

# BE God's People: poor in spirit

Matthew 5:3

MPS: Jesus comes to the spiritually helpless and hopeless to save and gives the abundant life of His Kingdom.

OBJ: Every person should practice three spiritual exercises to experience God's abundant life.

**INTRO** This summer, LifePoint is raising our expectations for the summer. Jesus sets people free and transforms to "BE God's People", to live in God's blessing by His Kingdom values. Walking in godly wisdom begins by embracing Kingdom values. Set your Summer aim to live in God's blessing by His Kingdom values.

**ILLUS** Gavin Peacock<sup>1</sup> left school at 16 to play professional football for Queens Park Rangers. In his words, "I'd achieved the schoolboy dream, everything that the world says will make you happy – the fame, the potential fortune and the great career. And yet I wasn't satisfied as I thought I would be, because football was my god."

**TRANS** "But wait, I thought once you had it all and achieved it all, that would be the end-all to happiness. **Is this not right?**"

Jesus begins his Sermon on the Mount with a value of life in His Kingdom that addresses all of life. **If our faith in following Jesus does not include the comprehensive whole of our life, then it matters for none of our life at all.**

**READ** Matthew 5:3 *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* **Matt 5:3**

**Jesus comes to the spiritually helpless and hopeless to save and gives the abundant life of His Kingdom.**

## What is poor in spirit?

Jesus says the first value of His Kingdom is *poor in spirit*. Our introduction to serves as the entrance in His Kingdom.

**Poor in spirit addresses the spirit of man.** The reference is two-fold. First, Matthew uses a word to refer to poverty of money and worldly resources. Poor is seldom a desirable descriptor because most people, at least in thought and heart, prefer to live in the suffrage of affluence's misery and struggle more than they dare pursue true joy without it. And, this is not to say that all with wealth or affluence are miserable. That is not true at all. **What is true is that all who worship their wealth will end up in its misery, because it cannot provide true joy, as our hearts are inclined to believe it promises.**

**ILLUS** A recent statistic shows the lack of wealth's ability to satisfy. The US combined household wealth has set a new record, surpassing \$100 Trillion. At the same time suicide rates risen dramatically across US. This reminds us that material gain cannot heal a broken heart.

The problem is our heart, what we believe about money, wealth and affluence, and what we believe about ourselves in light of it, whether we have it or not. Many live enslaved to wealth who do not even have it, because of what they believe about it. And THIS brings us much closer to the point of this beatitude. **The poor in spirit know that Jesus is the only source of true joy and gladness, of provision and protection, and that nothing can replace or prove superior to Him.**

**TRANS** But Matthew's reference applies the state of poverty not to one's status in life, but as the qualifier **OF** their life.

**Matthew applies poverty to the whole of a person's being.** Matthew's description is not to the poor in monetary terms, though that is not outside of his scope. *Poor in spirit* describes the mindset and posture of life of the one who has no ability within himself or network around himself to change or address his situation, nor to resource or satisfy his deepest needs, longings and desires. *Poor in spirit* is not about money or resource. **Poor in spirit marks the person who recognizes their complete lack of spiritual worth, by nature and ability, and lives in light of their own deep spiritual poverty and bankruptcy.**

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.christian.org.uk/news/former-premier-league-star-i-everything-except-christ/>



*Poor in spirit* is entrance into the Kingdom of God because it recognizes the complete inability of self to satisfy and save.

***Poor in spirit* contrasts the greatest value of the world.** Martin Lloyd-Jones states, "You will never find a greater antithesis to the worldly spirit and outlook than that which you find in this verse."<sup>2</sup> The spirit of this world is the spirit of self, self-assurance, self-reliance, self-sufficiency and self-salvation. Self-righteousness feeds from the fundamental highest value of self. Every religion builds on this same spirit as its foundation, that man may satisfy by himself what longings and desires he encounters within himself. The world champions self-ability in every realm. *Poor in spirit* contrasts the essence and striving of personal glory in self-salvation.

**ILLUS** The prodigal son demonstrates the *poor in spirit* before he returns to his father. After living in all the world's indulgences, he was left only helpless and hopeless in his state. His only thought was to live as the lowliest servant in his Father's Kingdom, and that was better than all he had obtained in the world.

**Must I recognize my state as that of the prodigal son?** According to Jesus, yes. "There is no one in the kingdom of God that is not *poor in spirit*."<sup>3</sup> *Poor in spirit is the posture of heart that submits all of life to God to receive life from God.*

**The *poor in spirit* recognizes a helplessness that births hopelessness in self.** *Poor in spirit* refers "not to a poor quality of faith but to the acknowledgment of one's spiritual powerlessness and bankruptcy apart from Christ."<sup>4</sup> This is the person who has reached the end of self, and only seeks refuge in God. Imagine that the one who has hopelessness heaped upon helplessness is now told, by the only one to whom he can turn (God), that the whole kingdom is now his. God does not respond with a "shush" to quiet the complaining, nor does he throw a crumb to squelch the pangs of hunger that only lasts for a moment. *God comes to the one who is hopeless and helpless in his state and supplies not only for basic necessities, but abundance of life and to share with others.*

***Jesus comes to the spiritually helpless and hopeless to save and gives the abundant life of His Kingdom.***

The *poor in spirit* rests in this one advantage stated in **Isaiah 57:15**; "For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: "I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite." *The *poor in spirit* turns to God in desperate hope for help and finds more than they ever imagined, life eternal in God's Kingdom.*

Everything in life that removes or diminishes our felt need makes this value more difficult to embrace; affluence, convenience, comfort, etc. It doesn't prevent it, but makes it far more difficult to embrace, justifying the acceptance of the very thing that opposes it. The *poor in spirit* holds one resonating prayer. "***Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge. I say to the Lord, "You are my Lord; I have no good apart from you."*** **Psalm 16:1-2** *Poor in spirit is the posture of life that forms the first confession of our need for Jesus and the culminating prayer of our relationship with Him.*

**Q? Have you confessed your need for Jesus with your whole life, in complete dependence upon Him?**

**What does it mean, "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"?**

The *poor in spirit* serves as the threshold of entrance into the Kingdom and relationship with God. When we reach the end of ourselves and turn to Jesus as our refuge, He makes us alive unto and reconciles us with God. <sup>Eph2:5;2Cor5:18</sup> Relationship with God brings the reality of heaven into a more prevailing reality in the everyday of life now. This expression of blessing, to inherit the kingdom of heaven, brackets the whole of the Beatitudes from beginning to end. When we confess our need for

<sup>2</sup> D. Martin Lloyd-Jones, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976), 35.

<sup>3</sup> D. Martin Lloyd-Jones, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, 33.

<sup>4</sup> Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, vol. 22, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 98.



Jesus we are given the whole Kingdom and our culminating life in relationship with Him is the Kingdom! [The one who is bankrupt in spirit is first the recipient of the full rule and reign of God's Kingdom blessing.](#)

Friend, God doesn't just want something from you. He wants you to know that He has something for you that you cannot and will not find anywhere else! [The first and greatest value in God's Kingdom is eternal life in relationship with Him.](#)

[Jesus comes to the spiritually helpless and hopeless to save and gives the abundant life of His Kingdom.](#)

**How do I practically live out this value?**

**TRANS** No amount of activity can make one poor in spirit as Jesus teaches. This is the recognition of a spiritual condition before God. Even our recognition of poor in spirit requires God's help. But there are practical exercises that can help us.

**OBJ** [Three spiritual exercises for every Christ-follower to cultivate a fuller experience of the abundant life in God's Kingdom.](#)

**Inventory your life regularly, and specifically your heart, to guard your life.** Proverbs 4:23 states, [Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life. Proverbs 4:23 \(NIV84\)](#)

**ILLUS** As a first year seminary student, I was overwhelmed with my first semester schedule; Master's courses, work and serving in the local church. One morning in my devotion the Lord impressed Proverbs 4:23 on my heart. Unsure what application it held immediately, I had no doubt of the Lord's clear impression. I wrote the verse on a small card and placed it on the dash of my truck. For almost three years, every time I got in my truck that verse was the first thing I saw. The Spirit branded it on me. I have learned it was not for that day nor that season but for every day. Today when pastors, professors and leaders are failing morally faster than social media can post it, there is no greater exhortation. For I know, "but for the grace of God, there go I." And this I must remember every day. I need that truth more today than ever!

**HOW do you guard your heart?** Paul's instruction in Romans 12:3 helps.

[For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. Romans 12:3](#)

**First, do not think of yourself more highly than you ought.**

It has been said that pride is the mother of all sin. It is also true that pride is Hell's gatekeeper. If you do not regularly confront your pride by God's truth, you'll give your heart to every little pleasure offered and be held captive by the lies with which you are deceived. Paul's exhortation directs us consider our life in light of God's eternal salvation. [Guarding the heart begins by purifying and training the mind in patterns of thinking that align with God's truth to confront our pride.](#)

Guard against bloated pride that says, "I'm too good or smart for that to happen to me." And guard against denied pride that says, "I would never do that because I'm not tempted by it." Your temptations are far worse than you imagine and you are capable of far more than you imagine. Pride of life fuels self-sufficiency. Self-sufficiency in any single area of life negates God-dependency in every area. [What you tell yourself when temptation is NOT knocking will define the narrative you listen to when temptation does knock.](#)

[The poor in spirit confesses that the heart knows no limit to sin nor end of destruction, but by grace we take joy in Jesus.](#)

**Second, think with sober judgment.**



An accurate understanding of self does not begin with self. Let the Word of God fill and consume you that it might purge and purify you. [The only way to live Christ-centered is to let His truth be the center, or defining standard, of your thinking. Christ-centered living begins with Truth-consumed thinking.](#)

**Refuse to let your mind be controlled by anything that does not align with God's Word by setting His truth as your ruling guide.** Guard against opinions that seem so confident, feelings or emotions that seem so convincing, and conclusions with no resolution. Let the Word of Christ dwell richly in you to "filter and interpret" all things for you, by rebuking, correcting, teaching and training you. [Col3:16;2Tim3:16](#) No lie can deceive you unless you believe it. No emotion or feeling can rule you unless you submit to it. No opinion can own you unless you let it. [By faith, think in accord with Jesus' Word and let everything else be formed from His truth at work in you.](#)

**Grace gives strength to think according to truth.** The absence of truth creates a minefield of deception at every thought. The active, working presence of truth is a guide for direction and every step of life. [Psalm119:105](#) In the pattern of your thinking, guard against expediency, comfort or convenience as of highest value and think along a path toward God's glory. [Sober judgment by God's truth is always worth the time and energy because it always produces hope and goodness.](#)

[The poor in spirit confesses daily need for and utter dependence upon Jesus by trusting to think according to His Word.](#)

### **Third, walk humbly before God.**

Once your heart is aligned with God and your mind thinking according to His truth, walk in this manner. [Walking humbly before God is the pattern of life motivated by grace working in one who is poor in spirit before Jesus.](#)

James instructs, [But he gives more grace.](#) *Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."* [7Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. 10Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.](#)

**James 4:6-10**

**God gives more grace to those who walk humbly before Him.** More grace than your sin to confess. More grace than your despondency to repent and turn away from sin and self. More grace than your habitual brokenness to walk in truth and righteousness and experience His transformation. [When you walk humbly before God, He comes near, purifies your heart \(and mind\) and fills life with overflowing joy.](#)

The smallest measure of success in any area has a terrible way of breeding the greatest confidence in self for every area. Embrace that which humbles you, because it is warring against something within that is exalting you. When sin tempts you, let your poverty of spirit turn you and God's grace fill you, because He always give more grace. [Walking humbly before God is how we cast off what we cannot control, what we are being controlled by and that which so easily entangles.](#)

The self-sufficient can know nothing of God's kingdom. The poor in spirit inherits His Kingdom. Jesus said, *"I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."* [Lukes5:32](#) Those who know no need for a Savior cannot be saved. Jesus came to save those who knew their need for a Savior. [The poor in spirit walk humbly before God to cultivate complete dependence on God.](#)

**ILLUS** Gavin Peacock, the teenager that got it all but didn't have "it", tells his story of how he became a Christ-follower this way. "After accompanying his mother to church one Sunday evening, the young pro was invited to a youth group. [In his own words.] He immediately noticed a difference between the other youngsters and himself. I pulled up in a nice car, I had a bit of money in my pocket, the career, I was in the 'in-crowd', they weren't", he recalls. "And yet when they spoke about Jesus Christ, when they prayed, there was a joy that they had, and a reality that they had that I didn't." Over the next few



weeks, he heard the Gospel preached and recognized his sinfulness and need of a Saviour. Aged 18, by grace, he was saved. Today, Gavin Peacock is a pastor in Calgary, Canada.

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**CLOSE** The more impoverished your spirit the fuller your experience of God's abundance for you. But if you do not believe this so that you live to practice it more each day, you will struggle to know and trust that the life God gives to you is greater than what the world claims for you. Allow the pattern of these exercises to deepen your awareness of your spiritual poverty outside of Christ and stay focused on the riches of His Kingdom as an ever-increasing desire for your life.

