

# Dr. Bill Mounce, Sermon on the Mount, Session 1, Introduction and Beatitudes Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

## 1. Abstract of Mounce, Sermon on the Mount, Session 1, Introduction and Beatitudes, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Bill Mounce's lecture introduces his multi-day teaching series on Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, beginning with introductory remarks and an in-depth examination of the Beatitudes. He emphasizes the **challenging and often misunderstood nature of the Sermon**, highlighting its countercultural message intended for all believers throughout time, not just a select group. Mounce stresses the importance of **interpreting Jesus' strong ethical statements with their full weight while avoiding simplistic understandings**, advocating for a theological lens of "already but not yet." The initial focus of the lecture is on the first Beatitude, "**blessed are the poor in spirit,**" which Mounce explains as recognizing one's spiritual bankruptcy before God, a foundational principle for understanding the entire Sermon and life within God's kingdom.

**2. 19 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Mounce, Sermon on the Mount, Session 1 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (New Testament → Gospels → Sermon on the Mount).**



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### **3. Briefing Document: Mounce, Sermon on the Mount, Session 1, Introduction and Beatitudes**

#### **Briefing Document: Dr. Bill Mounce on the Sermon on the Mount - Introduction and Beatitudes**

##### **Overview:**

This briefing document summarizes the main themes and important ideas presented by Dr. Bill Mounce in the first lecture of his series on the Sermon on the Mount. The lecture covers introductory issues and begins an in-depth examination of the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12). Dr. Mounce emphasizes the challenging and often misunderstood nature of the Sermon, its intended audience, its countercultural ethic, and a crucial framework for interpretation based on the "already but not yet" theological concept. He then delves into the first Beatitude, "Blessed are the poor in spirit," providing historical and theological context.

##### **Main Themes and Important Ideas:**

#### **1. The Annoying and Challenging Nature of the Sermon on the Mount:**

- Dr. Mounce describes the Sermon as "annoying" because its demands are difficult to adhere to and understand. He notes that it's "probably the best-known part of the teaching of Jesus, though arguably, it is the least understood and certainly is the least obeyed" (quoting Stott).
- He highlights the strong language and seemingly impossible commands (e.g., turning the other cheek, cutting off a hand, being perfect) that often lead to misinterpretation or being ignored by the church.
- He believes the church as a whole has "just ignored this Sermon on the Mount because most of it is just simply so hard to understand."

#### **1. The Intended Audience: Disciples and Believers:**

- Dr. Mounce asserts that the Sermon on the Mount is primarily addressed to "disciples," "believers," and "Christians," outlining how to live within the kingdom of God.
- He distinguishes this from a general message to non-believers, citing examples like the promise in Matthew 7:7 ("Ask, and it will be given to you...") as being specific to those in a covenantal relationship with God.

- He refutes the historical view (attributed to Aquinas and older dispensationalism) that the Sermon is only for clergy or for a future millennial kingdom, arguing it is "intended for all Christians for all time." He emphasizes the "priesthood of all believers."

#### 1. **The Countercultural Ethic of Discipleship:**

- Drawing on the title of Stott's book ("Christian Counterculture"), Dr. Mounce stresses that the teachings of the Sermon are fundamentally at odds with the values and behaviors of the world.
- He contrasts worldly praise of "individual achievement and rugged independence" with the Sermon's emphasis on "poverty of spirit" and "meekness."
- He argues that one cannot "straddle the fence" with the Sermon; it demands wholehearted commitment, referencing Matthew 6:24 ("You cannot serve two masters").
- The metaphors of "salt of the earth" and "light of the world" inherently imply being different from the prevailing culture to fulfill their purpose.

#### 1. **Understanding the Extreme Nature of Jesus' Ethics:**

- Dr. Mounce proposes that the strong language of Jesus must be taken seriously ("We have to let the words mean what they say").
- However, he cautions against simplistic interpretations, noting that Jesus often uses strong statements to drive a central point home, and context and other scriptural teachings must be considered (e.g., the divorce passage variations in Mark and Matthew).
- He personally tries to emulate Jesus by stating things strongly to make a point, acknowledging it can sometimes lead to misunderstanding.

#### 1. **The "Already But Not Yet" Framework:**

- This theological concept is presented as a key to understanding the Sermon on the Mount. The kingdom of God has been inaugurated through Jesus' work ("already"), but it has not yet reached its full consummation ("not yet").
- Dr. Mounce applies this to various aspects of the Sermon, such as praying for God's kingdom to come and his will to be done (imperfectly now, perfectly in the

new heavens and earth), and the blessings of mourning and hungering for righteousness (partial comfort and fulfillment now, complete in the future).

- He suggests the Sermon paints a picture of "who we are in Christ," "what we are becoming by God's Spirit and by His grace," and "who we ultimately will be in the new heavens and the new earth."
- While the Spirit and grace are not explicitly mentioned, Dr. Mounce considers the Spirit the "unspoken hero" and grace the "unspoken underpinning" of the Sermon.

#### 1. **The First Beatitude: Blessed are the Poor in Spirit:**

- The Greek word "Makarios" (translated as "blessed") does not mean "happy" or "cheery" but signifies being "approved by God" and living in a "right relationship with Him."
- "Poor in spirit" does not equate to financial poverty alone or being insignificant.
- Drawing from the Old Testament understanding of the poor, Dr. Mounce defines "poor in spirit" as recognizing one's "spiritual bankruptcy before God" and coming to Him with an "admission of unworthiness and dependence."
- He contrasts the worldly attitude of self-mastery ("Invictus") with the spirit of dependence on Christ ("Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to thy cross I cling").
- While this recognition is often present at conversion, Christians struggle to maintain this sense of spiritual poverty.
- He quotes William Carey (via John Piper) that the biblical answer to low self-esteem is "sovereign grace," not high self-esteem, using the image of being a "worm of Jacob" helped by the Lord.
- Dr. Mounce concludes that there are two kinds of people: those who are spiritually bankrupt and know it, and those who are spiritually bankrupt and don't.

#### 1. **The Kingdom of God:**

- Following George Ladd, Dr. Mounce defines the kingdom of God primarily as "the sovereign rule of God in the hearts and lives of His children," not primarily a place, though it has a spatial component.

- This understanding aligns with the "already but not yet" framework, beginning with God's rule in individuals and expanding, ultimately culminating in the new heavens and the new earth.

#### 1. **Emphasis in the Greek:**

- Dr. Mounce points out the emphatic placement of "of theirs is" in the Greek of each Beatitude.
- He interprets this to mean that the blessings are exclusive to those who embody the characteristic described (e.g., the kingdom of God belongs *only* to the poor in spirit, comfort *only* to those who mourn, etc.).
- This has significant implications for how believers understand their standing before God and their expectations of future blessings, particularly regarding mercy and forgiveness.

#### 1. **The Golden Chain of the Beatitudes:**

- Dr. Mounce highlights Martin Lloyd-Jones' analogy of the Beatitudes as a "golden chain," where each link (Beatitude) builds upon the previous ones.
- Understanding the first Beatitude ("poor in spirit") is therefore crucial for comprehending the subsequent ones and the Sermon as a whole.
- While Paul uses the metaphor of "justification by faith," Jesus' core metaphor for entering and living in the kingdom is "poverty of spirit."

#### **Quotes:**

- "the Sermon on the Mount is just annoying. If you're going to believe it, right? It's just annoying..."
- "the Sermon on the Mount is probably the best-known part of the teaching of Jesus, though arguably, it is the least understood and certainly is the least obeyed." (quoting Stott)
- "The language, it's so strong that I think what often happens is that people in our churches, and perhaps we ourselves, say, well, it can't possibly mean what it seems to be saying, so I'm going to ignore it altogether."
- "The Sermon on the Mount, first and foremost, is addressed to the disciples. It's how we enter the kingdom. It's how we live in the kingdom, okay?"
- "Discipleship in God's Kingdom is countercultural." (referencing Stott's title)

- "You can't serve two masters." (Matthew 6:24)
- "We have to let the words mean what they say."
- "We simply can't be simplistic in our interpretation."
- "It's the already but not yet. I think if you apply that to the sermon on the mount, it starts to make sense."
- "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God." (Matthew 5:3)
- "...these are people who recognize their spiritual bankruptcy before God." (on "poor in spirit")
- "Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to thy cross I cling." (hymn illustrating "poor in spirit")
- "...the sovereign rule of God in the hearts and lives of His children." (definition of the kingdom of God, attributed to George Ladd)
- "The Beatitudes 2 through 8 are an explanation of poverty of spirit, and the sermon is an explanation of the Beatitudes."

#### **Actionable Insights:**

- Recognize the inherent challenges and countercultural nature of the Sermon on the Mount in personal study and teaching.
- Emphasize that the Sermon's ethical demands are for all believers, not just a select few.
- Employ the "already but not yet" theological framework to help understand the tension between present realities and future fulfillment in the Sermon's teachings.
- Focus on the foundational importance of "poverty of spirit" as the entry point and ongoing reality of life in God's kingdom.
- Consider the implications of the emphatic language in the Greek of the Beatitudes regarding the exclusivity of the blessings to those who embody the described characteristics.
- Approach the Sermon as a cohesive whole, understanding the interconnectedness of the Beatitudes.

## 4. Study Guide: Mounce, Sermon on the Mount, Session 1, Introduction and Beatitudes

### Sermon on the Mount: Study Guide

#### I. Introduction and Context

- **Author and Setting:** Who is the speaker, and what is the initial context of this lecture on the Sermon on the Mount?
- **Significance of the Sermon:** Why is the Sermon on the Mount considered a significant collection of Jesus' teachings? Provide examples of its influence.
- **Initial Impression of the Sermon:** According to the speaker, what is a common initial reaction to the teachings in the Sermon on the Mount? Why?
- **Intended Audience:** Who is the primary audience for the Sermon on the Mount, according to the speaker? What implications does this have for interpreting its teachings?
- **Historical Interpretations:** Briefly describe the historical challenges in interpreting the Sermon, mentioning Aquinas' view and dispensationalism. What is the speaker's stance on these interpretations?
- **Countercultural Nature:** In what ways does the speaker emphasize the countercultural nature of discipleship as presented in the Sermon on the Mount? Provide examples.
- **Understanding Extreme Ethics:** What is the central question the speaker raises regarding the "extreme nature" of Jesus' ethics in the Sermon? What are some common responses to this?

#### II. Interpreting Jesus' Ethics

- **Giving Full Weight:** What does the speaker mean by "giving full weight" to Jesus' words? What potential problem arises if we don't do this?
- **Avoiding Simplistic Interpretations:** Why is it crucial to avoid simplistic interpretations of Jesus' teachings in the Sermon? Provide an example used by the speaker.
- **The "Already But Not Yet":** Explain the theological concept of "already but not yet" as it relates to the Sermon on the Mount. How does this framework aid in understanding Jesus' ethics?

- **Application of "Already But Not Yet":** Provide examples from the lecture of how the "already but not yet" concept can be applied to specific teachings in the Sermon, such as prayer and mourning.
- **The Sermon as a Portrait:** How does the speaker describe the Sermon on the Mount in terms of identity and transformation?
- **The Unspoken Elements:** What are the "unspoken hero" and "unspoken underpinning" of the Sermon, according to the speaker? Why are they important?

### III. The Beatitudes: Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit

- **The Meaning of "Beatitudes":** What is the origin of the word "Beatitudes," and what is the more accurate meaning of the Greek word "Makarios"?
- **Fundamental Meaning of "Blessed":** According to the speaker, what is the most fundamental meaning of being "blessed" in the biblical context?
- **Holman Christian Bible Translation:** What point does the speaker make regarding the Holman Christian Bible's approach to translation? Provide the example of John 3:16.
- **Meaning of "Poor in Spirit":** What does "poor in spirit" *not* mean? What is the Old Testament background that helps in understanding this phrase?
- **Spiritual Bankruptcy:** How does the speaker define "poor in spirit"? What contrast does he draw using the examples of "Invictus" and a specific hymn?
- **Poverty in Spirit and Conversion:** How does the speaker relate the concept of "poor in spirit" to the experience of conversion?
- **The Ongoing Need for Poverty in Spirit:** Why does the speaker argue that Christians never cease to be "poor in spirit"? How does he illustrate this with the concept of the "throne of our life"?
- **William Carey Quote:** Explain the significance of the William Carey quote provided by the speaker in relation to "poor in spirit."
- **Two Kinds of People:** Describe the two kinds of people the speaker identifies in relation to spiritual poverty.
- **The Kingdom of God:** According to George Ladd's definition, what is the kingdom of God? How does the speaker refine this definition and connect it to the "already but not yet"?



- **Emphasis in the Greek:** What grammatical feature in the Greek text of the Beatitudes does the speaker highlight? What is the implication of this emphasis for understanding who experiences the blessings of the kingdom?
- **Connection Between Beatitudes:** Explain the "golden chain" analogy of Martin Lloyd-Jones in relation to understanding the Beatitudes. How does the first Beatitude relate to the subsequent ones?
- **Jesus' Metaphor vs. Paul's:** What central metaphor does Jesus use to describe entrance into the kingdom, and how does it compare to Paul's metaphor of justification by faith?
- **Grandma's Illustration:** Describe the speaker's grandmother's illustration of the Christian life and how it relates to the concept of being "poor in spirit."
- **Looking Forward to Accountability:** Why does the speaker say he looks forward to giving an account for every careless word? How does this relate to his understanding of grace and poverty of spirit?

#### Quiz: Introduction and Beatitudes

1. What was Dr. Mounce's favorite sermon series, and why did he describe it as "annoying"?
2. According to Stott, what is the paradoxical nature of the Sermon on the Mount in terms of its familiarity and understanding/obedience?
3. Why does Dr. Mounce argue that the Sermon on the Mount is addressed to disciples (believers/Christians)? Provide one piece of evidence.
4. Explain why Dr. Mounce believes Gandhi's assessment of the Sermon on the Mount as the "world's finest collection of ethical teachings" is incorrect.
5. What are the two groups of people that the Sermon on the Mount distinguishes, according to Dr. Mounce? How are they different?
6. What is the speaker's main concern regarding the church's tendency to interpret the "extreme nature" of Jesus' ethics?
7. Explain the concept of "already but not yet" and how it helps in understanding the seemingly impossible ethical demands of the Sermon on the Mount.
8. What is the fundamental meaning of the Greek word "Makarios" in the context of the Beatitudes, and how does it differ from simply being "happy"?

9. According to Dr. Mounce, what does it mean to be "poor in spirit"? Contrast this with a worldly understanding of the phrase.
10. How does the speaker connect the concept of being "poor in spirit" to the entrance into and life within the kingdom of God?

### **Answer Key for Quiz**

1. Dr. Mounce's favorite sermon series was on the Sermon on the Mount, which took him two and a half years to preach. He described it as "annoying" because its demands are challenging to believe and follow.
2. Stott states that the Sermon on the Mount is probably the best-known part of Jesus' teaching, yet it is arguably the least understood and certainly the least obeyed.
3. Dr. Mounce argues the Sermon is for disciples because promises like "ask, and it will be given to you" (Matthew 7:7) are intended for believers in a covenantal relationship with God, not non-Christians.
4. Dr. Mounce believes Gandhi was wrong because for a non-Christian, the Sermon's teachings are unattainable, countercultural, and impractical for the "real world."
5. The Sermon distinguishes between those who go through the narrow gate and find life, and those who go through the wide gate leading to destruction. It also contrasts those who hear and do Jesus' words (wise) with those who hear but do not do them (foolish).
6. His main concern is that the church often dismisses or ignores the Sermon's teachings altogether, assuming they can't possibly mean what they seem to be saying due to their extreme nature.
7. "Already but not yet" refers to the idea that the kingdom of God has been inaugurated in Jesus' ministry and is present in the lives of believers, but it has not yet reached its full and final consummation, which will occur in the future. This helps explain why the Sermon's ideals are a present reality and a future hope.
8. The fundamental meaning of "Makarios" is "blessed," which signifies being approved by God and living in a right relationship with Him. It goes beyond a fleeting emotion of happiness and pertains to a deeper state of divine favor regardless of circumstances.

9. To be "poor in spirit" means recognizing one's spiritual bankruptcy before God, acknowledging utter unworthiness and dependence on Him for salvation and everything else. It is not merely about financial poverty or being insignificant in a worldly sense.
10. Dr. Mounce argues that recognizing one's poverty of spirit is the way one enters the kingdom of God ("theirs is the kingdom of heaven"). Furthermore, living in the kingdom involves a continued recognition of this spiritual bankruptcy and dependence on God throughout one's life.

## **Essay Format Questions**

1. Discuss the challenges and implications of interpreting the Sermon on the Mount as a set of ethical guidelines for all Christians in all times. Consider the views of Aquinas and dispensationalism, as well as Dr. Mounce's perspective.
2. Analyze the significance of the "already but not yet" framework as a key to understanding the ethical demands presented in the Sermon on the Mount. Provide specific examples from Jesus' teachings discussed in the lecture to support your analysis.
3. Explore the meaning of "blessedness" (Makarios) in the Beatitudes, contrasting it with worldly notions of happiness. How does understanding biblical blessedness shape our interpretation of the subsequent Beatitudes and the Sermon as a whole?
4. Critically evaluate Dr. Mounce's explanation of "poor in spirit." How does this concept relate to the doctrine of salvation by grace, and what are the practical implications of understanding oneself as spiritually bankrupt in the context of Christian living?
5. Examine the emphasis on the Greek word order in the Beatitudes, particularly the phrase "of theirs is." How does this grammatical nuance, according to the speaker, impact our understanding of who truly experiences the blessings of God's kingdom, and what potential challenges does this raise?

## Glossary of Key Terms

- **Beatitudes:** From the Latin "beatus" meaning blessed. Refers to the opening statements of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:3-12), each proclaiming a blessing on a particular group of people or disposition.
- **Disciples:** Followers or students of Jesus Christ. In the context of the Sermon, the primary intended audience for these teachings.
- **Dispensationalism:** A theological system that divides the history of salvation into distinct periods or "dispensations," each governed by a different way in which God relates to humanity. Older forms historically viewed the Sermon on the Mount as primarily for a future millennial kingdom.
- **Kingdom of God (or Heaven):** The sovereign rule and reign of God in the hearts and lives of His people. While it has a present reality, it will also have a future, fully realized manifestation.
- **Makarios:** The Greek word translated as "blessed" in the Beatitudes. It signifies a state of divine favor and approval, extending beyond mere happiness.
- **Poor in Spirit:** Recognizing one's utter spiritual bankruptcy, unworthiness, and complete dependence on God for salvation and life.
- **Priesthood of All Believers:** A Reformation doctrine asserting that all Christians have direct access to God through Christ and do not need a human intermediary like a priest for confession or access to divine grace.
- **Regeneration:** The act of God whereby a spiritually dead person is made alive in Christ, receiving a new nature and the ability to believe and follow God.
- **Sovereign Grace:** The theological concept emphasizing God's absolute control and freedom in extending grace and salvation according to His own purposes.
- **"Already But Not Yet":** A theological framework describing the inaugurated but not yet consummated nature of God's kingdom. The blessings and realities of the kingdom are present in part now but will be fully realized in the future.

## 5. FAQs on Mounce, Sermon on the Mount, Session 1, Introduction and Beatitudes, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

### Frequently Asked Questions on the Sermon on the Mount (Based on Dr. Mounce's Lecture)

**1. Who is the intended audience of the Sermon on the Mount?** Dr. Mounce emphasizes that the Sermon on the Mount is primarily addressed to Jesus' disciples, to believers, to Christians. While others may have been listening, the core message is about how those within the kingdom of God are to live. He points out that some of the commands and promises within the sermon, such as "ask, and it will be given to you," are specifically for those in a covenantal relationship with God. The ethical standards presented are so lofty that they are practically impossible for non-believers to achieve without the Holy Spirit.

**2. Is the Sermon on the Mount applicable to all Christians throughout history?** Yes, according to Dr. Mounce, the Sermon on the Mount is intended for all disciples of all times. He critiques the historical view, exemplified by Aquinas, that relegated these teachings primarily to the clergy, suggesting that lay people could not possibly obey them. Mounce argues against this distinction, asserting the "priesthood of all believers" and that the Sermon's ethical demands apply equally to all followers of Christ, regardless of their role within the church. He also notes the shift away from older dispensational views that placed the Sermon solely within a future Millennial Kingdom, highlighting the timeless and universally applicable nature of Jesus' teachings.

**3. In what ways is the Sermon on the Mount "countercultural"?** Dr. Mounce stresses that discipleship in God's kingdom, as outlined in the Sermon on the Mount, is fundamentally countercultural to the values and norms of the world. He illustrates this by contrasting worldly ideals like individual achievement and the insistence on personal rights with the Sermon's emphasis on poverty of spirit, meekness, submission to God, and the Golden Rule. The Sermon demands a radical commitment that doesn't allow for straddling the fence between worldly and godly living, as seen in the metaphor of having "a foot in two boats." Believers are called to be distinct – the salt that flavors and the light that illuminates – which inherently requires being different from the prevailing culture.

**4. How should we interpret the seemingly extreme ethical demands of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount (e.g., cutting off a hand, gouging out an eye, being perfect)?** Dr. Mounce suggests a two-pronged approach to understanding these strong ethical statements. First, we must give the words their full weight and acknowledge their intended meaning. However, second, our interpretations cannot be simplistic or literalistic in every sense. Jesus often uses strong language to drive a central point home. We need to consider the context and the overall message. He uses the example of the divorce passage to show how Jesus can make a strong statement about God's intention for marriage, while other scriptural passages provide necessary qualifications.

**5. What is the significance of the "already but not yet" theological framework for understanding the Sermon on the Mount?** Dr. Mounce believes the "already but not yet" concept is key to understanding the Sermon. This framework, championed by theologians like George Ladd and Greg Beale, recognizes that the Kingdom of God has already been inaugurated through the life and ministry of Jesus and is present in the lives of believers (the "already"). However, it has not yet reached its full consummation, which will occur at the end of time (the "not yet"). Applying this to the Sermon, the blessings and ethical standards it presents are a picture of who we are in Christ now, what we are becoming through the Spirit's work, and who we ultimately will be in the new heavens and new earth. For example, those who mourn are comforted now, but their ultimate comfort will come when sin is no more.

**6. What does it mean to be "poor in spirit" according to the first Beatitude, and why is it foundational?** Being "poor in spirit" does not simply mean financial poverty or being insignificant. Instead, it refers to recognizing one's spiritual bankruptcy before God, an admission of unworthiness and complete dependence on Him. This aligns with the Old Testament understanding of the poor as those who, lacking earthly riches, turned to trust in God alone. Dr. Mounce argues that poverty of spirit is foundational because it describes the posture with which one enters the kingdom of God and how one continues to live within it. The subsequent Beatitudes (2-8) can be seen as an explanation and outworking of this core concept.

**7. What is Dr. Mounce's understanding of the "kingdom of God" as it relates to the Sermon on the Mount?** Drawing on the work of George Ladd, Dr. Mounce defines the kingdom of God not primarily as a place, although it has a spatial component, but as the sovereign rule of God in the hearts and lives of His children. It's the kingly rule of God in an individual's life, and its presence expands as more people submit to this rule. This understanding fits with the "already but not yet" framework, as the kingdom begins in the hearts of believers now and will ultimately be fully realized in the new heavens and new earth.

**8. What is the implication of the emphasized possessive pronoun ("theirs," "those who mourn," etc.) in the Greek text of the Beatitudes?** Dr. Mounce points out a subtle emphasis in the Greek word order of the Beatitudes. The possessive pronoun (e.g., "of theirs is the kingdom of God") is placed out of the typical grammatical order, suggesting a strong emphasis. While not wanting to overstate it, he interprets this as highlighting an exclusivity. For example, the kingdom of God belongs to *those* who are poor in spirit, the comforted are *those* who mourn, and so on. This raises challenging questions about who truly belongs to the kingdom and who can expect to receive God's promises, suggesting a close link between the characteristics described in the Beatitudes and genuine faith and salvation. He notes that this emphasis becomes particularly potent when considering the beatitude on mercy, implying that only those who show mercy will receive it.