

Wonder, Part 2

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Matthew 5:8

The promise of the Beatitudes is a life of joy. Joy in knowing God through the process of conviction and repentance which lead to salvation, joy in humbling ourselves before God's sovereign will, joy in hungering and thirsting for a deeper relationship with God, joy in reflecting God's mercy to the world around us, and as we saw in the last lesson, joy in sanctification—becoming holy like God is holy.

If joy comes from applying these truths to our life, then the opposite must also be true. A failure to embrace the truths of the Beatitudes will result in a life lived poorly and unhappily. Sadly, many Christians allow their lives to be exactly this. Rather than the unfettered joy we are to portray to the world around us, many live lives that look no different from the surrounding culture. Rather than transformed minds, they have compliant, feeble minds that accept as true whatever society has recommended to them. They are, as Socrates so famously stated, unexamined lives.

The truths of God's Word are never intended to be negative straitjackets. Yet for too many, even Christians, this is the way they see the Bible. They believe it is a book of "thou shalt nots" rather than what it is—an invitation to live the best life ever. How sad and how testimony destroying!

Jesus sets forth in this Beatitude the incredibleness of what is on offer with the adoption of His life-changing process. The journey of becoming more like Him is not a soul-destroying slog. It is an exciting adventure of joy and wonder. Follow Him, trust Him, allow Him to show you the unexamined parts of your soul; and you will experience life as you have never known it before. This is the promise of sanctification.

One day, yes, we will stand before God face to face. What a wonderful moment that will be, one we cannot fully comprehend in this life. But the joy of a pure heart, of seeing God is not just a future promise. It is also the joy of daily walking in the Spirit, of never being alone, of never being weak and powerless, of never being without hope. Sanctification brings us daily before the throne of God as we seek to be clean and transparent before He who is All-Holy and All-Righteous. All we can do is kneel in wonder.

Can God be seen in our world today? Yes, in the lives of those who reflect His glory. Open your life to Him, humble yourself before Him, and watch in wonder as He shows Himself to you. You will be in awe of the work that God can do in your own life and in the lives of others. You will be in awe of the work that God can do in the world around you—your church and your city. And you will experience true joy. As David exclaimed in Psalm 16:11, *"in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore."*



The Joy of Perfect Vision

The real thing, not a cheap substitute.

Seeing God at Work *Becoming what He wants us to be.*

Sanctification, our growth to becoming more like Christ, appears at first glance as a solitary fixation. And to the extent that we need to transform our mind through prayer and Bible meditation, it is. But that is just the behind-the-scenes preparation for how we live out our sanctification before others. Read **Philippians 2:12-15**. How does Paul refer to task of sanctification in verse 12?

What does Paul say is the point of this effort of sanctification?

It is worth remembering that Paul's audience in the book of Philippians was the church of believers there. What does he call the church to in verse 14?

The way that we shine for God is in our relationships with others. How we love others defines our journey towards perfection as a Christian. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gave instruction on how to love others in a sincere, transparent way.

Being Chaste

In an overly sexualized world, as in both the Roman era and our era today, the command to be chaste is often seen as quaint. People frequently live in sexual sin within the church just as freely as they do outside the church. Jesus directly got to the root of the issue in **Matthew 5:27-30**. Where did He say sexual sin began?

One of the flashpoints in our culture in the past couple of decades has been homosexuality. Some claim that having homosexual *desires* are acceptable to God, if one does not act upon them. What clarity do **verses 29-30** bring to that idea?

What relevance does this have in regard to porn?

In **1 Thessalonians 4:3-7**, Paul explicitly links sanctification to sexual purity. How does sexual immorality degrade our love for our neighbor?



Being Faithful

Divorce is not a modern concept. In the Law of Moses guidelines were set for obtaining a divorce but it could only be initiated by the husband. However, the Roman culture of Jesus' day freely accepted divorce initiated by either husband or wife. In fact, it was used frequently by the Roman ruling class as a way of establishing better alliances. For instance, John the Baptist called out Herod Antipas' marriage to Herodias because she had divorced her husband Philip to marry Herod (Luke 3:19). Evidently, this culture adaptation had made divorce a common occurrence in Jesus' day. So much so, that in **Mark 10:2-12**, Jesus is asked about divorce by the Pharisees. What does He say was God's original intent for marriage?

Jesus quotes from Genesis 2:24 where God established marriage. It was the first institution of three that He ordained. (The others are government and the church.) How does Jesus underline God's involvement in the foundational nature of marriage in **verse 9**?

What is Jesus' explanation for the rule in the Law?

Jesus was showing here that God understands the process of sanctification. He sets the standard at perfection but knows that we might not be able to achieve it. What does this say about God's love for us?

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus drilled down to the root of the issue. What was to be the primary concern in initiating a divorce according to **Matthew 5:31-32**?

The implications of the cost of faithfulness were not lost on the disciples. How did they respond to this teaching in **Matthew 19:10**?

What does this tell us about how we grow in sanctification through faithfulness? How can faithfulness be a testimony to the power of God in our lives?



Our closest neighbors are our family. They are also the ones who know us the best and are the most aware of our hypocrisy and imperfections. How does loving our neighbor become even more challenging at times with those we know so well?

1. We know how _____ them.
2. We _____ around them.
3. We become _____. This plays a role in accountability.
4. This can lead to us becoming _____.

Being Trustworthy

Read **Matthew 5:33**. Note the beginning of verse 33, “...you have heard that it was said...” This is a pattern Jesus used repeatedly throughout His teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. Each time, He was contrasting the legalistic teaching of the Pharisees with the underlying spiritual truth of the command. Note what the Mosaic law said about vows in **Deuteronomy 23:21-23**.

1. Vows were to be _____.
2. Failure to keep a vow was a _____.
3. Vows were _____.

The taking of vows, such as the Nazarite vow, were commonplace in Jewish history. But in Jesus’ day, it appears that the Pharisees had made spiritual vows into an elaborate system that totally defeated their purpose. Jesus pointed out an example of this in **Mark 7:10-13**. What was this loophole allowing them to refuse to do?

Although we rarely call them this anymore, we still take spiritual vows. The most common are marriage vows, although there has been an effort to weaken these through the use of “self-written” vows that have no meaning and often make no commitment. Another area where we take vows is in the giving of offerings such as commitments to a building fund or missions. How should we think about these vows according to this teaching?

Read **Matthew 6:34-37**. What problem do we see described here?



Again, Jesus' example for this teaching was the practices of the Pharisees which He described in more detail in **Matthew 23:16-22**. What stands out to you in their approach to oaths?

1. Their _____ was designed to _____.
2. Their _____ was for _____.

What connection do we see in **Proverbs 12:17-22** between our speech and our spirituality?

How does our speech affect our emotional health according to this passage?

In **Ephesians 4:25-27, 29**, how did Paul describe the underlying problems with sinful speech?

What should be the purpose of our speech towards others according to **verse 29**?

How does our speech provide us with a measuring tool for our progress in sanctification?



Jesus taught that outward sinful behavior is a reflection of the true nature of what is in the heart. We may think we have our sin well hidden from others, but the reality of our sin will eventually come out for all to see. Uncontrolled lust becomes sexual sin. A self-centered heart leads to a failed marriage. A dishonest heart leads to untrustworthy speech. All of these sins revolve around a heart that seeks only to satisfy itself rather than the needs of others. To love others well, we must seek purity of heart through sanctification.

When the focus of our relationships with others is love, we seek the best for those around us, even when it is personally difficult. But the payoff is that in the end, we enjoy better relationships. While this seems counterintuitive, the change of focus is the key. Rather than a hyper focus on ourselves and our problems, we turn our attention to those around us, and our problems fade in comparison. We often come to realize that our problems are really not that severe compared to those of others around us. This change of perspective leads to an even greater desire to show our love to those around us and the joy of watching God work in their lives through our efforts.

