

Introductions to the Fasted Lifestyle

**Matthew 5:1-12-** *And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. <sup>2</sup> Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying:*

<sup>3</sup>*“**Blessed** are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. <sup>4</sup> **Blessed** are those who mourn, For they shall be comforted. <sup>5</sup> **Blessed** are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth. <sup>6</sup> **Blessed** are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled. <sup>7</sup> **Blessed** are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy. <sup>8</sup> **Blessed** are the pure in heart, For they shall see God. <sup>9</sup> **Blessed** are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God. <sup>10</sup> **Blessed** are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. <sup>11</sup> “Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. <sup>12</sup> Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

**Luke 6:20-26-** *Then He lifted up His eyes toward His disciples, and said:*

*“**Blessed** are you poor, For yours is the kingdom of God. <sup>21</sup> **Blessed** are you who hunger now, For you shall be filled. **Blessed** are you who weep now, For you shall laugh. <sup>22</sup> **Blessed** are you when men hate you, And when they exclude you, And revile you, and cast out your name as evil, For the Son of Man’s sake. <sup>23</sup> Rejoice in that day and leap for joy! For indeed your reward is great in heaven, For in like manner their fathers did to the prophets.*

<sup>24</sup> *“But **woe** to you who are rich, For you have received your consolation. <sup>25</sup> **Woe** to you who are full, For you shall hunger. **Woe** to you who laugh now, For you shall mourn and weep. <sup>26</sup> **Woe** to you when all men speak well of you, For so did their fathers to the false prophets.*

## I. THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT: THE ROADMAP INTO THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

- A. The Sermon on the Mount is the “constitution of God’s Kingdom.” It is the litmus test to measure spiritual development and ministry impact. We measure our ministry impact by how much people seek to walk out the Sermon on the Mount values (not by the size of our ministry).
- B. A wise man builds his “house” (life and ministry) on the “rock” which refers to relating to Jesus according to the Sermon on the Mount. This lifestyle is do-able for every believer and is the only way to experience God’s Kingdom. To neglect this lifestyle is to neglect and miss the Kingdom.
- C. **Matthew 7:24-25-** *24 Whoever hears these sayings of Mine (Sermon on the Mount), and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: 25 and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall...*
- D. Why do you want God to anoint your life? What is your dream for it? What would you do with more influence? Would you convince others to walk in this lifestyle (secretly/consistently)?
  - Mt. 5:1 says, “When Jesus saw his ministry **drawing huge crowds**, he climbed a hillside and began to teach them...” (Message).
  - What will we do with increase from Jesus?

- E. **Matthew 5:19**- *“Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, **he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.**”*
- F. Jesus goes on to tell those listening that unless their “righteousness” EXCEEDS that of the religious leaders, they would not enter the Kingdom of Heaven.
- Righteousness= Whole-hearted living= Perfect/Mature obedience
  - Jesus called us to be perfect in our obedience. This is meant to be the primary issue in our spiritual life yet it is often overlooked and disregarded. We do this by seeking to walk in all the light that the Spirit gives us. The pursuit of **full obedience** is not the same as attaining it. Our responsibility is to focus on “seeking” to completely obey God.
- G. We trust God’s grace to empower us to “attain” full obedience in an ever increasing measure.
- **Matthew 5:48**- *“You shall be perfect (**walk in all the light you receive**) as your Father...is perfect.”*
- H. Jesus is declaring to His generation what the Kingdom of Heaven looks like when it comes to the earth and walks around in flesh!
- I. **Matthew 5:17**- *“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.”*
- Jesus is demonstrating the “continuum of Scripture”. From beginning till end for this human age the Father’s desire and dream is to cause man to know and love Him fully.
  - Jesus coming to the earth became the human expression of the Father’s heart and mind!
- J. Jesus is paving a highway (more like a dirt path) which leads to encountering His heart and eternal treasures!

## II. THE BEATTITUDES: OVERVIEW OF THE HAPPY LIFE

- A. This is how Jesus uses His influence on others to teach them. He says “Live this way” & then, Lives this way Himself! Jesus was not declaring anything new for Himself. This is the way of the Kingdom! He was living this way for eternity’s past.
- B. There is No OTHER WAY to live happy!
- C. Jesus is teaching to a people who are all familiar with “process” as they were farmers, shepherds, teachers, etc. They were familiar with the seasons of living in the natural.
- Farming- Plowing, sowing seeds, watering, pulling weeds, watering more, & then “harvest”.
- D. The closest we can come is seen in Child-Bearing; 9 months to deliver a baby! We are disadvantaged by our “instant” culture. We neglect to understand the rhythms of heaven. We walk into a store, swipe our credit card, & walk out of the store with a pair of shoes.
- E. **Ephesians 1:17**- *“that the...Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him,”*
- One of the primary things “revelation” does for our hearts is allows us to see Jesus rightly. “Wisdom” gives us insight and foresight into how to steward the “revelation” the Father of glory/Jesus gives us.
  - Revelation is two-fold: We see Jesus rightly & we see ourselves rightly. We will not seek Jesus fully unless we see ourselves clearly!

- F. Each one of these “8” **Beatitudes** serves as an entryway into encounter!
- G. The Beatitudes are “progressive”, building one on the other! Following Jesus will actually produce these characteristics in us.
- H. Jesus describes five “grace-releasing activities” in our devotional life that position our heart to receive more strength in the grace of God. Our heart receives more grace as we consistently and secretly **serve and give** (charitable deeds: giving service and/or money (6:1–4, 19-21), **pray** (6:5–13), **bless adversaries** (forgiving, 6:14–15; 5:44) and **fast** (6:16–18).
- I. Spiritual disciplines (prayer, fasting, meditation, etc) are ordained by God as a necessary way to posture our heart to freely receive more grace.

### “Pursuing the Blessed Life”

**Matthew 5:1-12** *And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. <sup>2</sup> Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying:*

<sup>3</sup>*“Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. <sup>4</sup> Blessed are those who mourn, For they shall be comforted. <sup>5</sup> Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth. <sup>6</sup> Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled. <sup>7</sup> Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy. <sup>8</sup> Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God. <sup>9</sup> Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God. <sup>10</sup> Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. <sup>11</sup> “Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. <sup>12</sup> Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

#### I. “8” BEATITUDES- THE PROGRESSION OF KINGDOM LIVING

- A. Jesus is calling us to become like Him (to live out the Beatitudes), as we pursue a lifestyle of fully obeying Him under intense pressure and in the midst of temptation. It’s not enough to just focus on resisting sin. We must also pursue righteous living!
- B. **Being poor in spirit** (theirs is the kingdom, Mt. 5:3) – to acknowledge that we are in great need of help to sustain wholeheartedness (Mt. 5:48). This is to understand, that we are in a serious dilemma in needing a breakthrough in our heart (insight/power) and ministry in godliness.
  - The man who encounters the depth of our spiritual poverty and darkness apart from Him is then given access into the Kingdom of Heaven.
  - *At the heart of this Kingdom is the King*, who desires us to know Him intimately.
  - We cannot encounter God on our own terms. We must access the Kingdom and the King on His terms only. Jesus said that He is the “door” (**Jn. 10:9**).
  - Being poor in spirit is at the very heart of sinful mankind receiving salvation. A “rich man” has need of nothing.

- Poverty of spirit is neither financial poverty nor feeling negative about our spiritual life. It is a recognition that all our good comes from our Heavenly Father and a willingness to ask and receive freely from Him. We run “to Him” in our weakness” rather than “away from Him”.
  - **Theirs is the kingdom:** This speaks of experiencing more of the kingdom in a personal way. Our heart is expanded to receive freely from the Lord.
  - Self-sufficiency/self-reliance become the road block to receiving freely from God. Look at what Jesus says to **the church of Laodicea**.
  - **Revelation 3:17-19** *Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’— and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked— <sup>18</sup> I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.*
  - **I am rich:** The Laodiceans were deceived by their popularity, wealth and influence related to their ministry. Believers in prosperous circumstances often lack the virtue of being poor in spirit. Feeling superior to others in gifting and accomplishments often results in self-confidence, which minimizes our awareness of our need for God.
  - **I have need of nothing:** Let us not be comforted by the temporary comforts of the culture around us but by the eternal comfort of the King and His Kingdom that’s progressively coming.
  - **Be zealous:** Jesus wants us to be zealous in our repentance. We wage war against the sinful man who hides in the dark corners of our heart by running into the Light of Jesus’ love. We refuse to let anyone in this life talk us out of having as much of God as He will give us in this life.
  - We have no good thing in us and are capable of producing anything good
  - **John 15:4-** *Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.*
  - The famous saying, “So heavenly minded you’re no earthly good” is in essence simply wrong. All of Heaven and the King of Heaven is our only good.
- C. **Mourning for breakthrough** (for they shall be comforted, Mt. 5:4) – to be desperate enough to be “extreme” in pursuit of a progressive breakthrough in our heart (insight/power) and ministry.
- Fasting & Prayer= The Lord is inviting us into deep mourning, not just over our own heart’s darkness, but also into the depravity of our city, region, and nation!
  - **Matthew 9:15-** *“Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.*
  - **Genesis 1:1-2-** *“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. <sup>2</sup> The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.*
  - We mourn because we see how much God longs to give to our life, ministry, church, and in the nations. It refers to the pain we feel in seeing the gap between what God has for us and what we are experiencing. This mourning also increases when we realize how much He wants to give us and how little we want to actually give Him. This beatitude is not about mourning over difficult circumstances, but about mourning for a greater spiritual breakthrough in light of what Jesus has made available for us.

- “We say, ‘I want more of you God’ and God says, ‘I want more of you \_\_\_\_’.” (Mike Bickle)
  - Spiritual mourning is caused as we gaze into the eternal beauty of the Living God who sits on His throne and sets His entire affections on us. We ache over the reality of how much He loves us and how little we love Him in response.
  - **They shall be comforted:** God promises to break through by His Spirit to release His eternal comfort to those who reach for Him. Every movement of our heart and reach of our spirit is rewarded by His comfort to us. Most of our culture values temporary/false comfort more than the comfort of God. Refuse to be comforted by anything except the breakthrough of the Lord. Refuse to be comforted by anything less than God’s highest.
- D. **Walking in meekness** (shall inherit the earth, **Mt. 5:5**) – We walk in the fasted lifestyle and pursue a servant spirit in the use of our strength (time, money, energy, reputation, authority etc.).
- We willingly/voluntarily choose the small, secret, and weak way forward for the “blessed life”.
  - Meekness involves recognizing that God has given us everything spiritually, financially, physically, relationally, etc. Everything that we have is His and we have been given them as a loan. The Father is entrusting to us with great influence and ability in order to build His kingdom and we will be rewarded based on how we spend these resources.
  - Our natural mindset is to see our resources (gifting, money, position, favor, etc.) as belonging to us (instead of the Lord) and as being the fruit of our hard work (instead of His kindness).
  - **They shall inherit the earth:** This promise includes influence over others and eternal impact in this life and in eternity.
  - **Matthew 25:19-21** *After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them. <sup>20</sup>“So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, ‘Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.’ 21 His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; **you were faithful** over a few things, **I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.**’*
  - These become gifts of love to Jesus!
- E. **Hungering for righteousness** (for they shall be filled, **Mt. 5:6**) – Maintaining faithfulness in seeking God with wholeheartedness over time will guarantee that our hearts are not burned out. Living with this pursuit will guard us from disappointment of others and offense by God.
- Living near God actually helps to produce “hunger & thirst” for more of His love & life. He actually becomes the object of our heart’s reward.
  - **They shall be filled:** Our faithful reach for more of God will be rewarded by being filled with more of God; simply stated!
- F. **Relating to others with mercy** (for they shall obtain mercy, Mt. 5:7) – We pursue having a tender heart toward others who fail spiritually as well as those who attack, resist or disappoint us.
- When we respond to others with generous love and understanding the Lord promises to return mercy back to us! We become more like Jesus in our heart-responses.
  - We restrain our insistence “as Americans” on being treated fairly by showing mercy to others even when we feel betrayed or misunderstood. To be merciful is to seek to help people who are suffering (**Lk. 10:30-37- “The Good Samaritan”**). When we are moved to action to help those in difficult circumstances, we are seeking to reduce the miseries of others, even if it requires denying our personal comfort. Jesus calls us to be merciful to people who have significant spiritual failure, to cover people’s failures, and to tenderly seek to help them.

- Being merciful causes us to sympathize with those who deserve the trouble that they are in. This should never cause us to minimize the need for repentance of unrepentant sin.
  - **They shall obtain mercy:** We shall receive more mercy in our circumstances from God and others as we give it to others. When we give more, God will give more!
- G. **Being pure in heart** (they shall see God, **Mt. 5:8**) – We pursue purity in our thoughts and motives in helping people for their benefit without any personal gain. To “see God” even in a small measure causes our spirit to burn brighter in love for Jesus.
- “Pure in Heart” also implies singleness of heart; focused dedication to see Jesus. He becomes our primary focus and pursuit.
  - **They shall see God:** The ultimate experience of Christianity now and for eternity is to know God (**Rev. 22:4**). The pure will have an increased capacity to see and experience God. This is one of the greatest promises in God’s Word. I often pray, *“One day I will see you Jesus with my own eyes.”*
  - **Ephesians 1:17** *that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him,* (to see Jesus)
- H. **Becoming an anointed peacemaker** (called sons of God, Mt. 5:9) – We want to be anointing to bring peace (healing, restoration) to that which is out of God’s will (broken relationships, sick bodies, etc.)
- A Peacemaker is not one who convinces everyone to “get along”! A Peacemaker is one who actively works to establish justice in an unjust world. This means justice to Mind, Body, Soul, & Spirit.
  - This is at the heart the delivery of Justice! To restore the broken to its original design by the Master Creator.
  - We pursue justice in prayer, by passing laws to support justice, we stand against works of injustice in the cultures around us.
  - **They shall be called sons of God:** Sons of God actually administrate the Father’s will, from Heaven to the Earth. This is one of the highest compliments and privileges. This is the sign of a maturing Christian Believer.
- I. **Enduring persecution** (theirs is the kingdom, **Mt. 5:10-12**) – There will be a counterattack for plundering Satan’s Kingdom as we operate in power and stand for righteousness. We rejoice for the glory of knowing Jesus and the privilege of suffering for His name. (**Acts 5:41**).
- Persecution is the fruit of a maturing Christian as much as seeing signs, wonders, and miracles expressed in and through our lives. Persecution includes being attacked physically, financially, or verbally. Not sure about this statement? Ask the early Disciples who were all tortured and martyred or ask persecuted Believers all over the globe today.
  - **Theirs is the kingdom:** This speaks of experiencing more of the kingdom in a personal way now along with an even **greater** reward in heaven.
  - **1 Peter 4:14** *If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified.*

## “Cultivating A Heart of Faithfulness”

### Matthew 6:1-4 ...

In chapter 6 Jesus begins to cast vision for guarding and maintaining our hearts from the effects of the sinful nature. Jesus points out a few pollutions that commonly ravage our hearts and our lives: **Anger/Spirit of murder** (Mt. 5:22), **Sexual immorality** (Mt. 5:28), **Divorce/Unfaithfulness** (Mt. 5:32), **Unfulfilled commitments** (Mt. 5:33), **Spirit of retaliation/Defensiveness** (Mt. 5:38), **Inability to love our enemies** (Mt. 5:43). All of these issues in our hearts and in our culture are a result of the unrestrained and sinful heart. Again, Jesus was demonstrating that the spiritual bar was being raised much higher than any other generation. Jesus said that He was not coming to give a new set of requirements but a way to fulfill the commandments of Heaven with a happy heart.

#### I. POSITIONING OUR HEARTS TO RECEIVE MORE GRACE

- A. The sinful nature and our self-gratifying culture actually attempts to choke out the life of Holy Spirit flowing through us. It is not enough to say “No” to sinful practices but also “Yes” to the leadership and activity of Holy Spirit.
- B. Our hearts are to be seen as a garden requiring constant cultivation. We want to pull the weeds of sin and fertilize the seeds of God’s Word planted within our hearts. Over time, The Master Gardener will cause a harvest of fruit to grow.
- C. In Mt. 6 Jesus describes five “spiritual disciplines” or “gardening practices” that prepare us to receive more grace: **serve and give** (charitable deeds: service and/or money (6:1-4, 19-21), **pray** (6:5-13), **bless adversaries** (full forgiveness, 6:14; 5:44), and **fast** (6:16-18), leading to rewards from God (Mt. 6:4, 6, 18, 20).
  - **Matthew 6:1** *“Take heed (Consider your motives) that you do not do your charitable deeds before men to be seen by them. Otherwise, you have no reward from your Father in heaven.”*
- D. Many in the Body of Christ are malnourished and struggling with the entanglements of sin today mostly because of neglecting to give themselves to these spiritual disciplines with endurance.
- E. These spiritual disciplines don’t earn us God’s love, but rather position us in humility before the throne of grace. He does not love us more, but gives more to our heart, when we embrace disciplines. When we give God more, He gives us more!
  - **James 4:6** <sup>6</sup>*He gives more grace...God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.*
- F. These disciplines mark us with profound humility, because they humble us and cause us to rely on the response of the Father in Heaven. This positioning in weakness actually prepares us to be trusted with Heaven’s power, and empowers us to be Christ-like (living out the Beatitudes).
  - **2 Corinthians 12:9-10** <sup>9</sup>*and He (Jesus) has said to me (Paul), “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses [lifestyle of pursuing God], so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.* <sup>10</sup>*Therefore I am well*

*content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.*

- G. Many believers are actually “Un-Believers” when they buy into the false notion that it is *radical Christianity* and is *optional* for healthy Christianity to pursue weakness. It is not radical. It is normal and basic to the Christian life—it is Christianity 101.
- H. **It is not possible to live biblical Christianity without being committed to a lifestyle of praying, fasting, giving, serving, and blessing enemies.** Jesus said this, not me! Are you a real Christ-Follower if you are not actually “following Christ” in the message of the Sermon on the Mount?
- I. Jesus emphasized that the Father ***will openly reward*** those who commit to live out the disciplines of Mt. 6. Some of the rewards are ***external***, as circumstances are changed by God’s power. Some are ***internal***, as our hearts encounter Him and are tenderized. Some are ***eternal***, affecting our destiny in the age to come.
- J. We do these disciplines with ***confidence in His rewards*** (eternal and temporal). We must have confidence that His eyes are on us and that He is responsive to us (Heb. 11:6). The Father sees when no one else sees and promises to reward us extravagantly.
- **Hebrews 11:6** *Without faith [confidence in God] it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.*
- K. *Jesus taught more on rewards than any other man in Scripture* (Mt. 5:5, 12, 19; 6:4-6, 18-20; 10:41-42; 16:27; 18:4; 19:21, 28-30; 20:16, 27; 22:14; 23:11; 25:21-23; Mk. 9:41; 10:21, 42-43; Lk. 6:23, 35; 9:48; 12:21, 33; 14:11; 16:11; 18:14, 22; 19:17-19; 22:26-30; Jn. 12:26; Rev. 2:7, 10-11, 17, 26-28; 3:4-5, 9, 11-12, 18, 21; 11:18; 16:5; 19:7-8; 22:12).

## II. PRAY DAILY (MT. 6:5-18)

- A. Jesus sets this first discipline before the crowd as a demonstration of its foundational practice to the rest of the spiritual disciplines. We are invited into dialogue with the Living & Eternal God who hides Himself in plain sight. It is a great privilege, a fierce struggle, and a powerful miracle. Prayer is the bridge between the temporal and the eternal.
- B. *“Prayer fills man’s emptiness with God’s fullness. Prayer fills man’s poverty with God’s riches. Prayer puts away man’s weakness with the coming of God’s strength.” (E.M. Bounds)*
- C. *“If we will talk to the Spirit, then we will walk in the Spirit.” (Mike Bickle)*
- D. Why does God want us to pray? He wants us to connect with His heart in deep partnership. He loves the sound of your voice and the movement of your heart toward Him. It moves Him deeply. You were created to interact with God as the highest privilege of all of the rest of creation.

- E. There are blessings that God has chosen to give, but *only* as His people ask Him in faith. Most of God's promises for increased blessing are not guarantees, but invitations to partner with Him in persevering prayer (Isa. 59:2; Mk. 11:23; Lk. 18:7-8, Jas. 1:6-7).
- <sup>2</sup>*You do not have because you do not ask. (Jas. 4:2)*
- F. We ask God for everything, both the increase of good things and the decrease of bad things. As we grow in intimacy with God we are entrusted with greater authority for God.
- <sup>6</sup>*In everything by prayer...let your requests be made known to God... (Phil. 4:6)*
- G. Verbalizing our prayers helps us to control our thoughts in prayer. Our voice before God is very powerful and extremely valuable in moving His heart to respond to us.
- H. **Hebrews 10:17** *"So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."*
- I. We strengthen our spirit to grow in faith by feeding on God's Word and reading the Bible back to Him. We want read the Word and prophesy God's emotions and plans to our own ears. When we do this we are writing God's Word on our hearts one line at a time and one layer on top of another. This is actually the process of transformation from the inside-out.
- **John 6:63** *"The words that I (Jesus) speak to you are spirit, and they are life."*

### III. FAST REGULARLY (MT. 6:16-18)

- A. Fasting is, by definition, abstaining from food; it is part of the normal Christian life. Jesus said, "When you fast," implying that fasting should occur in the regular course of a Christ-follower.
- **Matthew 6:17-18** <sup>17</sup>*When you fast...<sup>18</sup> your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.*
- B. Fasting is less about food, and more about physical and mental weakness. When we fast we lose out on natural and physical strength.
- C. Jesus fasted, as He also prayed and pursued all of these spiritual disciplines.
- D. **John 4:32, 34** *But He said to them, "I have food to eat of which you do not know...My food is to do the will of Him who sent me, and to finish His work."*
- E. The temptation is to eat food to acquire strength, so we can accomplish more. We can actually accomplish more in becoming weak before God than we can with all of our own natural strength. We are exchanging our natural power for spiritual power. This is our offering of love back to the Father. We love Him with "all of our strength."
- F. Jesus called us to fast because there is great reward awaiting us. He proclaimed that the Father is watching our fasting that is done in secret and will reward us openly (Mt. 6:18).
- G. Fasting changes us internally and reorders what we value. When this occurs, we make different choices, which lead to different outcomes in the places we go and the people we meet. When our values are different, it affects how we invest our time, money, heart, etc.

## IV. GIVE GENEROUSLY (MT. 6:19-21)

- A. Jesus says there is a direct correlation to where we spend and invest our money and what our heart is given to. Our heart is tied directly to our money!
- B. **Matthew 6:21** *“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”*
- **Malachi 3:10**<sup>10</sup> *“Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me (put Me to the test) now in this,” says the LORD of hosts, “If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it.”*
- C. Tithing is trusting God directly with 10% of our money. God promises to release financial blessing on all who tithe. When we give 10% of our income to God, we discover that 90% with God’s blessing will go further than 100% without God’s blessing. Some say that they cannot afford to tithe. The truth is that we cannot afford NOT to tithe. God gives us \$100 and we give \$10 back to Him.
- D. Many Believers are deceived to say that Jesus didn’t directly call the His followers to tithe. If “Truth sets men free” then the lack of Truth keeps people bound in deception. Jesus taught more on giving to God than anyone else in the Bible. Jesus never taught that tithing was to cease in the New Covenant. It was understood as a continuation from the first covenant. Here are some New Testament verses on tithing and giving: (2 Cor. 9:7; Lk. 21:1-7; Mt. 23:23; Lk. 18:12; 1 Cor. 16:2; Acts 20:35; Heb. 7:5; Acts 2:44-47; 1 Tim. 5:8; Heb. 7:1-28; Lk. 12:33)
- E. The bible teaches that we’ll receive to the measure that we give. This reality tests our hearts in how much we really believe in God as our Provider. We are not limited to only giving 10%.
- **Luke 6:38** *“Give and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use (giving) it will be measured back to you.”*
- F. He’s inviting us to be instruments of His generosity that He might in turn wow our hearts with His generosity towards us.
- **Acts 10:1-4** *...Cornelius<sup>2</sup> a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms (offerings) generously to the people, and prayed to God always.<sup>3</sup> ...he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God coming in and saying to him, “Cornelius!”<sup>4</sup> ...he was afraid, and said, “What is it, lord?” So he said to him, “Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God.”*
- G. We can be givers on many different levels, with our money, our time and energy, our skills, and our possessions. We want to pursue the mindset that we are not our own, but God’s sole possession, always willing to be a channel of giving to others. **If you are God’s possession and inheritance, how much of your life will you allow Him to spend into this age?**
- H. Our possessions first belong to God; we hold them loosely—not irresponsibly, but loosely. We own them, instead of our possessions owning us. They are simply on loan for a short time.

## V. BLESS OTHERS

- A. We are called to bless our enemies as part of expressing the fullness of forgiveness (Mt. 6:14-15; 5:44). This is connected with the call to resist passive love (Mt. 5:21-42). Jesus elaborates on the implications of forgiving our enemies (Mt. 6:14-15). Jesus is calling us to have a free heart and spirit by repenting of unforgiveness no matter who has offended us.
- **Matthew 6:15** *If you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive you...*
  - **Matthew 5:44** *Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you...*
- B. The call to actively love our enemies includes our words, actions, and prayers. Our enemies are adversaries, who seek to hurt or hinder us, or who hope to see us fail. We say, "They don't deserve forgiveness!" The truth is that none of us deserve God's forgive. When we forgive our enemies we begin to act like our Heavenly Father who continually forgives those who do not deserve forgiveness.

### "Building For the Age to Come"

**Matthew 7:24-27** "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: **25** and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. **26** But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: **27** and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall."

All of us are living our lives as a student preparing for a final exam or an athlete preparing for a large sporting event, or a soldier preparing for a final battle. This 70 years (+/-) life is an internship to prepare us for the life to come. 70 years in light of 70 million years is but a blink. We will live in the ages to come out of the overflow of how we lived in this age. It really matters how we live today, in light of eternity.

## I. GOD'S DEFINITION OF WISE & GREAT (MT. 7:24-27)

- A. Jesus ended the Sermon by calling us to a lifestyle of consistent obedience (**Mt. 7:24-27**). He summoned us to renounce the values of secular culture that are so popular in the Church.
- B. We pursue the fasted lifestyle in the fear of God knowing that our obedience will be tested & rewarded with treasures and precious gold. In the same way that precious metals are test with intense fire for its authenticity and increasing value so too our love for Jesus will be tested by fire.
- C. **1 Corinthians 3:11-15** *For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Christ Jesus...*
- D. Jesus contrasts two types of Professing Believers:
1. **The Wise Builder**- He took extra time and care to build his house on a rock foundation.

2. **The Foolish Builder**- He built carelessly and quickly on sand. Most people do not fully value the hidden foundation because it is unseen.
- E. Jesus declares to the crowds that simply having a “profession of faith” is not enough to save you from the coming storms of life. Everything that is hidden in this life will be revealed in the life to come; both the positive and the negative. Our faith will be tested!
- F. **Matthew 7:21** *“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord’, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.”*
- G. Jesus tells us that the way to be wise and great in God's eyes is by doing or obeying His teachings in the Sermon on the Mount (**Mt. 7:24-25**).
- Matthew 7:24-25** *“Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine [the previous 2 chpts.], and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock:<sup>25</sup> and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.*
- H. Jesus invites everyone to be great in His sight without regard for their outward achievements or the size of their ministry or resource base. It will be based on the size of their heart in obedience and love to Him. Many say to Jesus in that final day, *“But...I sacrificed so much for you!”* Jesus’ response will be back to them, *“How closely did you obey Me and my commandments?”*
- I. **1 Samuel 15:22** *So Samuel said: “Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams.*
- J. **Matthew 5:19** *Whoever breaks (unrepented heart) one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does (faithfully walks out) and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.*
1. Jesus revealed a new paradigm for greatness. We focus on being great in His sight rather than in man's sight. This greatness will be fully revealed in the age to come. This is far more powerful than we have vision for in this life.
  2. Jesus warned that if we minimize the least of His commandments and teach others to do so, we will be least in His kingdom in the age to come. Many who have an unbiblical definition of grace are teaching and promote spiritual laziness and a lack of commitment to Jesus.
- K. **The storm**: Our love for Jesus must be tested and proven as genuine under the pressures of life. All of us will experience the storms that test our spiritual foundations through personal pressures in this life and then evaluated at the judgment seat of Christ to reveal the true character of our faith (**1 Cor. 3:11-15**).
1. **The Rain** (On the Roof)- We face the “rains of temptation”.

2. **The Flood** (On the Foundation)- We face the “floods of persecution”.
  3. **The Winds** (-) - We face the “winds of false doctrines”.
- L. Jesus tells us that the way to be foolish in God's eyes is by neglecting to obey His teachings in the Sermon on the Mount.
- Matthew 7: 26-27** *Everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: <sup>27</sup>and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.*
- M.
- N. Jesus did not describe Christians with non-Christians, but only those who heard His sayings or teachings. Both groups read the Bible, went to church, listened to sermons and listened to Christian music. We cannot always recognize the differences between them because the “foundations” of their private lives are out of view. The main issue is whether they diligently sought to obey Jesus' teachings in the Sermon on the Mount.
- O. The idea of blending into the secular scene with music, fashion, movies, etc. to win people *by becoming like them* is a great mistake. Jesus taught that believers who are indistinguishable from non-Christians are useless in bringing real change to the world.
- P. Jesus' message is very serious and must not be ignored in light of its sober warnings.
- Q. Which road are we going to travel? On which foundation are we going to build?
- R. What type of message will we proclaim? The biblical message calls forth humility, poverty of spirit, and makes people cry to God for mercy and to hunger for Jesus and righteous lifestyles.

## II. THE FINAL SHAKING: GOD’S MERCY STRATEGY

- A. **Hebrews 12:27-29** *“Yet once more I will shake not only the earth, but also heaven.” <sup>27</sup> Now this, “Yet once more,” indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made (temporary), that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. <sup>28</sup> Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. <sup>29</sup> For our God is a consuming fire.*
- B. The intension of the Father of glory to is to release the fullness of His glory and leadership and remove everything that is hindering His love from being fully received and manifested on the earth. This was His plan and intention from the beginning and will finalize this reality into eternity.
- C. There will be 4 primary expressions of the “fullness of God” released and revealed before Jesus returns.
1. **The fullness of God’s wrath- Rev. 14:10** *“he himself (Satan) shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength...”*

2. The fullness of Satan's rage- **Rev. 12:12** *"Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time."*
  3. The fullness of man's sin- **Rev. 9:21** *And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.*
  4. The groaning of creation- **Rom. 8:22** *For we know that the whole creation <sup>d</sup>groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.*
- D. God will use this final great shaking for purpose of sobering all of creation and to prepare the globe for the return of Jesus. He will purify the Bride of Jesus, convict the world of sin, and warn all of humanity of the Judge who is to come. In the midst of great judgments on the earth on the powers of darkness God will demonstrate His ability to supernaturally protect and provide for His children.
- E. **Acts 2:17-20** <sup>17</sup> *And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams. <sup>18</sup> And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy. <sup>19</sup> I will show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath: Blood and fire and vapor of smoke. <sup>20</sup> The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD.*
- F. God is beginning to prepare the earth for an increasing outpouring of His Spirit. The end-time outpouring will be manifested in more than just energizing and exciting the church with exciting revival meetings but also in releasing justice on sin and the powers of Satan. God will orchestrate final judgements on Satan's kingdom and declare, "Time's up!".
- G. **Isaiah 42:1** *"Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One in whom My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles.*
- H. **John 16:8** *"And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:..."*
- I. This will be the Church of Jesus' greatest hour on the stage of human history. Everything that is being orchestrated is because of the Father's love; love for the Son and for the Bride He will present to Him on that final day. The Father is coming to vindicate His people with a great **exclamation point!** The Father will thunder from heaven, "She Belongs to ME!"
- J. **1 Corinthians 3:13-15** *"each one's work will become clear (everything hidden will be revealed); for the Day (the Day of the Lord's appearing) will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. <sup>14</sup> If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. <sup>15</sup> If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire."*