

KNOWING GOD THROUGH THE BEATITUDES

FROM THE MESSAGES OF ADRIAN ROGERS



Knowing God Through the Beatitudes (Bible Study)

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2941 Kate Bond Road
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(800) 274-5683

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INTRODUCTION

KNOWING GOD THROUGH THE BEATITUDES

On some level, we are all seeking happiness. But generally, people who search for happiness are the most unhappy in the world. Many of the things the world says we need to be happy don't make the list in Matthew 5. Jesus didn't bless those who have popularity, position, personality, possessions, or power. Some people have all of these things and are still perfectly, exquisitely unhappy. Jesus doesn't say blessed are those who *have* certain things, but blessed *are* those who are certain things.

“Blessed” means so much more than “happy.” The Greek word for “blessed” is “makarios”—the local name of an island near Greece that was known as the “blessed island” because it was self-contained. It had enough vegetation, enough food, enough grain, and enough water to sustain life. They had enough for themselves and enough to export. When you see the word “blessed” in the Beatitudes, it means “to have everything you need spiritually.”

Happiness is not something you find by looking for it; it is something you stumble over when you're seeking blessedness. Get right with God, and blessedness will find you. In fact, it will chase you down.

In the Beatitudes, Jesus gave us all we need for our spirits to thrive. We can use these eight “Keys to the Kingdom” to develop Christ-like character traits and unlock blessings. If we want to have joy, happiness, and gratitude in our lives, we need to pay close attention to what Jesus said when He gave us the Beatitudes.

WANT MORE?

The audio messages by Pastor Adrian Rogers from which this study is derived are linked using the QR code on page 114 at the end of this study.



True happiness cannot ultimately be found in any earthly asset, but in humility before Almighty God.

ADRIAN ROGERS

WEEK 1

BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT

■ INTRODUCTION

Someone once called the Beatitudes “the attitudes that ought to be.” Another way to describe them is “The Keys to the Kingdom.” They are foundation stones for building our homes and lives—a blueprint for happiness in Christ.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:1-10).

Jesus listed “poor in spirit” first on purpose. Before we can receive the blessing of the other Beatitudes, we must first recognize our position before God as spiritually bankrupt. This week, we will learn what it means to be poor in spirit.

■ PRAY OVER IT

Dear God, I recognize that I am spiritually bankrupt before You; I have nothing of my own to bring. I am desperate for You—a spiritual beggar. I want to learn what it means to be poor in spirit so that I can be rich in faith and receive Your blessing. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

DAY 1

THE BLUEPRINT FOR HAPPINESS

■ PONDER IT

A big dog saw a little dog chasing his tail. The big dog said to the little dog, “Why are you doing that?”

The little dog said, “I have been studying philosophy, and I have discovered what a dog’s deepest need is. It is happiness, which lies in a dog’s tail. If I can ever apprehend that tail, then I shall be a happy dog.”

The big dog replied, “I have also studied philosophy, and I, too, have thought and pondered about these things. I do think it is good for a dog to be happy, and I do believe that some of a dog’s happiness lies in a dog’s tail. But I have found that the more I chase my tail the more it runs away from me. When I forget about chasing it and go about my business, it always comes after me.”

The more we pursue happiness, the more it runs away from us. But when we go about our business, it comes after us. But happiness, even for a dog, is not in his tail, but in his master. True happiness, or joy, for human beings, is found only in the Lord Jesus Christ, which is what the word “blessed” means. It is to have everything we need in Christ so that we can have joy even when we face difficult circumstances. The first step in finding true happiness is found in the first Beatitude:

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

The world tells us we should care most about what we have and what we can achieve. Society says our value lies in our bucks, brains, beauty, and brawn. But in reality, those things do not bring happiness or make us more righteous before God. Even people with all the earthly treasures a person could want are often unhappy.

Instead of what a person *has*, Jesus put emphasis on what a person *is*. A person’s character determines how joyful he can be. Each Beatitude

describes a character quality, and Jesus listed “poorness of spirit” first because without it, you cannot grow in Christ and find joy in Him.

“Poorness of spirit” does not just mean to be lacking; it means to have absolutely nothing, to be a spiritual beggar. The Bible uses the same word to describe a beggar named Lazarus, who ate crumbs from a rich man’s table and had sores on his body that dogs would lick. (See Luke 16:19-31.) In a spiritual sense, we are like Lazarus. We have nothing of our own that could save us and make us right with God. We have to admit that without Jesus we are spiritually bankrupt. Society rejects and despises beggars. But instead of despising or rejecting the poor in spirit, Jesus calls this kind of destitution a blessing. When we realize our need for Him and are desperate for Him, we find joy in Him.

■ PUT IT IN WRITING

- Where have you tried to find happiness apart from God? How have these things failed you?
- What are some attributes of a beggar, someone who is poor and destitute? How can you have those same qualities as you come to your relationship with Jesus?

We must be spiritually empty
before He can make us full.

ADRIAN ROGERS

THE SPIRITUAL BEGGAR'S BANKRUPTCY

■ PONDER IT

The world would not say that it is a blessing to be a beggar, poor, and destitute. However, we need to learn what it means to be a spiritual beggar because God says it is the way to spiritual blessing.

The spiritual beggar is spiritually bankrupt.

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

When He said, “poor,” Jesus was not talking about financial poverty. Jesus never said it was a blessing to be financially poor. The Bible teaches that we should help and have compassion for the poor. It also teaches that people who are poor are often more likely to recognize their need for God and have great faith. But it does not say that it is more spiritual to be poor.

If Jesus spoke about the blessedness of financial bankruptcy, then it would be our job to make everybody poor. That is not what God’s Word instructs us to do. Jesus had many friends who were wealthy and used their riches for good.

We are to be poor in spirit, which means we recognize our complete spiritual dependence on God.

Our human nature is made of body, soul, and spirit. In your body, you have physical life. In your soul, you have psychological life. In your spirit, you have spiritual life. “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:24). But before you can enter into the kingdom of Heaven, you must admit that in a spiritual sense, you are bankrupt before God, no matter how much you may have in the material or psychological sense. You will never get into the kingdom of Heaven if you do not recognize your spiritual bankruptcy.

We are not merely spiritually poor; we are spiritually broke. We are beggars before God because we have no righteousness of our own. We have no ability to save ourselves or make ourselves holy.

If you are relying on your good works or your loving attitude to get to Heaven, you have not yet recognized your spiritual bankruptcy. If you think you are better than someone else, you cannot be a spiritual beggar. You must come to the place where you recognize that you have nothing to offer God that would make you worthy of being saved. The Bible says that even your righteousness is as filthy rags in the sight of a righteous and holy God. (See Isaiah 64:6.) Jesus said:

“For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:20).

Instead we must come to Jesus with an attitude of complete humility and dependence. Not one of us is more or less spiritually dependent on God for our righteousness than another person. We are all spiritual beggars who can do nothing to earn our salvation.

■ PUT IT IN WRITING

- Have you ever realized that you were spiritually bankrupt? How does that change the way you see your relationship with Jesus?
- Have you ever considered yourself less sinful or dependent on God than someone else? What does the Bible say about our ability to earn our salvation or to become righteous?

Real humility is not thinking
lowly of yourself; it is not
thinking of yourself at all.

ADRIAN ROGERS

THE SPIRITUAL BEGGAR'S BROKENNESS

■ PONDER IT

The spiritual beggar is characterized by brokenness. Brokenness follows bankruptcy. First, a person must discover and admit who he or she is. Many people have trouble admitting they need something from anyone in order to be whole. For them, their greatest need is to *recognize* their need.

When we see who God truly is and then understand who we are, we discover our great need. For example, Simon Peter was an aggressive man. He was a fisherman, always giving his opinion and speaking out of turn. But one day, he had a glimpse of the majesty of Jesus Christ and realized he was completely unworthy of being in Jesus' presence. (See Luke 5:8.)

Isaiah, God's chosen prophet, pronounced judgment over unrighteous people. But when he had a vision of the Lord and saw God's majesty, Isaiah demonstrated poorness in spirit and said:

“Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts” (Isaiah 6:5).

In Matthew 15, Jesus came upon a pagan, Canaanite woman. She came to Him and asked Him to heal her demon-possessed daughter. Jesus said something harsh to her:

But He answered and said, “It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs.” And she said, “Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.” Then Jesus answered and said to her,

**“O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire.”
And her daughter was healed from that very hour (Matthew
15:26-28).**

The Canaanite woman had a posture of complete brokenness and humility and compared herself to a dog begging for table scraps. Her poorness in spirit moved Jesus to give her what she asked for.

Simon Peter, Isaiah, and the Canaanite woman all had encounters with God and responded in poorness of spirit. They became like beggars before a righteous and holy God, broken and needy. In response, God gave them what they needed.

Unless you see the Lord Jesus Christ and respond in a posture of brokenness, you cannot be saved. Your faith cannot rest on the backs of your parents or on any aspect of your heritage or accomplishments. You must see yourself as a beggar in the sight of a righteous and holy God and respond in humility and brokenness.

■ PUT IT IN WRITING

- Have you ever been broken before God and realized your complete need for Him? What did that moment look like?
- How has discovering your need for God changed your posture toward Him? What do you need to stop relying on or let go of so that you can completely depend on God?

God has children, but He
has no grandchildren. You
have to be born again.”

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DEPENDENCE ON GOD

■ PONDER IT

If there was ever a man who should have difficulty seeing himself as bankrupt, it was the Apostle Paul. He was high in society, from a notable tribe of Israel, a Pharisee, and a Roman citizen. He had every earthly reason to boast about his heritage and accomplishments. He was fluent in several languages and a world traveler. He perfectly kept the Jewish laws and knew Scripture forward and backward. But one day, he encountered Jesus, and his heart radically changed. He realized his spiritual bankruptcy and responded in brokenness. Later as he wrote to the Philippian church, he said:

But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ (Philippians 3:7).

When you become a spiritual beggar, marked with brokenness, you become dependent on Christ alone. As you mature as a believer, you have to stop depending on other things to define your righteousness.

Like Paul, you might come from wealth, status, and education. You might have a high IQ and have degrees from prestigious institutions. But your heritage or accomplishments do not make you more righteous or spiritual than anyone else.

You might have a strong financial position or be proud of your good reputation in your community. But these things do not make you right before God. You cannot take material wealth with you to Heaven, and your reputation before God is the only one that matters.

You may have a charming personality and be very good-looking. When you walk into a room, people notice. But these things don't matter on the Day of Judgment. When you choose Jesus, you depend on what God says about who you are in Christ.

No matter who you are or where you came from, you are spiritually bankrupt without God. When you begin to understand that, you stop

depending on what is temporary and start depending on the Lord Jesus Christ.

The standard God sets for righteousness is perfection. (See Matthew 5:48.) That standard can only be met through the atoning death of the Lord Jesus Christ. When you trust in Jesus alone for your salvation, the righteousness of Jesus is imputed or credited to you. Unless you understand how spiritually bankrupt you are in the sight of a righteous and holy God, you will not be dependent upon Him. You won't see yourself as "poor in spirit."

It's tempting to compare yourself to someone else, especially someone whose sin makes your sin look smaller. This allows us to convince ourselves that our own sin isn't that bad. But when you measure yourself against any standard other than Jesus Christ, your measurements are off, and you allow false pride to enter your heart. Only when you measure yourself by the standard of Almighty God alone and in a spirit of brokenness can you be spiritually poor enough to accept His righteousness on your behalf.

First, discover your need for God. Then, depend on Him alone. Finally, declare your dependence on the Lord and lay your pride in the dust.

■ PUT IT IN WRITING

- What earthly honors, possessions, habits, or accomplishments do you substitute for dependence on God?
- When did you discover your need for God? Are you depending on Him alone? What would it look like for you to declare your dependence on the Lord and lay your pride in the dust?

I'd rather be in Heaven saying my
ABC's than in Hell spouting philosophy.

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THE SPIRITUAL BEGGAR'S BLESSEDNESS

■ PONDER IT

When people truly have nothing, they will do whatever they must to get what they need, no matter how embarrassing it may seem. They will walk in the streets, boldly asking for money, and dig in dumpsters looking for food. They don't look around to see who is watching, because survival is the only thing that matters.

That is how we need to depend on Jesus—publicly and unashamedly. This is the right response as broken beggars before the Lord. When you are poor in spirit, you leave your pride in the dust and follow him like a beggar follows one who has bread—openly and desperately.

The spiritual beggar is blessed. It might sound miserable to be a spiritual beggar, but the Bible tells us we are blessed if we are spiritual beggars.

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

It is a blessing because it is the only way you will get to Heaven.

For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: “I dwell in the high and holy place, with him who has a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble” (Isaiah 57:15a).

All sin is rooted in pride, and no pride is welcome in Heaven. Until a person deals with the pride in his heart, he is not ready and willing to receive Jesus Christ as his personal Savior and Lord.

This Beatitude is first because it is the foundation of every other blessing. If you can't become poor in spirit, it is very difficult for you to receive the other blessings.

...“Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3-4).

Until you lay your pride in the dust, you cannot be saved. Until you come to the end of your own self-effort and all the things you have depended on, you will not be ready to completely depend on Christ alone. If you already have everything you need to be successful and right, then you don't need God. Even God cannot fill what is already full. We'll never come alive spiritually until we admit we are spiritually dead.

Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, ‘We see.’ Therefore your sin remains” (John 9:41).

You cannot strut into the presence of God. You must recognize that you are spiritually devastated and bankrupt to the point of being a beggar. Then when you come into God's presence, you simply cling to the cross and trust Jesus alone for your righteousness. This is where it begins. We must come to Jesus in poorness in spirit as spiritual beggars in order to reap heavenly blessings.

■ PUT IT IN WRITING

- What would it look like for you to unashamedly display and declare your dependence on God?
- Where does pride manifest in your life? What keeps you from positioning yourself as a spiritual beggar before God?

Pride drives wedges; humility
always builds bridges of love.

ADRIAN ROGERS

DAY 6

WHEN BANKRUPTCY BECOMES A BLESSING

■ PRACTICE IT

Jesus asks us to come to Him as spiritual beggars, but He does not send us away empty-handed. He meets the spiritual needs of anyone who calls on Him. No earthly asset can satisfy your spirit; you need to depend on Jesus Christ day by day. Respond to him in your spiritual bankruptcy and He will bless you.

If you have not been saved, you need to repent of your sin and receive Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and Lord. You need to recognize your spiritual bankruptcy and accept the free gift of salvation in Christ. The Bible says that if you believe, you will be saved. (See Acts 16:31.) Trust in the Lord and commit your life to Him. When you see who He is, recognize your need for Him, and trust Him, He'll save you. Pray something like this:

Dear Lord Jesus, I need You today. Help me not to be ashamed of You. Help me to receive You now as my Lord and Savior—not only in my heart but publicly. Come into my heart and forgive my sins and help me to live a life that pleases You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

■ PROCLAIM IT

If you prayed to receive Christ, please share your decision with another Christian you know or with your pastor. We would also like to hear about it, so that we can provide you with free resources to help you grow in your new faith. Please let us know by going to lwf.org/discover-jesus, scrolling down the page, and clicking on I BELIEVE.

Write down your testimony of how you came to know Jesus. Be sure to include how you first became aware that you needed Jesus and how Jesus met that need. Consider the things you used to depend on for your righteousness and describe how you see those things today in light of what Jesus has done for you. Pray about the people with whom God is asking you to share your story.

Evangelism is one beggar telling
another beggar how to find bread.

ADRIAN ROGERS