



Week 8: THE Path of GrowN – Poor In Spirit – Matthew 5:3
November 1st, 2023

9/13 th - The WHY(God’sRoles)	(Sp. Disciplines -j 8 weeks)	11/8 th –
9/20 th – The Payback(P.B.A. Prodigal. God’s Grace means..)	10/4 th – Meet the Bible	11/15 th –
9/27 th –The Power in Community	10/11 th – Why Suffering?	11/22 nd –
THE Path of GrowN	10/18 th – Why Righteous?	11/29 th – ADVENT
	10/25 th – Prayer	12/6 th – WNC Tmas Party?
	11/1 st – Poor In Spirit	12/ 13 th – Family Worship

[Week ? = Understanding the Kingdom of God????]

Series Resources: How People Grow by Cloud/Townsend and Cloud, H., & Townsend, J. (2009). *How People Grow: What the Bible Reveals About Personal Growth*. Zondervan. Celebration of Discipline by Richard Foster

Week 2: Bailey, K. E. (2005). *The Cross and the Prodigal: Luke 15 through the Eyes of Middle Eastern Peasants* (Second Edition, pp. 42–44). IVP Books.

Handouts:

Week 1 – God’s Roles Chart. Week 2 – Community. Week 4 – The Bible. Week 5- Suffering Verses. Week 8 – Devotional: Poor In Spirit

GrowN Concept #1: Quadrant Growth

Luke 2:52 HCSB *And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and with people.*

Jesus grew: Intellectually ● Physically ● Spiritually ● Socially

GrowN Concept #2: The Inheritance of Reconciliation

The Long-term Goal of GrowN: **2 Corinthians 5:18-21. NLT**

18 And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to Himself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to Him. 19 For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, no longer counting people’s sins against them. And He gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. 20 So we are Christ’s ambassadors; God is making His appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, “Come back to God!” 21 For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.

YES: Reconciling = Living your Life OUTLOUD with others so they may see Jesus in action.

NO: Reconciling ≠ You are going to Hell if you don’t accept Jesus. Stop SINNING! Never saying anything. God gives you the abundant life – including lots of \$\$\$ - here on earth.

THE Payback: I have earned this, God ↔ God cannot love me because...I have sinned so...

GrowN Concept #3: God is FOR me – There is no “God cannot love me because...”

Romans 8:31-32

What then are we to say about these things?^(C) If God is for us, who is against us?^(E)

32 He did not even spare His own Son^(E) but offered Him up for us all;^(E)

how will He not also with Him grant us everything? HCSB

GrowN Concept #4: God will PROVIDE for me - I do not have to EARN His love.

Matthew 6:33 (25 – don’t worry about your life)

But seek first the kingdom of God^(A) and His righteousness,^(B) and all these things will be provided for you.^(C)

GrowN Concept #5: THE Power in Community

I. The Power of Relationships in Community II. The Power of Acceptance in Community III. The Power of Forgiveness in Community

GrowN Concept #6:

[Disciplines: C&T – The Bible. Role of Suffering & Grief. Righteousness. Discipline. Spiritual Poverty. Obedience. Sin & Temptation. Truth. Activity. Time. FOSTER – Meditation. Prayer. Fasting. Study. Simplicity. Solitude. Submission. Service. Confession. Worship. Guidance. Celebration.]

How People Grow – Not a therapy book but a book on the sanctification process. Does not discount therapy (it is being written by two of them!) but ADDS the sanctification process to the therapeutical model.



Week 8: THE Path of GrowN – Poor In Spirit – Matthew 5:3
November 1st, 2023

2 Peter 3:18

¹⁷ Therefore, dear friends, since you know this in advance, be on your guard,^(A) so that you are not led away by the error of lawless people and fall from your own stability. ¹⁸ **But grow** in the grace and knowledge^(A) of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity.^{(a)(B)} Amen.^(b) **HCSB**

With our FIVE GrowN concepts as a foundation:

- #1. Quadrant Growth.
- #2. Becoming a Reconciler.
- #3. Knowing God is for me.
- #4. Knowing God will provide for me.
- #5. Understanding the POWER in Community.

NOW WHAT do we actually DO?

[Disciplines: C&T – The Bible. Role of Suffering & Grief. Righteousness. Discipline. **Spiritual Poverty**. Obedience. Sin & Temptation. Truth. Activity. Time. **FOSTER** – Meditation. Prayer. Fasting. **Study**. Simplicity. Solitude. Submission. Service. Confession. Worship. Guidance. Celebration.]

Would you like to know the cure for narcissism?

- Self-Aggrandizement?
- Weakness,
- Unfulfilled needs,
- Emotional injuries
- Immaturity
- Sin?

Luke 18:9-14

⁹ Jesus told this parable to certain people who had convinced themselves that they were righteous and who looked on everyone else with disgust: ¹⁰ “Two people went up to the temple to pray. One was a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee stood and prayed about himself with these words, ‘God, I thank you that I’m not like everyone else—crooks, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week. I give a tenth of everything I receive.’ ¹³ **But the tax collector stood at a distance. He wouldn’t even lift his eyes to look toward heaven. Rather, he struck his chest and said, ‘God, show mercy to me, a sinner.’** ¹⁴ I tell you, this person went down to his home justified rather than the Pharisee. All who lift themselves up will be brought low, and those who make themselves low will be lifted up.” ¹

Matthew 5:3

- New King James Version: **“Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**
- Common English Bible: **“Happy are people who are hopeless, because the kingdom of heaven is theirs.**
- Contemporary English Version: **God blesses those people who depend only on him. They belong to the kingdom of heaven!**

¹ [Common English Bible](#) (Nashville, TN: Common English Bible, 2011), Lk 18:9–14.



Week 8: THE Path of GrowN – Poor In Spirit – Matthew 5:3
November 1st, 2023

- Easy To Read Version: **Great blessings belong to those who know they are spiritually in need. God’s kingdom belongs to them.**
- God’s Word Translation: **“Blessed are those who recognize they are spiritually helpless. The kingdom of heaven belongs to them.**
- International Children’s Bible: **“Those people who know they have great spiritual needs are happy. The kingdom of heaven belongs to them.**
- International Standard Version: **“How blessed are those who are destitute in spirit, because the kingdom from heaven belongs to them.**
- J. B. Philips New Testament Version: **Then he began his teaching by saying to them, “How happy are the humble-minded, for the kingdom of Heaven is theirs!**

This evening we’ll be:

- **exploring the concept of being Poor in Spirit, Spiritual Poverty, being Humble.**
- **and how we can respond to what we learn, personally [internal action] and with others. [action in our community]**

ASK THE GROUP: INVITE A SCRIBE TO THE BOARD

Before we begin, let’s find out where we are & what we know together.

Make a list:

- What is being Poor in Spirit? Spiritual Poverty? Humble?

IF WE TRULY UNDERSTOOD HOW DESPERATELY WE NEED JESUS, MOMENT BY MOMENT, OUR LIFE AND PRACTICE WOULD CHANGE.

1. WHERE ARE WE STARTING FROM: UNDERSTANDING OUR DEPRAVITY

depravity, total depravity. *Depravity* refers both to the damaged relationship between God and humans and to the corruption of human nature such that there is within every human an ongoing tendency toward sin. *Total depravity* refers to the extent and comprehensiveness of the effects of sin on all humans such that all are unable to do anything to obtain salvation. Total depravity, therefore, does not mean that humans are thoroughly sinful but rather that they are totally incapable of saving themselves. The term suggests as well that the effects of the Fall extend to every dimension of human existence, so that we dare not trust any ability (such as reason) that we remain capable of exercising in our fallen state.²

² Stanley Grenz, David Guretzki, and Cherith Fee Nordling, *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 37.



Week 8: THE Path of GrowN – Poor In Spirit – Matthew 5:3
November 1st, 2023

A. The Meaning of Depravity.

Two things are meant by the expression “original sin”: the first sin of Adam, and the sinful nature possessed by every man since Adam, due to Adam’s first transgression. This sinful nature is called “depravity.” Depravity consists of four things which are true of every individual when he is born.

1. He is completely void of original righteousness. “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me” (Ps. 51:5).

2. He does not possess any holy affection toward God. “Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever Amen” (Rom. 1:25). “For men shall be lovers of their own selves ... traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God....” (2 Tm. 3:2–4)

3. There is nothing from without a man, that can defile him; but the things which come out of him, these are they that defile the man. “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man” (Mk. 7:15, 21–23).

4. He has a continuous bias toward evil. “And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Gn. 6:5).

Lest the term “depravity” be misunderstood, it is well to note the following, quoted from *Lectures in Systematic Theology*, by Thiessen:

From the negative standpoint, it does not mean that every sinner is devoid of all qualities pleasing to men; that he commits, or is prone to commit every form of sin; that he is as bitterly opposed to God as it is possible for him to be ... Jesus recognized the existence of pleasing qualities in some individuals (Mark 10:21; Matt. 23:23).... From the positive standpoint, it does mean that every sinner is totally destitute of that love to God which is the fundamental requirement of the law. “Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might” (Dt. 6:4, 5). See Matt. 22:35–38; that he is supremely given to a preference of himself to God (2 Tim. 3:2–4); that he has an aversion to God which on occasion becomes active enmity to Him: “Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Rom. 8:7); that his every faculty is disordered and corrupted: “Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart” (Eph. 4:18); that he has no thought, feeling, or deed of which God can fully approve: “For I know that in me (that is in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not” (Rom. 7:18); and that he has entered upon a line of constant progress in depravity from which he can in no wise turn away in his own strength (Rom. 7:18).

PRAISE THE LORD THAT JESUS CAME TO SET US FROM FROM OUR OWN DEPRAVED STATE & RECONCILE US TO A RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD THROUGH HIS DEATH, BURIAL, RESURRECTION, & ASCENSION, BREAKING SINS POWER OVER US. WE WERE WITHOUT HOPE IN THIS WORLD & THE NEXT.



Week 8: THE Path of GrowN – Poor In Spirit – Matthew 5:3
November 1st, 2023

Personally, it is my opinion that one of the biggest problems facing the church at large today is:

- that we don't recognize the depth to which we are depraved & that we need Jesus moment by moment, [we pretty much think we're fine, pretty good people]
- how much we need the empowerment of the Holy Spirit,
- That we lean into our own understanding the majority of the time to resolve the problems, circumstances, issues we face instead of pausing for just a moment to ask for His wisdom, His direction, His resolution—we...I...should be more frightened to move forward until I KNOW it's not my wisdom, my ego, my emotions, my "knowledge" because the damage that can happen to those He loves is just too dang great to risk it. [Oh Jesus, when will I learn, forgive my arrogance.]
- We don't lean into the wisdom of counselors to help our understanding, expand situational awareness, to see problems or issues we don't see coming—[there are people who's eternity will be impacted by the decisions you make!! And the counsel was dismissed.]
- how dependent we need to be on connecting with Him through inhaling the Word, prayer, service, sacrifice, and love—we show love by and large to ourselves more than others, how will people know we are His without the love that can only come from Him that they might experience that freedom, safety, & acceptance for themselves?

I'm including myself completely. I need to pray more, I need to fast for breakthrough—for myself & for others, I need more of His compassion, I need to work at staying healthily connected—and transparently, I haven't ever felt like I've gotten a good handle on any of that during the course of my walk with Jesus, and honestly, I don't know that I ever will—we LEARN to live in & find our acceptance in Him and not our performance or other's opinions—though we should, by His power, continue to work on it. [not submitting to comparison, competition, or condemnation. AMEN]

"This is not heaven." Pr. Orleen Haseltine

Tell the Broken people make broken choices story:

What does healthy dependency on/in Jesus look like through the Holy Spirit in our daily lives?

How people grow: Ch 14.

Spiritual poverty is about **living in reality**. A good way to understand this is to think of spiritual poverty as **experiencing our state of incompleteness before God**. This can be due to weaknesses, unfulfilled needs, emotional injuries and hurts at the hands of others, and our own immaturities and sins. It has to do with those parts of ourselves that are not what they should be and that **we cannot repair in our own strength**. When people experience at a deep level their neediness, incompleteness, and dependency—the way they actually are—they are often overwhelmed. Spiritual poverty is the cure for narcissism, self-righteousness, and a host of other problems. When our eyes are opened to our brokenness, we do not "feel better about ourselves"; rather, we feel that something is terribly wrong.



Week 8: THE Path of GrowN – Poor In Spirit – Matthew 5:3
November 1st, 2023

HERE IS OUR ANSWER:

Yet Jesus calls this a “blessed” condition because it helps us get closer to God. ***Our state of incompleteness drives us outside of ourselves to God as the source of healing and hope. When we are comfortably independent, it is easy to avoid our need for God.***

Brokenheartedness is related to spiritual poverty. Brokenheartedness is a state of being wounded or crushed by some loss, person, hurt, injustice, or circumstance. When a person is downcast because of an emotional, relational, or career injury, he is brokenhearted. God has special tenderness for this condition: “The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit” (Ps. 34:18; see also Ps. 147:3; Isa. 61:1). Brokenheartedness often brings about a sense of our spiritual poverty as it shows us our need.

Just as we see in Jesus’ parable of the Tax Collector and the Sinner in Luke 18.

2. What is being poor in spirit?

440. What is it to be *poor in spirit*?

It is to have a spiritual conviction that we have nothing of our own, nothing but what God bestows upon us, and that we can do nothing good without God’s help and grace, thus counting ourselves as nothing, and in all throwing ourselves upon the mercy of God; in brief, as St. Chrysostom explains it, *spiritual poverty is humility*. (Hom. in Matt. 15.)

3. Are there promises with being poor in spirit?

Those who know that they are poor will be blessed by God

- God will satisfy the poor in spirit Mt 5:3 pp Lk 6:20-21 *See also* Mt 5:6
- God will save the poor in spirit Ps 116:6
- God will accept the poor in spirit Ps 51:17; Isa 66:2
- God will be close to the poor in spirit Ps 34:18; Isa 57:15
- God will hear the prayers of the poor in spirit Ps 102:17
- God will give grace to the poor in spirit Jas 4:6,10; 1Pe 5:5-6; Pr 3:34
- God will meet the needs of the poor in spirit Isa 61:1; Lk 1:53

4. Why is Spiritual Poverty Important?

- a. **SPIRITUAL POVERTY HELPS US GROW** because it is literally *spiritual* poverty. The Greek term for “spirit” used in Matthew 5:3 (“Blessed are the poor in spirit”) is the word indicating the spiritual dimension of life. In other words, the experience of poverty is both practical and spiritual. Being aware of our incompleteness orients us toward God and his ways, where he awaits us with all we need to grow and repair. Spiritual poverty is a rich part of the spiritual growth process. Here is how.
- b. **SPIRITUAL POVERTY IS REQUIRED FOR A SAVING FAITH.** No one can become a Christian who does not admit, at some level, her lostness and hopelessness in freeing herself from the prison and penalty of sin (Rom. 3:23). Otherwise, Jesus’ death is meaningless and unnecessary. So to come to saving faith, we must be broken. What often happens,



Week 8: THE Path of GrowN – Poor In Spirit – Matthew 5:3
November 1st, 2023

however, is that we accept Christ as Savior because of our brokenness and then we live our Christian lives as if we were whole. Although we have God dwelling inside us, we all still have unfinished parts that need to become mature and sanctified. This is why the Bible teaches us to continue in the faith walk as we began it: “So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him” (Col. 2:6).

- c. **SPIRITUAL POVERTY DEVELOPS A HUNGER FOR GOD.** Spiritual poverty drives us to find solutions for our neediness and, ultimately, to find God. Those who know they are truly needy are more motivated to look beyond themselves to the Lord. For example, those in need often become humble in spirit, due to the difficulty of their condition. From there, it is a short step to finding God in so many ways. There is a strong correlation between those who are humble and those who seek after him: “The humble have seen it and are glad; You who seek God, let your heart revive” (Ps. 69:32 NASB). Many people who would not otherwise have invested much time in God’s ways have sought spiritual solutions to their problems. Need and emptiness goad them toward him after they have exhausted their own resources. Reflect on the difficult times in your life, and see if those were also times when you sought out the Lord more. This helps to explain why the Bible spends so much time blessing the spiritually needy and confronting the spiritually complacent. **Without poverty, there is no motivating hunger. Lukewarmness is the hallmark of someone who has not yet become poor in spirit and therefore is not hungry. Jesus had harsh words for the lukewarm church of Laodicea: “You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked” (Rev. 3:17).** There is a paradox in spiritual growth: People who are more dys-functional yet poorer in spirit tend to grow more than people who are less dysfunctional and less poor in spirit. One would think that people with more problems would struggle more with growing, and they certainly do struggle. However—and I have seen this more times than I can count in clinical and counseling settings—poverty drives hunger. You can’t stop a needy person from grasping onto God, while many people in less severe circumstances easily fall away.
- d. **SPIRITUAL POVERTY HELPS US ENDURE THE PAIN OF GROWTH.** Spiritual growth is hard work. It requires sacrifice, suffering, loss, and commitment. It is the narrow gate that relatively few enter (Matt. 7:13–14). It means losing your life, including all the old comfortable patterns, to find your life in Christ (Matt. 16:25). It is hard sometimes to see why we need to continue in our small group or face our issues or even pray or read the Bible. Yet growth is the only solution to our brokenness. Ultimately, the pain of growth is more bearable than the pain of our poverty. **Poverty makes it hard to go backward in the process. Once your eyes are opened to your need, it is difficult to live as though you had none. It is as if a door has been opened that can’t be shut.**
- e. **SPIRITUAL POVERTY KEEPS US LIVING RELATIONALLY.** Spiritual poverty and brokenheartedness drive us to emotional connectedness, both to God and to safe people. Coming to the end of ourselves reduces us to a childlike state of need and helplessness, which Jesus said is good: “Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it at all” (Mark 10:15 NASB). Children by nature are relationally



Week 8: THE Path of GrowN – Poor In Spirit – Matthew 5:3
November 1st, 2023

oriented. When they are in trouble or pain, the first thing they do is reach out for a protective, comforting parent. They instinctively seek out relationship without even thinking about it. They don't say to themselves, *I'll be strong and ride this one out*, or *I'll just think positive thoughts*. They ask for help from someone outside themselves. One of the blessings of spiritual poverty is that it helps restore to us God's design of a relationally based life. We learn to receive comfort, support, and acceptance from others, which then strengthens us to continue. Relationship is the fuel of life. We need to internalize great amounts of relationship all during our lifetime to persevere and grow.

- f. **SPIRITUAL POVERTY HELPS US ENTER THE DEEPER- progress in a more mature LIFE.** Our broken-hearted state also provokes us to move beyond spiritual immaturity into a deeper walk of faith. Although we all begin our spiritual lives as babes (1 Peter 2:2), God did not intend for us to stay in that stage of development forever. We are to move from elementary things to maturity in Christ (Heb. 6:1). The deeper walk takes us into many areas: the mystery of God's nature; the wonders of the Bible; the complexities of our own character, personality, and issues; and the intricacies of intimate relationships with others.
- g. **SPIRITUAL POVERTY DOES NOT ALLOW US TO STAY SHALLOW.** Once we are on the path to growth, we are called to continue it at new levels: "Deep calls to deep" (Ps. 42:7). We don't "arrive" in the faith, though we do mature and change. We are always moving forward or backward. Ask yourself if you are disconnected, complacent, or bored with your spiritual life. Ask others if you seem that way to them. If this is the case, it may be a signal to **ask God to help you** become poor in spirit and thereby find him at deeper levels.
- h. **SPIRITUAL POVERTY GUIDES US TO SPECIFIC GROWTH AREAS.** Spiritual poverty helps us find the right issues to heal. Physically hungry people are not always hungry for the same things. They may desire meat, vegetables, or fruit. In the same way, spiritually hungry people are not always hungry for the same things. Spiritual poverty can help us find particular areas of need and growth. **It is disheartening to hear stories of people who take their needs and problems to a Christian leader who says something like, "Your problem [meaning this is what I tell everyone who comes to me] is simply a lack of faith/secret sin/lack of surrender/lack of being in the Word/etc."** Although we all need to address these issues, sometimes the problem is different. An old Chinese proverb says, "Beware of the man whose only tool is a hammer, for he sees every problem as a nail." In the same way, beware of trying to deal with your spiritual poverty by a "one size fits all" formula. **[be thoughtful of the advice you receive and who it is from-is it life-giving & helps you get closer to Jesus in your transparency & authenticity OR is it judgmental, critical, & condemning-legalistic? Does their life lived in front of you reveal grace/truth in practice?]** How does our poverty lead us to specific areas of need and immaturity? **By making seekers out of us.** Seekers tend to look in many directions for answers and help. They pray and ask God for insight and wisdom about their condition. They search the Bible. They ask mature people for counsel. And God promises that in his timetable they



**Week 8: THE Path of GrowN – Poor In Spirit – Matthew 5:3
November 1st, 2023**

will find what they are looking for. He loves for us to seek. Jesus said, “So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you” (Luke 11:9). Some people may find their poverty leads them to realizing an incompleteness in being loved and emotionally connected. The Bible teaches that we are to be “rooted and grounded in love” (Eph. 3:17 NASB). Yet those who have lived lives devoid of comfort and support do not have this grounding. Other people find that they are broken in the area of self-control and responsibility. They allow themselves to be controlled by others, or they have an area of life, such as eating, that is out of control. They are poor in spirit in taking ownership of their lives. Still other people become aware of their own hatred of and judgment for their imperfections. They find that they cannot make mistakes without experiencing harsh feelings toward themselves.

- i. **Poverty accomplishes its task by helping people ferret out these often painful insights and realizations.** When people find these arenas of growth, they can work them out in the spiritual growth process we describe in this book. Identifying the areas is an important key—areas such as these:

- Establishing a loving and worshipful relationship with God and his ways
- Maintaining deep, vulnerable relationships with others
- Being free to make decisions based on values rather than on fear or guilt
- Knowing what we are and are not responsible for
- Accepting our badness and weaknesses as well as those of others
- Functioning as an adult rather than as a child in life and relationships
- Achieving competency in some job or career area
- Having a clear and balanced morality

ASK THE GROUP: INVITE A SCRIBE TO THE BOARD → spend some time here if possible.

Make a list: What do they think?

5. What do we do about what we’ve learned? How to put this into practice?

- a. Repent-tell God we’re sorry for doing things our way instead of His.
- b. Ask for His help REPEATEDLY-wisdom, revelation, empowerment, His LOVE/COMPASSION. Seek Him wholeheartedly.
- c. Be honest about any sin, hurt/loss, weakness in our lives.
- d. Inhale scripture
 - i. What Bible family can we look at for their example? 1. David 2. Paul
- e. Is there anyone I need to ask forgiveness from for being critical/judgmental when they revealed a place of “poor in spirit” to me? Giving pull yourself up by your bootstraps advice?
- f. Create a safe feedback look with a mature Christian friend-Foundational 15.
- g. Ask for His grace-we don’t grunt & strain this out on our own-Trust the Holy Spirit to be at work in our lives & be careful of unrealistic expectations of yourself & others.



Week 8: THE Path of GrowN – Poor In Spirit – Matthew 5:3
November 1st, 2023

Matthew 11:28-30 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 and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

THIS COMING WEEK, AS WE WORK THROUGH OUR DEVOTIONAL, LET’S INCORPORATE THE PRINCIPLES WE’VE BEEN LEARNING THROUGH GrowN:

2 Peter 3:18

*17 Therefore, dear friends, since you know this in advance, be on your guard,^(A) so that you are not led away by the error of lawless people and fall from your own stability. **18 But grow** in the grace and knowledge^(A) of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity.^{(a)(B)} Amen.^(b) HCSB*

With our FIVE GrowN concepts as a foundation:

#1. Quadrant Growth.

[all parts of us, intellectually, physically, spiritually, & relationally-and it’s not linear, but messy so we can have appropriate expectations of ourselves & others instead of being downcast or frustrated at what looks like inconsistent progress or not fast enough progress.]

#2. Becoming a Reconciler.

[Because we have been reconciled & have been INVITED to participate with Him]

#3. Knowing God is for me.

[He loves us, created this process, & is PLEASED that we are participating with Him.]

#4. Knowing God will provide for me.

[We don’t crank out our own resources, heck, we don’t even know what we need most of the time. His love & wisdom provides in HIS timing, for HIS glory.]

#5. Understanding the POWER in Community.

[Yes there IS power in community, even when we want to run, or hide, or disconnect—we do it to our detriment AND to the detriment of those in the community-they need us too!! If we don’t show up, they don’t get to enjoy God through us either.]

NOTES:

5450

poverty, spiritual

The lack of spiritual riches and gifts is seen by Scripture as an especially distressing cause of poverty. Awareness of spiritual poverty leads to a turning towards God in order to receive the riches he graciously offers through the gospel.

The ungodly are spiritually poor

They lack faith Mt 13:58 pp Mk 6:6

They lack understanding Pr 10:21; Isa 5:13; 56:10-11; Jer 5:4; Hos 4:6; 1Ti 6:5

They lack God Eph 2:12

They lack eternal life Mt 16:26 pp Lk 9:25; Lk 12:20-21; 16:22-23; Jas 5:1-6

They lack knowledge of their spiritual poverty Rev 3:17



**Week 8: THE Path of GrowN – Poor In Spirit – Matthew 5:3
November 1st, 2023**

Spiritual poverty may be a judgment
Am 8:11 *See also* Ps 51:11; 74:9; La 2:9; Eze 7:26; Mt 13:14-15; Rev 2:5

The godly are aware of their poverty

David recognised that he was poor and needy Ps 40:17 *See also* Ps 34:6; 35:10; 70:5; 86:1; 109:22

Others recognise their spiritual poverty Ro 7:18 *See also* Job 42:6; Ps 8:3-4; Lk 5:8; 7:6; Ro 7:24

Those who know that they are poor will be blessed by God

~~God will satisfy the poor in spirit Mt 5:3 pp Lk 6:20-21 *See also* Mt 5:6~~

~~God will save the poor in spirit Ps 116:6~~

~~God will accept the poor in spirit Ps 51:17; Isa 66:2~~

~~God will be close to the poor in spirit Ps 34:18; Isa 57:15~~

~~God will hear the prayers of the poor in spirit Ps 102:17~~

~~God will give grace to the poor in spirit Jas 4:6,10; 1Pe 5:5-6; Pr 3:34~~

~~God will meet the needs of the poor in spirit Isa 61:1; Lk 1:53~~

Spiritual riches are better than material riches

Poverty with righteousness is better Ps 37:16; Pr 15:16-17; 16:8; 19:1,22; 28:6

Poverty with wisdom is better Pr 16:16; 19:1,22; 28:6

Poverty with humility is better Pr 16:19

Poverty with peace and quiet are better Pr 17:1

Spiritual riches exalt the poor Jas 1:9

Spiritual riches endure Heb 10:34; 11:37-40; 1Pe 1:4

Spiritual riches more than compensate for material poverty 2Co 6:10; Jas 2:5; Rev 2:9

See also

1620 beatitudes, the

5580 thirst

5801 brokenness

8276 humility

8808 riches

Biblical examples:

David recognised that he was poor and needy Ps 40:17 *See also* Ps 34:6; 35:10; 70:5; 86:1; 109:22

Others recognise their spiritual poverty Ro 7:18 *See also* Job 42:6; Ps 8:3-4; Lk 5:8; 7:6; Ro 7:24

Psalm 40

For the music leader. Of David. A psalm.

¹ I put all my hope in the LORD.

He leaned down to me;

he listened to my cry for help.



**Week 8: THE Path of GrowN – Poor In Spirit – Matthew 5:3
November 1st, 2023**

² He lifted me out of the pit of death,
out of the mud and filth,
and set my feet on solid rock.

He steadied my legs.

³ He put a new song in my mouth,
a song of praise for our God.

Many people will learn of this
and be amazed;
they will trust the LORD.

⁴ Those who put their trust in the LORD,
who pay no attention to the proud
or to those who follow lies,
are truly happy!

⁵ You, LORD my God!
You've done so many things—
your wonderful deeds
and your plans for us—
no one can compare with you!

If I were to proclaim
and talk about all of them,
they would be too numerous
to count!

⁶ You don't relish sacrifices
or offerings;
you don't require
entirely burned offerings
or compensation offerings—
but you have given me ears!

⁷ So I said, "Here I come!
I'm inscribed in the written scroll.

⁸ I want to do your will, my God.
Your Instruction is deep within me."

⁹ I've told the good news
of your righteousness
in the great assembly.
I didn't hold anything back—
as you well know, LORD!

¹⁰ I didn't keep your righteousness
only to myself.

I declared your faithfulness
and your salvation.

I didn't hide your loyal love



**Week 8: THE Path of GrowN – Poor In Spirit – Matthew 5:3
November 1st, 2023**

and trustworthiness
from the great assembly.

¹¹ So now you, LORD—
don't hold back
any of your compassion from me.
Let your loyal love and faithfulness
always protect me
¹² because countless evils surround me.

My wrongdoings
have caught up with me—
I can't see a thing!
There's more of them
than hairs on my head—
my courage leaves me.

¹³ Favor me, LORD, and deliver me!
LORD, come quickly and help me!

¹⁴ Let those who seek my life,
who want me dead,
be disgraced and put to shame.

Let those who want to do me harm
be thoroughly frustrated
and humiliated.

¹⁵ Let those who say to me,
"Yes! Oh, yes!"
be destroyed by their shame.

¹⁶ But let all who seek you
celebrate and rejoice in you.
Let those who love your salvation
always say,
"The LORD is great!"

¹⁷ But me? I'm weak and needy.
Let my Lord think of me.

You are my help and my rescuer.
My God, don't wait any longer! ³

Psalm 34:18

¹⁸ The LORD is close
to the brokenhearted;
he saves those whose spirits

³ [*Common English Bible*](#) (Nashville, TN: Common English Bible, 2011), Ps 40.



Week 8: THE Path of GrowN – Poor In Spirit – Matthew 5:3
November 1st, 2023

are crushed.⁴

5:3 Each Beatitude includes a pronouncement of blessing, a description of the ones considered as blessed, and an explanation (**for**) of the blessing. **The poor in spirit** are those who recognize their spiritual poverty and, casting aside all self-dependence, seek God's grace.⁵

ON THE DOCTRINE OF BLESSEDNESS

435. What must we join with prayer in order to be grounded in the hope of salvation and blessedness?

Our own exertions for the attainment of blessedness.

Of this point the Lord himself says: *Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?* Luke 6:46. *Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.* Matt. 7:21.

436. What doctrine may we take as our guide in these exertions?

The doctrine of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is briefly set forth in his *Beatitudes*, or sentences on blessedness.

437. How many such sentences are there?

The nine following:

1. *Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*
 2. *Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.*
 3. *Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.*
 4. *Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.*
 5. *Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.*
 6. *Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.*
 7. *Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.*
 8. *Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*
 9. *Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.*
- Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven.* Matt. 5:3–12.

438. What is to be observed of all these sentences in order to their right understanding?

This: that the Lord proposed in these sentences a *doctrine* for the attainment of blessedness, as is expressly said in the Gospel: *He opened his mouth and taught*; but, being meek and lowly of heart, he proposed his doctrine not in the form of commandment, but of blessing, to those who should of their own free will receive and fulfill it. Consequently in each sentence or Beatitude we must consider, first, the doctrine or precept; secondly, the blessing or promise of reward.

⁴ [Common English Bible](#) (Nashville, TN: Common English Bible, 2011), Ps 34:17–18.

⁵ Jack W. Hayford, ed., [Spirit Filled Life Study Bible](#), electronic ed. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1997), Mt 5:3.



Week 8: THE Path of GrowN – Poor In Spirit – Matthew 5:3
November 1st, 2023

ON THE FIRST BEATITUDE

439. What is the Lord's first precept of blessedness?

They who would be blessed must be *poor in spirit*.

440. What is it to be *poor in spirit*?

It is to have a spiritual conviction that we have nothing of our own, nothing but what God bestows upon us, and that we can do nothing good without God's help and grace, thus counting ourselves as nothing, and in all throwing ourselves upon the mercy of God; in brief, as St. Chrysostom explains it, *spiritual poverty is humility*. (Hom. in Matt. 15.)

441. Can the rich, too, be poor in spirit?

Doubtless they can: if they consider that visible riches are corruptible and soon pass away, and can never compensate for the want of spiritual goods. *What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?* Matt. 16:26.

442. May not bodily poverty serve to the perfection of spiritual?

It may, if the Christian choose it voluntarily, for God's sake. Of this, Jesus Christ himself said to the rich man: *If thou wilt be perfect go, sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come and follow me*. Matt. 19:21.

443. What does our Lord promise to the poor in spirit?

The kingdom of heaven.

444. How is the kingdom of heaven theirs?

In the present life inwardly, and inchoately, by faith and hope; but in the life to come perfectly, by their being made partakers of everlasting blessedness.

In order that sorrow for sin may not reach to despair.

How People Grow: Cloud & Townsend

14

Water from a Deeper Well: Spiritual Poverty

Spiritual poverty is experiencing the reality of our condition.

Henry and I were meeting with a large Christian organization, and the topic of small groups in the church came up. We strongly support and see much value in small groups. We were discussing the needs that groups meet, how they operate, and so on.



**Week 8: THE Path of GrowN – Poor In Spirit – Matthew 5:3
November 1st, 2023**

One of the executives of the organization, who is a friend of mine, asked, “What difference do you see between groups for people with problems and groups for normal people?”

Henry and I looked at each other and said, “There is just one kind of group.”

This story illustrates a lingering problem in the church’s view of spiritual growth. Just about everyone would agree that we all need to grow spiritually. We need to be close to God, love each other, read the Bible, and apply its truths. But many do not believe that a major reason to grow is that we are in a deep and severe state of neediness and incompleteness.

Yet the Bible teaches that all of us are in this state. The parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector (Luke 18:9–14) and Paul’s personal anguish over his inability to do the right thing (Rom. 7:15–24) illustrate how much every person needs God’s grace and mercy. By our very nature, we are a broken people, with no hope except for God.

Not everyone is aware of his or her neediness, just as the Pharisee in Jesus’ parable did not recognize his. However, some are. Jesus described those who are aware of their neediness as *poor in spirit*: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:3). The Greek for “poor in spirit” indicates a cringing beggar, absolutely dependent on others for survival. Not a flattering picture of us! You don’t see people greeting each other in church with, “Wow, you’re such a cringing beggar. I’d like you to mentor me.” Yet the kingdom of heaven belongs to those who experience their dependency.

~~Spiritual poverty is about living in reality. A good way to understand this is to think of spiritual poverty as experiencing our state of incompleteness before God. This can be due to weaknesses, unfulfilled needs, emotional injuries and hurts at the hands of others, and our own immaturities and sins. It has to do with those parts of ourselves that are not what they should be and that we cannot repair in our own strength. When people experience at a deep level their neediness, incompleteness, and dependency—the way they actually are—they are often overwhelmed. Spiritual poverty is the cure for narcissism, self-righteousness, and a host of other problems. When our eyes are opened to our brokenness, we do not “feel better about ourselves”; rather, we feel that something is terribly wrong.~~

~~Yet Jesus calls this a “blessed” condition because it helps us get closer to God. Our state of incompleteness drives us outside of ourselves to God as the source of healing and hope. When we are comfortably independent, it is easy to avoid our need for God.~~

~~Brokenheartedness is related to spiritual poverty. Brokenheartedness is a state of being wounded or crushed by some loss, person, hurt, injustice, or circumstance. When a person is downcast because of an emotional, relational, or career injury, he is brokenhearted. God has special tenderness for this condition: “The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit” (Ps. 34:18; see also Ps. 147:3; Isa. 61:1). Brokenheartedness often brings about a sense of our spiritual poverty as it shows us our need.~~



**Week 8: THE Path of GrowN – Poor In Spirit – Matthew 5:3
November 1st, 2023**

When I tell strangers about the subject matter of this book, I glean information on their own stance toward spiritual poverty. I will meet someone on an airplane, for example, and we will talk about what we do. When I say that I write books, my seatmate may say, “So what do you write about?”

“I’m working on a book about spiritual, emotional, and personal growth,” I’ll reply, trying to cover all the bases.

Sometimes my seatmate’s eyes will glaze over, and he’ll say, “Sounds interesting,” and we’ll move on to sports or politics. But sometimes my companion will light up because the subject touched something important inside him. Then we will typically start talking about some struggle or issue he has had to face in life and how, through it, he experienced growth.

Now, I am not condemning the uninterested person. He may have been wounded in some growth group or process, or he may be one of those “together” people I have mentioned. The point I am trying to make is that all of us need to get to a needy place before growth can happen.

WHY SPIRITUAL POVERTY IS IMPORTANT IN HELPING

PEOPLE GROW

MANY PEOPLE WHO HAVE a heart for God and growth have the same split idea of who goes in what group as that friend of mine had. They want to deepen their walk, become more Christlike, and know God more intimately. But they feel disconnected from those with life problems, such as depression, addictions, anxiety, a marriage/family/relationship problem, or a work obstacle. Those without these struggles may feel compassion and concern for those with them, but they can’t relate to them. They will sometimes wonder why their friend can’t just get it together, snap out of it, or trust God more, since these solutions work for them. And when they counsel others this way, they run the risk of disheartening their friend so much that she could despair of even her trust in God himself: “For the despairing man there should be kindness from his friend; So that he does not forsake the fear of the Almighty” (Job 6:14 NASB).

We are not saying that everyone with life problems is poor in spirit. Some are in denial. Others blame their problems on other people. Still others believe that, given enough time, they can solve their problems all by themselves. These people have not yet come to the end of themselves, to the humble acceptance of reality that causes them to grieve as a signal that they understand their position (James 4:9–10). We are saying, however, that those with life problems have more opportunities to recognize their need for God’s healing, because the evidence is right there in front of them.

We are also not saying that those who don’t experience problems are in denial. There are many believers who love God, have good marriages and relationships, and have reasonably good lives, without catastrophes. They aren’t hiding anything. They aren’t deceptive or mean people. But they may lack a sense of their own brokenheartedness, because they are not as aware of their neediness as the reality would indicate.



**Week 8: THE Path of GrowN – Poor In Spirit – Matthew 5:3
November 1st, 2023**

Recently I ran into an old friend who had been in the same Christian organization with me many years ago. As we were catching up with each other, he told me that he had had a radical spiritual change. Knowing that he had always had a very solid and committed faith, I was curious. “Tell me about it,” I said.

“I went to a spiritual growth conference dealing with issues from the past. I didn’t think it really would relate to me, but I wanted to be open.

“The speaker taught about how our family backgrounds can affect our spiritual lives. The short version is that I became aware of how my family background affected me. My parents were caring, responsible Christian people, but they were judgmental and distant emotionally. I grew up cut off from my feelings and tied to my work and ministry. And I tended to criticize others unfairly.

“I realized how this hurt my marriage, my kids, and my friends. All of a sudden, I became overwhelmed with sadness and grief over my own hurt and what I had unknowingly done to others. As time went on, I worked on getting emotionally connected, and giving up criticism and judgment of myself and others.

“By the way, I wanted to know if, back in the old days, I also hurt you with my distance or judgment.”

Tears came to my eyes, not because he had hurt me, but because I could see how much he had carried inside for so long, trying as hard as he could to follow God, not knowing about all his issues. While I remembered my friend as very kind, I could feel that he was a different person from the man I had known. He was more approachable, more relational, and more open.

This is how spiritual poverty can help people grow. My friend became aware of his spiritual poverty, his particular hurt and emptiness, and his brokenness, and it changed his entire spiritual life, not to mention his relationships and ministry.

THE RICHNESS THAT SPIRITUAL POVERTY BRINGS

~~SPIRITUAL POVERTY HELPS US grow because it is literally *spiritual* poverty. The Greek term for “spirit” used in Matthew 5:3 (“Blessed are the poor in spirit”) is the word indicating the spiritual dimension of life. In other words, the experience of poverty is both practical and spiritual. Being aware of our incompleteness orients us toward God and his ways, where he awaits us with all we need to grow and repair.~~

~~Spiritual poverty is a rich part of the spiritual growth process. Here is how.~~

~~SPIRITUAL POVERTY IS REQUIRED FOR A SAVING FAITH. No one can become a Christian who does not admit, at some level, her lostness and hopelessness in freeing herself from the prison and penalty of sin (Rom. 3:23). Otherwise, Jesus’ death is meaningless and unnecessary. So to come to saving faith, we must be broken. What often happens, however, is that we accept Christ as Savior because of our brokenness and then we live our Christian lives as if we were whole. Although we have God dwelling inside us, we all still have unfinished parts that need to become mature and sanctified. This is why the Bible teaches us to~~



Week 8: THE Path of GrowN – Poor In Spirit – Matthew 5:3
November 1st, 2023

continue in the faith walk as we began it: “So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him” (Col. 2:6).

~~SPIRITUAL POVERTY DEVELOPS A HUNGER FOR GOD. Spiritual poverty drives us to find solutions for our neediness and, ultimately, to find God. Those who know they are truly needy are more motivated to look beyond themselves to the Lord. For example, those in need often become humble in spirit, due to the difficulty of their condition. From there, it is a short step to finding God in so many ways. There is a strong correlation between those who are humble and those who seek after him: “The humble have seen it and are glad; You who seek God, let your heart revive” (Ps. 69:32 NASB).~~

~~Many people who would not otherwise have invested much time in God’s ways have sought spiritual solutions to their problems. Need and emptiness goad them toward him after they have exhausted their own resources. Reflect on the difficult times in your life, and see if those were also times when you sought out the Lord more.~~

~~This helps to explain why the Bible spends so much time blessing the spiritually needy and confronting the spiritually complacent. Without poverty, there is no motivating hunger. Lukewarmness is the hallmark of someone who has not yet become poor in spirit and therefore is not hungry. Jesus had harsh words for the lukewarm church of Laodicea: “You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked” (Rev. 3:17).~~

~~There is a paradox in spiritual growth: People who are more dys-functional yet poorer in spirit tend to grow more than people who are less dysfunctional and less poor in spirit. One would think that people with more problems would struggle more with growing, and they certainly do struggle. However—and I have seen this more times than I can count in clinical and counseling settings—poverty drives hunger. You can’t stop a needy person from grasping onto God, while many people in less severe circumstances easily fall away.~~

~~I once worked with a Christian couple who fit both these descriptions. The husband, on the one hand, had a drinking problem, a sexual addiction, and a raging temper. He was a mess, but he was hungry. When he understood the gravity of his problems and his spiritual condition, he went through a long, painful period of deep grieving over what he had done to himself, God, and his family. He made amends to all he could. He went to counseling and several support groups a week, and he voraciously read the Bible and all the books on growth he could get his hands on. He was as vulnerable, correctable, and humble as he could be in his growth relationships. His growth took a long time, but he is a new man. He is grateful for all the grace God gave him, and he now has a fruitful ministry to others.~~

~~His wife, on the other hand, was caring, structured, and responsible, but she wasn’t very hungry for spiritual things. She went to church, read her Bible, prayed when she had time, and lived her life in a moral way. But she is pretty much where she was when I first met her. Her only problem back then, in her mind, was a crazy husband. And now she feels that life is better because he is better. I often tried to talk to her about her own hurts and issues, and she basically shut it all out. She just wasn’t hungry. Even though she has a basically good life, she touches no one deeply and lets no one in, including God. Her~~



Week 8: THE Path of GrowN – Poor In Spirit – Matthew 5:3
November 1st, 2023

children are distancing more from her as they grow, because there's nobody inside. She is getting busier and busier having lunch with friends and shopping.

The more broken we are, the more God can grow us up.

~~SPIRITUAL POVERTY HELPS US ENDURE THE PAIN OF GROWTH.~~ Spiritual growth is hard work. It requires sacrifice, suffering, loss, and commitment. It is the narrow gate that relatively few enter (Matt. 7:13–14). It means losing your life, including all the old comfortable patterns, to find your life in Christ (Matt. 16:25). It is hard sometimes to see why we need to continue in our small group or face our issues or even pray or read the Bible. Yet growth is the only solution to our brokenness. Ultimately, the pain of growth is more bearable than the pain of our poverty.

Poverty makes it hard to go backward in the process. Once your eyes are opened to your need, it is difficult to live as though you had none. It is as if a door has been opened that can't be shut.

I was counseling a woman who had made a commitment to grow spiritually. During the process she discovered that what she had thought was being loving to her family was actually rescuing them from growing up and taking ownership of their problems. She realized that her rescuing was hurting both them and her. So she set limits with them, and they gave her a lot of grief about it. She went deeper in her prayer and group study life, and she realized that the roots of her rescuing had to do with her own dependent mother, for whom she had to be the “strong” one. As she dealt with this, she began to feel the lonely, isolated emotions she had had as a little girl when she had needed a grownup mother and didn't have one. These times were painful for her, both relationally and internally. Yet she never wavered in her spiritual growth commitment.

As I saw her go through all this, I said, “Do you ever wish you hadn't started this process?”

“I used to,” she said, “but I've realized I could never go back. This is hard work for me, but at least God, reality, truth, and my friends are with me. I don't see how I could pretend as if what was wrong is really right anymore. So I actually feel blessed to be in this position in my life.” She endured the pain of growth because her spiritual poverty kept her involved in God's ways.

~~SPIRITUAL POVERTY KEEPS US LIVING RELATIONALLY.~~ Spiritual poverty and brokenheartedness drive us to emotional connectedness, both to God and to safe people. Coming to the end of ourselves reduces us to a childlike state of need and helplessness, which Jesus said is good: “Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it at all” (Mark 10:15 NASB). Children by nature are relationally oriented. When they are in trouble or pain, the first thing they do is reach out for a protective, comforting parent. They instinctively seek out relationship without even thinking about it. They don't say to themselves, *I'll be strong and ride this one out*, or *I'll just think positive thoughts*. They ask for help from someone outside themselves.

One of the blessings of spiritual poverty is that it helps restore to us God's design of a relationally based life. We learn to receive comfort, support, and acceptance from others, which then strengthens



Week 8: THE Path of GrowN – Poor In Spirit – Matthew 5:3
November 1st, 2023

~~us to continue. Relationship is the fuel of life. We need to internalize great amounts of relationship all during our lifetime to persevere and grow.~~

~~SPIRITUAL POVERTY HELPS US ENTER THE DEEPER LIFE. Our broken-hearted state also provokes us to move beyond spiritual immaturity into a deeper walk of faith. Although we all begin our spiritual lives as babes (1 Peter 2:2), God did not intend for us to stay in that stage of development forever. We are to move from elementary things to maturity in Christ (Heb. 6:1). The deeper walk takes us into many areas: the mystery of God's nature; the wonders of the Bible; the complexities of our own character, personality, and issues; and the intricacies of intimate relationships with others.~~

~~SPIRITUAL POVERTY DOES NOT ALLOW US TO STAY SHALLOW. Once we are on the path to growth, we are called to continue it at new levels: "Deep calls to deep" (Ps. 42:7). We don't "arrive" in the faith, though we do mature and change. We are always moving forward or backward. Ask yourself if you are disconnected, complacent, or bored with your spiritual life. Ask others if you seem that way to them. If this is the case, it may be a signal to ask God to help you become poor in spirit and thereby find him at deeper levels.~~

~~SPIRITUAL POVERTY GUIDES US TO SPECIFIC GROWTH AREAS. Spiritual poverty helps us find the right issues to heal. Physically hungry people are not always hungry for the same things. They may desire meat, vegetables, or fruit. In the same way, spiritually hungry people are not always hungry for the same things. Spiritual poverty can help us find particular areas of need and growth.~~

~~It is disheartening to hear stories of people who take their needs and problems to a Christian leader who says something like, "Your problem [meaning this is what I tell everyone who comes to me] is simply a lack of faith/secret sin/lack of surrender/lack of being in the Word/etc." Although we all need to address these issues, sometimes the problem is different. An old Chinese proverb says, "Beware of the man whose only tool is a hammer, for he sees every problem as a nail." In the same way, beware of trying to deal with your spiritual poverty by a "one size fits all" formula.~~

~~How does our poverty lead us to specific areas of need and immaturity? By making seekers out of us. Seekers tend to look in many directions for answers and help. They pray and ask God for insight and wisdom about their condition. They search the Bible. They ask mature people for counsel. And God promises that in his timetable they will find what they are looking for. He loves for us to seek. Jesus said, "So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you" (Luke 11:9).~~

~~Some people may find their poverty leads them to realizing an incompleteness in being loved and emotionally connected. The Bible teaches that we are to be "rooted and grounded in love" (Eph. 3:17 NASB). Yet those who have lived lives devoid of comfort and support do not have this grounding. Other people find that they are broken in the area of self-control and responsibility. They allow themselves to be controlled by others, or they have an area of life, such as eating, that is out of control. They are poor in spirit in taking ownership of their lives. Still other people become aware of their own hatred of and judgment for their imperfections. They find that they cannot make mistakes without experiencing harsh feelings toward themselves.~~



**Week 8: THE Path of GrowN – Poor In Spirit – Matthew 5:3
November 1st, 2023**

Poverty accomplishes its task by helping people ferret out these often painful insights and realizations. When people find these arenas of growth, they can work them out in the spiritual growth process we describe in this book. Identifying the areas is an important key—areas such as these:

- Establishing a loving and worshipful relationship with God and his ways
- Maintaining deep, vulnerable relationships with others
- Being free to make decisions based on values rather than on fear or guilt
- Knowing what we are and are not responsible for
- Accepting our badness and weaknesses as well as those of others
- Functioning as an adult rather than as a child in life and relationships
- Achieving competency in some job or career area
- Having a clear and balanced morality

(Some of these topics are covered in *Changes That Heal* and in the character aspects of *Raising Great Kids*.)

HOW TO DEVELOP SPIRITUAL POVERTY

BECOMING POOR IN SPIRIT is one of the most unnatural things we can do. It is the opposite of being victorious and having it together. Yet it is our only hope for spiritual growth. Actually, our task is more realizing our poverty than becoming poor, as we are already in need whether we know it or not. It is better to seek this quality ourselves than be forced to face it by difficult circumstances. Let's look at some ways that we can develop this internal capacity.

ASK GOD. Being in touch with your spiritual poverty is a gift from God because it brings forth things he wants to see in you and because it accomplishes his purposes. He will gladly show you where you are weak.

As you are reading this chapter, you may identify with my friend in the beginning who thought there are two different kinds of groups in the church—one for “healthy” people, and one for the “unhealthy.” You may be a spiritual, loving, responsible person who has never dealt deeply with your ongoing sins, weaknesses, and brokenness. Or you may be leading a church, Bible study, small group, or ministry where the norm is not to have problems. If so, get on your knees—and get your ministry on its knees—and ask God to bless you with spiritual poverty, for “theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:3). He will give you and yours the sense of incompleteness and need that keeps you close to him.

BECOME AN HONEST PERSON. Do an honest review of your past and present life. Look for patterns of avoiding pain, denying problems, staying away from truthful people, and trying to put a positive spin on negative things in your life. Be honest about tendencies to shy away from need and to move toward pride and self-sufficiency.

Look closely at those negative things you might be avoiding. Seeing the reality of your state can go a long way toward promoting your growth in spiritual poverty. Ask God for the grace and love to help you tolerate what you find inside (Ps. 139:23–24). Here are a few categories of issues:



**Week 8: THE Path of GrowN – Poor In Spirit – Matthew 5:3
November 1st, 2023**

- **Sins.** Look at selfish, rebellious behaviors and attitudes. Although you have been forgiven for them, they still require confession and repentance. Look especially beyond behaviors into dark motives of the heart: withdrawal of love, vengeance, envy, and blaming. (We say more about sin in chapter 16.)
- **Hurts and losses.** All of us not only have sinned, but also have been sinned against and injured. Look at significant people in your life who have hurt you. Also, look at failures and losses in life, such as medical, financial, or career losses.
- **Weaknesses.** Identify character flaws that hamper your life, things you do that you can't stop doing. This might include irresponsibility, control, fragility, people-pleasing, and perfectionism.

Try not to be too legalistic with this short list, as there is much interplay between categories. Irresponsibility, for example, can involve both sin and weakness, and it can be influenced by hurt. For growth purposes, however, this list can help you see your need for God.

READ THE TEACHINGS OF THE BIBLE ON THE TOPIC. Look up terms such as *poor in spirit*, *needy*, and *brokenhearted*, and learn what the Bible teaches about them. Look at the dynamics of God's relationship with Israel in the Old Testament. When she was complacent or rebellious, he was hard. When she was poor and hurting, he was tender. Study the differences in how Jesus addressed those who were wanting and those (like the Pharisees) who thought they had it together. The Scriptures give overwhelming evidence that spiritual poverty is an essential element of growth.

GET FEEDBACK FROM OTHERS. One characteristic of hungry people is that they surround themselves with others to help them with their dependency. For them, the normal Christian life is one in which people get together, share vulnerabilities, and fill each other up. If you are just entering into a position of poverty, however, ask those you trust if they think you are needy and poor in spirit. The honest ones will understand and will graciously let you know the truth.

My wife, Barbi, and I started a tradition in our family we call *character time*. During our regular family night, in which we meet to talk about the upcoming week, deal with problems, read the Bible and pray, we have character time, during which we help each other remain poor in spirit. Every member of the family—including our sons, Ricky and Benny—has to own an issue or weakness that needs the help of God and others to work out. Here are character issues that have come up over the years:

- Selfishness
- Withdrawing when upset and not talking about it
- Irresponsibility in household chores
- Working too much and not playing with family enough
- Chronic lateness
- Annoying someone and not stopping when the person asks us to
- Not coming when called
- Nail biting
- Getting angry too easily



**Week 8: THE Path of GrowN – Poor In Spirit – Matthew 5:3
November 1st, 2023**

- Taking kids on errands and calling it “quality time”
- Problems having regular devotional time
- Making promises and not keeping them
- Fighting instead of talking about problems

I hope you don't think we are hopelessly dysfunctional when you read this list! Anyway, we don't simply assign our self our own character issue. We must ask the other family members, “What do I do that really bugs you?” Then we all discuss ways to work on the issues, and we pray for each other. The next week everyone reports on his or her progress. Again, we can't leave out others in evaluating our progress. Rather, we ask, “How did I do this week?” Then we take it from there: we either work on a new issue or keep working on the same one. Most of the time it takes a while to change.

Our sons hated the idea at first, thinking it was just another way for their parents to control them. When they learned that Mom and Dad would participate in the process, they liked it. And while everyone certainly has his or her struggles, it has really helped the entire family hold onto a humble, brokenhearted position of need. Mutual support, vulnerability, and ownership have all happened during our character time.

SEEK A WHOLEHEARTED EXPERIENCE OF BROKENNESS. Poverty of spirit requires more of us than cognitively admitting we are incomplete and needy. It also affects our entire self, especially the heart. Realizing our condition before God is an overwhelmingly emotional experience, involving feelings such as dependence, grief, and remorse. Psychologists call this “being integrated,” having the heart and head in alliance with each other. Seek this experience in the same way you seek God: “But if from there you seek the LORD your God, you will find him if you look for him with all your heart and with all your soul” (Deut. 4:29).

God reminds us, time and time again, that he likes neediness. Our life experiences might tell us to avoid need. If so, take a faith step and open up your soul to God and safe people. Spiritual poverty is the only way to be filled with what he has for us.

When we become more attuned to our spiritual condition, we can better understand the importance of the subject of the next chapter: obedience.

TIPS FOR GROWERS:

- Realize that spiritual poverty, though it sounds negative, is actually a blessed state and the only way to receive God's growth and healing. Adopt that attitude toward yourself and God.
- Review your life experiences and look at ways you may have entered spiritual poverty—through losses, failures, or simply a hunger for God and an awareness of your incompleteness. See how God used these experiences to bring you closer to him.



**Week 8: THE Path of GrowN – Poor In Spirit – Matthew 5:3
November 1st, 2023**

- Be aware of your brokenheartedness, and be mindful that this is not a sinful state, but a state of being sinned against or simply hurt by a broken world system. Learn that your brokenheartedness was not meant to be borne alone or just with God, but also with others.
- Bring up to God and people you trust your weakness, brokenness, and immaturity. Confess these, admit you can't change them in your own power, and admit you need outside resources to help you.

TIPS FOR FACILITATORS:

- Help your growers see that spiritual poverty is a requirement for spiritual growth. Help them see the benefits of experiencing their incompleteness and neediness.
- Work with them on the sin of self-sufficiency, and help them see that, though it looks like the right thing, it will cut them off from God's growth resources. Confront the mentality of "I'm okay, I don't have needs or issues." When your group is maturing, use safe feedback to help those with that mindset hear what others really see about them and their lives.
- Help the brokenhearted not to feel guilty over being hurt or wounded. But help them also to be able to take responsibility for their hurts and to take the initiative to bring their wounds into contexts of growth. Don't let them stay polarized in either denial or the victim role.
- Show your growers that spiritual poverty leads them to a deeper walk with God and with others.

Matthew seems to give nine Beatitudes. It is arbitrary to find ten by counting verses 11–12 as two Beatitudes. These verses are closely paralleled by Luke 6:22–23; and Luke quite clearly counts this as one, resulting in four Beatitudes (Luke 6:20–23) matched by four woes (6:24–26).

There is some argument that Matthew originally had only eight Beatitudes, 5:11–12 being an addition. The first eight are all in the third person, whereas the ninth is in the second person. Also, the first eight have parallelism and rhythm not found in the ninth. There is no manuscript evidence for the omission of the ninth Beatitude. Its stylistic difference is best accounted for in terms of differences in sources employed. Matthew's ninth Beatitude closely parallels Luke's fourth, and all of Luke's Beatitudes are in the second person.

Some see verse 5 as an addition, since certain manuscripts reverse the order of verses 4 and 5 (see below). Seven, a symbolic number, could be arrived at by eliminating verse 5 and either eliminating verses 11–12 or counting verses 10–12 as one. This is somewhat forced.

The word *makarioi* introduces each of the nine Beatitudes. It is a declaration of blessedness, an interjection not requiring a verb. It does not describe one's inner feeling about himself but his state of blessedness as seen by Jesus. The meaning intended may be expressed as "Oh, the happiness of," but the familiar "Blessed" is adequate.



Week 8: THE Path of GrowN – Poor In Spirit – Matthew 5:3
November 1st, 2023

The poor in spirit (v. 3). Luke’s “you poor” (6:20) is likely to be more primitive than Matthew’s “poor in spirit.” Two views can be traced in ancient Judaism, one seeing wealth as a sign of God’s favor, with adversity as a sign of divine judgment. The other view identifies wealth with wickedness and poverty with piety (cf. James 2:5; 5:1). Luke’s Beatitude reflects the latter pattern, “the poor,” possibly identified with “the people of the land.” The Semitic term behind the Greek designates the pious in Israel, chiefly but not exclusively identified with the materially poor. Matthew removes the ambiguity by adding “in spirit,” recognizing that material or social poverty alone is not a mark of faith or piety.

The Beatitudes stress the striking contrast between outward appearance and inner reality. The kingdom of heaven belongs not to those who by the world’s standards are rich and mighty. They alone reign with God who surrender all claims to that end.

Neither material nor spiritual poverty is blessed, but one’s honest and humble acknowledgment of his impoverishment (cf. Isa. 61:1) opens the way for the reception of God’s blessings. It is precisely when man sees his own nothingness that God can give out of his own fulness. Lohmeyer (p. 83) argues that **poor in spirit** refers to those who voluntarily accept material poverty or even sell their possessions and give to the poor (19:21), thus finding in Matthew the same emphasis upon outward poverty as in Luke. So understood, Matthew stresses the blessedness of freedom from the tyranny of outward things, living under the rule of heaven rather than the rule of earthly goods (cf. 6:19–34).

Those who mourn (v. 4). Not all mourning is blessed and much sorrow finds no comfort. This Beatitude echoes Isaiah 61:1; and from the context, reference may be to the grief that follows one’s realization of his spiritual impoverishment. But the meaning cannot be confined to sorrow over sin. Probably the reference is to the comfort that is found now and in the final judgment by those who mourn now, whether over the hurts and the hardships of life or over their sins and those of the world.

The meek (v. 5). This verse echoes Psalm 37:11. The meek are not the weak or cowardly. They are those who under the pressures of life have learned to bend their wills and to set aside their own notions as they stand before the greatness and grace of God (Lohmeyer, p. 86). They are characterized by humble trust rather than arrogant independence. The earth does not belong to the self-trusting or self-assertive who seek to possess it but to “the poor in spirit” who are willing to lose all for the kingdom. This paradox belongs to the larger teaching which sees that one lives by dying, receives by giving, and is first precisely when willing to be last.

Hunger and thirst for righteousness (v. 6). This Beatitude did not arise among people whose problem was overweight. It speaks of a craving for righteousness comparable to such physical hunger and thirst as is known only in lands where people die for want of food or water. Blessed are they who yearn for the victory of right over wrong, in their own lives and in the world. These are assured that God’s righteousness will prevail.

The verse is eschatological, looking to fulfilment in the future consummation of the kingdom; but righteousness is also a goal for the present (3:15; 5:10, 20; 6:1, 33; 21:32). Righteousness and kingdom belong together (6:33). Where God reigns, he reigns in righteousness. Both kingdom and righteousness await eschatological fulfilment, but both are also present realities.

The merciful (v. 7). In mercy and forgiveness (6:12, 14 f.; 18:21–35), receiving is bound up with giving. It is not that one earns mercy by being merciful, for then it would not be mercy but reward. It is not that one earns forgiveness by forgiving, for again that would be reward for merit. Neither is it that Jesus set up arbitrary requirements for receiving mercy or forgiveness. It is rather that in the nature of mercy and



Week 8: THE Path of GrowN – Poor In Spirit – Matthew 5:3
November 1st, 2023

forgiveness there cannot be receiving without giving. The personal condition of the unmerciful or unforgiving is such that they are incapable of receiving. That in one which renders him incapable of being merciful or forgiving also renders him incapable of receiving mercy or forgiveness.

The pure in heart (v. 8). *Pure* translates *katharos*, the term for cleansing; and purity in heart contrasts with ritual cleansing of hands or body. By various groups within Judaism, a sharp distinction was made between what was ritually clean and what was unclean. Jesus brushed this aside in the interest of real purity, that of **heart** (cf. 15:1–20; 23:25). The heart stood for the whole inner self, mind as well as feeling. Purity of heart is simplicity or integrity as against duplicity. It is the concentration of the whole self upon God. The Beatitude seemingly draws upon Psalm 24:3 f., but also recalls Psalm 51:10. Although the emphasis here is upon inner purity or integrity as contrasted with outward, ritual cleansing, there is no indifference to the outward life of words and deeds. Purity of heart and wholeness go together, the outward life reflecting the inner purity.

The peacemakers (v. 9). Jesus is the “Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6). He is our peace (Eph. 2:13 f.). Peacemaking is positive and active, not passive. Jesus plunged into the midst of human life to bring order out of chaos, reconciliation out of estrangement, love in the place of hate. Israel had been designated “son” of God (Hos. 11:1). Jesus taught that God’s sons are those who are joined together with him in his work of peacemaking. To **be called** is to be, for the name reflects the nature. Although peace includes the ending of war and strife, it is more. It is harmony with man through harmony with God.

Persecuted for righteousness’ sake (vv. 10–12). Although two Beatitudes formally remain, they constitute one basic declaration. At some stage of transmission the Beatitudes may have concluded with verse 10, for the poetic rhythm does not continue in verses 11–12; and **theirs is the kingdom of heaven** in verse 10 looks back to the same in verse 3. With verse 5, the number would be eight, somewhat corresponding to Luke’s four beatitudes and four woes. Without verse 5 (many manuscripts place it before v. 4), there would be seven, the number for completion. But as it stands, Matthew gives nine Beatitudes, the eighth and ninth being basically the same.

Although Matthew’s eighth Beatitude (v. 10) is stylistically more like the first seven, the ninth (vv. 11–12) closely parallels Luke’s fourth (6:22 f.). The verbal differences between Matthew’s ninth and Luke’s fourth are so great as to suggest different sources; yet their parallels are so striking, including Matthew’s shift from third to second person, as to suggest a common origin, however far back in the tradition. Verses 11 f. cannot be accounted for as dependent on verse 10, as is often held. Verses 11–12 continue the thought of verse 10 but are independent in origin.

Persecution or abuse as such is not a blessing, but here is blessing for Christians in their suffering for Christ (Phil. 1:29). The blessedness holds only when one suffers in the service of Christ and righteousness and when the charges of evil doing are false. One may be opposed because he is wrong, wicked, or simply a disturber. For those who, like the prophets, suffer for truth and right, there is **reward in heaven**. There is no assurance of vindication or reward among men now. The reward belongs with certainty to the future, but even now as seen in heaven, those who thus suffer are in a blessed condition. The assurance belongs to those who suffer for what must ultimately prevail.

In Matthew Jewish persecution of Christians is linked with the view that Israel has always persecuted her prophets. This view did not originate out of Christian bias but is found in the Old Testament (cf. 2 Chron. 24:20 f.; 36:15 f.; Jer. 2:30; 26:20–23; 1 Kings 18:4; 19:10, 14).



Week 8: THE Path of GrowN – Poor In Spirit – Matthew 5:3
November 1st, 2023

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Nashville, Tennessee⁶

8359**weakness, spiritual**

Human standards of strength and weakness are overturned by God's perspective and may be used for his glory.

Spiritual weakness leads to increased reliance on God

2Co 12:10 See also Mt 26:41 pp Mk 14:38; Ro 4:19; 1Co 1:27-29; 2:2-5

Weakness demonstrates the power of God

1Co 1:27 See also Isa 40:29-31; 50:4; Jer 31:25; 2Co 12:5-10

God helps those who are weak

Ro 8:26 See also Isa 40:29; Eze 34:16; Joel 3:10; Heb 11:34

Spiritual weakness should not be despised

Ro 15:1 See also Mt 26:41 pp Mk 14:38; Ro 14:1; 1Co 4:10; 8:7-12; 9:22

Overcoming spiritual weakness

The importance of overcoming weakness Heb 12:12 See also Jos 1:6-7; Joel 3:10; Mt 6:28-33; 1Co 16:13; Heb 11:11

Weakness can be overcome by trusting in God Ro 4:20 See also Mt 8:26; 14:30-31; 2Ti 1:6-8; Jas 1:6

See also

1045 God, glory of

1180 God, wisdom of

3030 Holy Spirit, power

3221 Holy Spirit & prayer

5450 poverty, spiritual

6253 temptation, avoiding causing

6671 grace & Christian life

8026 faith, growth in

8030 trust

8224 dependence

8353 tolerance

~~**depravity, total depravity.** Depravity refers both to the damaged relationship between God and humans and to the corruption of human nature such that there is within every human an ongoing~~

⁶ Clifton J. Allen, ed., [Matthew-Mark](#), Broadman Bible Commentary (Broadman Press, 1969).



Week 8: THE Path of GrowN – Poor In Spirit – Matthew 5:3
November 1st, 2023

tendency toward sin. *Total depravity* refers to the extent and comprehensiveness of the effects of sin on all humans such that all are unable to do anything to obtain salvation. Total depravity, therefore, does not mean that humans are thoroughly sinful but rather that they are totally incapable of saving themselves. The term suggests as well that the effects of the Fall extend to every dimension of human existence, so that we dare not trust any ability (such as reason) that we remain capable of exercising in our fallen state.⁷

VII. ORIGINAL SIN AND DEPRAVITY

A. The Meaning of Depravity.

Two things are meant by the expression “original sin”: the first sin of Adam, and the sinful nature possessed by every man since Adam, due to Adam’s first transgression. This sinful nature is called “depravity.” Depravity consists of four things which are true of every individual when he is born.

1. *He is completely void of original righteousness.* “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me” (Ps. 51:5).

2. *He does not possess any holy affection toward God.* “Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever Amen” (Rom. 1:25). “For men shall be lovers of their own selves ... traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God....” (2 Tim. 3:2–4)

3. *There is nothing from without a man, that can defile him; but the things which come out of him, these are they that defile the man.* “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man” (Mk. 7:15, 21–23).

4. *He has a continuous bias toward evil.* “And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Gn. 6:5).

Lest the term “depravity” be misunderstood, it is well to note the following, quoted from *Lectures in Systematic Theology*, by Thiessen:

From the negative standpoint, it does not mean that every sinner is devoid of all qualities pleasing to men; that he commits, or is prone to commit every form of sin; that he is as bitterly opposed to God as it is possible for him to be ... Jesus recognized the existence of pleasing qualities in some individuals (Mark 10:21; Matt. 23:23).... From the positive standpoint, it does mean that every sinner is totally destitute of that love to God which is the fundamental requirement of the law. “Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might” (Dt. 6:4, 5). See Matt. 22:35–38; that he is supremely given to a preference of himself to God (2 Tim. 3:2–4); that he has an aversion to God which on occasion becomes active enmity to Him: “Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Rom. 8:7); that his every

⁷ Stanley Grenz, David Guretzki, and Cherith Fee Nordling, *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 37.



**Week 8: THE Path of GrowN – Poor In Spirit – Matthew 5:3
November 1st, 2023**

~~faculty is disordered and corrupted: “Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart” (Eph. 4:18); that he has no thought, feeling, or deed of which God can fully approve: “For I know that in me (that is in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not” (Rom. 7:18); and that he has entered upon a line of constant progress in depravity from which he can in no wise turn away in his own strength (Rom. 7:18).~~

B. The Result of Man’s Depravity.

Sin is willful rebellion against God. Such an attitude cannot but bring forth evil results. It is not surprising that one can look all about and see the awful results of sin. It is just not possible for men to continue sinning and receive anything but a harvest of sorrows of the worst kind. Paul states in Galatians 6:8: “For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption....” Hosea said, concerning Israel: “For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind....” (Hos. 8:7). He also declared: “Ye have plowed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity; ye have eaten the fruit of lies ...” (Hos. 10:13).

One would have to be blind not to see the result of sinful depravity in the minds and bodies of the human race today. Superstition, barbarity, and the grossest iniquity are seen in every land where the Gospel has not gone. Where the message of salvation from sin has been preached and rejected, the condition is almost worse, for here is added the condemnation of light that has been rejected. In our own land, which is probably the greatest Christian country in the world, every institution of correction, every prison of punishment, every sanitarium and asylum is bulging with the results of sin. Every policeman in the nation is a silent tribute to the result of sin. So devastating is the influence of sin upon the human consciousness that now sin is glamorized until it is being recognized in society as the thing to do. A great man once said, “Our greatest defense against sin is to be shocked at it”; and when this attitude ceases, sin has accomplished its direst results. Paul, in that terrible list of gross iniquities in Romans 1:24–32, climaxed the whole dread situation when he said: “Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them” (v. 32). When sin loses its sinfulness, and men take pleasure in the grossest of sinful practices, there is little hope left.

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Cv of
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Week 8: THE Path of GrowN – Poor In Spirit – Matthew 5:3
November 1st, 2023

Guy P. Duffield and Nathaniel M. Van Cleave⁸

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Matthew 5:3

CEB:

Happy people

~~³“Happy are people who are hopeless, because the kingdom of heaven is theirs.~~

⁴“Happy are people who grieve, because they will be made glad.

⁵“Happy are people who are humble, because they will inherit the earth.

⁶“Happy are people who are hungry and thirsty for righteousness, because they will be fed until they are full.

⁷“Happy are people who show mercy, because they will receive mercy.

⁸“Happy are people who have pure hearts, because they will see God.

⁹“Happy are people who make peace, because they will be called God’s children.

¹⁰“Happy are people whose lives are harassed because they are righteous, because the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

¹¹“Happy are you when people insult you and harass you and speak all kinds of bad and false things about you, all because of me. ¹²Be full of joy and be glad, because you have a great reward in heaven. In the same way, people harassed the prophets who came before you. ⁹

CEV

~~God blesses those people who depend only on him. They belong to the kingdom of heaven!~~

ERV

~~“Great blessings belong to those who know they are spiritually in need. God’s kingdom belongs to them.~~

GW

~~“Blessed are those who recognize they are spiritually helpless. The kingdom of heaven belongs to them.~~

ICB

~~“Those people who know they have great spiritual needs are happy. The kingdom of heaven belongs to them.~~

ISV

⁸ Guy P. Duffield and Nathaniel M. Van Cleave, [*Foundations of Pentecostal Theology*](#) (Los Angeles, CA: L.I.F.E. Bible College, 1983), i.

⁹ [*Common English Bible*](#) (Nashville, TN: Common English Bible, 2011), Mt 5:3–12.



Week 8: THE Path of GrowN – Poor In Spirit – Matthew 5:3
November 1st, 2023

~~“How blessed are those who are destitute in spirit, because the kingdom from heaven belongs to them!~~

PHILLIPS

~~Then he began his teaching by saying to them, “How happy are the humble-minded, for the kingdom of Heaven is theirs!~~

Strongs Concordance:

4434 πτωχός [*ptochos* /pto·khos/] adj. From *ptosso*, to crouch, akin to 4422 and the alternate of 4098; TDNT 6:885; TDNTA 969; GK 4777; 34 occurrences; AV translates as “poor” 30 times, “beggar” twice, “poor man” once, and “beggarly” once. **1** reduced to beggary, begging, asking alms. **2** destitute of wealth, influence, position, honour. 2A lowly, afflicted, destitute of the Christian virtues and eternal riches. 2B helpless, powerless to accomplish an end. 2C poor, needy. **3** lacking in anything. 3A as respects their spirit. 3A1 destitute of wealth of learning and intellectual culture which the schools afford (men of this class most readily give themselves up to Christ’s teaching and proved them selves fitted to lay hold of the heavenly treasure). *Additional Information:* For synonyms see entry 3993, *penes*. See entry 5870 for comparison of synonyms.¹⁰

James 4:8 God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.

5011 ταπεινός [*tapeinos* /tap-i-nos/] adj. Of uncertain derivation; TDNT 8:1; TDNTA 1152; GK 5424; Eight occurrences; AV translates as “of low degree” twice, “humble” twice, “base” once, “cast down” once, “of low estate” once, and “lowly” once. **1** not rising far from the ground. **2** metaph. 2A as a condition, lowly, of low degree. 2B brought low with grief, depressed. 2C lowly in spirit, humble. 2D in a bad sense, deporting one’s self abjectly, deferring servilely to others.¹¹

HUMILITY:

[Ps 131:1](#)

LORD, my heart isn’t proud; my eyes aren’t conceited. I don’t get involved with things too great or wonderful for me.

[Is 53:7–8](#)

He was oppressed and tormented, but didn’t open his mouth. Like a lamb being brought to slaughter, like a ewe silent before her shearers, he didn’t open his mouth. Due to an unjust ruling he was taken away, and his fate—who will think about it? He was eliminated from the land of the living,...

[Is 57:15](#)

The one who is high and lifted up, who lives forever, whose name is holy, says: I live on high, in holiness, and also with the crushed and the lowly, reviving the spirit of the lowly, reviving the heart of those who have been crushed.

[Mic 6:8](#)

He has told you, human one, what is good and what the LORD requires from you: to do justice, embrace faithful love, and walk humbly with your God.

[Mt 11:29](#)

Put on my yoke, and learn from me. I’m gentle and humble. And you will find rest for yourselves.

¹⁰ James Strong, [Enhanced Strong’s Lexicon](#) (Woodside Bible Fellowship, 1995).

¹¹ James Strong, [Enhanced Strong’s Lexicon](#) (Woodside Bible Fellowship, 1995).



Week 8: THE Path of GrowN – Poor In Spirit – Matthew 5:3
November 1st, 2023

[Php 2:3-11](#)

Don't do anything for selfish purposes, but with humility think of others as better than yourselves. Instead of each person watching out for their own good, watch out for what is better for others. Adopt the attitude that was in Christ Jesus: Though he was in the form of God, he did not consider...

[Jas 4:10](#)

Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

8276

humility

An attitude of lowliness and obedience, grounded in the recognition of one's status before God as his creatures.

God commands humility

Mic 6:8; Jas 4:10; 1Pe 3:8 *See also Ex 10:3; Pr 16:19; Isa 57:15; 58:5; Zep 2:3; Lk 14:9-11; Ro 12:3 sober assessment of oneself; 1Co 1:28; Eph 4:2; Col 3:12; Tit 3:2; Jas 3:13; 1Pe 5:5*

God exalts the humble

Lk 1:52 *See also 2Sa 7:8; 1Ki 14:7*

Believers should humble themselves before God

2Ch 7:14; 1Pe 5:6 *See also 2Sa 22:28*

Humility linked with repentance: 1Ki 21:29; 2Ki 22:19; 2Ch 12:6-7,12; 30:11; 33:12,19; 34:27

Humility linked with God's favour: Ps 18:27; 25:9; 138:6; 147:6; 149:4; Pr 3:34; 18:12; Jas 4:6; Isa 29:19; 38:15; 57:15; Pr 15:33; 22:4

Ps 35:13; Jer 44:10 *lack of humility linked with disobedience*

God humbles his people to renew and restore them

Ps 44:9 *See also Lev 26:41; Dt 8:2,16; 1Ki 11:39; 2Ch 28:19; Ps 107:39; Isa 9:1; 2Co 12:21*

God humbles the proud

Lk 18:14 *See also 1Sa 2:7; Isa 2:11,17; 5:15; 13:11; 23:9; 25:11; 26:5; Da 4:37*

Examples of humble people

Outstanding individuals **Ge 32:10** *Jacob; Ge 41:16* *Joseph; Nu 12:3* *Moses; 1Sa 9:21* *Saul*

David: 1Sa 18:18; 2Sa 7:18

1Ki 3:7 *Solomon; Da 2:30* *Daniel; Mt 3:14* *John the Baptist; Lk 1:43* *Elizabeth; Lk 1:48* *Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ*

Paul: 1Ti 1:15; Ac 20:19¹²

Pruning for a purpose-more fruit.

¹² Martin H. Manser, [Dictionary of Bible Themes: The Accessible and Comprehensive Tool for Topical Studies](#) (London: Martin Manser, 2009).