

What does being “poor in spirit” mean?

Jesus said, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:3). What does He mean by “poor in spirit”? Jesus isn’t saying that everyone who is financially poor is blessed or that those who are rich are not blessed. Being poor doesn’t make a person godly and being rich doesn’t make that individual ungodly. It all depends of the spiritual condition of their hearts.

People who are financially poor live with a sense of desperate need and are dependent upon others to get their needs met. Those who are poor in spirit realize they are utterly helpless and spiritually bankrupt, and they have nothing of worth to offer God. They see He is more valuable than any earthly possession and they desperately need Him. By being emptied of self, they can be filled with God’s righteousness.

Jesus says that those who realize that they are spiritually unworthy will receive the kingdom of heaven, which is salvation and eternal life. Before we can receive the gift of salvation we must realize that we are spiritually destitute and can do nothing to deliver ourselves from our dire situation. We become spiritual beggars and understand that we need a Savior. By admitting our spiritual poverty (poor in spirit), we can then receive the spiritual riches of the kingdom of God.

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