between Moses and God. God showed up in a burning bush and told Moses to go to Pharaoh and ask for their release. Moses came up with several reasons why he couldn't go until finally God asked Him who was in charge. God basically said, "Moses, stop looking at your own unworthiness and uselessness and start looking at me. I made your mouth. I will be with you. I will help you. I will teach you what to say. Look to me and live!"

Moses received a lesson in humility. It is not about what we can or cannot do, it is about what God can and will do.

What have you learned from this study and how will you put into practice?

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# MOURNING

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

Most everyone knows what it is like to mourn, to feel the grief over a lost friend or loved one, to hurt over a broken relationship, or to be sad when tragedy strikes. We also know what it is like in those moments to be comforted. Jesus is talking about giving comfort in those kinds of situations, but the mourning He is referring to is a little bit different. If we stick to the overall thought throughout the Sermon On The Mount, then it seems more likely that Jesus is speaking of those who mourn over sin. The mourning Jesus is talking about includes grief caused by personal sin and loss as well as social evil and oppression.

If we do not mourn like this then our spiritual formation will fall short. Those who are being conformed to the image of Christ will have hearts broken over sin. We should be disturbed by injustice, evil, and oppression in our world. We need to be broken over the sin in our own lives. It should affect us knowing that this is not the way God intended; His will and His plans are not being followed. But, in those moments of mourning, we also need to remember the comfort available to us in Christ.

**Read Luke 18:9-14.**

What is the difference in these two prayers? \_\_\_\_\_

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What broke the tax collector's heart? \_\_\_\_\_

What was the end result of their prayers? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Read Psalm 51.**

What was David (the author) being honest about? \_\_\_\_\_

What was he asking God to do? \_\_\_\_\_

What are the sacrifices God wants to see? \_\_\_\_\_

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What was David's ultimate hope? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Read 1 John 1:5-10.**

Who are we deceiving if we try to say that we have no sin? \_\_\_\_\_

If we confess our sins, what does God promise? \_\_\_\_\_

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The Bible makes it very clear. We are all sinners in desperate need of God's grace. There really is no need to run from or attempt to hide from the truth of sin. Let the realization of sin in the world and in your life bring you to the point of mourning. It is in that moment that we are ready to receive God's comfort, which comes in the form of Jesus who died for us. In His death and resurrection we can find freedom from the grief through forgiveness and redemption.

What have you learned from this study and how will you put into practice?

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# GENTLENESS

*Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.  
Matthew 5:5*

In our world we often look at gentleness (meekness) as a weakness. If you are gentle, or meek, people will walk all over you and you will never get anywhere in life. Jesus is not telling His followers to be weak and to let others take advantage of them. He is telling them that if they are truly following Him, then they will do so with great restraint and much control. Moses and Jesus were both gentle men, but far from being weak.

Some have referred to this idea of gentleness to that of a horse who has been broken. The horse has the strength and ability to break free of the owner, but chooses not to as the horse has decided to submit to and trust the owner. The horse is gentle, but not weak. Others compare gentle people to those who cannot be tempted or bought because they do not serve themselves. Their peace (in turn their power) comes from trusting God and not their selfish ambition.

To be gentle is to trust God with our life. We have given up control to Him and now live only for Him. We are a lot like the horse, we may have the power to live however we want, but we choose to live how God wants. This is very important in our spiritual formation. If we are not fully surrendered to and trusting in God, then we will not allow Him to change us or control us.

**Read Romans 12:1-2.**

What are we to present to God? \_\_\_\_\_

What is to be transformed? \_\_\_\_\_

What is the end result of this type of surrender and trust? \_\_\_\_\_

**Read 1 Corinthians 6:12-20.**

Just because we can do something, does it mean we should? Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_

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Who lives in our body? \_\_\_\_\_

Who do we belong to? \_\_\_\_\_

Who should we live for and be controlled by? \_\_\_\_\_

**Read Philippians 2:1-11.**

How are we to live our lives if we are in Christ? \_\_\_\_\_

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How did Jesus display gentleness/meekness? \_\_\_\_\_

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What happened to Jesus as a result of His meekness? \_\_\_\_\_

**Read Psalm 37:10.**

What does God promise to those who are meek? \_\_\_\_\_

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Jesus promises to never leave us or forsake us. We know He never goes back on His promises. Our lives need to be characterized by surrender and trust in God. In that gentleness we will find peace and we will be in a better position to be transformed by God.

What have you learned from this study and how will you put into practice?

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# HUNGER AND THIRST

*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,  
for they shall be satisfied.*

*Matthew 5:6*

How hungry are you? Hunger and thirst are two very natural sensations. Our body cannot survive without food and water so we hunger for those things very regularly, usually several times throughout the day. In a very similar manner our soul cannot survive without righteousness. We have a hunger and a thirst for something more, but often we seek to be satisfied in places that cannot satisfy us. The less we quench that hunger and thirst the unhealthier we become.

This hunger and thirst for righteousness is more than just a hunger and thirst to escape the penalties of sin. Righteousness is regarded as an end itself. It is a hunger for the things of God, right living, and faith. Nothing more is expected and God promises to satisfy that hunger. If we are not hungry for those things, then it will be very hard to be formed spiritually. Spiritual formation is about more than getting to heaven, it is about righteousness of heart and life.

**Read Isaiah 55:1-3.**

What is God offering the people? \_\_\_\_\_

What do you think they have been spending their money on? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Read Jeremiah 2:11-13.**

What have the people done? \_\_\_\_\_

Why do you think the cisterns are not capable of holding any water? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Read Psalm 42:1-2.**

What does the Psalmist long for? \_\_\_\_\_

Where does the Psalmist think they will find satisfaction? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17.**

Where can we find instruction in righteousness? \_\_\_\_\_

**Read Matthew 5-7.**

The Sermon on the Mount is the best summary we have of righteousness. The life described here is a righteous one, but impossible to live out without God leading the way and transforming our hearts.

As you read Jesus' sermon, take note of the things you hunger and thirst for and list a few of them here. \_\_\_\_\_

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What things are described here that you do not find yourself thirsting for?

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Pay special attention to 5:20 (and surrounding verses). What do you think is meant by that statement? \_\_\_\_\_

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This righteousness that we are hungering and thirsting for can only be satisfied in Christ. With that satisfaction comes a new way of living and being. That new way is the goal of Spiritual Formation. The new way is to be like Jesus – our righteousness.

What have you learned from this study and how will you put into practice?

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# MERCY

*Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.  
Matthew 5:7*

J. Oswald Sanders says, “Mercy is God giving us what we do not deserve. It is the ability to enter into another’s situation and be sympathetic toward his plight or problem. “It is always to the undeserving that mercy is extended. If it were deserved, it would no longer be mercy but mere justice.” God has given us mercy and He expects us to show mercy toward others.

So, what does mercy have to do with Spiritual Formation? The key to this beatitude is what we receive for showing mercy. We receive the mercy we give. This is very important for all those who are following Jesus and trying to be more like Him. Becoming like Christ requires mercy. This transformation is an act of God, an act we do not deserve. The more merciful we are, based on this verse, the more mercy we receive. As we live out the mercy we have been blessed with, our lives will be changed and the lives around us will be impacted. This spiritual formation process is not just for us, it is also for the sake of others.

**Read 1 Peter 1:3-4.**

What has God’s mercy done for us? \_\_\_\_\_

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What are we protected by? \_\_\_\_\_

**Read James 2:12-13.**

What will judgment be like for those who show no mercy? \_\_\_\_\_

What triumphs over judgment? \_\_\_\_\_

Mercy is compassion, which is a combination of feeling and action. God’s mercy is demonstrated in His willingness to send Christ to die for us (Romans 5:8).

**Read James 1:27, Matthew 25:31-46.**

What is true religion? \_\_\_\_\_

What kind of acts does Jesus expect of us? \_\_\_\_\_

When we do these things, show mercy, who is it blessing? \_\_\_\_\_

**Read Luke 10:25-37.**

What is the greatest commandment? \_\_\_\_\_

Who is our neighbor? \_\_\_\_\_

How are we supposed to love our neighbor? \_\_\_\_\_

We all desperately need God's mercy at work in our lives, especially when it comes to our spiritual formation. It is difficult to explain, but give it a try and watch your life be transformed as you share and receive mercy.

What have you learned from this study and how will you put into practice?

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## PURITY

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

Heart purity speaks of holiness and is a work God does in us as we grow in our relationship with Him. It speaks of integrity and sincerity. A person who is pure in heart is who they say they are. There is no hidden motive or secret life. Heart purity leads to genuine character and relationship with God.

This beatitude is one of personal examination. God and us are the only ones who will really know if we are living true to God and ourselves or if we are putting on a show for others. This becomes important in the formation process because we are not just trying to change our actions, but also change our hearts. Pure in heart people do not just behave differently, they are different because of the love of God. Jesus wants us to act different, but He also wants us to be different.

**Read Matthew 18:1-4.**

Why do you think we are to be like children? \_\_\_\_\_

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How are children pure in heart? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Read Matthew 23:25-28.**

What are the scribes and Pharisees condemned for? \_\_\_\_\_

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What is the first step to cleanliness? \_\_\_\_\_

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What does Jesus view as being the most important part to clean? \_\_\_\_\_

**Read Mark 7:14-23.**

What is it that defiles a man? \_\_\_\_\_

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What comes out of the heart? \_\_\_\_\_

**Read Titus 2:11-14, Ezekiel 36:26.**

What has the grace of God done? \_\_\_\_\_

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What did Jesus give Himself for? \_\_\_\_\_

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Why are we being purified? \_\_\_\_\_

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Heart purity starts with the work of Jesus Christ on the cross. He forgives us and then He cleanses us from sin. According to Romans 6, we no longer are slaves to sin, but slaves Christ. This cleansing starts and ends in our hearts. As our hearts are changed, we are changed. Spiritual Formation is our allowing God to do the work of purifying our hearts.

What have you learned from this study and how will you put into practice?

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# PEACE

*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.  
Matthew 5:9*

To be a peacemaker is to not be a pacifist, one who avoids conflict for the sake of peace. Being a peacemaker is to be a reconciler, one who enters a conflict and tries to restore peace. The goal of peacemaking is not to avoid the conflict but to bring the conflict to an end. Jesus is challenging us to not ignore the brokenness we see around us, but engage it, much like Jesus did with us. There was conflict, brokenness, between us and God until Jesus stepped in and brought healing and redemption to that relationship. We can bring Jesus to broken people and situations.

Being an active participant in bringing about God's peace and Kingdom values to this world will only bring us closer to God. Is there anything better than being called a son (or daughter) of God. Peacemakers hold that position.

## **Read Ephesians 2.**

What state were we in before Jesus? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

When Jesus came, what did He accomplish? \_\_\_\_\_

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How did Jesus establish peace? \_\_\_\_\_

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In what have we been united together? \_\_\_\_\_

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## **Read Psalm 23 and Philippians 4:11-13.**

What characterizes the peacemaker's life? \_\_\_\_\_

Where does he/she find contentment? \_\_\_\_\_

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How does this encourage our spiritual formation? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Read Matthew 5:23-26.**

How important is conflict resolution to Jesus? \_\_\_\_\_

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Why do you think it is this way? \_\_\_\_\_

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What happens if we do not seek peace? \_\_\_\_\_

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Jesus Christ has brought peace to our lives. He gives us peace in the midst of the storms and brings about peace in the midst of our conflicts. He is the peace between God and us. If we are going to be like Him, we must be the peace that we want to see in the world. We must extend to others what God has extended to us in Christ.

What have you learned from this study and how will you put into practice?

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## PERSECUTION

*Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness,  
for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.*

*Matthew 5:10*

As a disciple of Jesus Christ, you stand for something and someone that goes against culture and against the status quo, because of that, persecution will happen. Look at this as the litmus test of our life in Christ. If we are different than the world, to the point where they notice, then we must be doing something right. This persecution is the result of our pursuit of righteousness, of our spiritual formation.

The persecution we face will only strengthen and empower us. It is interesting that in the parts of the world where persecution is the strongest, the church is growing the fastest. It has been said that a faith worth having is a faith worth testing. A very humbling truth in our spiritual journey is that persecution only serves to draw us closer to God.

**Read James 1:2-3.**

How are we to face trials? \_\_\_\_\_

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What is the result of such trials when we face them the right way? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Read John 16:32-33.**

What does Jesus guarantee in this life? \_\_\_\_\_

Where do we find our peace? \_\_\_\_\_

**Read 2 Timothy 3.**

What does Paul tell us to do in these tough times? \_\_\_\_\_

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Why is it important that we expect and be ready for persecution? \_\_\_\_\_

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What hope do you see in this chapter? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Read Philippians 3:7-12.**

What is Paul's goal in life? \_\_\_\_\_

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What does Paul want to know? \_\_\_\_\_

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What does Paul want to be conformed to? \_\_\_\_\_

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In growing spiritually we are becoming more and more like Jesus. We cannot neglect the suffering and persecution part of the life of Christ. He endured that pain and came out victorious, so can we. Paul realized the importance of this conformity, that in order for us to conform to the life of Christ, we must also conform to the suffering and death of Christ. We truly must die to self, die to the world, and surrender to Christ. Persecution, while not fun, only makes us more like Christ.

What have you learned from this study and how will you put into practice?

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## **NOTES**

## **NOTES**

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