



8 KEYS TO GOD'S KINGDOM



Jesus began His Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5 with what we have come to know as the beatitudes. But what is a beatitude? The term comes from the Latin words, “*beati sunt*,” which means “blessed are.” A beatitude is a “state” of “true blessing” encompassing the satisfaction, joy, and happiness we possess when we know God has perfectly fulfilled a spiritual need. This real happiness, found in the center of God’s will, escapes people who seek happiness outside of God’s will; it comes only to those who seek God first. The beatitudes, given to us by Jesus Himself, are the Keys to God’s Kingdom. Join us on an eight-day challenge to learn about each of these keys and apply them to your daily life.



Profound truth. Simply stated.



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DAY ONE

POORNNESS IN SPIRIT

“Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” **MATTHEW 5:3**

In our world today, there is a stronger emphasis on what we have than on who we are. The world says, “Blessed are those with wealth, strength, power, knowledge and popularity.” But in His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus puts an emphasis not primarily on what a man has, *but on who a man is*. The first of these character qualities is *poorness in spirit*.

Matthew 5 reveals how bankruptcy can become a blessing. “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” In this passage, Jesus is not talking about financial poverty. Rather, He is identifying the *spiritual* poverty of a man.

In the spiritual realm, we are absolutely, totally bankrupt—beggars before God. We must discover this truth and admit it; if we don't see it or refuse to acknowledge it, we will never receive the kingdom of heaven.

Adrian Rogers says, “This discovery comes when we see just who God is, and then we understand who we are.” Brokenness follows this discovery; we realize we cannot depend on the things we once believed we could. We cannot depend on our pedigrees, our education, or our knowledge; these things cannot help us.

Those who are spiritually bankrupt cannot afford to be proud. All we can do is declare our dire condition. Because, as Matthew 5 reveals, spiritual beggars are blessed... “for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

This condition is a blessing because it is the only way we can get to heaven. Adrian Rogers says, “Until a man lays his pride in the dust, he cannot be saved. Even God cannot fill that which is already full. We'll never live spiritually until we admit we are dead spiritually.”

When we lay aside our pride and receive salvation from Jesus Christ, we are, in turn, received by God, just as we are. It is the only way we can come to the Father.

WHAT'S THE KEY?

Do you ever feel like your prayers go unanswered? You can trust that God hears your prayers and is moving in ways that you cannot often see or understand! When you pray, God listens, and He will answer in His way and in His time!



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DAY TWO

MOURNING

"Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." **MATTHEW 5:4**

The world tells us that a life without tears, sorrow, and heartache is a blessed life; but this is not true. We do all we can to avoid pain. We call on psychologists, self-help coaches, and entertainment to change our conditions. In reality, condition does not dictate character.

Jesus, Himself, was a *Man of sorrows*. He teaches us to bring our sorrows and heartaches into focus in such a way that we can see beyond the present and into the future. Our tears today can become telescopes to make the future all the brighter and more meaningful.

Turning tears into telescopes is a two-step process. We must identify the convicting guilt that causes us to mourn, and we must recognize the grace that comforts us. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gives insight into the deceptive power of sin. Man looks on the outward appearance and sees outward sin. But God looks on the heart and at our inner intentions that lead to our sin.

Our hearts are "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked" (Jeremiah 17:9). Our hearts are subject to sin's defilement, which perverts the beautiful things we see and touch. If we are truly convicted by our guilt, it should lead to consuming grief and sorrow.

There are two kinds of sorrow: godly and worldly. Godly sorrow leads us to repentance, but the sorrow of the world leaves us with remorse. Adrian Rogers explains, "Remorse without repentance can be a dangerous thing. A person filled with remorse is one who loves his sin and hates himself at the same time. A person who has repented is a person who hates his sin because he loves his Savior. Remorse looks at the sin and its consequences. Repentance looks beyond the sin to Calvary."

Looking at Calvary, we recognize that mourning is the only way to know the comfort of our dear Lord. The word "comfort" translates to mean *with strength*. When we receive God's comforting grace, we are receiving His Spirit, which is our strength and our advocate.

WHAT'S THE KEY?

Recognize your sinful condition and repent! Find comfort in the grace of God!



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DAY THREE

MEEKNESS

“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.” **MATTHEW 5:5**

In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus revealed that it is not the mighty men who are blessed; it is the mighty meek. Meekness is not weakness. Jesus was meek, yet He was a strong man. To be meek means to be yielded or to have a compliant spirit. Meekness is strength under control. When we were created, God put certain drives, instincts, and ambitions into our very natures. These are not evil in themselves, but they must yield to the Holy Spirit so that we may bring Him glory and honor.

While some believe releasing or restraining our strength will lead to control, true meekness comes after we see ourselves as poor in spirit. Once we are broken over our condition, we can develop strength under control. Meekness is developed in three steps.

Step One: Submit to the Son of God. Matthew 11:28-30 says, “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle [meek] and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.” Jesus offers our wild spirits rest and invites us to submit to His lordship and learn true strength from Him.

Step Two: Receive the Word of God. We cannot snatch pieces of the Bible to feed our pride or our opinions. Adrian Rogers says, “The Bible is not meant to be interesting; it’s meant to be disturbing.” We must welcome the Word into our lives with humility, reaching out to Jesus Christ with both hands, letting Scripture be our bridle and bit.

Step Three: Be Filled with the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit of God produces meekness in us; we simply bear the fruit of it. When we are meek, we will receive our inheritance. This dynamic is explained in 2 Corinthians 6:10, which says, “...as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.”

WHAT’S THE KEY?

Have you yielded to the Holy Spirit and developed a meek spirit? Take these steps today: submit to God, receive His Word, and be filled with His Spirit.



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DAY FOUR

DESIRE FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.”

MATTHEW 5:6

The word “blessed” means to be satisfied. In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus revealed the secret of satisfaction. Many of us think of righteousness as something to do. But in the Bible, righteousness is wrapped up in a person, and His name is Jesus. When we hunger and thirst after righteousness, we are actually hungering and thirsting after Jesus Christ.

Jesus is Our Spiritual Sustenance

In the material realm, food and water are necessities, not luxuries; if we don't eat or drink, we will die. The spiritual realm is the same. Jesus Christ is not some luxury; He is a necessity. Without Him, our spirits will die.

We should desire Jesus above all other things. In Matthew 6:33, Jesus tells us, “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you.” Jesus will not work in second place. A lack of joy, peace, or fulfillment is a symptom of unrighteousness. When we hunger and thirst after Jesus, we are blessed, but it is crucial to remember that the blessings are just a byproduct. Jesus is the cure; not the joy, peace, and fulfillment that comes with Him.

Adrian Rogers says, “You'll never go beyond Jesus: you may only go deeper and deeper into Jesus.” We should seek Jesus passionately—with a huge appetite. Our quest for Jesus Christ should be marked by deliberation, determination, and desperation.

Jesus Satisfies the Strongest Appetite

Finally, we should enjoy Jesus perpetually. Adrian Rogers says, “I don't know how much of God you have, but you have all you want. Shallow thirst equals shallow satisfaction; small hunger equals small satisfaction.” Contrary to popular belief, we don't lose the good things of life when we come to Jesus. In fact, we enjoy things more in the context of righteousness. In Jesus, we are completely, continually, and certainly satisfied.

WHAT'S THE KEY?

A person who is hungry and thirsty for righteousness is on a deliberate, determined, desperate quest for Jesus Christ. Seek Jesus Christ as a starving man would seek food.



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DAY FIVE

MERCY

"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy." **MATTHEW 5:7**

Mercy is not just softness or mere sentiment; it is compassion in action. And the magnificence of mercy is that those who have received it will show it. Mercy is a godly characteristic, one that resides in the hearts and minds of those who have accepted salvation from Jesus Christ. And it actively reveals itself as compassion for others. Mercy has several unique qualities.

First, consider the beauty of mercy: it is godlike.

Lamentations 3:22-23 says, "Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is Your faithfulness."

Every morning, we get to wake up and greet the mercy of God, which is faithful and fails not. In Luke 10, Jesus tells the Parable of the Good Samaritan and reveals the symbolism of salvation. When others passed by us in our despair and need, Jesus rescued us, healed and cleansed us, and covered our debts. After He told this story, Jesus called us to do the same for our neighbors. He explained that when we are merciful, we are godlike. (See Luke 10:37.)

Second, consider the basis of mercy: truth.

Psalm 85:10 says, "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." To show mercy is not to minimize sin. There can be no mercy without truth, which is that the justice of God says our sins must be punished.

When we show mercy, we withhold judgment; when we withhold judgment, it implies judgment was deserved. But thank God that He doesn't give us what we deserve! Adrian Rogers says, "God doesn't deal with us on the basis of fairness; God deals with us on the basis of mercy." We are not forgiven because we show mercy; rather, we show mercy because we are forgiven.

This is the magnificence of mercy: The more mercy we show, the more mercy we get.

WHAT'S THE KEY?

Do you have a heart full of compassion in action? If God has forgiven us, how much more should we forgive one another? Remember this beatitude, today: Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy.



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DAY SIX

PURITY OF HEART

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

The definition of the word "integrity" has to do more with unity or singleness of the heart or mind. In this context, Matthew 5:8 means: "Blessed are those who have integrity, without divided hearts." This is the principle of integrity: those who are single-minded, not double-souled, are blessed.

Integrity takes place in the heart, at our very core.

Our hearts are the control centers of our emotions. When we speak of our hearts, we speak of total commitment. Proverbs 4:23 says, "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life."

But on our own, our hearts are diseased, "deceitful...and desperately wicked" (Jeremiah 17:9). The cause and desire to sin comes from within. All the diet and exercise in the world will not cure the spiritual disease of our hearts. In spite of any reformation on the outside, we've not dealt with the problem of the heart. Adrian Rogers says, "Everything that you see wrong in the world today has originated in the heart of men."

God is the Great Doctor.

The good news is that God is faithful to make a formal diagnosis of our hearts. If we will let Him, He reviews our conditions and reveals what He finds on the inside. God allows circumstances to come into our lives to see how we will react because our reactions speak the loudest of what's in our hearts. He is the one who transplants a new, pure heart in us.

Sin blinds us, and the world is desperate to see God. But it is only with a pure heart that we can receive the eyes of faith. That is the promise of integrity: when we get our spiritual hearts right, our spiritual eyes will see God.

WHAT'S THE KEY?

Matthew 6:22 says, "When your eye is single, your body will be full of light." Are you a person of integrity? Devote yourself to serving God and seek to have a single-minded heart.



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DAY SEVEN

PEACEMAKING

"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God."

MATTHEW 5:9

People are not at peace within themselves; this is why they cannot be at peace with anyone else. Until we are right with God, we will be troublemakers and not peacemakers. We must understand the priority of peacemaking.

First, we must consider the attributes of peace.

Peace is not appeasement. In fact, appeasement never brings peace. Adrian Rogers says, "There is something desperately wrong with the person who can get along with everybody." Though the Bible says to be at peace with all men if it is possible (Romans 12:18), this is not always possible. Jesus Christ, Himself, did not get along with everybody. We will be known by the enemies we make.

Adrian Rogers says, "Peace is a right relationship with God that leads to a right relationship with self and guides us in a right relationship with other people."

Second, we must recognize the adversary of peace, which is sin.

Sin brings inner turmoil because it separates men from God. There can be no peace without the Prince of Peace. Jesus will never make a truce with sin. Jesus came to put a line of demarcation between truth and error, between light and dark, between sin and righteousness.

Matthew 10:34 says, "Think not that I've come to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace but a sword." When God's standard of righteousness is set, there will always be division. Without righteousness, there can be no godly peace. And the sword that Jesus has is like a scalpel: it must first hurt before it heals.

Peace has been planned by the Father, purchased by the Son, and provided by the Spirit. We are ambassadors and agents of peace, called to share the hope of reconciliation with a world in turmoil.

WHAT'S THE KEY?

We are to be agents of peace. Share the hope of reconciliation with others today.



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DAY EIGHT

PERSECUTION

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” **MATTHEW 5:10**

According to Scripture, becoming a genuine Christian means being ostracized socially and considered inappropriate to society. But no matter what happens, nothing can take our joy from us. Adrian Rogers says, “Joy controls conditions like a thermostat. Persecution is the thermometer that registers how much you love Jesus.”

The first reason we are persecuted is because of the life we live: “for righteousness’ sake” (v. 10).

In Matthew 5:13-16, Jesus called us the “salt” and “light” of this world. Salt irritates the wounds of this world, and light exposes its darkness. In context, Jesus is saying we are to be irritants and exposers of sin. But we must not confuse punishment for persecution. Adrian Rogers says, “We are punished by good people when we do evil. We are persecuted by evil people when we do good.” Christians who are filled with the Holy Spirit will be “naturally supernatural.” We don’t dare to claim we are persecuted if we are not living for Jesus Christ.

The second reason we are persecuted is because of the Lord we love: Jesus says, “for my sake” (v. 11).

The world hates Jesus Christ because He stands against the very things the world stands for: drunkenness, abortion, pornography, pride, racism, and greed. And as followers of Christ, we can expect persecutions of various kinds: personal insult, physical abuse, social stigma.

But our response should be one of royalty; because we are children of the King, we reign in life and can return good for evil. We must also rejoice in the Lord; we have been identified as followers of Christ and associated with the Lord. Finally, we should respond to the hate of this world with the love it desperately needs.

WHAT’S THE KEY?

Knowing the reasons for persecution and the results of it, are you willing to follow Jesus in a world that hates Him? When you are persecuted, rejoice in the Lord and respond in love.