



February 8-9, 2025

Historical Context and Summary

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

The word “beatitude” comes from a Latin word (*beatus*) meaning “happy” or “blessed.” Therefore, the beatitudes are concerned with what it means to be happy or blessed. It is important to note that each beatitude is not a command, but a description. In other words, the beatitudes are not commands one has to follow to enter the kingdom of heaven. A new king and a new kingdom were now present and the old ways of doing things had to go. For those who did not want to enter this kingdom, they must have thought Jesus was turning the world upside-down (Acts 17:6). However, He was actually turning the world right side up! The beatitudes are simply the characteristics of His kingdom and its citizens.

For this beatitude, Jesus used a form of the word *ptoches* (“poverty”) to not just imply someone who was struggling to make ends meet. Instead, the word refers to someone who is “completely destitute and helpless to do anything about it.”¹ But Jesus was not talking about physical poverty. He was referring to spiritual poverty. The person who is poor in spirit recognizes they cannot save themselves and has a sense of their own sinfulness and limitations. They know they need God’s grace. This beatitude is a prerequisite to living out the other beatitudes. If the person is not poor in the spirit, they will not mourn, be meek, hunger and thirst for righteousness, etc.

In explaining each beatitude, it may be helpful to break them down into the following elements: the beatitude’s meaning, the Old Testament connection, God’s promise within the beatitude, and how to develop the beatitude on one’s life. Following is basic information on each element for this beatitude:

- **Meaning:** Recognizing your need for God and relying on Him instead of yourself
- **Old Testament Connection:** God provides for those in need. Isaiah 41:17 — “*When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue is parched with thirst, I the Lord will answer them; I the God of Israel will not forsake them.*”

¹ Jerry Bridges, *The Blessing of Humility* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2016), 9-10.

- **God's Promise:** You will receive the **kingdom of heaven** — God's presence and eternal life
- **How to Develop It:** Humble yourself before God and depend on Him. James 4:7-10 — *“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. (8) Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. (9) Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. (10) Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will exalt you.”*

Discussion Guide

Break the Ice

What is the poorest you've ever been? Why were you poor? Do you have any fond memories of this season? Bad memories?

We often think of being poor or poverty as something negative. When thinking about poverty in terms of being spiritually poor, Jesus teaches that it is something positive.

Up

Read Matthew 5:3 out loud. What stands out, confuses, or challenges you in this beatitude from this verse or the message?

What do we learn about God and His character from this passage?

How can spiritual poverty (defined as complete reliance on God) help us know God more? What does this actually look like in daily life?

In

What are some ways we try to live independent from God?

Humility is the core requirement to enter this kingdom. Without it, we won't even acknowledge our spiritual poverty. It takes humility to accept God's plan of salvation. As one author wrote, "Those who are proud and self-sufficient could never hope to enjoy the blessings of Heaven. They would never accept that they were sinners in need of a savior, never accept the need to obey God in God's way, and never accept the fact that without God they could do nothing. Thus, they will never enjoy a Heaven filled with sinners"

cleansed by the blood of Jesus.” (Revelation 1:5)² Being poor in spirit is the only way through which we recognize our need for salvation and God’s help.

What does it look like to daily practice humility and dependence on God?

Out

How can a life that is not poor in spirit negatively impact those closest to you?

How can the follower of Christ choose to grow in being poor in spirit? What steps, practices, etc?

Prayer

Spend time confessing to God any self-dependence and pride that gets in the way of you acknowledging your need for Him. Thank Him for His salvation that you desperately need.

² Lifeline Bible Church, “The Beatitudes or Be Attitudes,” <https://lifelinebiblechurch.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/THE-BEATITUDES.pdf>.