

## ***Session 3 Grace to Walk Out the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5-7)***

*Please refer to the teaching notes for this message.*

### **THE EIGHT BEATITUDES**

We will look at grace to walk out the Sermon on the Mount. Paragraph A. I refer to the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7, as the constitution of God's kingdom. Most of you are familiar with it. My question is—and I say this kindly—are you really familiar with it? In our IHOPKC world we talk so much about the Sermon on the Mount, but I find that we are still challenged as a spiritual family on how to really walk out the details of it. I believe these three chapters are the most comprehensive statement about a believer's response in cooperating with the grace of God. If you want to know what Jesus says about how we should respond to Him, read Matthew 5-7. This is the best way to grow in the grace of God.

Paragraph B. Jesus outlined eight different beatitudes. He said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are those who mourn. Blessed are the meek. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. Blessed are the merciful. Blessed are the pure in heart. Blessed are the peacemakers, and blessed are those who are persecuted" (Mt. 5:3-10, paraphrased). These are eight very distinct attitudes by which we respond to Him in order to grow in the grace of God. The whole of the New Testament grace message can be summarized by these eight beatitudes being formed in our life. The whole of the Sermon on the Mount is actually a development of how to walk out these eight beatitudes. If you want to walk in wholehearted love for Jesus, say, "Holy Spirit, teach me these eight attitudes, these responses." These are not a one time response. This is a lifestyle—the way we carry our hearts our entire Christian life.

### **THE EIGHT BEATITUDES DEFINE SPIRITUAL MATURITY**

I compare these eight beatitudes to eight beautiful flowers in the garden of our heart. These flowers are to grow to fullness over the decades of our life with Jesus. These eight beatitudes define what love and the first commandment really are about. They define what godliness really is. They define spiritual maturity. If someone says, "What is spiritual maturity?" Take them to these eight beatitudes. Ask the Holy Spirit to mentor and disciple you, and to teach you on these eight beatitudes. He knows more about them than anyone else. I have opened my Bible many times and said, "Holy Spirit, I know what commentators say, but what do You say about these eight? How can I live in them? If I lose my way, how can I recover any one of these eight beatitudes in my life?"

### **EVERYBODY CAN PUT THE EIGHT BEATITUDES INTO PRACTICE**

Paragraph C. Jesus used the word "blessed" eight different times. To be blessed includes having a vibrant spirit. All of us want a vibrant spirit, so that we feel God's presence and we feel loved, and more than that, so that we actually feel love in return. Beloved, there is nothing more exhilarating than the power of being able to love in return with all of our heart.

Jesus said, "You are blessed." The blessedness includes feeling the presence of God. It is a simple thing, but it is more than all of that. Here is the glorious thing about these eight beatitudes. Everybody can do them. Everybody can. The person with very little gifting can do them. The man with no education can do them, or the person with no money, or the person who is at home on a sickbed—I mean for years at home in a bed. They can still put these eight beatitudes into practice. A man in prison because of his crimes, who has repented, can put these into practice. If he goes to prison for life, he can still do these eight things. A lonely person can do these

eight things. Greatness is being offered to everybody. Anybody can do them without any reference to their gifting, their money, their social status, how beautiful they are, or how good they feel. Everybody can do these. That is what is amazing about them.

### **WE CAN BE SALT AND LIGHT IF WE WALK OUT THE EIGHT BEATITUDES**

Paragraph E. Jesus referred to the two metaphors of salt and light. Most of us are familiar with these. Here is the part that is often neglected. We can only be salt and light if we are walking out the eight beatitudes as a people, meaning, a person who just simply says, “I love Jesus,” but who is living in defeat and in compromise, is not going to be salt and light. Salt and light is the fruit of people walking out these eight beatitudes consciously. Over the years I have heard sermons on salt and light, but I have rarely heard them connected to people who walk out the eight beatitudes. It is almost as if some people think anybody can be salt and light as long as they say Jesus loves me. However, there is more involved. A community of believers, even a small community, who are consciously and deliberately seeking to walk out the eight beatitudes, can be salt and light. That is the context of Matthew 5:13. It goes back to the twelve verses right before it.

### **THE MOST NEGLECTED PROMISE OF JESUS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT**

Paragraph F. This is just a verse or two after the eight beatitudes. This is one of the most glorious promises in the whole Bible by the lips of Jesus. This is so glorious. Just before I even tell you how great it is, I want to say that I believe this is the most neglected promise of Jesus in the New Testament. Matthew 5:19, I believe, is the most neglected promise and it is probably one of the most neglected warnings. Jesus gives us a warning and He gives us a promise here in verse 19. I want to encourage you to make Matthew 5:19 one of the top ten verses in your life. It is certainly on my top-ten list. It is amazing, coming from the lips of Jesus. He says this, “Whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven” (Mt. 5:19). Included in the commandments are the eight beatitudes. This verse is in the context of the eight beatitudes. It involves more than that, but let’s look at the eight beatitudes. If a born again believer ignores or does not keep the beatitudes, they will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. They are born again. They will have a resurrected body, but in the age to come they will be called least. Again, it is Jesus saying this. We don’t really think much about the age to come. Jesus thought a lot about the age to come. There is continuity between what we do in this life and our experience in the age to come. We get into the New Jerusalem freely by the blood of Jesus, but our place in the city, our function in the city, and various other things—I will not go into detail right now—they are not entirely, but partially determined by our response to the eight beatitudes in this life.

Jesus said in effect, “Born again believers, if you ignore these and you teach other people to ignore them, you will be least in My kingdom on the other side.” This is one of the most neglected warnings. You may have a big ministry on this side, but you will be called least if you ignore the Beatitudes. You might say, “What does that mean?” That is a bigger question for another day. The point is that it does matter.

Here is the good part. I look at that warning and say, “This is real.” One thing I know about Jesus is that He never changes His mind. The Jesus who said this 2000 years ago is the same Jesus you and I will stand before and He will not change His mind.

### **“WHOEVER DOES THESE WILL BE CALLED GREAT”**

Here is the part I like about verse 19, “Whoever does these eight beatitudes and these commandments shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (Mt. 5:19, paraphrased). These commandments are centered on these

eight beatitudes. That is why we want to focus on them, study them out, and ask the Holy Spirit to teach them to us. He said, “If you do these and if you teach other people to do them, you will be called great in My kingdom in the age to come” (Mt. 5:19, paraphrased). You may be totally ignored in this age, nobody may pay any attention to you, but I tell you, in the age to come, God Himself will consider your lifestyle as a great lifestyle. He will call your choices great.

I cannot imagine anything more exciting than standing before Jesus on the last day. I am counting on this. I don’t know where I am at, but I am going for this.

When He looks me in the eyes, I want Him to say several things. One of them is this, “You did those eight beatitudes in your weakness and in your brokenness. When you failed, you signed back up. You recommitted. You threw yourself into them for decades.” I don’t know if He will say that, but I am hoping He will.

I will say, “Yes, yes.”

“Not only did you do them, you taught everyone to do them, whenever you had the opportunity.”

“Oh yes.”

“My son, My beloved, your life was lived in greatness from My point of view.” Beloved, I cannot imagine hearing anything more powerful than that. I can think of few things that are equal to this.

### **TEACHING THE BEATITUDES CAUSES CONFLICT**

I first ran into this verse many years ago, in my twenties. I am fifty-seven now. I stumbled into this in my early twenties. I said, “I am going to do this. I don’t know how to do it, but I am going to figure it out. Holy Spirit, teach me.” Again, I am not commenting on how well I have done. I wish I would have done a lot better, but I know I have cared about these eight things for these many years. I decided to do them. The surprising thing I didn’t know was the trouble I would get into with people when I began to teach them. I thought doing them was the hard part and probably it is, but teaching them causes so many conflicts. I didn’t know about that. Over the last thirty years, I have had many collisions over these eight beatitudes, because, by the grace of God, I refused to back down on teaching them. They disrupt people. They are invasive. I have had many people use the message of the grace of God to undermine these eight beatitudes.

Beloved, let me assure you, and I know you know this, that Jesus is the best grace Teacher who ever walked the earth. These are the eight ways we carry our heart to experience more of God. If you keep them on a poster, people will see them in your office and say, “What a beautiful poster!” They will not trouble anybody, but if you live them, it will bother your immediate relationships. It will affect your immediate relationships. If you teach them, you will be a troubler. You will cause trouble for other people and they will let you know. These many years later I look at these verses and I say, “Jesus, these verses are loaded.”

Many believers I know, teach people to ignore these. They don’t actually say, “Ignore the eight beatitudes,” but when you hear their teaching, they undermine these eight beatitudes. Jesus said, “If you teach My people not to do these, you will be called least in My kingdom.” I have never heard a person say, “Don’t do the beatitudes,” but I have heard much teaching associated with grace that undermines these as a lifestyle.

## **MOST TEACHING MINISTRY IS ONE ON ONE**

Paragraph G. I will give you a snapshot of the Sermon on the Mount. Then we will look at these eight beatitudes for a couple minutes each. My goal today is not to give a comprehensive teaching, but it is to stir your heart, so that when you leave this conference, you say, “I am going for the Sermon on the Mount. I am going to figure out what thirsting means by the grace of God. I am going to study it and I am going to teach it.”

Maybe you say, “I don’t have a teaching ministry.” Beloved, I think every one of you in this room has a teaching ministry. Most of the teaching in the Body of Christ is not with a microphone in a crowd. I am guessing that ninety-nine percent of the teaching in the Body of Christ happens one on one or one on two. You may not think you have a teaching ministry. Beloved, your teaching ministry was fully in gear when you talked to the guy in your car on the way to the conference. Even if you were teaching the wrong things and talking them out of dedication to God rather than talking them into dedication, you were teaching. I know that you would not be coming here if you were talking people out of dedication. My point is, don’t wait until you have a microphone to start teaching this. Teach it at the university. Teach it when you drive somewhere with somebody. I don’t mean stop and point your finger at them and teach them. I am talking about supporting the eight beatitudes in a conversational style. Argue for them. Don’t argue against them. Don’t talk people out of hungering and thirsting for righteousness. Talk them into hungering for righteousness. Don’t say, “Well, by the grace of God, you can just chill out and be lazy, because Jesus did it for you.” Beloved, don’t talk them out of hungering for righteousness. Talk them into hungering for righteousness. Don’t talk them out of purity of heart in the name of grace. Talk them into purity of heart. Don’t talk them out of meekness, talk them into meekness. You will be called great on the last day. The Lord will say, “Your life choices and your lifestyle were great from My perspective if you taught these things.”

I believe the most powerful teaching ministries throughout history are mothers teaching their children in their home. I believe the greatest disciplers of history have been moms with their children. Don’t think, “Well, I am stuck at home.” Beloved, you are walking out the Great Commission. You are discipling the nations with your disciples, those little guys in front of you. That is part of the nations. You are doing the Great Commission. Don’t endure child-raising so you can get into the ministry. Don’t say, “I love my children, but I can’t wait until I get into the ministry.” Beloved, you are discipling the nations right in front of you. Do it with all of your heart and do it with the confidence that the Lord is pleased with you.

## **A SNAPSHOT OF MATTHEW 5 AND 6**

Paragraph G. Again, here is a snapshot of Matthew 5. Right after He teaches the eight beatitudes, He says in effect, “You can be salt and light. You can impact society, but only if you walk out the eight beatitudes” (Mt. 5:13-14, paraphrased). That is a very key point. Then He gives the next point. He says, “As a matter of fact, if you do them and teach them, you will be called great in the age to come. You may not be called great in this age, but you will be called great by God in the age to come” (Mt. 5:19, paraphrased).

Then He outlines six temptations that must be resisted continually. I think of the eight beatitudes as flowers growing in our heart. Using this analogy, the garden of our heart has weeds. We have to constantly pull the weeds out of the garden of our heart. Very strategically, in a very simplified way, Jesus outlines six temptations that we must actively resist our entire spiritual life in this age. He means a lot with every phrase He says.

In Matthew 6—paragraph H—He identifies what I call five kingdom activities we have to do. He identifies six temptations to resist and five activities to pursue. He mentions six negatives to say no to and five positives to

say yes to. If you say no to the negatives, you weed the garden. If you say yes to the positives, you water the garden. If you weed and water the garden, the eight flowers of the eight beatitudes will grow in your character. That is the picture of Matthew 5-6.

### **SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES TENDERIZE OUR HEART**

Paragraph H. These five kingdom activities are prayer, fasting, giving, serving, and blessing our enemies. I have a lot more information on this on the website. Those are five very proactive things that we do. We refer to them as spiritual disciplines. Spiritual disciplines have a bad connotation to many people in the Body of Christ. That needs to be corrected. Spiritual disciplines don't earn us the love of God at all. Settle that right now. Spiritual disciplines don't earn us anything. Here is what spiritual disciplines do. They put our cold heart in front of a bonfire so that our heart becomes tenderized. That is the analogy I use. When we pray and fast, we are not earning the favor of God or the presence of God. We are positioning our cold heart in front of the fire of God's presence so that our cold heart gets tenderized and the ice begins to melt. The power is not in sitting in front of the fire. The power is the fire. The power is God's presence, but when we sit in front of God's presence, we position ourselves to receive the impact of the fire. When somebody says, "I'm not going to do prayer and fasting and all those things. I'm not going to earn anything. I am into the grace of God," say, "You are right, don't earn anything, but recognize your heart is cold. Your heart is hard. Put it in front of that fire and receive the power of the grace of God to tenderize your cold and dull heart."

### **SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES RENEW OUR MIND AND EMOTIONS**

When we engage in disciplines, God gives us more. This is very important. We receive more in our emotions and our mind. God doesn't love us more, but we do experience more. You can be a born again believer and have a shallow experience of God, or you can be a born again believer and hunger for righteousness, and engage in these five activities.

God doesn't love you more if you engage in spiritual disciplines, but I promise you, you will experience much more, because your mind and your emotions will be renewed. The battle is in the renewing of the mind. You are not earning anything. Our prayer and fasting is so weak. Think about how weak our prayer and fasting is. If you are objective about it, how could it possibly earn you anything? When I come before the Lord and pray, it is not very dynamic. It is pretty weak and fragile. It is as if the Lord says, "My fire will change you, but I want you in dialogue with Me. The dialogue doesn't earn the fire. The dialogue with Me puts you in a position to experience more of the fire."

Now I am sure there is some guy out there trying to earn the love of God with his disciplines, but this idea that spiritual disciplines are relegated to legalism and earning, is mostly a cover-up argument for spiritually lazy believers, who want Bible verses to enforce their passivity and spiritual laziness. Don't buy it! You will experience far more in the decades to come. You will experience more this year too. If you engage in this lifestyle, you will get some history in God. You let some years go by. God will not love you more, but I tell you that you will experience much more. If you buy into a distorted grace message, those people who gave it to you will steal your ability to grow and experience so much more in the grace of God.

### **THE FOUNDATIONAL BEATITUDE: POVERTY OF SPIRIT**

Roman numeral II. Let's look at the eight beatitudes. I will just mention two or three of them for one minute, and I will spend three or four minutes on some others.

The first one is poverty of spirit. This is the foundational beatitude. This is the beatitude out of which flow all the other seven. Jesus said, “Be poor in spirit.” I have asked the Holy Spirit, “Teach me what this means.” I have studied it in commentaries. This is too important for me to trust a commentary by some brilliant men, who are great teachers. I say, “Holy Spirit, I only have one life on the earth. I don’t want to miss this. You teach me what this means. I will study it out, but I need help.” I am saying this to you, because this is what *you* need to do. Don’t trust my definition. Ask the Teacher who lives inside of you to teach these eight beatitudes to you. Nothing is more critical to your life than understanding these eight beatitudes, walking in them, and taking a public stand for them, even if you are taking a stand and contending for them just before one or two people. Don’t allow somebody to dismiss them.

So the first beatitude is to be poor in spirit. In a very abbreviated way, this means seeing our great need to experience more spiritually. I am not going to go into detail. I have a lot more on the website on this. We are poor in spirit if we see our poverty stricken state and realize that we need help that is bigger than our human personality and our own resolve. We need help that is outside ourselves. Within our own resources, we don’t have the strength to do it. We are spiritually poor. We initially enter the kingdom by being poor in spirit. We need a salvation that we cannot earn. We see our need related to our legal position and the cross of Jesus gives us a standing before God. That is our initial salvation experience. We are poor in spirit, but it relates to our legal position. We stand before God in the righteousness of Christ, fully forgiven because of what He did, not because of what we did.

### **EXPERIENCING POVERTY OF SPIRIT IN OUR LIVING CONDITION**

This attitude of poverty of spirit is not over the day you are born again. It is one thing for Jesus to give us great wealth in our spiritual position, our legal position, but it is another thing to actually experience it in our living condition. As an unbeliever, I need a salvation that is bigger than myself. I see my poverty stricken state and I say, “Jesus, I need something that is bigger than myself. I cannot deliver myself. I cannot cancel my debt. I cannot get right with God.”

It is as if Jesus says, “I did it for you. I gave you your legal position.”

Then for the next decades that you are alive, however many decades that happens to be, you are now poor in spirit related to your living condition. You see the great wealth of what Jesus made available for you, but you experience the actual state of your heart. You are not walking in very much of what Jesus made available. He offered great love to you, but you don’t feel the power of that love and you don’t return that love very well. You say, “Jesus, spiritually I am in great need for a breakthrough of the grace of God so that my living condition comes more in line with my legal position.” In other words, you say, “I see the gap between what You freely provided for me and how little I am actually experiencing in my mind and my emotions. My mind is not very renewed. My emotions are not alive in the grace of God. I am in need. I need the Spirit’s help to even apply the grace of God.”

### **WE NEED THE HOLY SPIRIT TO HELP US**

I am going to say that again. It takes the ongoing interaction with the Holy Spirit as a born again believer to actually experience the grace of God in our living condition. I see this great wealth Jesus has given us. I say, “Holy Spirit, there is a gap between what is available and what I am experiencing.” It is as if the Holy Spirit whispers, “You need Me to help you close that gap in your experience. Talk to Me! Cry out to Me! I will

enliven your understanding. I will stir your emotions. I will give you impartation step by step.” We actually need the Holy Spirit’s help to grow in the grace of God.

Poverty of spirit is the one beatitude on which I am spending the most time, because it is the most foundational. We see our great need initially when we are born again and receive our legal position. Then throughout decades of our spiritual life, we continue. I want to see greater holiness in my heart. I want greater love, to feel it and to express it. I want greater understanding of the Word. I want greater power in my ministry. I want to walk more consistently. That is poverty of spirit. That is the foundational beatitude.

Any doctrine of the grace of God that undermines poverty of spirit, is undermining the teaching of Jesus related to the grace of God. The reason I say this is because I know many people who, when they teach the grace of God, are no longer in a poverty-of-spirit mode. They confuse all they have in their legal position with what they are walking in. In actuality, they are walking in very little of it. The Lord says, “Cry out and bridge the gap by My Spirit. I will cause you to walk out that which I have freely given you as a gift on the day you were born again.”

Let’s go to paragraph F. We are going back to the passage in Revelation 3, where Jesus talked to the Laodiceans. He said this to born again believers. Verse 16 (paraphrased), “Because you are lukewarm...I will vomit you out of My mouth. My heart is sick over the way you are not responding to Me.” Verse 19 (paraphrased), “I love you so much. I have offered My love to you. You have responded in such a minimal, passive way. You don’t value the relationship that I value so deeply.” Jesus is not angry at them. Jesus’ stomach is sick. He is heartsick over the way they devalue the relationship. They put so little effort into it. Verse 17, “You say, ‘I am rich...I don’t need anything.’” This is the opposite of poverty of spirit. It is as if they say, “I have all things in Christ.” They do! That is their legal position. Now they need to throw their life into the Word of God, into prayer, and into interacting with the Spirit, so that they can actually experience all the things that are freely given to them with a renewed mind and renewed emotions and actually walk them out. The Laodiceans were not doing that. Jesus said, “You don’t know that your spiritual life is wretched” (Rev. 3:17, paraphrased). Beloved, you can have all things in Christ and have a wretched spiritual life. He said, “You are miserable” (v.17). He was not casting them off. He was trying to wake them up. Lukewarm believers are hard to wake up. They are so convinced they need nothing.

Jesus said, “Wake up. Your life is poor. Your living condition is poor” (v. 17, paraphrased). It is as if He said, “Yes, I have given you everything. That is your legal position, but you are not walking in it. Don’t you see the great need you have?”

He says, “Be zealous” (v.19). He says in essence, “I want you on fire. I want you hungry. I want you to press into Me. I don’t want you passive. I want you to turn off some things, lay aside some things, and make your interaction with Me the priority of your life. I want you zealous, because I am zealous for you. I want you zealous for Me, because we have so much together.”

### **HOWARD PITTMAN’S DEATH EXPERIENCE**

Paragraph G. Howard Pittman. I am going to tell you about a man’s story really briefly. We have a little fifty page book in our bookstore which I want to recommend. It is called Placebo. It is a strange little title. It is a strange little book. There it is on the PowerPoint. Isn’t that an interesting cover?

This man is about eighty years old right now. I won't tell you the whole story. Some years ago, He had a death experience. I know the man. I got to know him pretty well some years ago.

I believe he is a very godly and honest man. He is a very tender man. He had a death experience. I am not going to break it all down for you, because it is in the book. He was hemorrhaging and they rushed him to the emergency room. Medically he died in the emergency room. His spirit left his body and he went and stood before the Lord.

They were keeping him alive with machines down in the emergency room or the ICU unit. He had this dynamic encounter with the Lord. The Lord told him, "Howard, I love you, but I want to tell you something that is going to break your heart." I am summarizing it in some of my own words to make it brief. The Lord said in essence, "Howard, I rebuke you, because you are a Laodicean believer." He said, "You think you are doing great, but the opposite is true." Howard was trembling. He asked the Lord, "Can I have another chance?" Of course the Lord already knew He was going to send him back. He said, "I want you to go back, but I want you to go across the nations." He has preached in many nations over the past several decades. The Lord said, "I want you to tell them that My church in the west is in the condition of the Laodicean church and My people don't know it. I want to wake them up."

He came back from that death experience. It was far more dramatic than I am telling you, but that is all I am going to go into right now.

### **THE LAODICEAN CONDITION OF THE CHURCH IN THE WEST**

This testimony was an important part of waking me up to the importance of this Laodicean passage, although not only because of this. I believe the majority of the Church in the west—I am talking about the whole western world—is in the condition of the Laodicean church. We are patting each other on the back. We are magnifying the grace of God and living in spiritual shallowness, but Jesus doesn't buy it at all. He is troubled by it. I don't care how many millions or how many thousands follow a ministry, Jesus is not going to change His mind about this subject.

My point is that this is a serious problem in the Church in the west, even though all through America there are still millions who are not yielding to this—millions. So don't imagine your group is the only one faithful. There are millions who are faithful, but there are hundreds of millions who are in this condition. Why am I saying this? Because you will be confronted with this problem everywhere you turn in the Body of Christ. If you are not aware of it, it will discourage you and you will start questioning yourself, saying, "Maybe I am wrong. Everybody couldn't be wrong. I must be wrong." I have good news for you. There are millions who are holding the line and standing with Jesus and resisting the Laodicean spirit—millions, although you don't find a lot of big ministries that are going on the line in a zealous, energetic way. So you might conclude, "Well, I don't hear anybody on TV talking about it. Maybe it is not real."

Beloved, poverty of spirit is what the Laodiceans lacked. They thought everything was OK. They did not see their great need. Jesus said in essence, "Your spiritual life is miserable to Me. I do love you. I have not written you off, but your spiritual life is not OK, it is wretched" (Rev. 3:17, paraphrased). Beloved, when those believers stand before the Lord, if they didn't repent, that is what Jesus will tell them on the last day as well. He won't have changed His opinion if they didn't change their lifestyle.

## **CAN YOU NAME THE EIGHT BEATITUDES?**

I am guessing that there are a number of you in this room who are living in this condition and you don't even think about it. You don't think about the eight beatitudes. You don't take a stand. You are not fasting and praying that they would breakthrough in your life. You don't study it out. You never think about them. I am saying this in kindness. Most of you are still in your early twenties. If that is you, wake up now and don't lose two or three more decades of your spiritual life. Let me show you the state of where the Church is on the eight beatitudes. If I asked you right now, without looking down at a list, to name the eight beatitudes to the person next to you, could you list those eight beatitudes because they are such a priority in your life, they are such a priority in your ministry, and they are such a priority in your church that you know them clearly, because you have heard them mentioned so many times? I think much of the Body of Christ would struggle to produce them, because they are never on their mind. That is why they can't recite them. That is a Laodicean condition of the Church.

There is nothing more important in our spiritual lives than the teaching of Jesus to grow in these eight character traits manifest by the rest of the Sermon on the Mount, backed up and amplified by Paul's and the rest of the apostles' teaching. Nothing is superior in importance than these eight beatitudes. Do you know them? Do you pray over them? Do you talk about them? Do you impart them? Do you struggle to grow in them? Do you hear them in the place where you are connected? If the answer is no, then start talking about them and say, "Let's change this. Let's make these central to what we are going for in our pursuit of the grace of God."

Again, my point is not to be negative. My point is to make you stop and say, "Huh, I actually don't know what the eight are and I don't ever pray about them. I don't know how I am doing on obeying them and I never hear teaching about them. Note to self: I am in trouble spiritually. Note to self: I am going to make a change in 2013. I am going to correct this in the next twelve months." That is the point I want to make. It is because I like you so much. That is why I am making this point. And Jesus said if I teach on them, He will call that great. I will teach on these by the grace of God until the day I die and so will many of you.

## **SPIRITUAL MOURNING**

I took all my time on that one, so I will just give you one minute or less on the other ones. Spiritual mourning; I just have a paragraph or two and a lot more on the website. There are many good books. We have quite a few in our bookstore. Poverty of spirit is what we see about our need. Spiritual mourning is how we feel about what we see. We are mourning for a spiritual breakthrough, meaning it is not OK with us if we don't get a breakthrough of righteousness in our heart, or in our ministry, or in our family, or in our city. We are sick over the lack of the breakthrough of righteousness in our own lives. We know that Jesus loves us. That is the tension. We have confidence that He is smiling at us and we have the joy of that confidence, but even in the midst of the joy of knowing He delights in us, we want a breakthrough in love. I am not going to be comforted by anything less than God's fullness in my life.

## **WE ALWAYS LABOR FOR THE NEXT BREAKTHROUGH**

Paragraph C. 2 Corinthians 7. I am not going to read it, but I just give a little bit here in the notes. Paul, the apostle, develops the value of godly sorrow. There is a gap between how much sorrow is available and how little we experience. That is not OK. I am not content without a breakthrough on numerous levels.

Beloved, here is how it works. Whatever breakthrough I get, I am going to believe for another breakthrough at a greater level. Just so you understand what I am saying, let me say hypothetically that if I get a breakthrough of a

three in my heart, I am going for a four. When I get a four, I am going for a five. All of my days, I plan to walk in the joy of God smiling over me and loving me as well as the joy of my eternal inheritance and my relationship to the glory of Jesus. At the same time I am going to mourn and press in for level five, level six. If I live to be ninety, I am going to be praying and fasting for another breakthrough before I am ninety-one. My point is that we are always reaching for the next breakthrough. We are never content, though we are grateful each step of the way.

### **BLESSED ARE THE MEEK**

Paragraph four. Blessed are the meek. You can read this on your own. The essence of meekness or humility is the revelation that everything you have belongs to Jesus. The ownership is His— your gifting, your good looks, your money, your abilities, your favor—He owns everything.

It is as if He says, “I want you to use all the resources I gave you, not only for your own comfort and honor, but I want you to invest your resources into increasing love in your own life and in the lives of others.” That is a part of meekness. The way you use your resources is related to meekness. Meekness is bigger than that, but that is the one point I wanted to highlight.

### **HUNGER AND THIRST FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS**

Roman numeral V. Hungering and thirsting for righteousness. We hunger for righteousness. We pray. We search the Word. We press into God, not to earn anything, but to position ourselves to receive more. Again, our prayer doesn’t earn us anything. It is so weak, but it positions us to receive the impact of the fire.

I might tell you that there is a million dollars worth of gold bars on floor ten over in the hotel and you have to go and get them. You cannot use the elevator. You have to walk up ten flights of stairs to get the million dollars worth of gold bars. They would be pretty heavy, but you might be able to carry them and walk down the stairs. You would never imagine that the effort of walking up the stairs and carrying them down the stairs could possibly earn you a million dollars. The effort we put into the relationship doesn’t earn us the gold, but it enables us to receive the gold and make it our own.

Paragraph C. Hunger is one of the most important signs of life. Lack of spiritual hunger is a serious sign of spiritual sickness. When somebody is not hungry physically for a sustained period of time, they die. They call that physical death. People in the intensive care unit in the hospital, who are on life support systems, are not hungry. They have lost their appetite. The lack of appetite is a powerful sign of spiritual sickness. No matter how many Bible verses somebody uses to cover it up, it is a sign of sickness. People don’t enjoy the Word, it is boring to them. They don’t enjoy prayer, it is boring. This is not because God is boring. It is because their unrenewed mind is not in unity with God. I am not looking at you saying, “You are bad if prayer and the Bible are boring. It is normal for it to be boring, but it is not OK with us for it to be boring. We give ourselves to do it. I promise you this. It will become exciting if you do it.

### **MIKE’S TESTIMONY**

I remember in my college years, thirty-five plus years ago. I was committed to be a man of the Word and of prayer. The only problem was that I didn’t like the Bible at all and I hated prayer—for real. I loved Jesus and I loved meetings. I could go to meetings five nights a week. I loved outreaches. I could go on any ministry trip you wanted. If you made me sit in my hotel room for fifteen minutes with a Bible, just me and God, I was tortured for fifteen minutes.

I told God once, “If You had written the Bible in a more interesting way, more of us would read it.” I am sure He smiled and said, “Little guy, you will change your opinion later.” Here is my point: I didn’t like the Word and prayer at all. It was miserably boring. The only thing I liked less than the Bible and prayer was fasting. That was worse than prayer. If you had told me when I was twenty that I would one day love reading the Word and love prayer, I would have said, “You are talking to the wrong guy.” If you had told me when I was twenty that when I was forty, I would be leading IHOPKC with twenty-four-hour prayer, Bible study, and fasting, I would have just collapsed with depression; that would have been more bitter than death. If you had told me when I was twenty, that an angel would appear and say, “O young man of God, you will be doing night-and-day prayer,” I would have said, “No, in the name of Jesus, no!”

A miracle happened in me. Somewhere in my twenties I stayed with it and boring Bible suddenly became interesting, and then became exhilarating. I couldn’t believe I liked the Bible and prayer. It was amazing to me. I thought I was the last guy on the planet who would ever like it. I was more of a Rambo Christian. I would go to any outreach you wanted, I would go to any meeting, but you couldn’t make me get quiet with God. Well, I am going to end with that. Amen.

#### **ALTAR CALL**

Talk to Jesus for a few minutes. Say, “Lord, I don’t know about the eight beatitudes. I don’t really think about the Sermon on the Mount. Yes, I would like to be great in Your sight, that sounds cool, but I don’t really think about it. Jesus, I want to enter into this reality, and into the blessedness of this lifestyle.”

I want people to have a little space here to say, “Lord, I may be a Laodicean believer and I didn’t even know it. I don’t have a lot of spiritual hunger. I like You and I like music. I like worship and I like jumping. I don’t really like hungering for righteousness. Help me and I will do it if You will help me.”

The Spirit of God will help you if you set your heart. He will delight in helping you. It will not be a burden to Him. He will delight in the relationship while you are growing in those eight beatitudes. All of us are just barely growing in them. I have so much further to grow in all eight of them. I feel His pleasure while growing in them and that is critical.