

# Power Plays

## Poor Power! (Part 1)

There is an assumption that I will make about everyone today. When we woke up from our sleep or lack of it we all wanted to be happy. It is an assumption but I believe it is true. The desire to be **happy** has a huge influence on us in what we do and what we want.

Jesus knew that we have the tendency as humans to fall into a course that seems right to us but keeps us far short of where we could be in our Christian walk. Many of our life choices seems to make sense at the time that we make them. We look to the options that are in front of us and choose, with good intentions, a path that seems right. We commit to that decision, we spend all our energy on that one specific course, expecting “happiness” to be just around the corner.

We can call it different things:

Individual	Theme	Definition
<b>Struggling Sojourner</b>	<i>“We want to be fulfilled”</i>	Trying to find meaning and purpose in life.
<b>Recovering Addict</b>	<i>“We want to be healthy”</i>	Trying to find reality and stability in life.
<b>Overachiever</b>	<i>“We want to conquer another mountain”</i>	Trying to find the big win and ultimate achievement in life.
<b>Frightened Recluse</b>	<i>“We want to be safe”</i>	Trying to find a way to feel secure and in control in life.
<b>Aspiring Christian</b>	<i>“We want to reach our destiny”</i>	Trying to find specific direction and focus in life.

- The challenging thing about the aspiring Christian is when direction changes you think you have heard God wrong or He has taken off. Am I saying that God will lead you on and then drop you like a lead balloon? No, God will be God. He has given us all authority to act as He would act.

None of us got up this morning and looked at a check list to make sure we were taking the appropriate steps to make us happy, but subconsciously we were responding to that check list in our minds.

The pursuit of happiness in our society is a driving force. The English word "**Happy**" is from the root **hap** which means luck as a favorable circumstance. There is a since that if you are happy, you must be lucky.

- The pagan Greek literature at the time of Jesus used to describe the state of happiness and well-being as something only the gods who were exalted above the earth could enjoy and man was subjected to poverty, suffering and death in this earthly life. In the Greek mind, happiness had to do with **material possessions and the**

**freedom to enjoy them. Their happiness had to do with unrestrained, unlimited gratification of physical desires.** Sound familiar? Deities had no limits or restraints in Greek mythology, therefore they deemed the gods to be happy. Other Greek writers did recognize that certain men had the opportunity to live exceptionally blessed, fortunate, prosperous and wealthy, but they were the exception.

During the time that Jesus was giving this message the major thought was that you had to be either a god, dead or filthy rich to be blessed, to be happy. Jesus' message here was so radical, no wonder the people responded in awe:

*“When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.”*

**Matthew 7:28-29**

## **The Life of Jesus**

We understand that Jesus was born in a dumpy, rural, hick town where everybody watches wrestling and thinks NASCAR is a sport. And if they shot it and grilled it, that was dinner. Jesus grew up in that kind of town. He grew up in his first 30 years of his life as a regular blue collar worker swinging a pick, sledge hammer as well as primitive carpenter tools with his dad.

Contrary to popular opinion, Jesus was not a long haired, manicured finger nailed, flowing gown, prom date, European jock, feminine type of man. You instantly get in your mind that that is not a person you would want to live for or die for. You couldn't worship him because in all reality you're 10 year old brother could take him.

It's hard to worship any man that you could take. Jesus was a man, a masculine construction worker, calluses on his hands, great biceps from swinging a sledge and in great shape from walking everywhere he went. If you've been on a construction site you know that the men there pride themselves as men. He, more than likely, did not have long hair with product in it, he had short hair. He was from Nazareth but he was not a nazarite or have to abide by the Nazarite vow to grow their hair long like some 80's metal front man. The common misconception of Jesus' hair comes from that idea.

He was 30 years old when he started his public ministry and my personal opinion is that he could take us all. He is not a Richard Simmons' dancing to the 80's wimp Christ! In the Book of Revelation we see a Jesus tattooed, riding on a powerful stallion with his sword drawn for war. That's my Jesus!

Jesus spent the last 3 years of his ministry as an itinerant minister never traveling more than 200 miles away from home. He never wrote a book. He never held a political office. He never joined a political party. He never founded a company. He never became wealthy. He did not become affluent. He did not become powerful. He lived a simple, humble life. He never was married. He never had children. He died at the age of 33, homeless and broke. He never had what we would have that mark us as men.

## **The Legacy of Jesus**

Human history swings on this man, Jesus Christ. B.C. and A.D. Adono Domini, “The year of our Lord”, all of history hinges on this man. He is the most famous and significant person in

the history of the world. He is the man to whom more songs have been sung, more paintings have been painted, and more books have been written than anyone else in the history of mankind.

Today 2.1 billion people worship Jesus Christ alone as God and in that, the largest religion in the world has come to exist called Christianity.

### **The Lesson of Jesus**

For Christians, since it's early, beginning stages has used the symbol of the cross to represent Jesus' life and legacy. When it came down to a symbol for Jesus Christ, a cross was chosen by the early Christians to represent our faith. Some have liturgical signs of motioning a cross, some adorn you homes with crosses, some wear a cross, we have crosses in our church. It is interesting that the symbol that is so easily recognized for thousands of years recognizing Jesus is the cross.

There are so many things that **Jesus did that are wonderful and good** things that demand our attention; **he fed the poor**, he **encouraged the downcast**, he **healed the sick**, he **raised the dead**, he was a **gifted authoritative teacher** like none who had ever lived, but of **all of that that could have been chosen to remind us of our Jesus and the symbol that best** represents his ministry and commission of ministry to us, **the cross was chosen. The cross is the crux of our faith. Anytime we deviate from the cross we are wondering from our faith**, end up **destroying the link between us and God** and eventually the **church will sit empty or dormant**.

### **Understanding The Cross**

**Unless you understand the lesson of the cross you will never understand the language of the Christ!**

When we **speak of the cross**, we can **speak of it so commonly**, so **regularly**, and so often that we **lose the scandalous, offensive, horrendous and shameful nature of the cross**.

*“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its **shame**, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”*

**Hebrews 12:2**

We have to **understand** the “**shamefulness of the cross**” to **understand** the “**significance of the cross**”.

- **Josephus**- A historian during the time of Christ defined the crucifixion as the most retched of deaths.
- **Cicero**- The Greek philosopher described it as one of the most disgusting and shameful forms of death that the Greeks and Romans should not even speak of it because it is not fit for even good people to mention.
- **Adolf Hitler**- Crucified Jews and allied soldiers against doors, swastikas, sides of homes and barns with banonetts and knives through their shoulders, necks and testical's and legs.
- **The Communist Rouse In Cambodia**- Is known to have crucified people during their

rampage through that Asian country.

- **Sudan-** Today they are still crucifying people there.

**Excruciating-** When we speak of crucifixion, we often use a word called “excruciating.” Excruciating was a word created to explain the horror of the crucifixion. Excruciating literally means, from the cross. Since the pain and the shame for the cross was so horrifying, a word had to be invented to describe it.

**800 Year History of Crucifixion-** When we speak of the cross, we speak of the crucifixion. And it has its beginning roughly 500 years before the birth of Jesus. In the days of Jesus it was the Romans who had perfected it and this practice continued until the Roman Emperor Constantine, who we believe converted to faith in Jesus Christ, put an end to crucifixion and the horrendous mode of public persecution that had existed for some 800 years.

**Roman Citizens-** Crucifixion was not proper for a Roman citizens, it was for the slaves and the commoners. For someone to be crucified they would have to do something so treacherous, such as treason if they were a citizen, because it was held as the most disgusting, painful and retched death.

**Biological Perspective-** To be crucified is a slow, painful, excruciating death of asphyxiation whereby a man who has been beaten, in Jesus' experience, by the cat of nine tails, (Passion) and his arms would be placed in a position that his lungs could not grasp enough air to breath and every attempt to breath took every bit of effort. Very slowly, very painfully, he began to die of asphyxiation.

- **Additional Pain-** To cause the man to endure more pain and suffering over a greater amount of time they would often put a small seat or ledge underneath the rear end of the man to keep him up so he could not slouch down and expedite his own death because the wanted him to suffer as long as possible. Some men had been able to slip off that seat often popping their shoulders out of socket so they could go ahead and breath out their last breath so the weight of their body would not allow them to ever breath in again.

Another way that was developed to keep the man from coming off of the seat was to take his penis and nail it to the cross so it would not allow him to fall off the cross to assure that he would suffer as long and as much as they possibly could.

**Public Viewing-** This was not done on the outside of town. This was not done in the privacy of some type of courtyard, but it was done in the public centers. This would be done today in front of the supermarket or in front of the local mall. This was done in open, public areas where crowds of people would gather. This was done to **shame** and **humiliate** you as much as possible. It was to **disgrace** you and your **family** and bring as much **pain** to you on the **inside** as much as on the **outside**. **This was more than a death sentence, it was the stripping of all dignity.**

This **invited** the **lowest forms** of **public** society as your judges and commentators. Today they would be the **street punks**, **lowlifes**, the **rebellious homeless** and those who got their thrill by watching the hopelessness of others. They would **spit** on you, **throw** things at you, **curse** and **mock** you and make fun of you as you agonize in pain.

**Public Shame-** You would be **stripped naked** openly and shamefully. It was known about

these men that pain would be so intense that they would become **incontinent** and lose control of their **bowels** and mess all over themselves, down the cross would be a puddle of **blood** and **feces**.

Sometimes they would **leave your body for days** as the vultures picked at you. When you died they would throw you in the dump. At times **parts of the bodies** would **fall off** and **dogs** would carry them off as chew toys.

**Ten's of thousands** of people were crucified. As many as **6000** people would be crucified on any given day. When **Spartacus** was defeated, they took 6000 of his most loyal followers and crucified them on a **120 mile stretch of road**.

At this place and time there was no way for a man to **retaliate** for the stripping of his dignity and humanity. Commonly the only retaliation was one of two things, one was that they would **curse** those who stood around them and secondly they would try to **urinate** on as many people as he could that stood around them. That was the only way in which they could try to defend themselves.

**This was done to Jesus. This was done to God!**

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When we say that Jesus died for our sins, often we don't understand what that involved. **Of all the great sermons that Jesus preached, of all the great healings that He performed, of all the great miracles that He ever caused, the symbol of our faith is the cross! It is the crux of our faith. Isn't there anything less offensive, more positive, less bloody, more attractive and less shameful that we can talk about? Yes! There is a natural pull since the day that Jesus died on the cross to be more politically attractive and less abrupt.**

- **The cross is offensive**
- **The cross is shameful**
- **The cross is disgusting**
- **The cross is where Jesus Christ went**
- **It should horrify us**
- **It should trouble us**
- **It should offend us**

***"For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."***

**I Corinthians 1:18**

- **The message of the cross is what? "Foolishness"-** moria {mo-ree'-ah} 3472- it's where we get our word "moron" from.
- **Galatians 5:11** says that the cross is an "**offense**"- and it still is offensive today.
- **Galatians 6:12** says that people who want to **avoid being persecuted** actually **avoid the cross**.
- One of the **largest churches in America** made a statement that, "We **don't talk about sin**, we don't talk about **blood**, we don't talk about **death** or **hell**, and we don't talk about the **cross** because we don't want to talk about things that people find

- offensive. **THEN THEY HAD BETTER NOT TALK ABOUT JESUS!**
- **THE CROSS GLORIFIES JESUS AND GOD AND WHEN YOU DO NOT HAVE THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE CROSS YOU HAVE NOT HEARD THE GOSPEL.**
- (Many remarks drawn from Mark Driscoll, Death by love)

## Balance

We want to be balanced in the Word of God. An unbalanced person in the Word of God has about as much joyful experience as a kid on the playground who has been invited to get on one end of the teeter-totter while five guys are laying on the other end to get the individual as high as possible before they all bail off. Slam! The imbalance is shocking and painful. There is a whole new vocabulary that you learn to walk in as a Christian.

You learn terms and their meaning such as:

- Servant leadership
- Confidently humble
- Peacefully aggressive
- Openly focused

There is a challenge to all those who consider themselves believer's today because of our tendency to camp on a portion of scripture that fits our personal liking and it becomes the flavor of the day, which becomes the flavor of everyday. It's like a snow cone stand that only offers the orange snowball, because that's the only one the owner likes.

## The Language of Jesus

Matthew 4:23 tells us that Jesus spent the first part of his public ministry in Galilee (northern Israel) **doing two things: healing people of their diseases, and teaching people about the "gospel (good news) of the kingdom."** In Chapters 5-7 we get a picture of what Jesus was teaching. When you look at the list that Jesus had in mind for happiness in Matthew 5, it is easy to confuse, abuse and ignore. His strange list is opposite to what most people are looking for, for instance:

- "Happy are the poor"
- "Happy are the sad" (etc)

We can simplify Jesus' ministry characteristics, (without resolving all His blessed attributes), to two sides. Many people have a tendency to elevate one of Christ's characteristics and support it above another. While one side elevates the ethical teacher of the Sermon on the Mount but then refuses to get involved with the uncomfortable supernatural Person of Jesus Christ. And on the other side are those, lets call them charismatics, (us), who believe Christ's experiences were Christ's example for us to follow, the miracles, the power, the cleansing of the leper, the healing of the centurion's servant and the casting out of demons, but when it comes to the beatitudes and Jesus' core values, it is such an unrelated part of their personal lifestyle and doctrine that it is seldom visited or even understood.

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## Jesus Amazed His Listeners

If you read from Matthew 5-7 you will find that Jesus speaks with an authority that amazes his hearers. Jesus is not a soft spoken wanderer neither does He speak harsh like the prophets of old, but He speaks with confidence, with clarity and power. He speaks like a King and even to some he sounds like a mad man:

- He claims that there is blessing, the kingdom of heaven for those who are persecuted for Christ himself and it will be translated as righteousness with God if they would hold to Christ teachings (5:10-11).
- He claims to have a personal relationship with God the Father, his father (6:9 - "Abba").
- He claims that He will judge all people on "that day", the end of the age (7:21-23).
- He claims that people will have to face the consequences of how they respond to His Words (7:26-27).

### **The Beatitudes**

Jesus begins **chapter 5** by making a series of **eight statements** that have the **same kind of structure on the Mount of Olive**, which was a **hill overlooking the Sea of Galilee** in order to **speak to his disciples and a large group of people** that particular day, we call them the Beatitudes. This message that is considered to many as a passive, laid back, easy Jesus is the same Jesus who cleansed the leper, healed the centurion's servant, stilled the storm and cast out demons.

The word **Beatitude-** comes from a Latin word for "blessed" which is "**beatus**". These are the **foundation of Christian values**. Jesus gives us a **clear definition of the every day believer**. These values will **guide, point and teach** each believer to a **state of peace and happiness** while at the **same time establish us right into the center of God's powerful Kingdom**.

(There are eight beatitudes worded in the same way. Verse 11 could be viewed as a ninth one, but it is really an expansion of verse 10 and is worded differently from the others. It says, "Blessed are you when men revile you..." None of the others say, "Blessed are you..." It is probably an expansion of verse 10, which says, "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake." The reviling in verse 11 is a specific instance of the persecution in verse 10.)

### **The Beatitudes (NIV)**

*1Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, 2and he began to teach them saying:  
3"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.  
4Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.  
5Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.  
6Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.  
7Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.  
8Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.  
9Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.  
10Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all*

*kinds of evil against you because of me. 12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."*

Matthew 5:1-15

The world says Matthew 5 this way,

Blessed are the strong, for they shall rule the earth.

Blessed are the mighty, for they shall rise to power.

Blessed are the rich, for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are the influential, for they shall be favored.

Blessed are the popular, for they shall be loved.

Blessed are the gifted, for they shall be followed.

Blessed are the beautiful, for they shall be admired.

Max Lucado catches the idea beautifully in his book on the Beatitudes called *The Applause of Heaven*.

God applauds the poor in spirit.

He cheers the mourners.

He favors the meek.

He smiles upon the hungry.

He honors the merciful.

He welcomes the pure in heart.

He claps for the peacemakers.

He rises to greet the persecuted.

### The First Beatitude:

*"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."*

Matthew 5:3

- **Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**
- **Blessed**- There are two words in the Bible translated "**blessed**", **makarios** and **eulogetos** (from eú = good, well + lógos = word), the latter meaning that we speak well of someone (as when we hear a eulogy at a funeral, the eulogy speaking well of that person who has passed on from life to death). In contrast, makarios is **not to speak well of** someone, but defines **a condition that exists**. In other words, makarios describes something that **is** true about someone, not something that someone **says** is true about them. Makarios is a reality, an inward state of truth no matter how you actually feel. In other words, to be "blessed" as defined by makarios, one does not have to feel "happy" to be blessed. You can still be blessed and act as if you are not happy. Makarios defines one's state of being in relation to God, independent of how one feels about it at a given moment in time.
- To be **POOR** (*ptochos*) means absolute and abject poverty. It comes from the root verb *ptossein*, which means to crouch or cower as a beggar. To be *ptochos* is to be so poor that you are beaten to your knees begging for one cent. This word was the word used for beggars, not like the poor we know today.
  - This is a man is poor and downtrodden and oppressed, he has no influence on earth, no power, no prestige. He cannot look to men for help and when all the help and resources of earth are closed to him, he can

only look to God. And, therefore, this word used here describes people who, because they have nothing on earth, have come to put their complete and total trust in God. (Amos 5:12; Ps 10:2, 19:12, 17; 12:5; 14:6; 68:10). (William Barclay. New Testament Words)

### What Being Poor in Spirit Doesn't Mean: To be poverty in spirit

**A Vow of Poverty:** There has been some misinterpretation of this scripture that encourages a person to take a vow of poverty. Was Jesus saying here that the economically poor are blessed? No, **poverty is not blessed nor is it spiritual**. You can be as arrogant, ungodly and as disconnected with God as those who have all the wealth in the world. Spirituality is not an economical position.

- To be poverty in mind is a sense of **powerlessness** to really **overcome** the battles in life and in the spirit realm- Luke 10:19; I Corinthians 15:57

*I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you.*

Luke 10:19

- To be poverty in mind is a sense of **spiritual bankruptcy** and **unworthy presence** before God. (Come to the throne room boldly)-

*“Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”*

Hebrews 4:16

- To be poverty in mind is a sense of **filthiness** and **disgusting** before God- Matthew 8:2-4; I John 3:3; Titus 1:15; Heb. 10:22

*“...let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.”*

Hebrews 10:22

- To be poverty in mind is a sense of **unfit reject** before God- II Corinthians 12:9

*“But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.”*

II Corinthians 12:9

### What Being Poor in Spirit Does Mean: To be poor in spirit

#### 1. Completely Dependent on God:

- The poor in spirit are those who realize that they can never achieve salvation on their own and must put their complete faith and trust in Jesus Christ.

#### 2. Completely Empty of Self:

- Total recognition of self:

*“I know that nothing good lives in me...”*

Romans 7:18a

- **Total resolve for self: John 15:5**

*"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."*

John 15:5

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### **Big Names With Poor Spirits-**

- **Abraham:**

In dealing with the Lord about Sodom and Gomorrah he said, *"Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, though I am nothing but dust and ashes..."* (Genesis 18:27).

- **Jacob:**

When Jacob returned to the promised land after spending 20 years in exile, he wrestled with God in prayer and said, *"I am unworthy of all the kindness and faithfulness you have shown your servant. I had only my staff when I crossed this Jordan, but now I have become two groups."* (Genesis 32:10).

- **Moses:**

When God came to him with a mission to lead his people out of Israel, he said, *"Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt? ... O Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue."* (Exodus 3:11; 4:10).

- **The reason God got angry at Moses is not because of his humble assessment of his own abilities, but of his lack of faith in God's ability.** God responded and said to Moses, *"Who gave man his mouth? Who makes him deaf or mute? Who gives him sight or makes him blind? Is it not I, the LORD? 12 Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say."* (Exodus 4:11-12).

**Read: "What is the Biblical solution when a person is paralyzed by a sense of guilt or unworthiness or uselessness? The solution is not self-esteem. God did not say to Moses, "Stop putting yourself down. You are somebody. You are eloquent." That is not the Biblical way. What God said was, "Stop looking at your own unworthiness and uselessness and look at me. I made the mouth. I will be with you. I will help you. I will teach you what to say. Look to me and live!"**

**The Biblical answer to the paralysis of low self-esteem is not high self-esteem; it is sovereign grace. You can test whether you agree with this by whether you can gladly repeat the words of Isaiah 41:13, "Fear not, you worm Jacob...I will help you, says the Lord; your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel." In other words, God's way of freeing and mobilizing people who see themselves as worms is not to tell them that they are beautiful butterflies but rather to say, "I will help you. I am your redeemer... Go to Egypt now, and I will be with you." (Reference?)**

- A Christian who is poor in spirit is not self-assertive, self-reliant, self-confident, self-

centered, or self-sufficient. The poor in spirit are not consumed in the deadly teaching of **salvation by means of self-esteem.**

**Example: WILLIAM CAREY-** William Carey did not have high self esteem. He castigated himself again and again for his sin. When the fire of 1812 destroyed dozens of his precious manuscripts he didn't blame the devil. He said, "How unsearchable are the ways of God!" And then he accused himself of too much self-congratulation in his labors, and said, "The Lord has smitten us, he had a right to do so, and we deserve his corrections."

When he had outlived four of his comrades in mission he wrote back to Andrew Fuller, "I know not why so fruitless a tree is preserved; but the Lord is too wise to err." When he died in 1834 in Serampore a simple tablet was put on his grave with the words he requested. And when you hear these I want you to ask, What was William Carey's secret? How could he persevere for 40 years over all obstacles—as a homely man, suffering from recurrent fever, limping for years from an injury in 1817, and yet putting the entire Bible into six languages and parts of it into 29 other languages—what was the secret of this man's usefulness and productivity for the kingdom? The tablet on his grave reads,

**WILLIAM CAREY**  
**Born August 17th, 1761**  
**Died June 9th, 1834**  
**A wretched, poor, and helpless worm,**  
**On Thy kind arms I fall.**

The secret for William Carey was not self esteem but he was poor in spirit to the very end. "A wretched, poor, and helpless worm," he calls himself, knowing very well his sin and failures.

His secret was in the last line of his epitaph: "On Thy kind arms I fall." This was his secret in dying and this was his secret in living. He cast himself, poor, helpless, despicable on the kind arms of God. For he knew the promise of Jesus: Blessed are the poor in spirit, for to them belong the merciful and mighty arms of the King of kings.

A Christian who is poor in spirit does not boast in their God given characteristics such as their birth, their family, their nationality, their education, their physical looks, their race, their wealth, or their culture. None of that matters. The poor in spirit are those who are conscious of their sins and know in their hearts that they are completely unworthy of the grace that our loving but holy God pours on us. It is understanding **Isaiah 64:6**

*"All of us have become like one who is unclean,  
and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags..."*

- **David:**

*"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. "* (Psalm 51:17). We know that we need God after great and horrible times such as David's experiences with adultery and murder, but what about the times when you are doing good?

When the collection for the temple was being taken David prayed, *"But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand."* (1 Chronicles 29:14). In the best of times, David did not yield to the idea that he was helping out God but realized that he was a simple vessel used by God, and act of

God's grace and not our importance or abilities causes Him to search us out.

- **Solomon:**  
*"Now, O LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David. But I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties." (1 Kings 3:7).*
- **Job:**  
*"My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes." (Job 42:5-6).*
- **Isaiah:**  
*"Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty." (Isaiah 6:5).*
- **John the Baptist:**  
*"He is the one who comes after me, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie... He must become greater; I must become less." (John 1:27; 3:30). Could this be why Jesus said, "Among those born of women, none is greater than John" (Luke 7:28). "If anyone would be first he must be last of all and servant of all" (Mark 9:35).*
- **The tax collector:**  
Jesus told a parable of a Pharisee and a tax collector who went up the the Temple to pray. Concerning the tax collector he said, *"But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."* (Luke 18:13-14). Which is just another way of saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit.
- **The centurion:**  
When Jesus was not far off from his house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying to him, "Lord do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; therefore I did not presume to come to you. But say the word, and let my servant be healed..." When Jesus heard this he marveled at him, and turned and said to the multitude, "I tell you, not ever in Israel have I found such faith" (Luke 7:6-9).
- **The Canaanite woman:**  
When Jesus at first refused her request for help, since she was not a Jew, she said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table." To which Jesus responds, "O woman, great is your faith!" We learn from the centurion and the Canaanite woman that poverty of spirit is right at the very heart of what true faith is.
- **Peter:**  
When he saw the power of Jesus on the Lake of Gennesaret, "Simon Peter fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord'" (Luke 5:8).
- **Paul:** He continue to recognize throughout his later years of ministry the need of poverty of spirit, his spiritual bankruptcy - his continual need for and dependency upon Christ's provision...

"I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is , in my flesh..." (Roman 7:18).

"We have this treasure in earthen vessels to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us..." (2 Corinthians 4:7).

"I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth..." (1 Corinthians 3:6-7).

"I am the foremost of sinners; but I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience for an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life" (1 Timothy 1:15-16).

- A Christian who is poor in spirit means that we come to God, conscious of the incredible separation that our sins had created between us and God and the total inability to build a bridge to him and there attain righteousness or right standing before Him.
- A Christian who is poor in spirit understands that all are unfit or unqualified to even be in the same room with God, to commune with Him, to fellowship with Him.
- A Christian who is poor in spirit realize that all that we see good in our lives are stumbling blocks in our lives until they are submitted to His throne, they are nothing.

**Paul says it this way:**

*"But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things.*

*Philippians 3:7-8a*

*I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ- the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.*

*Philippians 3:8b-9*

*I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead."*

*Philippians 3:10-11*

To be "poor in spirit," is to know and acknowledge to God your impoverished spiritual need. It is not to admit that you are disgusting and insignificant or a person without value. **A POOR In Spirit mentality does not establish a POOR self-image, it gives you one!** It is to admit to God that because of your sins you owed a debt that you could never repay, that you have no moral claim on his acceptance of you and that the only thing you deserve from God is his wrath and judgment.

## **The Prodigal Son**

In Luke 15 the prodigal son became poor in spirit. He left his fathers house full of pride and arrogance, he wasted his inheritance and God given talent and became the poorest of the poor. Because of a famine, not even the pig farmers could feed him what the pigs were

eating, he had no job and nothing to eat. Then the thought came back to him, or as the scripture says, *“he came to himself.”* He realized the place he had ended up. **He humbled himself and was willing to take on the role of a slave. Being lost was far worse than being a slave, and if you don't realize that you will never get the idea of God.** He went back to his father and said without hesitation:

*“I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son”*  
Luke 15:21

See the importance of this scripture and understanding the passage is focusing here, on verse 21. Because many people focus on verse 20. The incredible love of God who stands at a distance has been looking for us, waiting for us and upon the idea that we need to turn toward God, He responds like this father:

*“But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.”*  
Luke 15:20

That is being poor in spirit. You can only appreciate your salvation to the level of your understanding of you lostness. You will never appreciate the thought of becoming a slave until you have understood completely the idea of being lost.

**Viet Nam POW:** A group of POW's had gathered at what was called the Hanoi Hilton. Each man was telling how they were captured and brought to the prison. They went around the room telling their stories until it came to this one Navy seaman. He told them, “You see guys, you were all captured, but I was rescued.” He went on to tell them how his ship was on the coast of Viet Nam and he had leaned on the railing a little too far and fell over board. He was sure he would drown as minutes turned into an hour. He saw the light of a boat coming when he realized that it was the enemy. He had to decide between death and the possibility of living and he chose life. He chose life! And the idea of waking up every morning with the idea of choosing not only “life”, but “God's life”; becoming enslaved in it and being “saved.”

**Joel:** I listen to the story of one of my friends whose only memory of his father was of him laying on the couch every day totally drunk. There was a greasy hand print on the wall where he would steady himself as he tried to urinate in the toilet. He told me of his mother who went to a convention in San Antonio, Texas during his junior year in high school, and she never came home again. They contacted the FBI who could not find her either. All they figured was that she had been kidnapped or murdered. He told me about how he had to raise his 12 year old little sister and put food on the table. I stand amazed as he tells me what it was like for God to come into his life. How God saw him far off and he was “poor in spirit”, and he received the mercy of God, not the pity of God. My friend had to go to God just like me and I him. He has probably reached more people for Christ than anyone I know, because he understands where people were at.

This is not about having a fear that God will not accept you. It is about having a fear that you would take advantage of such incredible grace. Listen to what happens in verse 22:

*“But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate.'”*  
Luke 15:22-23

*"For the son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate."*

Luke 15:24

### **The Pharisee and The Tax Collector: Luke 18**

This is the story of a man who believe his own righteousness was in what he did and he looked down on everybody else. Jesus told it this way:

*"Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men-robbers, evildoers, adulterers- or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tent of all I get.'"*

Luke 18:10-12

*"But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'"*

Luke 18:13

*"I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."*

Luke 18:14

That is being poor in spirit. The result of the prayers of the Pharisee went home **condemned**. The result of the prayers of the tax collector went home **justified**. Only the poor in spirit will enter into the kingdom of God. Why? **Because they come to God having full knowledge of their own lostness and their own sinfulness. They know that they can't by-pass the process of the cross and what the cross means. They know that it's not about the Big man up stairs, it's about the King of Kings and Lord of Lords in which all kingdoms will soon before Him bow. There is a humility, there is a reverence, not that He would slip your salvation away at any time or distance Himself to question your loyalty, but that He would choose you! That He has called you! When we are asked if we want to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, the response is not, "I need to think about it." It should be, "Yes! Yes! I can't believe that I have been asked!**

**Pastor Ted Haggard, Nigeria, Africa:** At a pastor's meeting with Pastor Ted Haggard, he asked if anyone of us would like to go with him to visit a church in Nigeria, Africa. It is the world's largest church structure. It seats 50,000 people. More Muslim are receiving Christ through that church than any place in the world. He has plans to plan 100 churches in the United States over the next five years. Pastor Ted said that if we go with him we would get to be with the pastor of that church and most of it's top staff. He said it was a once in a life time opportunity. Would I like to go? Are you kidding me? How can I turn that down?

The poor in spirit openly confess that they are full of guilt and are totally unqualified to enter into the kingdom of God. They beat their chest and cry out to God, "I am not worthy, please have mercy on me oh God!" **The poor in spirit are the ones who recognize their need for God, not only their authority from God!**

### **What Is The Kingdom of Heaven?**

***"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."***

**Matthew 5:3**

- **The curse of the law for spiritual prosperity**
- The Old Testament closes with the word “*curse*.” (see Malachi 4:6). The New Testament begins here, in the preaching of Christ, with the word “Blessed.” He has changed the curse into a blessing: “Blessed”
  - **Friedrich Hauck** says that the Greek word **Makarios** “refers overwhelmingly to the distinctive religious joy which accrues to man from his share in the salvation of the kingdom of God.”

**Blessed or Makarios means possessing the favor of God**, experiencing “**spiritual prosperity**”. It describes a state of being marked by fullness from God. And so what Jesus is saying in the “Beatitudes” is “**Spiritually prosperous** (blessed) are the poor in spirit...”, etc (Mt 5:3) And thus some of the translators like Wuest pick up this definition...

**Spiritually prosperous** are the destitute and helpless in the realm of the spirit, (Wuest)

**Kingdom** (932) (**basileia** from **basileus** = a sovereign, king, monarch) denotes **sovereignty, royal power, dominion and refers therefore to the territory or people over whom a king rules**. The Kingdom of Heaven/God is the sphere in which God is acknowledged as King (In hearts giving Him obedience).

**Young's Literal** has an interesting literal translation:

- **"for the kingdom of heaven belongs to them." (NET)**
- **"because theirs is the reign of the heavens" (YLT)**
- Some sources record that **makarios** means "to be congratulated." The natural man thinks of the "**poor in spirit**" as the person who mourns over sin and suffering, the meek, the persecuted as groups to be despised or even pitied. However, **Jesus says they are fortunate people for God is pleased with them and fittingly He has "blessed" them**. They are to be congratulated and after all what fortune is so great as God's blessing? **D Martyn Lloyd-Jones** adds that...

The only man who is at all capable of carrying out the injunctions of the Sermon on the Mount is the man who is perfectly clear in his mind with regard to the essential character of the Christian. Our Lord says that this is the only kind of person who is truly 'blessed, that is, 'happy'. Someone has suggested that it might be put like this; **this is the sort of man who is to be congratulated**, this is the sort of man to be envied, for he alone is truly happy. (Lloyd-Jones, D. M.)