

## ***Session 3 Poverty of Spirit: The Foundational Beatitude***

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

### **INTRODUCTION**

Father, we ask You for Your blessing on the speaking and hearing of Your Word. We ask You for the Spirit of wisdom and revelation. Lord, I ask You for strength in our spirit, that the very light of Your countenance would shine on our minds and on our hearts right now, in the name of Jesus. Amen.

I'm going to continue in a series that we'll stay on for several months on the Sermon on the Mount. In this session here we're going to look at poverty of spirit, which is the first of the eight Beatitudes. We won't spend an entire session on all eight of them, but we will cluster them together, two or three each time. However, this first one is so foundational to the other seven. This first one could be compared to the foundation, and the others are the stones on a building that come after the foundation.

### **THE COMPREHENSIVE STATEMENT ON COOPERATING WITH THE GRACE OF GOD**

Paragraph A. The Sermon on the Mount is Jesus' most comprehensive statement on a believer's role in cooperating with the grace of God. It's excellent teaching on the grace of God. Now the reason I emphasize this is that some people conclude that the Sermon on the Mount is somehow different than the teaching of the grace of God. And because there's such an emphasis in the Sermon on the Mount on the believer's responsibility to press into God—He talks about prayer and fasting, giving and serving and seeking God, and thirsting and hungering after righteousness; and because of Jesus' emphasis on our responsibility to exert ourselves in the process of the grace of God, people wrongly conclude that it's not grace teaching.

Why? Because they have a very popular but very wrong idea that the grace of God is so free—and it is free—that there's no responsiveness required of believers in order to receive that grace. Yes, it's free, but Jesus calls His people to respond in an aggressive way to receive the grace of God. The point is that in the freeness with which the Lord offers it to us, we want it to touch our emotions and our mind. We want it to touch us. We want our mind and our emotions impacted by the power of the grace of God. And so I make the statement here that it's His most comprehensive statement on the believer's role in cooperating with the grace of God. It's the biblical litmus test to define and measure what spiritual development really is.

It's also the standard to define what ministry impact is. When you read the Scriptures, ministry impact is mostly described in terms of how it moves the human heart toward God. It's not just the size, the number of people responding, though that is in the Bible. However, when I think of my ministry impact, I'm not thinking of thousands gathering. I'm thinking of the quality of the response the believer has to obey the Sermon on the Mount lifestyle. That is Jesus' standard of ministry impact.

### **WALK IN THE FULLNESS OF THE LIGHT THAT YOU'RE GIVEN IN EVERY SEASON OF LIFE**

Again, this is just a review from the last time. The pinnacle, the high point of the Sermon on the Mount is Matthew 5:48, where Jesus calls us to live perfectly. Now this is a relative concept, that we're to live in all the light that we have. A new believer can do this; again, it's a call to live perfectly. The Lord is saying, "In all the light that I give you, obey it in that season of your life." And so a new believer can do this: we can walk in this perfect obedience in that relative sense in every season of our life.

Paragraph B. Now the eight Beatitudes describe a vibrant heart. I talk often about how the Holy Spirit wants to give us a vibrant heart: a heart in which we experience the activity of the Holy Spirit. And one facet of having a vibrant heart is that we're pursuing and we have a grace, a progressive grace, to walk in these eight Beatitudes; that we find a commitment and a grace to walk in these eight different virtues.

A vibrant heart is more than that. A vibrant heart would be the Holy Spirit speaking to us. It would be enjoying the Word of God, feeling His love, feeling His presence. Those are other facets of a vibrant heart. This is our inheritance. These eight Beatitudes aren't just what we're supposed to do. They're not just the standard of maturity. It's actually our inheritance to walk in this kind of liberty, in the kind of freedom described by these eight different Beatitudes. It takes the power of God to be poor in spirit. It takes the power of God to have spiritual mourning; to walk in meekness; to hunger and thirst for righteousness; and to show mercy to those who have mistreated you. Now being merciful is more than that, but it involves that. That's where mercy really becomes an issue, when you're showing it to someone who hasn't treated you rightly. It's embracing purity. It's being a peacemaker and enduring persecution with a spirit of rejoicing.

Now these are expressions of the Holy Spirit's activity in our life. It takes the supernatural power of God to do any of these eight. And so Jesus is describing the level of liberty that is in this vibrant, alive heart, as well as a heart that feels the presence of God and hears from God and moves in the prophetic and other things as well.

**“BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT, FOR THEY SHALL BE COMFORTED”**

Roman numeral II. Being poor in spirit. Jesus says, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted” (Mt. 5:3-4). Now when He says *blessed*, He's talking about a vibrant heart. Your heart will be alive in God. Your heart will experience the power of the Holy Spirit as you commit to these eight different Beatitudes. He will help you. He will escort you into walking them out progressively.

Now to be poor in spirit, in one sentence, means that we're aware of our great need. We're aware of our poverty-stricken condition, that we see that we lack so much spiritually. That's the idea. Now the context of being poor in spirit is this: the context is that Jesus has provided us spiritual wealth. He has provided us this exceeding wealth in the grace of God. It's freely and fully provided to us. It's because of His work on the cross. And so the day we're born again He says to us, “This wealth of grace, the riches of grace is yours. Now I want you to seek Me. I want you to respond to Me so that you experience the wealth of the grace of God in your thoughts and emotions; in your heart and in your ministry to others. This wealth of grace is yours, but you have to press into God, and I'll help you do it. And I'll release an anointing on you that is beyond your personal abilities. That is what I'll do for you.”

And a person who is poor in spirit says, “We see how great the wealth is that You've offered, but we see how little we're actually experiencing in our emotions, and in our thoughts, and in our life. We're poverty-stricken in our experience compared to the measure that You've provided. Lord, You've given so much, but we want to experience it more.”

And Jesus said, “It's that awareness of the deficiency; it's that awareness of how little you're experiencing that creates an urgency that whatever the price is, you'll pay. And whatever way you need to rearrange your life, you will seek the Lord and posture yourself in order for Him to release more of this into your own understanding.”

### **ARE YOU ABLE TO SEE THE POVERTY OF YOUR HEART BEFORE GOD?**

Now sometimes people describe these two technical terms: our legal position and our living condition. Our legal position is this: we have the grace of God fully available to us and it has been paid for; the work of the cross is ours. That's our legal position. It's all there, but that's not the whole story in the grace of God. What about how much we experience? What about our living condition? And the goal is for our living condition is to reach more or to be more in line with our legal position; that we would experience the grace in our mind and emotions more equal to the grace that is provided to us.

And so someone might come up to me and say, "How are you doing?"

And I could say, "Well, in my legal position, I'm awesome! My living condition... well, I'm not doing that great," is what you might be able to answer.

And so when Jesus talks about being poor in spirit, it means, "Do you see the spiritual lack compared to that which is made available?" And if you see it, does it concern you enough to take action? And being poor in spirit implies that we take action when we see our poverty-stricken state relative to what has been made available to us.

Therefore there are two aspects of being poor in spirit. Number one: we see how little we're experiencing. Our heart isn't godly like it could be godly. Our natural abilities can't make our heart godly. We can use all of our brain power; we can use all of our will, but we can't make our heart have godly emotions. We need help that is bigger than us. We need help that is outside of us. We need to look to another source, because we want a godly heart. We want godly emotions. We've exercised our will; we've focused our mind. We've done everything we can, but we can't produce godliness. We've come up short in our emotions. And so the Lord says, "OK, there's help outside of you: it's Me, but you have to recognize that you need Me in order for your heart to be godly, for Me to touch you, for Me to intervene in a gracious way in your life. So seek Me. The only way you'll solve the problem is if you seek Me. And if you seek Me, seek Me with the confidence that I'll graciously intervene even more than your seeking of Me deserves."

Some people misunderstand and they say, "Well, if we seek the Lord and then we get a breakthrough, isn't that like earning the breakthrough?"

I say, "No, it's not at all; seeking the Lord is posturing ourselves to receive that which is freely available." He gives us so much more than our seeking deserves. I mean our prayer, our fasting, our giving, our serving, our blessing, those five kingdom activities described in Matthew 6 are the spiritual disciplines with which we seek Him. Our fasting and prayer is so weak: it's fragile; it's broken. It's not so great, but He graciously gives us far above what our seeking deserves. And so the person who's poor in spirit says, "OK, I lack. I can't make my heart godly through my personality. I can't inspire someone else to be godly through my personality. I'm not witty enough; I'm not smart enough to move their spirit. I don't have the ability to reach in and move them spiritually, so I see my lack. And my experience of what is provided is so low; I want more. Therefore I will look to a source outside of myself, You, Jesus, that You would move my heart and You would anoint me so I can move the hearts of others. And so I will seek You with the confidence that You'll graciously answer me far beyond what my seeking could ever deserve."

That is what poverty of spirit is, just in a nutshell. We say to the Lord, “I want more, Lord!” and He answers back, “Good, I want more!”

We say, “I want more of Your manifest presence on my emotions!”

He says, “Good, I want more of you seeking Me!” And again, our seeking is so weak and fragile, hardly could it be considered worth earning the presence of God touching us.

“Lord, my human abilities can’t move my own heart. My human abilities can’t move someone else when I minister to them. I need an anointing that is bigger than me.” That is poverty of spirit.

Now if we see how low and superficial our spiritual experience is, if we see it and it doesn’t move us to action, that’s called “spiritual passivity.” When we see the lack, how much is available and how much we actually experience, but it doesn’t move us to action, that’s called passivity. However, if we don’t seek the lack but we think we’re doing great, that’s called *pride*. We’re completely missing what reality is. If we see the lack and we respond even in our weak and broken way, and we put ourselves in the position of saying, “Lord, we want more,” and we’re trusting for a hundred-fold return of what we invested in the relationship because God is so gracious, that’s called “poverty of spirit.” If when we see the lack in our life it doesn’t move us to action, it’s not poverty of spirit; it’s feeling bad, but it’s still spiritual passivity. And so we actually have to respond if we want to fulfill the biblical definition of having a poor spirit.

### **THE MOST CHALLENGING OF THE EIGHT BEATITUDES**

Now I think it’s the most difficult of the eight Beatitudes to sustain. To cultivate a sense of the magnitude of our poverty-stricken situation, to cultivate that regularly through the years, I believe is the most challenging of all of the eight Beatitudes. I believe it’s more challenging than giving mercy to people who mistreat us; more challenging than seeking purity; more challenging than walking in meekness. This idea of keeping cultivated in our understanding, this idea that there’s this massive supply that is freely available but we’re experiencing so little, so therefore the sense of poverty creates urgency where we keep reaching: we keep reaching for more. If we do this first Beatitude, the other seven will develop far more effectively in our life.

### **DO YOU HAVE THE GRACE TO CULTIVATE POVERTY OF SPIRIT IN YOUR OWN LIFE?**

Now when I know a person who says, “I’m leaving IHOP-KC”—the Bible school or the staff—“and I’m going to start a HOP or plant a church or start a ministry somewhere”; the first thing I think is not, “Do they have a really attractive, engaging personality so that people will like them? Do they have leadership gifts?” Those are all nice things. Having leadership gifts is important. However, the first thing I think about when a person says, “I want to go out and do something,” is, “Do you have the grace to cultivate poverty of spirit in your own life, and then can you impart it to the people you’re going to gather? Because yes, I believe you have the ministry skills. I believe you’re a good communicator. I believe you could organize the ministry. I believe the money will come in and I believe that the people will gather. However, once they gather, will you cultivate this poverty of spirit in your own life? Because it has to be cultivated, and in your life regularly, not once every year or two. And can you impart it to other people? Because if you can’t, you can gather people and have a house of prayer, or plant a church or have some kind of ministry, but the people won’t have passion.” I mean, they could have passion for a season, but that passion has to be reignited over and over and over again.

And I've seen many people start off with poverty of spirit. I mean, they have this reaching heart, they're pressing into God, and they gather some people and they all have this attitude. A month goes by, a year goes by, and all of a sudden they've lost that sense of the magnitude of how little they're experiencing compared to how much He has made available. And so they lose the urgency and they lose the pressing. And now they're just doing ministry skills, and those are good. And they're still doing the work of the ministry but without that intensity in their spirit, without that fire.

Now when I speak of the fire of the Holy Spirit in someone's life or heart or in their ministry I'm not talking about their communication style. I'm talking about a vibrant heart. And what I mean is that someone will get up and maybe preach, or they'll do something on a microphone, they'll sing or preach and someone will say, "Boy, that guy was so fiery!" And what they mean is that he has a really aggressive personality.

And I say "Well, that's not what I call *fiery*. That's just a big, bold personality." And that's cool. Big personalities are cool, and I like them, but that's not the same thing as the fire of the Holy Spirit. I mean, a motivational salesman can do that without the Holy Spirit.

Or a worship team will get up and lead and the whole room will be jumping and screaming, which is fun, but someone says, "That was so fiery!"

I say, "Not necessarily; at every rock concert in America they do that." I mean, the man gets up and sings the opening song, and they're total unbelievers, and they're worshipping the devil, and everyone screams. And that's what our conferences look like. They all look the same. I mean, it looks the same everywhere. That's human dynamics; it's not bad, but my point is this: that's not what I mean by fire. Fire isn't how enthusiastic the room is and how aggressive are the people on the microphone; that's just human dynamics. That's not good or bad; it's just human. Fire means the heart is moving and is connecting with the Holy Spirit. There's a prophetic flow, even a slight one, where God is speaking to them and they're speaking to God even a little and there's this zeal and this moving forward in growth of these eight Beatitudes. That's the fire of the Holy Spirit. That's what I call the power of God moving on someone.

And so that's how I evaluate my ministry, and when I want to encourage someone in ministry, I ask them, "Can you sustain a fiery ministry environment?" And again, I don't mean being loud. I don't mean everyone doing something together with enthusiasm and unity. That's good, but that's not what I mean by fire. Can you cultivate this urgency in your own life to keep pressing, because the press people wear out in it, and can you motivate others to do it? If you can, your teaching ministry, your house of prayer ministry, your outreach ministry, or your worship ministry will have a whole different kind of dimension to it if you can keep poverty of spirit at the very center of your ministry. It's the hardest one by far.

### **IF YOU LIVE IN THE FLOW OF THE KINGDOM, THE KINGDOM IS ALREADY YOURS**

Paragraph A. Jesus says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted" (Mt. 5:3-4). Now it's interesting that out of the eight Beatitudes, six of them bear the promise, "They shall." "They shall be comforted." "They shall receive mercy." "They shall see God." Those are future-oriented. However, in the first and the eighth, it's not the words, "The kingdom shall be yours," but, "The kingdom *is* yours." It's in the present tense. The word *is* is a strategic word. Jesus is saying that if you cultivate this attitude, this disposition of poverty of spirit, you constantly stir up the awareness of the magnitude of how little are experiencing, and how you need help that's outside of yourself—it's bigger than you; It's the

Holy Spirit, and you've got to seek Him on His terms—and He will graciously give you that help if you seek Him.

Jesus said that if you live that way, the kingdom *is* yours right now. Yes, there's a future dimension of this promise, because the kingdom unfolds throughout the ages to us in a more progressive way. However, I like this word: He says, "You'll experience a vitality and a vibrancy in your heart even now, not waiting till the age to come."

Now the other Beatitudes put the focus of the promises on *shall*: "You shall be comforted"; "You shall see God"; "You shall receive mercy"; "You shall inherit the earth." They do have a present-tense experience as well, but the focus is mostly on the future. However, in this first one the focus is on the present tense.

I'm not going to develop this right now; we'll wait until the next session and I'll put several of the Beatitudes together. "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." When we see differently in verse 3, when we have poverty of spirit, then we feel differently. When we see our poverty-stricken state, we mourn. It's not a casual observation. When we really see with revelation, we can't just say, "Well, you know, I'm a mess and I don't have much power in my heart. I feel really bad about myself." That is seeing in one sense, but Jesus is making another point. When you see at a level that creates a pain in your heart, where it's no longer acceptable and you're actually going to change the way you live; you'll throw yourself into a seeking of God and positioning yourself to have your emotions and mind impacted. Jesus is saying, "You're blessed."

With poverty of spirit we see our life differently when we behold our poverty-stricken state. Again, it's not casual; there's a weightiness that inclines us to feel differently. And the combination of those two together equips us to progressively experience the rest of the Sermon on the Mount.

Now in this mourning, we don't only mourn. Our whole spiritual life isn't only spiritual mourning. The mourning is because we have a desperate feeling that we can't stay in this poverty-stricken state. We have to make progress by seeking God on His terms and trusting Him to graciously answer us far beyond what our seeking deserves. This mourning is only part of the emotional response. We still have assurance that God loves us. We still have confidence that what we do in smallness He enjoys and values, because most of our works and most of our efforts are small, but He honors them and He enjoys us and we have the assurance of His loving-kindness over us. And so our life isn't only mourning, but it has the element of mourning in it.

### **WE CAN'T FULLY MEASURE THE BREAKTHROUGH, BUT WE CAN'T STOP SEEKING IT**

Now these two issues of poverty of spirit and mourning really bother people. As I've shared these over the years in my twenties I was really invested in those two beatitudes and thought they were very normal. Then in my thirties I began to travel with John Wimber and to some other places around the world. And I began to talk about these openly and freely. And I began to talk to a lot of national and international ministries, and I was surprised at how many thought, "Bah, humbug! We don't do that. We're not poverty-stricken; and we're not sad about our ministry, either! We don't have any sadness or grief about how weak it is."

And I've told this story before, but I heard two separate guys, a couple of years apart, stand up at really big conferences and make this statement: "This is as good as it gets!"

And I was horrified, and I said, “Oh Lord, You’ve got to be kidding!” And I said to one of the guys, “This is as good as it gets?” and he said, “Yes!”

“Well, what about being poor in spirit?”

And I’ve had many discussions since then with many people and found out that that’s not a value in the kingdom of God in many places to be poor in spirit, and to feel this weight of desperation that business as usual isn’t OK. We have to get a breakthrough and we have to seek a breakthrough. And we can’t measure fully what the breakthrough will look like, but we’re never going to stop seeking for it. And when we get a breakthrough at some level in our heart and even in our ministry, we will seek for a greater breakthrough. And when we get a greater breakthrough we will seek for a greater breakthrough. We’re ever going to be seeing the gap between what the Lord has made available and what we’re experiencing. I’m talking about in this age. We will for our entire lives be blessed if we stay in this place of seeing the truth about how much more God has to give us if we will stay reaching towards Him in the way He describes in the Sermon on the Mount.

Paragraph E. The way we become poor in spirit is by understanding how much God wants to do in us. And so when we remind ourselves through the Word or through biographies or other means what God does through His people, then it stirs us up and we say, “Wait, if You’ll do that through those guys, why won’t You do it through me?”

And so when I read the Word and as I’ve read biographies over the years, I would read about how far God was willing to go in moving a man or a woman’s heart by the Spirit, and then releasing the Spirit to move other people’s hearts and to release the power of God to impact others. Therefore I would read these biographies and I would say, “Lord! I want this! This is for me!” Then that creates this sense of poverty: “I’ve gotten a little of that. I want a lot more! My experience is way too low! I want my experience in my heart and in my ministry to others to be far richer than this, because Your grace is so rich!”

And so that is how poverty of spirit will grow in us, by putting our self in a place where we’re constantly interacting with the information of how much God wants to give the human heart.

### **EVERY SINGLE PERSON HAS A MINISTRY TO SOMEONE**

Now all of us have a ministry, every single believer. As we well know, your ministry isn’t just on a stage, in a pulpit, or on a worship team. Every person in the marketplace has a ministry. Every mom, dad, brother and sister in a home has a ministry. Not just the mom, but the dad as well. Not just the dad: the children have a ministry in their home. We want to teach young people to see their parents as part of their ministry, not to disciple their parents but to serve their parents and release the Spirit to their parents and to their brothers and sisters.

Our ministry isn’t something we do outside of the home; it begins in the home. We talked about the prison ministry where eight or ten people every week are getting saved or whatever the number is in the prison outreach. They have a ministry in that prison. They don’t get out and then their ministry starts; it starts the day they’re born again. You may be in a hospital bed; you have a ministry in that hospital bed to reach out to the people who are caring for you and to the others around you that are sick. And the guy cleaning the floor, your ministry is to touch them.

Therefore, I would venture to guess that 99.9 percent of all ministry in the Body of Christ throughout all history occurs in twos and threes or tens and twenties. Very few people impact a thousand. I would say less than 1 percent of the Body of Christ impacts a thousand. And so don't think of ministry just according to 1 percent of how many people; that's a wrong concept. Think of the 99 percent of all ministry throughout history, which is impacting ones and twos, twos and threes, tens and twenties: that's what ministry is.

The reason I say that is because some people say, "I want to get in the real ministry!" and what they mean is that they want to touch a thousand people.

I say, "No, you're in the real ministry if you're inspiring people and instructing them to live a Sermon on the Mount lifestyle. If you're convincing them and encouraging them to walk in those eight Beatitudes, beloved it doesn't become more real than that. That is real ministry."

Whether in your home, in the marketplace, whether in a prison cell or a hospital bed, or a student at the university; it doesn't matter your station in life, because everyone has a ministry and the Holy Spirit wants your own heart to be more vibrant. And He wants more activity of the Spirit in you, but He also wants more activity of the Spirit through you. And the activity of the Spirit through you, yes, it does involve healing the sick and leading people to the Lord in those kinds of traditional ministries that we all understand. However, His ministry in you is to inspire and to instruct and encourage people to walk in the eight Beatitudes. And you have people all around you and you can tell your story. You can tell your challenges. You can tell your insights. And you can tell who has encouraged you in your journey as you're trying to walk those out. And when you share them with other people, beloved, you're discipling people and you're doing the work of the kingdom, however you want to do it, with power. And power doesn't mean that when you talk, they fall over. It means when you talk it makes sense to them, and they leave with a motivation and an inner resolve to obey the things you said about the Sermon on the Mount. That's the power of God.

### **IT'S NOT HOW HIGH THEY GO; IT'S HOW THEY WALK WHEN THEY LAND**

I mean, think about it: when a fallen person in a fallen world is motivated to obey the eight Beatitudes, beloved, that obedience will be rewarded forever because it moves Jesus that much. Beloved, if you're moving people in that direction, that's real. You're speaking to fallen people in a fallen world, and they're resolved and committed to walk in the eight Beatitudes. And Jesus is going to reward them forever for it, and reward you forever for teaching on these, as He says in verse 19. Beloved, that's the power of God operating in your ministry. We don't want to think of the power of God as just external demonstrations, where people have external manifestations. Because that's not the measure of the power of God; the measure of the power of God is the internal resolve to obey when no one is looking, and to sustain that obedience. And if there's an outward manifestation, that's cool, too, but that's not the main grid. It's like the man says: "I don't care how high they jump when they dance, so long as when they land they walk straight with God." That's the real point. It's not how high they go; it's how they walk when they land. That's what really matters at the end of the day.

And the charismatic culture in America puts so much emphasis on visible demonstrations of power. Some of them are real, a lot of them are fake, and a lot of them are exaggerated, but a lot of them are real, too, and we can get distracted from the reality of the power of God.

Beloved, I want to say this: I want to move in healing; I want to move in prophecy. I want to move in all those outward things, but I want to be able to move people to be convinced to obey the eight Beatitudes. And that

takes the power of God, whether they flinch when you're talking to them or not. If they walk away resolved, the power of God was being manifest through you.

Now one thing I want to talk about is moms. I believe the greatest assignment in the kingdom of God in history is moms in their home with their children. That's not only an important assignment; it's the most significant assignment in terms of reaching out and touching people. It's touching children in the homes. And the reason I say that is that moms must cultivate poverty of spirit, just like the preacher, just like the worship leader. Because I'm not talking about a mom feeling overwhelmed and exasperated by the work load; I get that. I mean, that makes sense. That's not poverty of spirit; that's just the human dynamics of, "Oh my, that's tough!"

I'm talking about a mom saying to her children, "I want to be available to you, but you need more than just me. I don't want to bring just me to you over the years; I want to bring the ministry of the Holy Spirit. I want to speak to your little heart where the Spirit moves you on the inside"—because that is available to moms. It's not just our natural affections, which are critical. It's not just natural instruction, which is critical too, and very important. It's the ability to release the Spirit's activity that touches their mind and their heart. That takes seeking the Lord for a breakthrough in your own ministry to your children.

### **THE NUMBER ONE BATTLEFIELD AND PLACE OF STRENGTH**

And the reason I say that is that I've met with moms over the years who say, "Well, I'm not doing the fasting and prayer thing. I'm doing the mom thing."

And I say, "There's no ministry that needs fasting and prayer more than the mom thing." I mean, for real! And maybe it won't look the same; it won't have the same measure of intensity in terms of time. However, that's the number one battlefield and place of strength in the whole kingdom of God. It's moms moving in the power of God. And again, I'm talking about when they say simple little things and whisper them in their ears, it moves their children's heart. That takes the power of God. That's bigger than a mom's personality. That's bigger than her love and devotion; it takes the anointing. And no mom has that without seeking it, just like a preacher doesn't have it; just like a person in the marketplace doesn't have it.

Now I talk to guys in the marketplace, men or women, and they say, "Well, we're trying to get divine ideas, see the money work, get the right systems, and have all of those things in place. And we need the power of God." OK, I agree with that, but you have a calling beyond just offering a service and seeing the finances and the systems work rightly. You need to release the presence of God in what you're doing, too.

And again, when I say "the presence of God," I don't mean you go to your staff meetings and say, "Come, Holy Spirit," and hope two people fall down. It's cool if that happens, but that's not what I'm talking about. I'm saying you speak words because you have an anointing on your life. It might be one on one. It might be to a competitor; it might be to a customer. It might be to a fellow staff member. It might be to someone with whom you're driving, but your words move them to obey the Sermon on the Mount.

Beloved, it takes an anointing to do that. And so I've heard businesspeople say, "Well, I'm just in business; I don't do that fasting and prayer thing."

I say, “Is your thing only to build the externals of your business? Or do you want to impart the presence of God to your customers, your competitors, your staff members, your employers, your employees? You want to do it to everyone, don’t you? That’s what you’re called to do!”

Beloved, we have to hunger and thirst for it. We see how much God wants to give us and how little we’re experiencing in and we’re responding in a way that we’re giving our self to God because we want that anointing in our life.

**“AS MANY AS I LOVE, I REBUKE AND CHASTEN; THEREFORE BE ZEALOUS AND REPENT”**

Paragraph K. Jesus addresses being poor in spirit here in a very direct way. He lays out each of the eight Beatitudes, one, two, three, here in Matthew 5. He lays them out in one sentence, but each He develops later on in His ministry in the Gospels, as well as in the book of Revelation where He elaborates on each. He says, “Here’s what I meant back in Matthew 5:3; let me break it down for you.”

And now look at what He says to the church of Laodicea here in Revelation 3:16. He says, “You’re lukewarm. And you’re neither cold nor hot, and I will vomit you out of My mouth because you say I’m rich and I’ve become wealthy and I have need of nothing” (Rev. 3:15-16, paraphrased). He says, “You don’t know that in reality you’re wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked” (v. 17, paraphrased). He’s speaking spiritually. But look at verse 19: “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent” (v. 19, NKJV). Then He goes on to say, “To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne” (v. 21).

So let’s be clear about what Jesus is saying in verse 19: “I love you. I’m only telling you what I’m telling you because I love you so dearly. You’re compromising. You’re in spiritual pride. You don’t see your poverty-stricken state in the Spirit. You don’t see the gap between the wealth I’ve made available and what you’re actually walking in in your heart, your emotions, your character, and your behavior.”

He’s talking about spiritual pride here, or you could call it *passivity*. Maybe they did know, some of them. However He says here in verse 17, “You don’t even know!” And so if you don’t know how weak you are, that’s pride; if you do know how deficient you are and you do nothing, that’s passivity. And so one guy picks pride and the other guy picks passivity, I want nothing to do with either of them, because if we know it and we respond, it’s called poverty of spirit.

**THE DECEPTION OF BELIEVING THAT WE HAVE NEED OF NOTHING**

Now look again at verse 16. “You’re lukewarm: you’re neither hot nor cold.” He says, “This is how I feel about you; I will vomit you out of My mouth.”

Now He isn’t saying, “You’re repulsive to Me; I don’t love you!” because in verse 19 He makes it clear, “I do love you.” What I believe He’s saying here, using the human analogy, is this: “Your lack of dedication and your lack of responsiveness to Me gives Me a stomachache. It makes My stomach hurt because I love you so much. I’ve given you so much. I’ve made so much available, but you respond so passively that it actually hurts My stomach. And that’s why I’m correcting you, because I love you so much.”

He says, “Let Me give you the essence of it,” in verse 17, and this describes so much of the Church in the Western world. He said, “Here’s your fundamental problem,” and using Matthew 5:3 it becomes clear that they

didn't cultivate and sustain in an ongoing way this attitude, this disposition of being poor in spirit. He says, "Here's what you say: 'I'm rich. I've become wealthy. I have need of nothing.'"

**“BECAUSE YOU ARE LUKEWARM . . . I WILL VOMIT YOU OUT OF MY MOUTH”**

Now here's what was happening in Laodicea: their ministry was growing. They were rich; they were wealthy. Money was great; the crowds were great. Their influence in society was great. The enthusiasm of the people was great. I mean, people were responding. The money was pouring in; the governor was asking for their advice. And they said, "Wow! Things are happening! It's never been better than this!" The externals were growing and increasing.

However, Jesus said, "You've made a wrong assumption by the externals of My blessing. You've concluded that you're OK spiritually because you're growing and your money is up, and the enthusiasm and your popularity is higher than ever." He says, "You've wrongly concluded that because of My blessing these externals took place; internally you made a wrong conclusion about where you were spiritually. You say, 'I have need of nothing.'"

I mean, they knew they needed Jesus. They knew He was God and they needed Him in the generic sense, like every believer: "Yes, we need the Lord."

But Jesus says, "That fact doesn't move you enough to press into Me. You don't see that there's a huge gap between what I want to give you and what you're walking in. You're pretty comfortable with the place you're living in. The truth is that you are increasing outwardly, but your internal, spiritual life is getting worse and worse and worse, and you're completely unaware of it."

He says, "You're wretched." Now He doesn't mean, "You're all just wretches, get out of My presence!" That's not what He meant. What He meant was this: "Your experience of what I made available to you is so much lower than what I want for you that I call it *wretched*. You're miserable. You're not at all walking in what I've called you to walk in because you've ceased to be zealous."

As He goes on to say in verse 19, "Be zealous, get the zeal back, and seek Me as you did in the early days before you were made passive by the blessing in your life" (Rev. 3:19, paraphrased). He says, "I love you. I love you even while you're compromising." When we respond in zeal, we're not earning God's love, because He loved us when we were compromising. He loved us when we were unbelievers. We're not earning anything. However, we're positioning ourselves to come into agreement and alignment with God.

Now this isn't just a dynamic that happens with a church like Laodicea when they had external momentum, popularity, and increase. This could happen in a business. There's a guy or a gal in a business, the Lord blessed them and gave them the idea, favor has come, things have gone in the right way, and they have popularity and influence. In his spirit, though, the man isn't going. He's actually diminished in his walk with God under the blessing of God. And not only in his spirit is he diminished; his ability to inspire and bring others into the eight Beatitudes is fading. He doesn't have an anointing on his life to do that, but that doesn't bother him because the money is up beyond any time ever in his business history. And Jesus would say to that man, "Repent!"

And the guy would say, "Repent? I have more money than ever, more honor. I mean, I'm on the cover of the magazines. I mean, what do you want?"

And the Lord says, “Yes, but you’re not connected to Me anymore! Repent! You’re not ministering and releasing My life to people like you did in the days of old.”

### **THE DEDICATION IS REMARKABLE, BUT DON’T BUY THE PRESS**

Now this is a verse that will always be necessary for IHOP-KC. In the last number of years we’ve had a certain amount of increase and prominence: economically, numerically, and around the nations. All these things are happening; and most of our people can interpret it rightly, but some of them don’t. They think, “Isn’t this amazing?!” People come from all over the world and make these glowing statements about how IHOP-KC has touched them, and I love that. I love it, but I want to say this: that I love IHOP-KC, but I’m not so impressed with us spiritually. I’m not impressed with myself spiritually. There’s so much more that I need to enter into. And when I look at us I say, “I love who we are! I would rather be with this spiritual family than any other group in the earth.”

I love this spiritual family, but I don’t buy the press. I don’t buy that it’s amazing spiritually. I think the dedication is remarkable. I give thanks to God for our sincerity. But our spiritual breakthrough and the level of the activity of the Spirit in our hearts and ministering through us? I look at that and I say, “Lord, I’m grateful for what You’ve given us but I’m desperate for more!” I’m desperate for a greater manifestation of power that moves the individuals into the eight Beatitudes when no one is looking, that they would have power to walk those things out.

And so I’m grateful, because in poverty of spirit we don’t despise the growth we have. We don’t despise the blessing we have, even when it’s small, but we’re grateful for it. I thank the Lord for the increase of my own spiritual life over the years. I’m grateful, but I’m not content. I look at myself and I think I’m further than I used to be, but I’m not nearly content with where I want to be in my heart experience and in my ministry experience to others. I want a far greater manifestation of power inside and on the outside. “Thank You, Jesus! I mean it! I’m not writing it off. I’m not saying, ‘Oh it’s nothing.’ No, I love You for it, thank You, but I’m not content.”

When I look at IHOP-KC as we’re approaching our thirteenth year, I say, “Thank You, Lord, that all of these amazing people are here, but I’m not content with where we are spiritually.” We have so much more ground to take spiritually. And I believe that we constantly cultivate this awareness of the magnitude of our spiritual poverty and how much more God has to give us; and that our good thinking, our will power, our clever ideas, our gifted musicians can’t produce the anointing. The crowds may come, but that’s not the same thing as moving people spiritually to live out the eight Beatitudes.

That’s what I want to see us do more. I want to impact people inside and outside of this spiritual family in such a way that when it’s all said and done, not that we can measure it very well, but that they love Jesus enough to say yes to these eight Beatitudes in the secret place of their life.

### **A NEAR-DEATH ENCOUNTER WITH THE LIVING GOD**

I’m going to end with two quick stories. I’ve mentioned this a time or two before. Paragraph J. It’s about Howard Pittman. We have his book, *Placebo*, in the bookstore. He was a Baptist preacher on the weekends, and he ministered to orphans and did a whole lot of evangelism outreaches and was very active in ministry. And he was a state police officer on the highways of Louisiana for twenty or thirty years.

Then one day he had an accident and began hemorrhaging on the inside, and he ultimately bled to death. Well, it was a near-death experience. They put him in the hospital. They put him in the intensive care ward for two or three days. He was out! I don't remember exactly how long. However, his spirit left his body for a day or two and he stood before the Lord.

So here he was: his body was in the ICU and he was hooked up to all these machines. They told his wife, "We don't think he's going to make it. There's not much hope that he's going to survive this; he's just a moment from death."

His spirit had already left his body. The angel took him and he stood before the Lord, and the Lord made the most shocking statement. He made an encouraging statement as well.

The Father spoke to him and said, "I'm going to send you back, and I want you to have this message." And I'm paraphrasing, but in essence He said, "The church in the West has a Laodicean attitude and a Laodicean spirit. The church in America and throughout Europe is operating in the Laodicean spirit, and I'm very grieved. I love them, but My heart is grieved over the standing of the majority of the church. And I want you to go back and tell them that. And so that you really understand what I'm saying"—the Lord spoke to Howard Pittman and said—"you're like that, too!"

And Howard Pittman was shocked, because he was so active in ministry with orphans and evangelistic outreaches. And the Lord told him, "You do it so you can get recognition from people. You do it so that you can feel good about your life. You're disconnected from Me; you do it for yourself. You're a Laodicean. I want you to do it for Me, not just to feel good about yourself so that people will pat you on the back because you're reaching out to orphans.

"And I want you connected to Me. I called you to be connected to Me. You're spiritually weak. You're wretched. You're poor. You're miserable in your spiritual condition. The state of your relationship to Me is miserable. And I want you to repent and I want you to bring the message back to the church all throughout the West"—but especially in America.

### **HE WILL POUR OUT A SPIRIT OF POWER BEYOND ANY TIME IN HISTORY**

Then He said, "Before you go, I want to tell you this, My Son is coming soon." And of course *soon* is a word that Jesus used 2,000 years ago, and who knows for sure what *that* means? But He told him to say, "I'm preparing for My Son to return." I don't remember the exact terminology, but He said, "Tell them this: that before My Son returns I will release such power that they'll do greater works than even My Son did when He was on the earth. The greater-works-than-these miracles will take place. They'll do miracles even beyond My servant Elijah."

And Howard Pittman being a Baptist pastor said, "I couldn't help it; the thought came to me instantly, because when you're standing before the Lord it's really the real you. And my thoughts sprung up, 'Miracles aren't for today!'" He said "I tried to grab that thought back but it was already there."

And he said, "The Lord rebuked me. He said, 'You're greatly mistaken. I will pour out a Spirit of power beyond any time in history. Go back and tell the church in essence in America and West that they're the Laodicean church.'" And when I look from coast to coast, there are clearly a number of exceptions but for the most part the

church is content spiritually. I mean, they want to grow numerically but they're content spiritually. They're not pressing into God with a feeling of the desperation of where they are spiritually. And that they need help that is beyond themselves, which will only come by seeking God on His terms and by Him graciously giving us more than our seeking would ever deserve.

When I look at the church in America, the reason I'm telling you this is because this is one of our values that we really want to emphasize and cultivate throughout every season of our life: poverty of spirit. We never graduate from this; it's our way into the kingdom, but it's the way of the kingdom in every season of our spiritual life. However, we have to cultivate it. We have to constantly put before our mind how much God desires to give. It makes urgency awaken in our heart. We cry out to God. We press in harder and get a little breakthrough. And then we start pressing in harder for the next breakthrough.

### **RESPONDING AND COOPERATING IN THE WAY JESUS TAUGHT**

Now you'll run into people all over this nation who don't like this. They say, "Brother just....." There's a growing—and I say it week after week—distorted message that only gives half of the message of grace. They say, "It's freely given!" That is the grace message, but it's only half. The other half is that you must respond and cooperate in the way Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount.

And if we teach the first half without the second, it's presumption. If we teach the second half, "Respond with aggressiveness," without the first half, then it's legalism. We don't want presumption or legalism; we want both halves of the message. If we take one half without the other half, the overall message isn't the truth. It has truth in it but it's still not the truth.

And the church in our nation has been lulled to sleep, seduced, comforted, patted on the back, put to bed with this false, distorted message of grace where everything is so free that they don't have to respond! And if God wants my attention, He'll just pour out the power of God and there you have it. And I'll then start seeking Him when He grips me, but until He grips me in a special way I'll do what I do and thank Him for His grace.

Well, that's what the Laodiceans were doing. And so you hear someone say, "Yeah, our crowds are big, our buildings are big, our money is big, our popularity is big! The governor and the president want to meet with us. All of the top business guys want to meet with us."

And Jesus would say, as He said in verse 17, "You say you're rich? You say you're wealthy? You say you're influential? You say your crowds are big? You don't need to press in until I grip you in some special way? You don't know that the state of your relationship with Me is wretched! Yes, I do love you; that's why I'm confronting you, but I want you to wake up. I want you to do it My way."

And so the Lord told Howard Pittman, "Go back and speak this message. And many will resist you, but if you love them you'll speak this message."

Amen. We're just going to end with that. Let's stand.